

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)

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Campaign Contact Information

Full Name of Campaign Committee: Phillips for Philly Families
HQ Address: N/A
Campaign Manager Name: Emanuel Wilkerson
Campaign Manager Phone: 484-366-1480
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Candidacy Information

What office are you seeking?

City Councilmember

If you are running for a district seat, in which district are you running?

9th District

Are you the incumbent? * Yes X No ___ If yes, year first elected: **November 2023 (Special election to replace Cherelle Parker)**

With which party are you registered? **Democrat**

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Please list union leaders you seek input from when developing your legislative agenda:

Samuel Staten, Jr, Laborers' Local 332
Brian Pollitt, Transportation Workers' Local 234
Mungu Sanchez, Political Director, Carpenters Union Local 197
Wayne Miller, Business Manager, Sprinkler Fitters Local 692

Who are your opponents?

There are a few whisper campaigns, but no official candidates until after March 7th at the conclusion of petitions

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?

The path to victory is working with stakeholders in the 9th, spreading the message of the campaign through various channels, and serving the people of the 9th.

Top priority is centered on creating better opportunities for children. The health and vitality of a community are best measured by the state of its children. Schools are a driving force in assessments as to whether or not a community is healthy. Similarly, schools are drivers of house and real estate prices. As schools improve, the desirability and financial vitality of a community increases. The principal reason for a home purchase is often school quality. I have a large thrust oriented toward improving schools and educational outcomes in my district. The health of children and the health of a real estate market are uniquely correlated by school quality.

Furthermore, I will continue to serve the 9th district with excellence. Servant. Service. These simple yet profound words are often forgotten in our system of government in Philadelphia. They are the core of my campaign. I am working hard for the people of 9th every step of the way. There is a critical need for these ideas (servant and service) in our city. I learned the significance of service early on in my life. I grew up in the 9th District with a loving, single

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mother, a proud card-carrying member of AFSCME, who worked two jobs to ensure that my sister and I had the best chance at success in life.

Because of my deep-seated roots in service, I am running not to be in the spotlight, but to genuinely impact change in my district. My campaign is focused on:

· **Rebuilding our Commercial Corridors**

Develop the 9th District's commercial corridors into the most beautiful and sought-after areas to visit in the city of Philadelphia.

· **Enhancing Your Quality of Life**

Advocate for funding to support, clean and beautify our business corridors, and work closely with neighborhood leaders/block captains to provide each block with resources.

· **Improving Public Safety**

Focus on Community Policing & Increased Police Presence and Engagement with our Communities.

· **Delivering Responsive & Reliable City Services for Our Community**

A District Office that will serve you, be your advocate with city agencies, and treat you with compassion and respect.

· **Strengthening our Schools**

Focus on delivering better resources for our children and creating initiatives to increase parent and community involvement in our schools.

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?

As a teenager, I co-founded a non-profit called Youth Action and most recently, was Director of Pre-College Programs for TeenSHARP. My work has helped thousands of young people become community leaders, access high-quality affordable college education, and secure livable-wage jobs. I recognize the importance of these young people securing quality jobs that pay a livable wage to help support their families. I want to work with labor and industry leaders to develop a workforce which will lead the city into a newer 21st-century. So I support an increase to \$15 and we should not stop there.

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?

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As a child of the city's labor movement, I know firsthand the importance of paid sick leave and other labor rights. I am open to conversations between city, labor, and industry leaders to bring the city update with national trends.

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

I simply believe that the cap on annual contributions should be adjusted to the city's cost of living.

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 believe a school board member should be a person who puts our children first and recognizes the critical needs of today. School board members should also ensure our future leaders are equipped with the tools and knowledge to face an ever changing society. These members should come from our communities and represent the diversity of our city. It is also important to ensure that School Board members are reflective of retired school professionals and staff who understand the operations best.

As mentioned, it is about students and not politics. Until the fair funding issues are resolved at the state level, many communities rely on charter schools for quality education. We need to have a conversation on how to strengthen the partnership between our public and charter schools. I'm open to exploring more conversations about this matter and how we can increase equity for our children.

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?

As an educator, I have seen firsthand the inequalities facing our education system. It is rooted in systemic bias and our state legislature's inactions are robbing our children of equitable funding.

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Since starting City Council six weeks ago, I became chair of the Children & Youth Committee and a member of the Education Committee to address these issues. I have begun plans to work with my colleagues on engaging the private sector to support school remodeling, teaching resources, counseling support, and school safety. In the 9th district, I have also commenced exploratory committees around neighbor engagement in schools which will support children with accessing mentors, increasing funding resources, and ensuring that entire neighborhoods are invested in schools.

In addition, as a community organizer, I have worked with many of Philadelphia's and surrounding communities' state legislators on various issues impacting young people. I am respected by them as a champion for our future generation. So I will leverage those relationships and my chairship to advocate for greater resources for our city.

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?

As mentioned, I am focused on communities and how we can better serve them. No person should have to worry about dirty streets, unpaved sidewalks, unsafe lighting in public spaces, or their communities being overtaken by rodents. I have met with many of the city departments and their labor counterparts to understand the issues facing our departments. Our funding priorities should focus on 1) the effectiveness of addressing community matters (block by block); 2) develop a city marketing campaign to enhance recruitment and retention; and 3) develop greener initiatives to move our city closer to being a leader in the movement for a greener world.

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.

As an educator, and community organizer, I recognize the importance of our libraries and recreation centers. I have helped thousands of young people succeed and these institutions were vital in their development as well as growth of the overall community. I strongly support fully funding and fully staffing our Library and Parks and Recreation systems.

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In addition, this is not only an obligation of our city, but we need to hold our federal and state partners accountable. I also see no problem with getting funds from the private sector as well.

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 will work with colleagues on council to ensure 1) our salaries are liveable to the city's cost of living; 2) our recruitment is reflective of the diversity within our city; 3) look into initiatives which promote growth based on experience and merit, not solely one's collegiate status.

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

I am **strongly against** the privatization of City services and will block any effort brought before council.

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?

Climate change is greatly impacting our city, especially communities of color. We need to address it through climate justice and education.

I have a constitutional obligation to address climate change. I took an oath to the Pennsylvania Constitution, and in Article 1, Section 27, it reads: "the people have a right to clean air, pure water, and to the preservation of the natural, scenic, historic and esthetic values of the environment."

I support meaningful legislation which addresses the root of the issues and is representative of all people as well as accessible.

In addition, a lot of our communities and companies still depend on fossil fuel. I will work with the labor sector and industry to enhance a workforce to build a greener city, develop more EV stations, and transform all our neighborhoods into greener communities which will promote a better quality of life.

TAXES

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

As our city is facing financial uncertainties due to inflation and the economic aftermath of the pandemic, it is more important than ever to have fully equipped City services to address the needs of our neighbors. I believe everyone should pay their fair share. I will work with non-profit leaders to equitably expand their outreach in our communities and strengthen or build their support for our City services through grants.

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

There is currently a plan in place to eliminate the 10 year tax abatement.

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.

I will support legislation which ensures all citizens, not concerning income, pay their fair share. No matter one's zip code or neighborhood, we all have a right to safe communities, clean streets, and quality schools. I am open to conversation around the Wealth Tax and other proposals if it addresses the inequities amongst our communities.

PHILADELPHIA HOUSING

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

I would support meaningful legislation and conversations to address the City's housing crisis at the root. This not only includes additional funds to HTF from the city, but advocating for more foundation fundings into the trust.

In addition, I would create and/ or support legislation which creates more home beautification grants and family property transfers.

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

The city is facing an affordable housing crisis that impacts communities of color. These families are forced into financial uncertainty and/ or homelessness due to inflation and predatory leasing.

I will continue to work with my colleagues on city council to ensure no family has to fear the sheriff knocking on their door or their utilities being shut off. To help, we can ensure our neighbors know about the services and programs to address these issues like LIHEAP, Rent Rebate, and the Homestead Exemption.

In addition, we need to look at vacant city and tax delinquent properties with the hopes of transforming them into publicly supported affordable housing ventures. This could be selling old School District buildings and other large facilities for fair market value towards affordable housing ventures.

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

Yes, I support extending the City's Good Cause Evictions law. I will work with my colleagues on legislation to strengthen a positive relationship between property owners and tenants. No family has to fear the sheriff knocking on their door or their utilities being shut off.

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?

I understand firsthand as an educator, the impacts of the school to prison pipeline on black and brown students. I have worked as a young development professional and community organizer to

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eradicate these systematic classist institutions from our communities. I will continue to work in council and make it a priority for my committee, Children and Youth, to work with the School District and Police Department to address this issue.

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.

We need to stop criminalizing drug addiction and mental health. It needs to be addressed at the community level and it starts with our neighbors. Let's address the issues before it even gets to the penal system. This is achievable by providing more funding for our social and mental health programs within our legal and policing systems. The effect of these programs can be measured by the reduced number of police interactions and the reallocation of resources towards non-law enforcement services like the Department of Behavioral Health.

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

The Philadelphia Police Department currently has a program which deploys certified and highly trained community workers to handle sensitive situations, like mental health calls. This program, like many others, is grossly underfunded and not equitably deployed throughout the city. I will work with my colleagues on finding additional funding and resources for these programs, so we can begin to see achievable results.

In addition, I support community policing initiatives that allow for well trained officers to connect with residents and businesses to respond and connect with businesses and neighbors.

21. What funding and staffing proposals would you support to enhance probation and parole services for Philadelphians under supervised release?

We must address the funding and staffing needs for probation and parole services. However, we need to also address the bail system which has led to an overpopulated supervision system and strain on city resources. In Philadelphia and the Commonwealth as a whole, our neighbors are being criminalized for being poor. Often for non-violent crimes-- offenders are forced to serve jail time without being proven guilty due to the inability to post an institutionally classist bail. By reforming this system, we will be able to address the staffing and funding needs. As well as loosening up resources for other city programs focused on crime prevention and re-entry.

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?

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As mentioned above, we need to address the criminalization of non-violent crimes which led to the overpopulation of the correctional system. Thus, addressing the staffing and funding issues related to re-entry. I want to see every incarcerated person who is re-entering our community equipped with the tools and knowledge necessary to be successful in the 21st-century. I will follow our state partners in creating opportunities with local colleges and universities to give incarcerated people the ability to achieve a degree or trade skills.

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

We need to work with state and federal partners to address decade long legislative loopholes that exist beyond the city. These loopholes as seen in recent court challenges against the city have put strains on our ability to aggressively address the gun issue. Nevertheless, we have a moral commitment and constitutional responsibility to address the matter. I will continue to work with our law enforcement partners to get ghost guns off the streets and crackdown on their illegal manufactures. We need to build up on our community crime watch system throughout the city to help prevent gun related crimes and educate our young people on the dangers.

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

In the 9th District, many of our neighbors are faith driven and I am committed to working with clergy on a coalition to support victims of crimes. This coalition will help address the needs of victims and their families on a community level. It takes a village to overcome trauma and prevent tragedies from happening again.

PHILADELPHIA CORPORATE POWER

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

No. The city is already strapped with funding life-saving and quality improvement programs. So it is not appropriate or wise to use tax dollars to fund political ambitions. We need to be more worried about reliable funding for our schools, quality programs for our seniors, and comprehensive benefits for our expanding city workforce.

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.

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I support legislation which fosters growth in the city’s workforce (exclusive to our residents) and enhances the relationship with our corporations.

RESIDENCY ISSUE

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

I’m open to this conversation because we are very short staff in many city departments and this could help us recruit more staff to work in the city. However, we have to ensure that a decision to create an option for city workers to live outside the city does not impact the vitality of the city. I’m interested in hearing proposals that will not deeply impact the city’s economy.

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

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