



Connect with your Neighbors.....Change the World

2023 Council At-Large Questionnaire

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CANDIDATE CERTIFICATION

Candidate Name

I have read the attached questionnaire responses and certify that the information provided is accurate and the opinions stated accurately reflect my own positions.

Candidate Signature:Melissa Robbins Date: Jan 12th

Please complete, sign and return this form via email in Word format to: info@phillynn.org and Gloria Gilman gmgilman@gmail.com. Also mail a copy with the signature page to

**Gloria Gilman
121 S. Broad St., Suite 1710
Philadelphia, PA 19107**

I. INTRODUCTION

Although many of the questions in Section III below call for a simple yes or no answer, please feel free to provide an explanation for any of your choices. If you have not yet come to a final decision, or don't currently have enough information to provide an informed answer, please so state.

II. BACKGROUND

1. What, if any, elected or appointed government office(s) have you held? None
2. With respect to your other qualifications for the office of At-Large Council member:

a. What community or policy issues have you worked on, and in what capacity? (Please provide the names of two or three individuals who can provide information about your previous work.) Shut Down Berks Coalition, Police Oversight Commission, Prison Oversight Commission, Protect Washington Avenue, Equal Pay For Equal Work (Making all salaries transparent on the state and local level). Pushed for incarcerated people to receive mail-in ballots on state road.

I worked as an advocate around all of these issues. I testified at hearings, participated in interviews, staged protest, participated in lobbying days, visited local prison and handed out voter registration applications as well as mail-in ballots.testified in committee hearings.

c. What other endorsements have you received? Black Women;s Leadership Council

d. How do you plan to win? Mobilize supporters, continued media exposure, attend wards functions, canvass, phone bank, contact unions, grassroots organizations, community organizations

e. How much money have you raised? 5,000 How much do you expect to raise? 100,000

3. What three things would you most want to accomplish if elected? Increase home ownership, secure existing HUD leases prior to expiration, re-establish after-school programs, summer school, and secure funding to rehab and or build new schools citywide.

III. ISSUES

A. Economic Development

What do you see as the current economic picture of Philadelphia and what would you do to make economic development more just, fair, and equitable for all Philadelphians? Our city current ignores the lack of Black business owners citywide. There has to be an intentional investment into small business as well as intentional investments and opportunities created for Black entrepreneurs to gain access to start-up capital.

Would you back legislation to:

1. Impose an impact fee on businesses failing to pay workers \$15/hr to reimburse the City for the costs of relieving poverty? **That would solely depend on the annual earnings of the business. Every business cannot afford payroll or cover their bank loans while generating an income, especially Black and Brown businesses.**
2. Take \$200 million of City pension funds now invested in risky securities to invest in neighborhood economic development projects, through a public bank or otherwise? **Yes, that way we could see how our dollars pay off/ We would see the return on our investment. The neighborhood development project would generate a more secure return.**

3. Create a program to provide technical assistance and start-up funding for cooperative, worker-owned businesses and housing? **If specific neighborhoods were looking to adopt such a program than I would be in complete agreement.**
4. Take whatever steps are needed to create and fund a Bank of Philadelphia to hold all City deposits and invest them locally? **ABSOLUTELY!!!**
5. Create a system of participatory budgeting that would allow City residents to control allocation of all or a portion of the funds allocated in the City budget? **I would want to see a board that truly represents the entire city to oversee such a process. I agree that budget transparency is critical to maintain trust amongst residents. This sounds like a great start to truly invest our city tax dollars back into our communities.**

B. Education

What are the root causes for the current state of Philadelphia Public Schools and what would you do to address these issues? Intentional educational divestments. Create a pipeline of Black and Brown educators, renovate and rebuild schools citywide, make greening of school properties a priority, create culturally sensitive curriculum for Black and brown students, separate K-5, 6-8, 9-12th grade. Allow elementary students to have recess with well funded safe and bright playgrounds with grass. Bring back music, art, home economics, mandate civil K-12, mandate financial literacy, in school libraries and funded school trips. Provide safe and health food both breakfast and lunch. Eliminate students having to pay who clearly cannot afford food.

Specifically, would you back legislation to:

1. Regulate charter schools by making their budgetary practices transparent, ridding them of conflicts of interest, and stopping them from cherry-picking their student bodies? **YES** Would you be willing to attach that plan to a budget rider? **YES**
2. Make the School Board an elective office, or otherwise deepen community participation in School Board appointments? **YES, ABSOLUTELY!!!!**
3. Compute the cost/benefit ratio for the School District of all proposed KOZ zones before they're approved by Council? **YES**
4. Increase direct City funding for the School District? If so, please explain. Until we have complete line item transparency of how school budget dollars are allocated I would agree to more direct city funding. The tax payers are currently in the dark and get very little return of our dollars when it comes to our children thriving in schools.

C. Criminal Justice

What do you see as the current state of the Criminal Justice System in Philadelphia and what would you do to address any perceived problems/issues? Mandate residency requirements for all police officers. Officers must have lived in Phila County for a year prior to hiring and must reside within Phila County

limits after hire. Prisons must be overhauled and made safe for inmates as well as staff. Implement a prison oversight board. Mandate psych services 90 days prior to release to ensure that incarcerated individuals are able to safely acclimate back into society. Invest into halfway house to create therapeutics space so that upon release those formally incarcerated people make begin a real healing rehabilitative process before returning to their families.

Would you back legislation to:

1. Fully end the stop and frisk program? **YES**
2. Change the Charter to create an oversight board to keep a check on Philadelphia prison conditions? **YES**
3. Increase post-release counseling for jobs, housing and other support services? **YES, YES, YES!!!**
4. Bar employers from denying jobs to ex-offenders without a specific job-related basis? **YES!**

D. The Role of Community in the Economic and Political Systems in Philly

What do you see as the role of the community in our political and economic systems and what would you do to make it more fair, just, and equitable for all Philadelphians? Campaign finance reform. Each candidate would have to raise a specific dollar amount and the city would match that amount, so those who want to run and serve can afford to instead of wealthy white men continuously having the upper hand with fundraising.

Would you back legislation to:

1. Bar or limit privatization of City property and work done by City employees? **YES** More specifically are there any circumstances under which you would sell PGW? **No, we should not move towards privatization in such a poor and vulnerable city.**
2. Move Pension Fund investment decisions in-house? **YES, we need more transparency to much money is put at risk and at stake.**
3. Reform PIDC, the City's main economic development funding agency, so that its Board has a majority of public and community members, rather than Chamber of Commerce appointed members? **YES, YES, YES!!!**
4. Require the City to withdraw subsidies from corporations that fail to provide jobs or other benefits to City residents? **YES, YES, YES!!!**
5. Publicly finance City elections? **YESSSSS!**

E. Housing

What are the root causes of the current Housing Crisis in Philadelphia and how would you address these issues? Historic red lining, banks intentionally denying Black people access to mortgages, current tax abatement, missing L&I with little to no accountability, rigged RCO's, lack of real representation on the

zoning boards as well as planning commissions, little to no education around home buying, discriminatory practice from landlords towards housing vouchers. A poorly managed PHA.

Would you back legislation to:

1. Create a rent stabilization program? **YES**
2. End, limit or curtail Councilmanic prerogative over land disposition? **I would look to limit with the full participation of residents with insight and input.**
3. Create or support more affordable housing, both rental and home ownership? Please specify. **YES, currently a slew of HUD leases are due to expire. We as leaders must get a head of these leases to ensure that we secure permanent housing for residents. We should ensure that those who earn less than \$60,00 have immediate access to home ownership if they want with municipal subsidies. Those who wish to lease without the responsibility of home ownership should have locked in rates without fear of eviction and without limitation of which family members are allowed to reside there. Also stipulations must be made for those who earn a living from contracts (1099) to access home ownership.**
4. What would you do to curtail or limit the effects of gentrification in our neighborhoods that is displacing long term and low-income residents? **First, we must stop referring to people as low income. Labels hurt. Also, we must pass laws to stop the harassment of home owners from developers and or buyers. Prohibit calls, mail or impromptu visits. End tax abatements! Create community oversight for builders before they break ground, staff and enforce L&I.**

F. Environmental Justice

What are the major Environmental issues in Philadelphia and what would you do to address them? Trash, poor lighting, abandoned cars, lack of greenery citywide. Fully fund a tree planting programs as a part of environmental science for students citywide. Invest in a citywide lighting program. Create incentives for resident to clean and remove trash from ALL alley ways. Ensure that trash removal is equal citywide. Identify all abandoned houses and create subsidy opportunities for those residents who have lived in our city for more than 20 years to purchase them.

Please answer the following specific questions:

1. Would you use the City's power of the purse to prevent SEPTA from continuing to build and use natural-gas fueled power plants in the City? **ABSOLUTELY**
2. What will you do to support and promote the use of solar and other renewable energy sources in the City? **I would encourage resident to move toward solar roofing with incentives tied to the recommendation. I would create high school recycling programs run by students to ensure that all recyclables are processed and broken down properly**
3. Do you support a plan for City government or the entire City to be fossil-free by a particular date? If so, how would you accomplish that goal? **I support the program, I'm sure about how realistic a specific date attached to the idea would be based on all of our current challenges.**

G. Health Care

What can the City do to provide and support adequate and affordable health care for its residents? Re-open all of our healthcare centers in our communities. Partner with medical institutions to create certification classes for local residents who want to pursue the medical field and who want to work in their neighborhoods. I support healthcare for all residents. Annual healthcare screenings citywide in all clinics, free high school physicals for students. More oversight for aging adults and Vets in senior homes.

Specially answer the following question:

1. Would you support the construction of a City-owned Northeast Health Center? **Yes, as long as there are anti-racist policies implemented and regularly reviewed. We need healthcare center citywide.**

H. Taxes

Would is your plan for a fair, just and equitable taxing structure for the City of Philadelphia, addressing specifically your position on real estate, corporate, and individual taxing rates? Independent appraisers should be used to determine the actual value of a home and taxes should be based on market rate of a particular neighborhood after appraisals, individuals should have to pay taxes based on their annual earnings. Those who earn more should pay more. (I have not studied the tax structure as much, although I am a quick study.

Specifically answer the following:

1. Would you increase taxes if the programs you wish to fund cannot otherwise be paid for? **I would not want to raise taxes. I would look for alternative avenues to fund proposed programs.**

2. Which taxes would you propose raising? **Those local business owners who neglect to pay taxes, those who do not have digitally functioning cash registers in their places of business to track purchases that generate receipts. Large corps who do not pay their fair share.**

I. General Statement

Use this space to provide any further information that you would like us to consider about your candidacy, not covered by the questions above.

I am a veteran, who has served in neighborhoods on the ground citywide. I care about all of Philadelphia, which is why I am running for the at-large seat. I will work to ensure that we increase home ownerships for those families who have historically been blocked out of creating generational wealth for their families. As a leader, I will make lighting, cleaning and greening our city a priority. I have been working tirelessly non-stop for over a decade because I am a lifetime public servant. The amount of money should not dictate my viability for your support. I look forward to not only working with PNN, but serving all members and communities.