

--	--	--

AFSCME DISTRICT COUNCIL 47
2023 CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE
(Mayor)

CANDIDATE INFORMATION

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

Name: * Cherelle Parker
Registration Address:
E-Mail:
Home Phone:
Work Phone:
Cell Phone:
HQ Phone:
Fax:
Work Address:

Campaign Contact Information

Full Name of Campaign Committee: *People for Parker
HQ Address: *PO Box 27647
Campaign Manager Name: *Sinceré Harris
Campaign Manager Phone: *215-694-8575
Campaign Manager E-Mail: * sincere@cherelleparker.com

Candidacy Information

What office are you seeking? Mayor

With which party are you registered? Democrat

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

I pride myself in seeking input from across a broad spectrum. I would never limit myself in listing who I would reach out to. However, I value the advise of Linda Fields; and when it comes to labor issues, I often seek counsel from Sam Staten Jr., Ryan Boyer, Gabe Morgan, Andi Perez, Joe Ashdale, Mungu Sanchez. I have also learned a great deal from the likes of Sam Staten Sr., and Bobby Henon from IUOE.

--	--	--

Who are your opponents? Warren Bloom, Amen Brown, Jeff Brown, Jimmy DeLeon, Allan Domb, Derek Green, Helen Gym, Rebecca Rynhart, Maria Quiñones-Sánchez, Mike Stack.

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

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

I am running to make Philadelphia a safer, cleaner, greener city—one that makes economic opportunities accessible to all, regardless of what neighborhood you come from, what your background is, or what your connections are to the powerful in this city.

This is a message that resonates with Philly voters in rooms from the Northeast to South Philly, and from the Northwest to Southwest. This message resonates in forums, community meetings, when we are out knocking on doors, and in the recent fundraising numbers—with our campaign having the highest percentage of contributions from people who actually live and can vote in Philadelphia of all the other Mayoral campaigns.

We have built a tremendous team, from hiring top staffers who have delivered victories in Pennsylvania to Tom Wolf and Joe Biden, to a consultant team that is uniquely adept at understanding the nuances of this race and particularly overcoming the challenges that Black women candidates have historically faced.

Of course, my campaign will be getting that message out - on paid media including TV, digital, radio, and mail; and also by executing a strong ground game so that our team has a chance to have hundreds of thousands of one-on-one conversations with voters in every part of the city.

We are also seeking endorsements from Labor and other policy-aligned groups, and hopeful that those groups will carry our message to their constituents as well.

As such, our path to victory entails raising \$1.5-\$2 million, in order to be competitive on paid media platforms, but also capitalizing and growing on

--	--	--

the strong base I bring to the table from the Northwest—including the highest vote producing Black wards in the city.

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 maintaining a Living Wage for employers not covered by the Living Wage Ordinance?

Yes. I supported and helped pass a \$15/hour minimum wage for all employers that do business with the city, but now that is not enough. According to the MIT living wage calculator, a living wage in Philadelphia is \$17.87 per hour for someone with no children. Ultimately, any across-the-board minimum wage change will need to come from Harrisburg, and I've got the experience to get it done, and I would fight to have automatic increases permanently tied to the rate of inflation so we don't have to have these fights again.

But we don't have to wait on Harrisburg to help many Philadelphians now. We can continue to ensure that every city worker is paid a living wage, and that goes for the contractors and subcontractors who do business with the city. In 2018, I was proud to enact the law that requires all employers that do business with the city pay their employees at least \$15 per hour. I am ready to give these workers a raise and make sure that happens annually by tying that wage to the rate of inflation.

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.

4. 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 the only candidate in the race with experience as a legislator in City Hall and in Harrisburg, I understand both how to navigate the inner workings of government and how important it is to have established relationships between Philadelphia and Harrisburg.

One of my proudest moments as a State Representative was having come out with a hard-fought compromise when Republicans in Harrisburg threatened the funding for the Philadelphia School District and thousands of union PSD workers were set to

--	--	--

receive pink slips. As Chair of the Philadelphia Delegation, I couldn't just tell our residents that we couldn't get anything done because we were at the mercy of intransigent Republicans—I was sent by my constituents and elected by my colleagues to get things done. So I had to negotiate with the other side and find a way to get to yes, and in a way that didn't sell out our values. I maintained communication and relationships that remained true to my strong Labor ties. I didn't, and I still don't, change who I was depending on which room I was in and the audience I was in front of. As a result, during my time in the State Capitol, I was seen as a hard-charging, but honest, broker who built relationships that endure to this day.

Currently, the city is sitting on an unprecedented \$500M+ surplus, the state has a surplus of \$11B+. For the first time in my experience, money is not the problem, we are only held back by our vision. One of the first things I plan on doing when elected will be to call my friend of nearly 20 years, Governor Josh Shapiro, and the people I know on both sides of the aisle in Harrisburg to start working on a deal where we can actually fund the school district at the levels that it should be at.

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

As a City Councilmember, I was proud to vote in favor of legislation which has ultimately led to a guaranteed annual contribution (equivalent to 0.5% of the city's total general fund appropriations) to the Housing Trust Fund. This legislation helps ensure that funding to the HTF will not be cut during hard times, and will not be used as a bargaining chip during budget negotiations.

I support increasing revenue for the HTF as needed, but any increases would have to be balanced against competing budgetary interests.

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

As a City Councilmember, I supported and voted for the good cause eviction legislation that passed in 2019. I also supported the various emergency housing bills that came through City Council during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

I support strategies that help keep our most vulnerable residents in their home. There are various ways to do this, but most importantly is that we find ways to build our stock of home owners – building equity. That is why I've supported legislation

--	--	--

to help first time home owners, and for longtime residents to be able to afford repairs. And I have a plan for the city to build 10k-15k affordable homes on city-owned property through various subsidies that will give low-income Philadelphians an opportunity to become homeowners.

7. As mayor, what steps will you take to ensure that local government plays a proactive role in expanding permanent affordable and workforce housing in Philadelphia?

As Majority Leader of City Council, I played a key leadership role in ensuring workforce housing - via the Turn the Key program - became a reality. This program is still very new, having just been launched in 2022, but I would support expanding it, as well as other affordable housing initiatives, throughout the city.

8. 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?

Our Prisons system is currently in crisis, and many of the challenges stem from extreme staffing shortages. The only true way to begin solving this problem is to give the workers a raise in order to retain existing workers and incentivize new ones to join them. Working in the prisons is one of the most stressful municipal jobs, and the COVID-19 pandemic followed by the "Great Resignation" has caused existing workers to leave to find easier, higher-paying jobs while at the same, fewer people are applying to fill those jobs. When so many workers leave, the remaining workers must take on even more of a crippling workload. It is not sustainable.

As Mayor, I will treat the funding and staffing issues as a crisis situation, and it will be an all-hands-on-deck approach until it's addressed.

9. Do you support additional funding for programs which 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 a city, we have a crisis of people suffering from addiction and mental and behavioral health that are on our streets or in our criminal justice system. We need to find a solution that is both humane and effective. That is why I am going to be leaning heavily on my intergovernmental experience to bring the State and the

--	--	--

Federal government together with the city to find and fund a truly regional approach.

10. 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?

Yes. With my experience of ten years in the General Assembly (many of them under Republican control) and almost seven years in City Council (about half of those years as a member of the leadership team), I have the experience of bringing different parties to the table and not leaving until we reach a compromise. I would also bring student and parental voices to the table as part of this and any process that affects the implementation of new School District policies.

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

I introduced a formative and comprehensive Philadelphia Neighborhood Safety and Community Policing Plan in City Council to address the immediate needs of our community to have a proactive police presence in every neighborhood. My plan has five key elements:

- Community Policing
- Hiring More Police and Addressing Other Personnel Challenges
- Quality-of-Life Issues
- Victim and Witness Services
- Community Engagement and Investment

Community policing better connects law enforcement with community members by fostering stronger relationships, bolstering transparency, and strengthening connections with businesses and neighbors. In order to have true community policing, police officers must not only be seen as responding to emergencies. We need a well-staffed police force that can meet with residents and businesses to understand their concerns, and that can be proactive, not just reactive – serving as guardians, not warriors. Police officers should be a part of the fabric of our communities, and people need to consistently see a physical presence of familiar officers in their community.

I support a return to community policing and have called for adding officers on the beat who patrol neighborhoods on foot and on bicycles, to get out into the

--	--	--

community, and get to know the neighborhoods they're working in, as well as the residents who live there. When policing is done right, everyone from schoolkids to new residents to long-standing business owners – everyone in the community – knows their local police officers.

Currently, the majority of the officers walking a beat are assigned to the highest-crime areas. Once the city has filled its depleted ranks, hiring to fill vacancies on the force, my plan calls for the disbursement of beat officers across the city – to neighborhoods and commercial corridors beyond just the highest-crime areas. Research has found that there were statistically significant reductions in reported violent crime in areas patrolled by beat officers, but the effect faded once the officers were removed from their targeted beats. And when the officers know the residents – their names and where they live – there is a natural accountability on both ends and the likelihood of excessive force is reduced. We know community policing works; we now must commit to it.

But policing is not just about police officers – they are just one tool in the toolkit to address community safety. There are other tools at our disposal that we must urgently employ, such as:

- Sealing and rehabbing vacant properties
- More security cameras
- Tackling neighborhood blight by removing abandoned cars
- Maintaining quality street lighting
- Cleaning vacant lots
- Street sweeping
- Graffiti removal

I recognize that we must have a comprehensive approach to criminal justice. I have long championed restorative justice programs that use innovative and unconventional tactics to help rehabilitate those already caught up in the justice system, and help all parties – both victims and perpetrators – find healing.

We also need to look at broader reforms to the entire criminal justice system. That is why, on Council, I supported a special committee tasked with overhauling Philadelphia's criminal justice system. This committee examined:

- Unsustainable and rapid growth of the adult corrections population
- Unique issues presented when dealing with juveniles involved in the criminal justice system
- Policy changes across the nation that have proven effective in reducing costs, recidivism, and corrections populations

--	--	--

- The impact that current laws have on Philadelphia communities and the justice-involved population

The issues of police and safety are big - but solvable. It just requires bold leadership to get it done.

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

I would work with the First Judicial District, along with Local 810, to see what the funding and staffing needs are.

13. Would you support further privatization of any city operations or facilities including but not limited to libraries, recreation centers, and health centers? Do you commit to reviewing and evaluating currently contracted out work for the purpose of returning it to work performed by City employees? If yes, explain what methods would be used for that evaluation. If no, explain why?

I am steadfast in my opposition to privatizing public utilities, spaces, and responsibilities that should fall to the government to provide. Private companies' core mission is to turn a profit in order to stay in business. Government exists to provide protection and essential services to its citizens.

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

I will work with national and state partners to regulate guns at the local level. But coming to any consensus, even on what most would say are "common sense" gun laws, could take years, and we can't just sit back during that time and say our hands are tied.

Instead, we must work to ramp up any and all enforcement of our existing laws on the books. My Philadelphia Neighborhood Safety and Community Policing Plan, particularly with its call to hire an additional 300 community policing officers, provides a path forward.

--	--	--

Additionally, I will be looking at State and Federal law enforcement to work with the Philadelphia Police Department to find ways to combat the overwhelming amount of illegal guns.

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

Many witnesses and victims of crime, whether they are a bystander calling 911 or a victim of a serious crime who is now in fear for their life, do not feel supported by the systems that are supposed to support them. While notable steps have been taken in the name of victims – such as City Council’s efforts to create an Office of the Victim Advocate and the Citizen Police Oversight Commission – more can be done to support victims.

911 Dispatchers and Hotlines - For many victims and witnesses of crime, their first interaction with the Police Department is when they call 911. I advocated for several years in a row to increase the budget for the 911 Unified Call Center, and it was allocated additional funding to hire more 911 dispatchers. This was a good first step, but to ensure we have a sufficient number of 911 dispatchers, we must fill all of the remaining vacant positions as quickly as possible. Philadelphia residents are rightly complaining that they cannot quickly get through to 911, or sometimes they cannot get through at all, and wait times for officers to arrive has increased. These issues can be addressed by hiring more dispatchers and police officers. Additionally, to relieve some of the pressure on 911 dispatchers, we need continued education of our residents on the difference between 911 and 311. Finally, we must promote the use of hotlines or tiplines as another tool to report information. Hotlines protect a caller's anonymity. The caller leaves a message, gives information, and states the reason for their call. While on City Council, I worked with the administration to establish one such hotline.

911 Texting Infrastructure - We are more than 20 years into the 21st century, and texting technology has been around even longer than that. Other cities, such as New York City, have implemented 911 texting, but Philadelphia has not made significant headway in making this a reality. The Police Department must do a cost-benefit analysis as to what it would take to implement 911 texting in our City.

User-Friendly, One-Stop Website - To build trust with the community, we must also have 100% transparency regarding crimes, arrests, and prosecutions. While there are some websites that share some or all of this information and update it in a timely manner, the Police Department - with support from the administration - must create a user-friendly website where individuals cannot only get the latest crime data for

--	--	--

their neighborhood, but also be directed to on-the-ground supports in their community. For example, if there was a shooting at a recreation center, a child's caregiver could easily find information about that shooting and other crime in the area. At the same time, they could also find a list of organizations, and their contact information, that are working to prevent crime in the neighborhood.

Witness Relocation - Witness relocation is also a growing need in the City. Witnesses to crime must feel safe to report what they know, or they won't report anything at all. For FY23, I successfully advocated for additional funding for witness relocation.

Reward Money - Rewards can also be an incentive for people to report crimes, and at the very least, they can raise public awareness of crimes, which potentially makes it more likely that the perpetrator will be caught. Over the past five Fiscal Years, the total average reward amount spent in each Fiscal Year was \$136,000. However, only \$20,000 was actually spent on rewards in FY21. We need to significantly ramp up our reward money, using it as a tool to get more people to report crimes.

16. What measures would you support to make sure that wealthy non-profits pay their fair share of support for City services?

Following Pittsburgh's lead, we should task PICA with recertifying tax-exempt properties to first ensure that properties that are taking tax exemptions truly should.

But we need more buy-in from our wealthy non-profits, especially our universities.

As Mayor, I will make sure that these institutions are making substantial and quantifiable investments in our city's neediest communities, I look forward to working with these non-profits and bringing them to the table so they have an even bigger stake in the future of our city.

17. 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.

If you looked at the tax burden on Philadelphians by income bracket, the highest tax burden would unquestionably fall on low-income residents. In other words, this

--	--	--

means our tax system as a whole is regressive, and we need to work to make it as progressive as possible. To touch back on earlier answers, this is where my intergovernmental experience comes into play. Our flat-tax structure is mandated by the state's constitution, but there can be carve-outs that allow for more progressive taxing. That is one of the things I am excited to tackle in Harrisburg as Philadelphia's next Mayor.

I will also say that within the confines of our current tax structure, the most effective way to increase revenue is to find ways to attract new businesses and allow our existing businesses to scale and grow so they can hire more people and attract new employees from out of town to our city.

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

As a City Councilmember, I supported changes to the 10-year property tax abatement. The abatement was effectively cut in half from 100% abated over 10 years to 100% abated in the first year, 90% abated in the second year, 80% abated in the third year, etc.

I am was excited when Governor Wolf signed into law HB581, allowing for 10-year tax abatement in areas with blighted properties if at least 30% of the housing built is affordable to households making 60% of the area median income. As Mayor, I will be working to take full advantage of HB581 across the city.

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

First and foremost, I want Board members who care about kids and are passionate about the success of Philadelphia school kids. As a both a former teacher and someone who is a product of the Philadelphia Public School system, I know how important it is to make sure the School Board includes appointees who understand what it is like to teach in a classroom setting or oversee a school, values the important role public schools play in the lives of children who may come from a household like mine—where the primary caretaker may be a single parent who doesn't work a nine-to-five job, and reflects the diversity of our city.

--	--	--

I will also look for a school board who is unapologetic about supporting the creation of quality seats in state-of-the-art buildings to have a world-class education system in the city of Philadelphia. This includes a combination of both traditional public and charter schools. But maybe most importantly, I will continue my advocacy for the State to reinstate the Charter School Reimbursement line item that was deleted by the Corbett Administration in 2011. This line-item reimbursement to public schools essentially refunded public school systems for students lost to charter schools, thereby, helping school districts defray the overhead costs that remained the same despite smaller enrollments. We do not have to be living in an us vs. them environment between traditional and charter schools, and reinstating the reimbursement will drastically change that conversation.

20. 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?

I'm committed to ensuring that the School District is adequately funded at the City level.

As a former member of the State Legislature and former Chair of the Philadelphia Delegation, I understand the process and delicate negotiations between the Legislature and the Governor all too well. In many instances, I played a leading role in negotiating with the Democratic and Republican leadership in both chambers, seeking to hammer out a deal. As mentioned, one such fight I engaged in was on behalf of the School District of Philadelphia.

I have fought to fund our schools in Harrisburg before. I know how to get that done. As Mayor, I would continue to use my relationships at the State level to ensure Philadelphia's schools receive our fair share of state funds.

21. 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 represents an existential threat not just to our way of life, but to humanity. Between global population displacement and competition for resources, extreme flooding and drought here in the United States, and increasingly severe weather events that directly impact Philadelphia residents and businesses, it is important that we acknowledge that climate change is already taking place today, and that it is incumbent upon us all to play our part in addressing the challenge.

--	--	--

As Mayor, I am committed to upholding the City’s goal of carbon neutrality by 2050. As part of my plans to achieve these ambitious ‘net zero’ goals, I would:
Work to transition our light and heavy bus fleets to clean energy sources like electricity and hydrogen, respectively.

Join advocates in supporting a regional hydrogen hub through funding from the Department of Energy via President Joe Biden’s Inflation Reduction Act (IRA)
Support ‘Buy Clean’ efforts similar to those at the federal and state levels that would address embodied carbon in building and construction materials

However critical our goal of ‘net zero’ emissions is, we can not forget that historically underserved communities have borne the brunt of both environmental pollution and the effects of climate change. Therefore, it is our responsibility to ensure a just and equitable transition when discussing this shift to low and no emissions. I am committed to ensuring climate justice and environmental justice groups representing communities of color and low-income communities have a real seat at the table in a Parker Administration.
Also, in my first 100 days as Mayor, I would be proud to join ‘Climate Mayors’ – a group committed to showing leadership on climate progress and using their collective voice representing over 74 million Americans to advocate for federal and global action on climate change.

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

An adequately funded and staffed court system is the foundation of a functioning justice system. I would work with the various players - FJD, DAO, Defenders, etc. - to ensure that services are provided equitably.

As part of my last budget negotiation, I pushed for more funding for the Defenders. They received a \$5.8 million budget increase, all of which went to increasing staff pay.

23. 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.

Our libraries, and the parks and recreation systems have effectively been flat-funded for at least the past 15 years (adjusting for inflation), and yet at the same time, they have been tasked with more and more responsibilities, all while dealing with crumbling infrastructure due to years of deferred maintenance.

--	--	--

Our children and families need a safe neighborhood anchor such as a local park, playground, or recreation center. My commitment to libraries, parks and recreation systems has been part of my platform since I first ran – it’s where I spent my time growing up. That’s why I gave my full support to the Rebuild program, and I look forward to finding other ways to make it so our libraries and parks and rec system is among the best in the nation.

24. 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

Recognizing the new economic reality after the Great Resignation, we need to modernize our pay scale, recruiting, and hiring practices to retain our existing employees and bring in the best and the brightest – for our courts and for our city.

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

I do not support the privatization of city services.

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

Yes. As long as it is done legally, fairly, and equitably.

27. 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, and as a City Councilmember, I did just this. I introduced Bill # 210500 - Amending Section 13-101 of The Philadelphia Code, entitled "Fixing and Regulating Rates and Charges," to extend the prevailing wage provisions of the Code that apply in connection with the receipt of charity water rates. I introduced this bill because Temple was receiving the City's charity water rate, but yet it wasn't paying certain employees the prevailing wage (aka it wasn't following Bill # 160713). Unfortunately, even though my bill passed, I was dismayed when Temple chose to forgo the charity water rate so they could continue not paying certain employees the prevailing wage.

--	--	--

28. 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?

As City Councilperson and Chair of the Committee on Labor & Civil Service, I worked to codify the stacked hybrid agreements that were negotiated with the unions. One bill included raising the stacked hybrid cap from \$50,000 to \$65,000.

As Mayor, I would be open to discussions about further increasing the cap from \$65,000 and potentially indexing it in some way.

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

It is my preference, and the preference of many Philadelphians, that city employees aren't just viewing the city as a place to earn a paycheck, but that they are actively participating in our community with a vested interest in delivering services for their neighbors and supporting neighborhoods that they have a stake in – meaning they live here too.

That being said, and understanding the challenges facing hiring and retaining city employees, I have supported a waiver process so that we do not have to have unfilled positions that were lost to a residency requirement.

--	--	--