

**AFSCME DISTRICT COUNCIL 47**

**2023 CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE**

**(City Council District and City Council-At-Large)**

**CANDIDATE INFORMATION**

**Candidate Personal Contact Information (Fields marked with asterisks are required)**

Name: \* Amanda Mcillmurray

Registration Address: \* 2605 S. Darien Street Philadelphia PA 19148

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**Campaign Contact Information**

Full Name of Campaign Committee: \* Amanda for Philly

HQ Address: \* 2605 S. Darien Street Philadelphia PA 19148

Campaign Manager Name: \* Tess Kerins

Campaign Manager Phone: \* (267) 693-7437

Campaign Manager E-Mail: \* info@amandaforphilly.com

**Candidacy Information**

What office are you seeking? \* City Council At Large

If you are running for a district seat, in which district are you running? \* n/a

Are you the incumbent? \* Yes \_\_\_ No X If yes, year first elected:

With which party are you registered? Democrat

Please list union leaders you seek input from when developing your legislative agenda:  
Rosslyn Wuchinich, Emiliano Rodriguez, Nicole Hunt, Mungu Sanchez, Antoine Little,  
Danny Bauder, Jed Dodd, Brian Eddis, Hilary Linardopolous, Marita Crawford, Richard

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Hooker, Dermot Delude Dix, Jarrett Smith, Ryan Hancock (of Willig Williams and Davidson), Sam Datlof (labor attorney), Sam Schwartz (labor attorney with NLRB), Nicole Kligerman, Devan Spear, Pallavi Podapati

Who are your opponents?

There are currently 20 or so candidates rumored to be running — we'll see how many of them make the ballot in a few weeks!

If there is not sufficient space to respond to the following questions, please attach additional sheets to the questionnaire.

## **CAMPAIGN**

1. Briefly describe your campaign's path to victory. What issues will you be emphasizing throughout your campaign and why?

With contentious Mayoral and City Council races, turnout in Philadelphia will be at an all-time high. My campaign brings experience and is equipped to drive this turnout to ultimately win 50,000 votes and be victorious on May 16, 2023.

Our path to victory is informed by the following:

- I have long standing relationships citywide that have a history of delivering electorally. We'll lean heavily on these relationships while forging new relationships.
- I will be a top vote getter in places progressives are expected to do well: wards 1, 2, 5, 8, 9, 18, 21, 22, 27, 39A, 46.
- I'll outperform in places where progressive candidates typically struggle to gain footing, like in the Northeast where I have deep roots.
- Anticipated support: I'll earn the support of organized labor because of my deep roots and relationships in the labor movement and my undying commitment to workers. I'll also earn the support of community organizations because of my history, relationships and policy priorities. Because of this support and my team's expertise, I'll have the most robust door knocking program of any candidate in the race.
- My team knows what it takes to win and will outwork the competition. We take nothing for granted and are vying for support everywhere.
- My campaign will raise \$300,000, and will invest that in an aggressive voter outreach strategy through mail, digital and canvassing.

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**PHILADELPHIA ECONOMY**

2. Do you support raising the Living Wage requirement of employers that do business with the city from its current rate? What would your approach be to promoting a Living Wage requirement for employers not covered by the Living Wage Ordinance?

Yes, I support raising the Living Wage requirement of employers that do business with the city. It's great that Council and Mayor Kenney passed 21st Century Minimum Wage legislation in 2019 that officially established a wage standard of \$15/hr as of July 2022 and connected that to based on annual consumer price index adjustments. But \$15/hr is still poverty pay and workers deserve to be paid more. Philly has the 4th lowest "real minimum wage" which means it's one of the most difficult places to survive in the US on minimum wage. The MIT Living Wage Calculator estimates that single adults with no children need \$16.67 per hour to support themselves; a single adult with one child needs \$32.42 per hour; and a household with two working adults and two children needs \$23.28 per hour, per adult. Unfortunately the City of Philadelphia can't currently raise the minimum wage because it's preempted by the State but with a new Democratic held State House there's renewed hope we can tackle this on the state level. As a city, we can continue to raise the wages of workers by supporting unionization efforts and also impose an impact fee on employers who pay their employees less than a living wage to reimburse the City for costs of relieving employer created poverty.

3. The City requires companies with 10 or more employees to provide paid sick leave. Many states and cities have similar laws with no exemptions. Would you support updating the legislation to put it in line with what other states and cities have passed?

Yes, every worker deserves paid sick leave and PTO. This exemption also encourages companies to misclassify their workers as independent contractors to sidestep what is legally required.

**PENSION/RETIREMENT SYSTEM**

4. What is your position on the current cap on annual contribution in the defined benefit plan by employees in the stacked hybrid plan of the Municipal Employee

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Pension system? Should the cap be indexed to include automatic increases tied to salary increases?

All new employees are hired with a hybrid pension plan, so no matter your final salary, your pension is calculated as a percentage of no more than \$65,000, with the rest being put into a 401(k). That should be raised and indexed to inflation.

**EDUCATION/SCHOOL BOARD**

5. What qualities and experience would you look for in appointees to the School Board? What standards should School Board appointees use to evaluate current or proposed privatization measures (e.g., charter schools)?

I would look for appointees to be alumni, parents or educators of the Philadelphia School District. I'd look at their history with the education justice movement, their professional experience and their relationships with organized labor. I'd look at their past actions and whether that matches up with their promises and stated priorities. I support a moratorium on new charter schools and would only support appointees who are opposed to privatizing public schools.

6. How would you work to support acquiring fair State funding for the Philadelphia School District? What experience and relationships do you have working with entities in Harrisburg that would help accomplish that?

Thanks to the tireless efforts of students, educators, parents, education advocates and the Public Interest Law Center, the Commonwealth court affirmed what we already have known for generations: Philadelphia's school system is underfunded and inequitable and our students have been shortchanged. Our student body, which is overwhelmingly Black and brown, deserves so much more. Judge Renee Cohn Jubelirer determined that PA's system of education funding violates our Constitution. Now, we need the state to step up and revise our funding formula and fairly fund our students' education.

I've worked for years to elect Democrats to the State House and Senate — and now because of those efforts and the work of countless people across the state, Democrats control the House. I have deep relationships with State Representatives and Senators both in Philadelphia and across the state and plan to strategize and collaborate with them, educators, labor, and allies to get our students what they deserve. I also founded

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Reclaim Philadelphia, which is a founding organization of Pennsylvania Stands Up — a statewide organization with more than 1,000 members in counties across the state. As all organizing projects to take power and resources out of the coffers of the rich and put them into the piggy banks of working people, this will take a coordinated inside outside strategy.

### **CITY SERVICES**

7. What are your priorities for funding City and Court services? How would you ensure that these services are provided equitably throughout the city?

**We need unprecedented public investment to ensure that Philadelphia remains a place where its residents can live, learn, work, and play safely and joyfully.**

Philadelphia benefits from a network of parks, libraries, rec centers, and sanitation infrastructure that were once the envy of the world. However, generations of disinvestment have left many of these key public services and institutions in desperate condition, some even turning to privatization. All these needs are compounded by increasing extreme weather — especially increased extreme heat.

Reinvesting in public services and public places will not only make our neighborhoods safer and more beautiful, but will also fuel economic advancement for Philadelphians that have been left out of the city's primary economy of universities and medical centers. I support significantly shifting the operations budget for key city departments to ensure that both new hires and existing employees have access to family-sustaining wages and safe working conditions that are protected by our City's public service unions. There are too many jobs that need to be done for our city to leave Philadelphia's most precious resource (Philadelphians themselves) sitting on the sidelines. There are too many of the workers that are already doing those jobs do so without the pay, support, and safety that they deserve.

Growing up, I experienced all the joys of the city's robust network of parks, recreation centers and libraries— playing youth sports, diving the depths of books shelves, and mentoring youth as an umpire. These experiences were foundational in creating the person she is today and wants every young person to have those same opportunities.

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I'll fight for well-funded, and accessible public services — because we deserve it AND because it's effective at preventing violence. We're told these services are "free" when in reality we pay taxes to fund them. It's time we get a return on our investment. I'll fight to make sure wealthy institutions like Comcast and Penn finally pay their fair share so we don't have to keep carrying their load.

As Councilmember, I'll fight for:

- Support an expansion of staffing and programming in Libraries and in Recreation Centers to ensure that 7-day service can be provided safely and consistently for both residents and staff.
- Well-funded and accessible public services including parks, recreation centers, trash pick up from public and residential cans and street cleaning
- Support all measures necessary to increase the number of L&I building inspectors, funded by an expansion of fines on negligent and reckless developers who continually threaten the safety of our neighborhoods for their own profit.
- Support changes to Philadelphia's taxes to ensure that our wealthiest businesses and landowners pay their fair share to support these vital city services they benefit from but don't pay for.
- Fine negligent developers who dig up our street sand don't properly patch them in order to fund the Department of Licenses & Inspections and street cleaning across the city.

8. What level of services should the city support to fully fund and fully staff our Library and Parks and Recreation systems? Please explain your position and how you believe those systems can be funded.

I support an expansion of staffing and programming in Libraries and in Recreation Centers to ensure that 7-day service can be provided safely and consistently for both residents and staff. Right now, many of these workers are part time and seasonal and overworked while being underpaid. I support significantly shifting the operations budget for key city departments to ensure that both new hires and existing employees have access to family-sustaining wages and safe working conditions that are protected by our City's public service unions. There are too many jobs that need to be done for our city to

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leave Philadelphia's most precious resource (Philadelphians themselves) sitting on the sidelines. There are too many of the workers that are already doing those jobs do so without the pay, support, and safety that they deserve.

9. How would you address staffing shortages throughout departments, including those that are a result of unfilled positions? What initiatives would you put in place to help hire and retain current City / Court workers?

I support significantly shifting the operations budget for key city departments to ensure that both new hires and existing employees have access to family-sustaining wages and safe working conditions that are protected by our City's public service unions. There are too many jobs that need to be done for our city to leave Philadelphia's most precious resource (Philadelphians themselves) sitting on the sidelines. There are too many of the workers that are already doing those jobs do so without the pay, support, and safety that they deserve. We need to fill these positions and make it easier for Philadelphians to make our city work.

10. What is your position on the privatization of City services?

**I oppose any and all efforts at privatization of public goods including but not limited to parks, public utilities, recreation centers, libraries, and schools.**

## **ENVIRONMENT**

11. What steps do you want the city to take to address climate change and to shift away from fossil fuels toward renewable energy sources? Do you support the City amending its investment portfolio to divest from fossil fuel companies?

Yes, I support the City divesting it's investment portfolio from fossil fuel companies. We should make Philly the home of a new green economy. We can remediate and develop brownfield sites, such as the former PES oil refinery, to become the site for renewable energy generation, battery storage, and the like. We can and should electrify our buildings and homes. We should invest in public transit to ensure residents can travel freely and easily. We should invest in building green, affordable, accessible and safe housing for people at every income level so people can afford to move AND stay here with some money left over after their rent or mortgage is due. We must invest in public spaces like parks, recreation centers and libraries to give our residents places to gather,

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build relationships, have fun AND service as climate resiliency centers for our neighbors who will suffer the most through climate change.

There is currently a Philadelphia Solar Rebate Program which encourages homeowners to install solar panels on their homes. This program is exactly the type of initiative that we should focus on expanding to incentivize people to invest longterm in their own energy use and that of the city's. I have participated in this program and just installed solar panels on my house this past year.

Unfortunately, this program has been put on hold due to COVID-19 budget cuts. We should seek to reinvest in necessary programs such as these to push for a green future in Philadelphia.

## **TAXES**

12. What measures would you support to make sure that wealthy non-profits pay their fair share to support City and Court services?

Working people and small businesses carry the burden while the rich benefit. Community members have demanded for the University of Pennsylvania to pay Payments in Lieu of Taxes (like most ivy league universities do) but the revenue from that is a drop in the bucket compared to what is legally owed to Philadelphians. In its 1985 decision in Hospital Utilization Project v. Commonwealth, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court established requirements an organization must satisfy to qualify as a purely public charity entitled to a real estate tax exemption. Many large profitable nonprofits, like the University of Pennsylvania which is both the largest property owner and employer, do not meet these requirements and legally are required to pay property taxes. We're losing out on hundreds of millions of revenue EACH YEAR by not ensuring these mega nonprofits pay real estate taxes.

13. Would you support any changes to the city's property tax abatement program? If not, please explain why. If so, please explain how?

Yes. The tax abatement has only served to increase wealth disparities in Philadelphia and protect profits of developers and landlords. We need an end to the 10 year tax abatement now.

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14. How would you reform city taxes to increase revenue? What is your position on the Net Income and Gross Receipts Tax and on the Wealth Tax legislation? If you have other ideas to increase revenue, please explain them.

Working people and small businesses carry the burden while the rich benefit. Community members have demanded for the University of Pennsylvania to pay Payments in Lieu of Taxes (like most ivy league universities do) but the revenue from that is a drop in the bucket compared to what is legally owed to Philadelphians. In its 1985 decision in Hospital Utilization Project v. Commonwealth, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court established requirements an organization must satisfy to qualify as a purely public charity entitled to a real estate tax exemption. Many large profitable nonprofits, like the University of Pennsylvania which is both the largest property owner and employer, do not meet these requirements and legally are required to pay property taxes. We're losing out on hundreds of millions of revenue EACH YEAR by not ensuring these mega nonprofits pay real estate taxes.

I also fully support raising taxes on mega-corporations such as Penn through PILOTS, taxing the top 5% of Philadelphians, ending the 10 year tax abatement, and enacting a .4% tax on stocks and bonds (excluding retirement accounts). The PA Budget and Policy Center has done extensive research to show that this would raise an additional \$200 million each year, necessary funding that could be invested in our community.

## **PHILADELPHIA HOUSING**

15. Do you support increasing revenue for the Housing Trust Fund to help residents avoid displacement in communities currently facing development pressure?

Yes. Ideally, we'd have a robust federal investment in affordable housing, like has happened in the past. But in recent decades, the federal government has divested from this so we must figure out local solutions. In order to increase density, developers can include a set amount of affordable units or, if a developer wants to get out of their affordability requirement, they pay into the HTF which ends up being far less than it'd

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cost to build affordable units. This has often served as a way for developers to exploit the benefits of increasing density while sidestepping the need for affordable housing to increase profits. But that fee should be tied to the cost of building affordable units and they should have to pay at least the same amount.

16. As a city elected official, what steps will you take to ensure local government plays a proactive role in expanding permanent affordable and workforce housing in Philadelphia?

We must make sure every resident of our city has a safe, stable home.

In middle school, my family was evicted because our landlord hiked up our rent during early Fishtown gentrification. We bounced around a lot and it put us in chaos. years later, my parents finally were able to buy their own home in Frankford – only because my dad became a Teamsters truck driver. It was life changing for us and that home is still in my family now.

Unfortunately 6 years ago, my dad suffered a brain injury. He hasn't been able to work since and he lost his union job. Our family home is crumbling because he can't afford to maintain it. The story of my family is not unique. It's the story of so many of us. My dad apply for Senator Saval's Whole Homes to get funds to make his home safe for him, my siblings and my new 4 month old niece.

Philadelphia has an affordable housing problem. But it's a problem that can be solved with creative and visionary legislation like WHR. As City Councilmember, I'll fight to make sure every Philadelphian can buy a home and keep that home in their family for generations. I'll fight alongside all of you to pass rent control so our neighbors can't be kicked out because a landlord decides to double the rent. I'll fight alongside all of you to tie that with Right to Counsel and Just Cause eviction and to fully fund L&I so corporate out of town developers can't just slap up these Lego houses and collapse our neighbors.

In the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic, Philadelphia embarked on an experiment that many had once thought unimaginable: a near-total ban on evictions. Then Philadelphia implemented protections like the eviction diversion program and rental assistance. We can have a better system, that lessens the harm of evictions which are disproportionately filed against Black and Brown Philadelphians, and keeps people housed. We need policies that protect renters, make it easier to buy a home, maintain

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our homes and stay in our homes, policies that fight back and prevent displacement caused by developers.

As City Councilmember, I'll fight for:

- A cap on rent and limits on rent increases also known as rent control,
- Tenants' rights to organize at their properties by dedicating resources to supporting tenants' unions and allow tenants to sue slumlords for damages and legal fees who leave their properties unfit for human habitation
- Increase funding for the Department of License and Inspection, so that it can proactively inspect rental units, new construction and rehabs to ensure all units are livable and safe
- Expand Right to Counsel and Good Cause Eviction to the whole city,
- Establish a fee on the practice of "flipping houses," with funds raised going toward preserving and expanding affordable, accessible houses and green space in gentrifying neighborhoods.

17. Do you support extending good cause eviction protections to all residential leases? Do you support rent control measures to protect Philadelphia tenants?

**Yes! Please refer to my answer for #16. This is one of the core goals.**

**PHILADELPHIA RESTORATIVE JUSTICE**

18. Do you support revising the Memo of Understanding between the Philadelphia Police Department and Philadelphia School District to close the school to prison pipeline? If yes, explain how you would accomplish this. If no, please explain why?

Pennsylvania has one of the highest rates of incarceration in the nation, and Philadelphians, specifically Black and brown Philadelphians, are incarcerated and overpoliced at disproportionate rates in comparison to white people and other Pennsylvanians across the state. One of the most unconscionable and pressing problems in the criminal legal system is the practice of prosecuting and trying youth as adults. We must end this practice and ensure that there are no youth incarcerated in the city's adult prisons. We must end the school to prison

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pipeline. We need to repeal Act 33, which allows youth to be charged as adults — human brains aren't fully developed until the age of 25 and children don't have the same decision making capacity as adults.

One specific thing that should be revised is the MOU states that any incident in a school involving a member of PPD is subject to qualified immunity — which essentially means they can not be held accountable for misuse of force, for violating the rights of or harming (either intentionally or unintentionally) students, educators or staff.

19. Do you support additional funding for programs that are alternatives to incarceration for drug addiction, mental health treatment, and other issues? If yes, how would you measure the effectiveness of those programs? If no, please explain.

As Councilmember At-Large, I'll support addressing the opioid epidemic for what it is: a health crisis, not a criminal issue. I'll fight to break down barriers to accessing treatment, fund overdose prevention measures to keep our neighbors safe.

20. What community policing initiatives do you support or propose? Please explain.

To have real safety and healing, we deserve a world that treats the root causes of issues and doesn't leave people behind. The legacy of Reagan-era tough on crime tactics and the war on drugs has not only destabilized communities across our city, particularly Black communities, but has not made us safer. In the last decade alone we have spent over \$2.6 billion dollars to jail over 47,000 Pennsylvanians, more than a quarter of whom from Philly. Tens of thousands of Philadelphians are locked up before trial and nearly three thousand children are incarcerated in youth prisons.

It's clear that our current system isn't working. We must prioritize solutions that do work and be willing to try new things to keep our communities safe.

I support expanding funding for mobile crisis teams to respond to people in mental health crises. I support the creation of unarmed, civilian traffic safety officers to write tickets for traffic offenses. We should create and fund violence interrupter programs that employ people with street credibility to interrupt cycles of gun violence and stop retaliation. I support restorative justice initiatives that can help to settle beefs and create healing. I'll also advocate decriminalization of many low level offenses.

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22. What funding and staffing proposals would you support for the Department of Prisons to ensure incarcerated citizens are best prepared for return to the community from incarceration or from alternative detention programs?

Being imprisoned and removed from society impacts formerly incarcerated people's ability to re-enter society and survive, let alone thrive. We should make sure that returning citizens have all the resources available to them. Providing resources to returning citizens also reduces recidivism.

23. What steps do you believe the City can take to reduce the availability of guns in Philadelphia?

First, we should require that gun owners report when their guns are lost or stolen. Since this is not currently legally required, straw purchases are common and guns involved in violence often can't be traced. We also should pass common sense regulations on gun ownership: requiring gun safety training, prohibiting people with a history of domestic violence from purchasing guns, etc.

24. Do you have any plans regarding programs that support and protect victims of crime and other affected members of the community?

Yes — we should fund low and no cost therapy, expand funding for critical services like Victim/Witness Services of South Philadelphia, and allow victims of crime autonomy and agency in how they address the harm caused to them. Right now, if you report a crime to the PPD they legally have to pursue it even if you don't agree with the course of action and it feels harmful to you instead of healing. Our primary goal when it comes to the victims of crime should be healing and restoration.

**PHILADELPHIA CORPORATE POWER**

25. Do you support publicly financed campaigns for all City elected offices? If no, please explain.

**100% yes.** As a working-class person currently running for office, and as someone who has run successful grassroots campaigns in the past, I know how difficult it is to run for office — particularly for Black, brown, Indigenous and Asian people, queer people, women of all races and working people. Our government and people in power should be representative of the people who are being governed — instead of just by whoever, instead of whoever has wealthy connections, accepts money from real estate

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developers or corporate lobbyists, or can self-fund their campaigns through their own wealth.

26. Do you support legislation that enables the City to recover subsidies from corporations or other businesses that fail to provide jobs or other benefits to city residents as a condition of the subsidies? Please explain.

Yes!

**RESIDENCY ISSUE**

27. What is your position on City and Court employees having the option to live outside the city? Please explain.

City and Court workers should be required to live within the City of Philadelphia — but so should the PPD and PFD. We shouldn't have different standards for different city workers. I recognize that some city workers want the option of moving outside of Philly for a variety of reasons — increasing unaffordability of housing, concerns about crime and safety, and the criminal underfunding of our public schools. Those concerns are entirely valid and understandable and we need to collectively solve these problems.

Our city is facing an overdose crisis, skyrocketing housing prices, a gun violence epidemic, a never ending pandemic and we're all working more jobs than ever while making less money than ever. But we're faced with a choice — to leave or to fight, organize and win a better city for all of us. Philadelphia is a city of fighters and as a Philadelphian, I hope people choose to stay to fight alongside me to make our home safer, more affordable and more just for all of us.

28. Are there any other issues you'd like to mention about which we have not asked you in this questionnaire?