

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: * QML FOR PHL
HQ Address: *2732 North 5th Street
Campaign Manager Name: * Temporary Contact Yanitza Gonzalez
Campaign Manager Phone: * 610.930.8706
Campaign Manager E-Mail: *

Candidacy Information

What office are you seeking? * City Council

If you are running for a district seat, in which district are you running? * 7th

Are you the incumbent? * Yes X 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:

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Who are your opponents? Moses Santana and Andres Celin

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 was endorsed by the Democratic Party during my special election campaign in November, 2022 and fully expect to have their backing in the primary election in May. In addition, I will employ grassroots organizing and coalition/partnership building efforts to gather support, as well as utilizing strategic communication methods, both print and social media, to spread my message.

My fundraising plans are going according to plan so I fully expect to meet my fundraising goals and run a very competitive race.

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?

I do support raising the current rate of the Living Wage requirement for businesses that do business with the City. This increase will provide a much-needed pay increase to many low-paid workers across the Philadelphia, all of whom are feeling the effects of a rising cost of living. I also believe that we need to fight to increase the state minimum wage and look forward to promoting and fighting for efforts that seek to provide a living wage for all Philadelphia workers, especially businesses that have more than 10 employees.

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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 do support the City's sick leave requirement for employees of companies that have 10 or more employees and would support efforts to expand this benefit to put it in line with other cities and states, as long as those efforts do not threaten the viability of small 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?

I believe that the cap is too low and that the City needs to take a closer look at how to ensure that employees pension benefits are not devalued because of inflation. If indexing the cap and applying automatic increases is the most efficient way of ensuring an equitable solution to this lost of value, then I would be willing to consider such as action.

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)?

A school board appointee should be a person of good moral character preferably someone with an educational background, who has a true understanding of the City's diverse communities, neighborhoods, family dynamics and of its school

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systems (public, charter, religious, private). The policies, budgets and other decisions the school board make represents the needs of many constituencies who are dedicated to providing a successful academic journey to all children. But Philadelphia's education systems are complicated, crazy regulated, and the varied demands on public schools continue to grow, so appointees need to be good communicators and listeners of the diverse perspectives that are expressed by parents and experts, alike.

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?

The State has not fulfilled its constitutional duty to provide a quality education for all of our children so the City needs to continue its fight for equitable funding for Philadelphia schools. I expect to play a role in this fight due to my personal/professional relationships with multiple members of the Philadelphia Delegation in the House of Representatives as well as in the Senate. Securing funding at any level of government is based on relationships oftentimes built on trust, communication and a willingness to work hard. I have those types of relationships and intend to use them for the betterment of our children.

In addition, my work on Governor Tom Wolf's Advisory Council on Latino Affairs and as a commissioner on his Pennsylvania Election Law Advisory Board have allowed me to meet like-minded individuals who will be allies in the fight for increased education funding.

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 the council member whose district is most effected by the national opioid crisis and its side-effects of violence, death and squalor, my priority is to mitigate and then eliminate this scourge. This will require City resources and manpower. Court services will also be needed to resolve these issues so effective divergency programs will also be needed. However, providing these resources in

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an inequitable manner will result in failure for these programs so I will promote, require and monitor these initiatives to make sure that they are implemented with an eye towards equity.

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.

The Free Library system and the Parks and Recreation department are key partners in our community as providers of safe, educational, healthy and entertaining experiences for our children. We must fund these departments appropriately and that means increasing their funding so that our values are reflected in the budget.

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?

The City's staffing shortages have caused delays and backlogs in many City departments. Many of these issues can be eliminated by filling unfilled positions so it's obvious that we need to try everything we can to recruit individuals for these positions and to make sure that we don't lose City employees to other employers. That means listening to Union officials about their perspective on the current situation and work with them in ensuring that the City workforce is well-trained, well-paid and a partner in improving service provision to City residents.

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

Every few years companies come up with different plans for privatizing City services. And every year you hear of cities who eliminate these privatization programs because they don't produce the results that they claimed beforehand. While there may be some instances where public-private partnerships may be

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advantageous, in general my experience has taught me to be mostly skeptical of such efforts.

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?

I believe that the City needs to take measures to fully shift away from a vehicle fleet powered by fossil fuel and to implement policies in areas where the City can move towards a zero carbon footprint.

In regards to the City divesting from fossil fuel companies in its portfolio, while I personally believe that the City should divest from investments in fossil fuel stocks, I would have to defer to the municipal unions before any changes because their members are the ones who would most be effected by that decision.

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 in favor of requiring cash-rich non-profits who use significant City and Court services to work with the city to establish fair and equitable payment in lieu of taxes (PILOT) initiatives.

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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 support changes in the City's property tax abatement program that significantly increase funding for affordable housing but any changes would have to include a cap on the amount of the allowable 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 agree with former Councilperson Sanchez's BIRT reform that has led to 73K businesses not having a city liability. This has directly helped small businesses and Black and Brown businesses. I believe creating clear and transparent rules lead to better compliance and ultimately increases revenue.

I have not been part of the discussion of the Wealth Tax but understand it is not legal based on the law department's review.

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 do support increasing revenue for the Housing Trust Fund and any other efforts that increase chances for people to stay in the communities where they were raised. My district has undergone a lot of changes because of new development and many residents have been displaced through development. As a result, some communities now have rental housing rates that are prohibitive for people who have lived there all of their lives. This phenomenon has caused instability for too many people and must be addressed if we are to continue to be a City of Neighborhoods.

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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?

Because of the poverty problems facing this city, coupled with the significant increases in rents across the City, making sure that affordable housing is available is critical to the future of this city. Because of this, housing is a primary priority for me and I will be actively involved in efforts to provide affordable housing to people from all economic backgrounds.

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. I am not in favor of rent control measures but would be willing to consider efforts that seek to tame rent increases by providing incentives to affordable housing providers.

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 am unfamiliar with this memo of understanding but do understand that the school to prison pipeline must be eliminated ASAP. The best way to do that is to provide our children with an education that will allow them to seek either further education or job training when they graduate from our high schools. This means better, well-funded schools that will prepare a diverse and knowledgeable workforce. This means improving the City’s business environment so that companies want to establish a presence in Philadelphia.

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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 do support these programs but am concerned that money is being wasted in some cases. I therefore want all of these programs to have a measurable component to it and programs that are not productive need to be eliminated or revised.

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

I support: Special Victims Senior Services, Victim Services, SafeCam, Explorers and other similar programs that forge opportunities and foster positive community and police relations. These programs are vital to our community because they create opportunities of mutual respect where residents are able to build trust with the police.

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

The City needs to review best practices throughout the country and from that research determine and establish caseload ratios that allow probation and parole department employees to do their job according to these best practices. Too many of these employees have too many cases and as a result are unable to devote their efforts to providing the level of service that they would like to provide. This causes low morale within the workforce and leads to employees to seek employment in other workplaces.

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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The City needs to prioritize the preparation of incarcerated individuals so that returning citizens can become productive citizens. This means more funding for prison programs such as GED, financial literacy, crisis and conflict resolution counseling, and programs that assist returning citizens in finding affordable housing when they return to society.

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

Because the City is restricted from passing gun control related legislation, the City cannot introduce initiatives that have been successful in other cities. Nevertheless, the City needs to continue to use its resources, manpower and intelligence gathering operations to go after straw purchase violators and ghost gun manufacturers.

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

Crime can be very debilitating for individuals, families and communities. The City has a moral responsibility to assist anyone effected by crime and to me that means establishing the best victim services programs in the country. I will work hard to make sure that these programs are funded fully and appropriately.

PHILADELPHIA CORPORATE POWER

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

I support publicly financed campaigns for all City elected offices.

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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The City should definitely pass legislation that calls for companies that take advantage of subsidies but do not provide the jobs or other benefits that they agreed to. Too many times we as a City are willing to provide significant subsidies to companies who do not hold to their part of the bargain. This must stop and I support legislation that would allow for the City to recover monies lost.

RESIDENCY ISSUE

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

As a matter of principle, I believe that City workers should live in Philadelphia. However, recent employment trends have caused disruptions in the workforce and made it difficult to find candidates for some unfilled positions. As a result, I am open to considering allowing City and Court to live outside of the city. But again, my preference is not to do so.

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

No.

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