

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: **Gary Masino**
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Campaign Contact Information

Full Name of Campaign Committee: **Friends of Gary Masino**
HQ Address: **To be determined**
Campaign Manager Name: **Jhonas Dunakin**
Campaign Manager Phone: **(215) 834-6002**
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Candidacy Information

What office are you seeking?

Philadelphia City Council

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

District 10

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

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With which party are you registered?

Democratic

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

As a long time union member and leader, I would have an open door policy to discuss any legislation with any union leader.

Who are your opponents?

Brian O'Neil

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?

I believe that the path to victory relies on having an effective organizing and community outreach programs, which emphasizes the need for new bold leadership that can tackle the challenges facing the district today. This race will be won at the doors of voters.

While the district is facing many challenges, I will be fighting for reductions in violent crime in our neighborhoods, increased economic opportunities for our constituents, and access to quality education and facilities for students.

Having served as the leader of Sheet Metal Workers 19 for over a decade, I have a proven track record of building coalitions to solve some of the toughest challenges in the union's history. I believe that Philadelphia and the 10th District needs the perspective and expertise that I have fostered through my experiences advocating for working families.

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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, with the cost of living on the rise since the signing of the ordinance, the current wage does not provide support for working families. With the Pennsylvania minimum wage set at \$7.25/hour, there is a moral obligation for local governments to step up and advocate for higher wages wherever possible. The current wage set in the Living Wage Ordinance has lost value over time, especially with unforeseen high inflation rates we're experiencing today. I would support legislation that would tie minimum wage for city employees, contractors, and subcontracts to a measure of inflation. This would help ensure living wages for working families today and into the future.

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, I would support legislation that would increase the number of people who fall under the mandatory sick leave law. While there is legislation that has worked in other states and cities, it is important to modify such legislation to fit Philadelphia's unique workforce and industries. Bringing together workers and business would be essential when crafting this legislation to understand circumstances where this legislation is appropriate.

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?

This matter ought to be subject to collective bargaining with the backing of strong unions. I am a big advocate for workers' rights and I would work to ensure

that unions have the support needed to negotiate favorable retirement agreements.

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)?

The School Board should look like the city it serves. I support appointees with a diverse variety of backgrounds and experiences. It's critical that the board has a balance between those who have direct experience with Philadelphia schools and those with technical backgrounds that can find unique solutions to the challenges facing our schools.

To evaluate school needs, the buck stops with the community the school serves. At the end of the day, it's the faculty, staff, parents, and students who should have the highest weight when deciding what is best for a community's schools. While education is a public good and is a means for students to achieve their goals, a zip code should not determine a student's potential.

I would also be open to guidance from AFSCME 47 and its members regarding best steps to provide quality education to students

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?

Pennsylvania has consistently been ranked towards the bottom nationally, regarding adequate and equitable funding for public education. Mostly due to the fact that schools are dependent on funds from local property taxes. I support the fair funding formula to be applied to all state level funding of schools, where weighted and adjusted students are used in the formula to ensure equity.

As a union leader, one of my largest responsibilities is advocating for my members at all levels of government. As a result, I have extensive experience in the legislative process. I have built broad based coalitions, managed relationships between legislatures and institutions, and successfully helped pass

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legislation. I will bring my experience and relationships as an elected city councilperson to advocate for more equitable state funding in our city's schools.

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?

Our city needs to provide adequate policing and quality of life services. We are behind other cities our size in terms of funding and innovation of public spending. While the city has taken steps in the right direction, I would be more aggressive in prioritizing funds to the police, libraries, parks and recreation, to name a few.

In order for our city's government to provide quality services we need to recruit and retain quality talent. Philadelphia is not immune to the worker shortages facing the public and private sectors nationally. As a councilman, appropriating aggressive recruitment funding would support hiring qualified and diverse talent. I am also open to exploring perks that would make the city governments retention practices more competitive with private industry.

The city's courts would also benefit from additional funding. The same story of talent hiring and retention that city hall is facing, is also true for our court system. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, courts have been backed up with caseloads that delay trials and services.

As a councilman, I plan to better monitor appropriated funds and take action if not used adequately.

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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 believe that the city has taken a positive first step to addressing this issue, by appropriating more funds to these departments in the latest budget. Crime can be significantly reduced if there are readily available and accessible public spaces for constituents (like public pools and community centers).

But I don't think that worker hiring and retention practices are adequate enough to compete with other industries. We need to strengthen our hiring practices and incentivize worker retention. We have to put an end to demanding our public workers do more with less.

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?

As a city councilperson, I would first set up a task force, in coordination with the appropriate unions, to investigate and compare city wages and working conditions, with those of other municipalities and the private sector. If there is a large difference, I would support legislation to make up the gap and support the appropriate unions during any collective bargaining.

Also, Governor Shapiro recently removed four-year college degree requirements for most state government jobs. In coordination with AFSCME and appropriate unions, I would explore this policy option. It would reduce barriers to entry for qualified workers and broaden the pool of candidates with practical experience.

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

I am against privatizing city services.

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?

While I think it would take large national changes to truly address climate change, there are areas in which the city's government can take action and be a model for an environmentally sustainable future. I believe the city's government is equipped to address the symptoms such as heat, flooding, and air quality. Building the infrastructure to address the symptoms is the right first step, which the city has started to address. As a councilman, I would be more aggressive in building the necessary infrastructure and providing alternatives for constituents. Such as tree coverage in dense neighborhoods that reduce the use of energy to keep cool and more reliable public transportation as an alternative to driving. There is also an opportunity to produce good sustaining union jobs in building climate change infrastructure, helping ensure security for working families.

I'm open to exploring divestment from fossil fuel companies, but not at the expense of providing quality service to constituents and securing the future of working families.

TAXES

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

I believe we need to explore the nearly \$30 billion worth of untaxed real estate value in the city. It is not unusual for a city our size, with a large concentration of universities, hospitals, etc., to have a large amount of untaxed property. As a councilman, I would attempt to identify how much value from these assets make it back to constituents and scrutinize value that isn't given back.

I would also explore a payment in lieu of taxes agreements. Philadelphia is an outlier with this when compared to other cities.

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

I would be open to exploring reforms to the tax abatement. My priority with this program is to ensure good paying jobs for residents, while minimizing impact to tax revenue.

With guidance from AFSCME and other relevant stakeholders, the program could be modified by attaching prevailing wage, labor standards, business/trade licensing, and claw back provisions. By doing so the tax abatement will follow through on what it was originally intended for, to create good paying construction jobs which produce a tax base in the form of city wage taxes, which are added to the general fund. These additions (and possibly others) to the tax abatement ensure that developers are hiring contractors who are good actors in the construction industry and paying their workers the correct area wages and standards for each craft classification. This would also discourage irresponsible developers because there would be a set of rules they would have to follow just as the good developers always have.

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.

Currently, we are very fortunate that the city has a budget surplus. I think the latest budget's tax reductions is a right first step to help provide some wage relief and help incentivize job growth in the city. Especially since the residents of Philadelphia demand more housing of all kinds.

I am open to exploring taxing alternatives that do not negatively affect working class families.

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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, I think council's proposal to appropriate a fixed amount of the general fund to the Housing Trust Fund is a right first step.

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?

I think the city needs to be creative in how it logistically supports this initiative. We cannot afford to reduce incentives for constructing new homes, but as a district councilperson I would have ability to change zoning. As a union leader, I have experience in bringing parties together to create compromises. I believe it's worth exploring what zoning changes could provide incentives to create joint affordable and market priced housing.

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

I do support extending good cause eviction protections. Tenants need protection from predatory landlords and to voice concerns over property repairs.

I do not support rent control legislation. We are not in an economic environment where we can risk a downturn in housing construction.

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 do support closing the school to prison pipeline. The Memo of Understanding should be revised regularly to address changing needs of the stake holders in schools. I believe that exploring changes to the diversion processes is a first step we should take. By bringing relevant stakeholders, like parents, school officials and police leadership, together to agree what offenses are eligible for diversion and what additional resources are needed to improve diversion programs.

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.

Yes, incarceration is an expensive mean to addressing these issues. I would measure the success of alternatives to incarceration by the recidivism rate, how often these individuals come back into the criminal justice system. There are proven alternatives, like drug court, that have reduced costs and recidivism rates that I support.

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

I believe that the Police and the community need better means of communication, outside of just calling 911. There are opportunities to build communication infrastructure, on the community side, by instituting block captains who represent the concerns of there neighborhoods. This would help streamline communication and needs to the police. The police also need to be more readily available to the community.

Police also cannot be expected to wear as many hats as they do now. Creating better communication between the police and other departments in city government would go a long way to connecting constituents with the services they would need.

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

I believe that staffing this department adequately is the key. Just like every other department recruitment and retention is an issue. There is room to be creative like providing perks to increase worker retention, being more aggressive with funding recruitment and exploring salary increases for workers.

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?

Just like every other department recruitment and retention is an issue. There is room to be creative like providing perks to increase worker retention, being more aggressive with funding recruitment, and salary increases for workers.

For citizens leaving prisons and returning to the community, there are programs that provide transitional housing and a job that creates stability. I would also support increased funding for drug treatment and mental health services.

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

As a councilman, I would have the authority to address the symptoms of the issue. This is largely a federal problem to solve. With the availability of “ghost guns” and straw purchases, it’s difficult to reduce the supply of guns in the city.

Better community/police relations would help with intelligence gathering, allowing police to identify criminals with guns. I would also support specialized investigative units that would work to identify large illegal gun suppliers rather than targeting the lower levels in the supply chain.

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

I would be an advocate to victims of crime and plan to have a robust constituent services program that would efficiently connect victims to relevant services. If a service does not exist, I am open to passing legislation to address victims that fall under the cracks of the city’s current programs.

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PHILADELPHIA CORPORATE POWER

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

The goal of publicly funded campaigns is better transparency between candidates and voters, which I agree with. I believe that there are better ways to address the negative outcomes of our current election system that do not include publicly funded elections. Some changes I would advocate for are more specific election codes that specify enforcement and punishment, increased funding for election code enforcement, and transparent campaign finance reports that identifies donors for all organizations involved in electioneering. Reducing the use of “dark money” is the key to better transparency.

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, this should be a mandate. We have an unemployment issue in the city, there's good quality people here that can do the work. Using the tax abatement as an example and my experience in the construction industry; most of the workforce for non-commercial development are not from the city. It is a lost opportunity for the city to provide good working jobs for its residents. If the city were to subsidize any project in any way it should benefit the constituents.

RESIDENCY ISSUE

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

We cannot ignore the fact without the proper wages and benefits we cannot recruit the best talent; it doesn't matter where you live.

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

I'm a third-generation sheet metal worker with over 40 years of experience in the industry. I started as an apprentice, learning the sheet metal craft. Then a union organizer, where I helped fight for the dignity and rights of workers. Today, I lead 4,000 union members as the Business Manager of Philadelphia's Sheet Metal Union. I've learned not only how to build buildings, but how to build movements, and bring people together to confront tough challenges.

Our city is confronting some of the toughest challenges in a generation. Violent crime is at record highs and residents buy guns just to feel safe in their homes; our city's future economic prospects are so uncertain, working families have had to account for every penny they spend; and our city's schools are in such disarray, due to inequitable funding, that students can't be in a school building without fear of asbestos and teachers are leaving their professions faster than they can be replaced.

Our city needs leaders in its government that can build our future. I've spent the last 40-years helping build the future for the Sheet Metal Workers union, fighting for working families and ensuring their futures. As an elected councilman, I'll bring this same style of leadership to Philadelphia, continue to partner with others, and work to build the future.