

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: *Kenyatta Johnson
Registration Address: * 2044 Ellsworth St
E-Mail: *councilmankj@gmail.com
Home Phone: *
Work Phone: *
Cell Phone: *
HQ Phone: *
Fax: *
Work Address: *

Campaign Contact Information

Full Name of Campaign Committee: *Citizens for Kenyatta Johnson
HQ Address: *
Campaign Manager Name: * Rachel Binder
Campaign Manager Phone: * 310 789-7142
Campaign Manager E-Mail: * rachelbb54@gmail.com

Candidacy Information

What office are you seeking? * City Council

If you are running for a district seat, in which district are you running? * 2nd District

Are you the incumbent? * Yes No 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:

Who are your opponents?

Bougie Rose, Aaron Humphrey

**AFSCME DISTRICT COUNCIL 47
Candidate Questionnaire 2023
(City Council District and City Council-At-Large)**

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 2nd district is the one of the largest and most diverse districts in the City of Philadelphia. As a result, the only way to win a race is to understand the needs of communities that, on face value, seem at odds with each other. However, I was born and raised in this district and have been fighting for its communities my whole life and I know that these diverse communities have more in common than most think. To that end, my campaign will work hard to contact the more than 15,000 voters it will take to win this election via multiple forms of communication.

While paid and earned media are the backbone of a traditional campaign (and will be a significant part of mine as well), I know that field plays an outsized role in the district. As a result, my campaign will have a strong presence in our communities; knocking doors, holding meetings, and providing spaces where all residents of the district can come and hear how we can work together to continue to improve the quality of life for all.

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?

The City should lead by example in providing family-sustaining wages for its contracted workforce and I will continue support raising the Living Wage requirement for employers doing business with the City. I am the author of several pieces of legislation that raised wages and expanded benefits for workers at Philadelphia International Airport. With respect to employers not covered under the current Living Wage Ordinance, I support a \$15 minimum wage for all Philadelphia workers and have advocated for state legislation to raise the minimum wage statewide or enable Philadelphia to do so locally.

AFSCME DISTRICT COUNCIL 47
Candidate Questionnaire 2023
(City Council District and City Council-At-Large)

- 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?

I supported the City's first paid sick leave law and would support efforts to expand the scope of the City's sick leave requirement to ensure that more workers have access to these important benefits. However, I do have questions about how a requirement with no exemptions would impact small, neighborhood businesses that operate in my district and would need to better understand the impact of such a proposal before declaring my support for extending these requirements to all businesses.

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?

The \$65,000 cap for "annual salary" under the defined benefit portion of the stacked hybrid plan does raise questions about employees' future retirement security in the face of inflation over time. While these caps are collectively bargained, I would support the adoption of a plan that indexes the cap to the Consumer Price Index or another reasonable measure of inflation to ensure that the defined benefit 'base' of the stacked hybrid plan keeps pace.

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)?

AFSCME DISTRICT COUNCIL 47
Candidate Questionnaire 2023
(City Council District and City Council-At-Large)

The ideal candidate would have experience working in diverse communities, an established record of success in positions of civic leadership, and a demonstrated commitment to improving our City and the lives of its residents. Moreover, it is vital that School Board appointees understand the urgency of improving our schools' aging infrastructure and have the skills necessary to monitor the complex capital program necessary for these improvements. Finally, individuals who have parented District students also provide a valuable perspective from which the School Board would greatly benefit.

I believe that School Board members should evaluate charters on their ability to prepare our young people with the knowledge and skills to be productive as they take their first steps into adulthood, whether that be in college or the workforce. The critique that charter schools deprive traditional district schools of funding is best addressed through changes to the state's funding formula, which creates unnecessary tension between the interests of traditional district schools and those of charter schools. I believe that charter schools can be a valuable complement to traditional public schools in our City's mission to prepare our young people for the future. School Board members' evaluations of charter schools should be focused on their ability to help the City and School District accomplish that mission.

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?

Disparities in state funding have deprived our School District of vital resources and our students of the educational opportunities that they deserve. I have worked to organize rallies in both Philadelphia and Harrisburg, alongside colleagues from the state legislature and other local

AFSCME DISTRICT COUNCIL 47
Candidate Questionnaire 2023
(City Council District and City Council-At-Large)

leaders, to advocate for increased funding for Philadelphia's schools. I have worked with my colleagues in City Council to hold hearings that highlight the impact of reduced state funding on the Philadelphia School District. I have also worked with my colleagues to introduce resolutions calling on the legislature to address school funding inequality and reject legislation that would negatively impact the School District's budget. I am also proud to have partnered with and supported organizations like the Public Interest Law Center and the Education Law Center that continue to fight in court for changes to the state's funding formula.

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?

I am committed to ensuring that our City departments achieve the high level of service that Philadelphians deserve. In particular, I have focused my efforts on Council to improving funding and staffing levels at chronically under-funded departments such as the Streets Department and the Department of Licenses and Inspections. These departments play a key role in improving quality of life in Philadelphia and I remain committed to expanding their resources. In the most recent budget, I supported Council's increased investments in the Streets Department, intended to reduce the City's paving backlog and ensure that the Department has the tools it needs to keep our streets clean and safe. I have also consistently advocated for increased staffing at Licenses and Inspections to better monitor development projects in the City. Finally, I'm proud of Council's collective effort, in coordination with the local court system, to bolster funding and ensure the court system's continued operation throughout the COVID pandemic.

AFSCME DISTRICT COUNCIL 47
Candidate Questionnaire 2023
(City Council District and City Council-At-Large)

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.

Supporting the City's Library and Parks and Recreation systems has been a core priority for my time on Council. I have consistently advocated for the budget and staffing levels necessary to ensure that these important assets can continue to serve our communities, particularly our City's youth, and support Council's efforts to ensure that library facilities are open a minimum of 6 days per week. I will continue to push the Administration during upcoming budget cycles to expand library and recreation center hours and to provide our young people with programming and other positive outlets, particularly during the Summer months.

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 believe that the City needs to continue to think creatively about how we handle recruitment and retention in our City Departments and Courts. The City should consider monetary bonuses and other hiring and retention incentives and should also consider eliminating college degree requirements and other burdensome pre-requisites that might be preventing otherwise qualified applicants from applying for City jobs. I have also supported changes to the City's residency requirement for applicants to City jobs, which permits those who are willing to relocate to Philadelphia to apply for work with the City.

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

I am opposed to the privatization of City services and City-owned utilities.

ENVIRONMENT

AFSCME DISTRICT COUNCIL 47
Candidate Questionnaire 2023
(City Council District and City Council-At-Large)

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?

I support smart investments in green public infrastructure and the Council's ongoing campaign to reduce the city's carbon footprint. As Chair of the Transportation and Public Utilities Committee, I have helped push Philadelphia into a national leadership position on green economic policy through purchases of green energy and investments in green infrastructure. I do have questions about complete divestment from fossil fuels, particularly as it relates to City investments through the Pension Fund. The Pension Fund's investments support our municipal workers' retirement security and I would be hesitant to require an investment strategy that would hinder that Fund's performance and increase the Pension Fund's unfunded liabilities. However, I would support the Pension Fund in making such changes if it can be shown to be the prudent choice for the Fund and its beneficiaries.

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 am supportive of the City's ongoing efforts to negotiate PILOT payments with major non-profit institutions. I would also support an administrative effort to evaluate tax exempt property in the City on a more consistent basis, to determine whether that property is being used for a qualified charitable purpose as defined under Pennsylvania law. Our Eds and Meds are important economic engines in the City, but organizations should not receive tax exemptions for property that does not serve a charitable purpose as required under the law.

AFSCME DISTRICT COUNCIL 47
Candidate Questionnaire 2023
(City Council District and City Council-At-Large)

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 have supported Council's efforts to reduce the property tax abatement and would support its elimination. The evidence has shown that the tax abatement has subsidized downtown developers and spurred displacement in already-developing neighborhoods, while failing to bring investment to the neighborhoods that need it most. I would support eliminating the citywide tax abatement in favor of an incentive system intended to bring investment and new affordable housing units to areas suffering from disinvestment. I applaud Council President Clarke's recent proposal for a geographically targeted abatement for projects that generate a certain percentage of affordable units. I will continue to explore how we can use these newly authorized tools to create a system of equitable development that benefits all neighbors and neighborhoods.

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 am committed to growing the City's tax revenue to the support services and programming that Philadelphians rely on. However, I share the concerns of many Councilmembers that certain taxes can make our City's business climate uncompetitive and will result in a shrinking tax base. The City's Tax Reform Commission and several independent tax policy experts have found that the business taxes the City imposed during the decades of population decline in the early to mid 20th century have led businesses to locate outside Philadelphia – because the City was taxing something that could move fairly easily, increases in rates resulted in a shrinking base. Along with my colleagues in Council, I have supported steady reductions in BIRT and the Wage Tax to

AFSCME DISTRICT COUNCIL 47
Candidate Questionnaire 2023
(City Council District and City Council-At-Large)

address these disincentives to Philadelphia residency and help grow our City's tax base. Wealth and wealthy individuals are also inherently mobile and I would be hesitant to impose a new tax that could result in reduced tax bases. Instead, I would favor increasing real estate taxes for commercial properties and increases to the City's new construction impact tax and to the realty transfer tax.

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 fully support increasing revenue to the Housing Trust Fund. Providing funds to support the creation and maintenance of affordable housing units in neighborhoods experiencing gentrification has been a consistent priority during my tenure in Council and I will continue to support increasing budget allocations for the Fund. I supported Council legislation to create a mandatory minimum allocation for the Fund, which represented a \$26 million commitment in its first year in operation, and I will continue to support supplementary budget allocations to ensure that the Fund continues to provide much needed assistance to economically vulnerable residents.

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 have continually supported additional City resources for affordable housing initiatives, most recently through the \$400 million Neighborhood Preservation Initiative (NPI) which will be used to produce new affordable housing units, preserve existing affordable housing, enable

AFSCME DISTRICT COUNCIL 47
Candidate Questionnaire 2023
(City Council District and City Council-At-Large)

homeowners to make needed repairs, and provide rental assistance and eviction prevention programs to support vulnerable renters. The NPI-funded Turn The Key program will create 1,000 affordable homeownership units, beginning with a 25-unit development that has already broken ground in the 2nd District. This is part of my longstanding commitment to supporting workforce and low-income housing development on city-owned property and expanding affordable housing options in the 2nd District. Moreover, I supported the legislation that created a preference for qualified City employees interested in purchasing a home constructed under the City's workforce housing program.

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

I supported the Council legislation that created good cause eviction protections and would consider supporting additional eviction protections to support vulnerable renters. I am also proud to have supported funding for the Philadelphia Eviction Prevention Project and other eviction prevention and rental assistance programs designed to protect against displacement. However, I have concerns about the impact that rent control would have on the rental market and the availability of affordable rental housing and I would need to study the impact of a given proposal before giving it my support.

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 would support the School District in working with the Police Department to revise its Memorandum of Understanding to reduce the number of mandatory police escalations in

AFSCME DISTRICT COUNCIL 47
Candidate Questionnaire 2023
(City Council District and City Council-At-Large)

situations where the safety of students and teachers does not require such escalation. These agreements are negotiated directly between the School District and Police Department and I would support the District in refocusing its policy for police escalation toward situations where Police intervention serves student and staff safety.

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.

I support alternatives to incarceration and believe that incarceration should be limited to those who pose a danger to themselves and others. Indeed, for those experiencing addiction or other mental health struggles, addressing these underlying issues has been shown to be more effective than incarceration. The City should proactively monitor outcomes for individuals involved in these alternative programs and seek to support those that have been shown most effective at reducing recidivism and encouraging re-integration for past offenders.

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

I supported Council's efforts to establish the Citizens Police Oversight Commission and believe that this forum will provide an important tool for communities to identify and address areas of concern in partnership with the Police Department. The creation of this body is an important step toward ensuring that the Police Department is accountable to the citizens that it serves. I've also sponsored regular meetings in my district between community members, local police districts, and other law enforcement officials to help identify neighborhood priorities, respond to particular instances of violent crime, and foster productive citizen-police relations. As part of this approach, I support ongoing Council efforts to increase police staffing and shift toward a model of policing that prioritizes beat patrols and more consistent coordination with community

AFSCME DISTRICT COUNCIL 47
Candidate Questionnaire 2023
(City Council District and City Council-At-Large)

residents and leaders. Council's efforts to reduce the number of unnecessary civilian-police interactions is also an important part of this approach – through the termination of unconstitutional stop-and-frisk, the authorization of civilian traffic enforcement, and the passage of a local Driving Equity Bill, Council has developed important new strategies for ensuring that police resources are directed toward the City's most pressing issues.

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

I support alternatives to incarceration where incarceration does not serve public safety, and I believe that the goal of incarceration must always be the rehabilitation and eventual re-integration of past offenders. Probation and parole officers play an important role in the success of these diversion and re-integration systems and I would support increasing funding and staffing levels for these programs to ensure that individuals who are involved in the criminal justice system have an opportunity to participate in alternative programs in instances where it is determined that public safety is best served by diversion from the prison system and are supported during the re-integration process.

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?

I believe the primary goals of our prison system should be the rehabilitation and reintegration of those who are incarcerated and that our City should provide the funding necessary to support those goals and to ensure that the conditions of detention are safe and humane. Re-integration programs have been a particular focus during my time in Council and I am committed to continuing my advocacy for expanding these programs in future budget cycles.

AFSCME DISTRICT COUNCIL 47
Candidate Questionnaire 2023
(City Council District and City Council-At-Large)

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

Unfortunately, state pre-emption limits the City's ability to restrict the sale or possession of guns. However, I have supported the creation of evidence-based programs aimed at preventing gun violence through targeted interventions and investments in resources for those most likely to be carrying and using firearms. I have also consistently advocated for state action to provide the City with the tools necessary to reduce the prevalence of guns in Philadelphia.

The City should continue to develop and support evidence-informed programs that focus on gun violence prevention. This approach involves law enforcement as well as social services resources and my advocacy as chair of the Special Committee on Gun Violence has helped to bring millions in new funding from the City and State to support prevention programs. And the Council's nearly \$200 million commitment to violence prevention programs in the recent budget cycle was an important step in the right direction. I also believe that our City's efforts and investments must be focused on providing young people with positive alternatives, particularly recreational and employment opportunities.

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

I plan to continue my work advocating on behalf of victims and co-victims of crime in Philadelphia. Working with my Council colleagues to develop and support programs for victims of crime in Philadelphia has been a particular focus of the Special Committee on Gun Violence, which I chair and am proud to have helped establish. I have consistently supported additional funding for victim services programs coordinated through the District Attorney's Office through

AFSCME DISTRICT COUNCIL 47
Candidate Questionnaire 2023
(City Council District and City Council-At-Large)

both the annual budget process and in mid-year transfer ordinances. And having introduced and passed the legislation to create the Victim Advocate position, I look forward to continuing to support that office's important work. I have also introduced and passed legislation in Council that calls on the state legislature to adopt a Victim's Bill of Rights, to better ensure that those impacted by crime receive the services and support that they need.

PHILADELPHIA CORPORATE POWER

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

Yes, I support publicly financed campaigns and other efforts to reduce the influence of money and wealthy special interests in the political process.

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.

I support efforts to hold companies accountable for promises made to the City and its residents. The City should have the tools to ensure that companies benefitting from subsidies or other special benefits hold up their end of the bargain and I would support efforts to create a better system of accountability as it relates to corporate subsidies.

RESIDENCY ISSUE

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

AFSCME DISTRICT COUNCIL 47
Candidate Questionnaire 2023
(City Council District and City Council-At-Large)

It is important both from a policy perspective and in terms of our City government’s culture that City and Court employees reside in Philadelphia. From a policy standpoint, our City benefits when positions are geared toward individuals who live in Philadelphia and have demonstrated a commitment to our City – these individuals will continue to make positive contributions in their neighborhoods and rather than taking their City salaries out to the suburbs, these individuals will support the local economy and pay local taxes. Moreover, I believe that our City’s workplace culture and productivity are enhanced when positions are filled by City residents who demonstrate a continued commitment to Philadelphia. I have supported amendments to the City’s former residency requirement for new hires, to address concerns about the impact of the requirement on City recruitment, but I believe that requiring City workers to relocate to and remain in the City is reasonable and produces benefits for the City and its residents.

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

AFSCME DISTRICT COUNCIL 47
Candidate Questionnaire 2023
(City Council District and City Council-At-Large)