



Connect with your Neighbors.....Change the World

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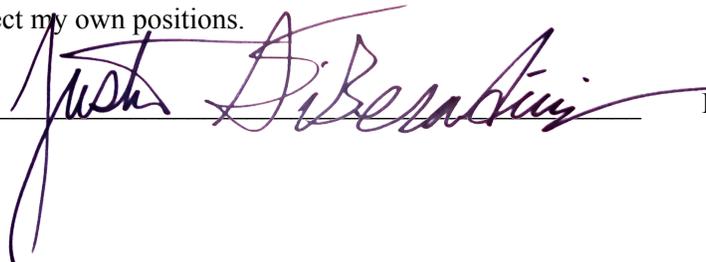
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2019 Council C

CANDIDATE CERTIFICATION

Candidate Name: __Justin DiBerardinis__ Office Sought: __City Council member at-large__

I have read the attached questionnaire responses and certify that the information provided is accurate and the opinions stated accurately reflect my own positions.

Candidate Signature:  Date: __March 6, 2019__

**Please complete, sign and return this form via email in Word format to:
gmgilman@igc.org and mail a copy with the signature page to
Gloria Gilman
121 S Broad St, Suite 1720
Philadelphia, PA 19107**

BACKGROUND

1. What, if any, elected or appointed government office(s) have you held?

For Councilmember Maria Quiñones-Sánchez:
Legislative director from January 2007 to October 2013

2. Background and viability questions:

- a. What community or policy issues have you worked on, and in what capacity? (Please provide the names of **two or three individuals** who can provide information about your previous work.)

Schools: I was the lead organizer with Eastern Philadelphia Organizing Project (EPOP) in the six-year effort to replace (not close!) Willard Elementary school in Kensington. It was one of the worst, maybe THE worst, in the system, and in a state of total decay — overcrowded, dilapidated, unsafe and toxic. I brought hundreds of parents, teachers and neighbors together, and in 2011 the new Willard Elementary opened up. The community came together to make it happen.

Progressive taxation: In Councilmember Quiñones-Sánchez's office I wrote the legislation that brought progressivity to Philadelphia's business tax code, creating small business exemptions within BIRT and the Use and Occupancy tax. I also worked with Neighborhood Networks to defeat the Chamber of Commerce and save Philadelphia's Gross Receipts tax, one of the few taxes that effectively collect revenue from the largest corporations doing business in Philadelphia.

Housing/blight/property: I worked side-by-side with Councilmember Quiñones-Sánchez to advance the concept of a land bank to move property more quickly and transparently to people who need it.

As the program director of Bartram's Garden I worked with neighboring communities in Southwest and West Philadelphia to make Bartram's a place for everybody, offering access to nature, gardening, the outdoors, and community-building. In so doing, we have built one of the most racially and socioeconomically diverse public spaces in America. It is hard to label what policy issue that is, because to me it is everything.

References:

On the Willard Campaign: Steve Honeyman, former director of EPOP, 267-258-2158

On tax policy reform: Stan Shapiro, Neighborhood Networks, 267-760-7137

on the work at Bartram's Garden: Tonya Robinson, President of the Bartram's Village Residents Council, 267-738-3506

- b. What about your background or experience do you think most qualifies you to be elected? Please attach a brief bio.

What most qualifies me to be elected is my total dedication and love for this whole city. My upbringing in a household with a generational commitment to social justice. My commitment to economic equity and justice for Philadelphia, My track record of progressive organizing in working class and working poor communities throughout this city. The broad coalition of support for my campaign which is reflective of the solidarity and commitment that I have shared with communities of color across Philadelphia

BRIEF BIO: Justin DiBerardinis is a lifelong Philadelphian who grew up in Fishtown in the 1980s and 90s, one of four children raised by parents who were activists and community leaders. As a young organizer working in Kensington, Justin led the successful effort to replace Willard Elementary, one of the most run-down schools in the city, with a new and modern building. Serving in the office of Councilmember Maria Quiñones-Sánchez, Justin developed

legislation to take on vacant land and blight and to make business taxes more progressive, which helped thousands of neighborhood businesses survive and grow. He also wrote legislation that ended horrible gerrymandering in our Council Districts, legislative maps that had undermined the voting power of black and Latino voters. As program director at Bartram's Garden, Justin worked alongside the park's Southwest Philly neighbors to create an urban farm, the Sankofa Community Farm, and a free public boating program, both national models. Bartram's now welcomes over 100,000 visitors a year from every part of Philadelphia. Justin is a proud graduate of Central High School, where at 16 years old he met Linda To. They and their children, Manny and Joan, live in Germantown and attend St. Malachy's church in North Philadelphia.

c. What other endorsements have you received?

As of March 6: 215 People's Alliance, RePoint Philadelphia, 5th Square, CCP faculty and staff (AFT L2026), District 7 Councilmember Maria Quiñones-Sánchez, Register of Wills Ron Donatucci, state representatives Jared Solomon, Danilo Burgos, Jason Dawkins, Joanna McClinton and Jordan Harris, former Mayor and Governor Ed Rendell. (See justinforphilly.com/endorsers for any later additions.)

d. How do you plan to win?

Winning requires people, time and money. I've been meeting people and raising funds for over a year at intimate house parties throughout the city. We've had over 80 events in living rooms and my campaign continues to have these gatherings each week. My fundraising has been productive putting me at the top of at-large challengers in the last campaign finance filing.

Because I believe that organizing and building coalitions is vital, I've brought several excellent progressive organizers onto my campaign team who are working to mobilize my supporters and get my message out.

My endorsements, to date, are significant; and it has been key to win the support of NN allies such as the 215 Peoples Alliance that will put boots on the ground to get the word out about my platform. I'm hopeful that I will enjoy the support of a grassroots powerhouse quartet: 215 Peoples Alliance; Neighborhood Networks, Reclaim Philadelphia, and the Pennsylvania Working Families Party.

I also believe that it is important that we expand the coalition for progressive policies in this city. It is important that progressive candidates don't overlook white working class voters in the Northeast, in deep South Philadelphia and in the river wards, communities that would benefit from policies that are driving economic equity, employment, and better public services. These communities have to know that there is room for them in a progressive coalition. With my background growing up in the river wards, and the legacy of my parents work, I believe I am the right candidate to bring this message to these communities.

e. How much money have you raised? How much do you expect to raise?

As of March 6, we've raised over \$250,000, and we are on pace to achieve our fundraising goal of \$450,000

3. What three things would you most want to accomplish if elected?

- Build a WPA-style program to drive jobs and services to the neighborhoods that need them most.

- Reform the tax structure so that it is progressive, increases revenue, and stops favoring out-of-town businesses.
- Change the charter to make Council a real legislative body instead of a group of micro-managers.

ISSUES

Although many of the questions below call for a simple yes or no answer, please feel free to provide an explanation for any of your choices. If you have not yet come to a final decision, please state which way you are leaning and what additional information you would need before deciding, if any.

I. Economic Development

Would you:

1. Raise the City minimum wage to \$15 an hour, either directly or by imposing an impact fee on businesses paying less than \$15?

Yes, I support a \$15 minimum wage. I understand that there are issues of state pre-emption, and I'm eager to learn about other steps we can take locally to drive us towards that goal. I believe the creation of a large scale WPA program, with living wage pay rates could have a major impact on wages in this city.

2. Take \$200 million of City pension funds now invested in the stock market to invest in neighborhood economic development projects?

Yes. As with any pension issue, I believe this is subject to negotiation with the workers and retirees who are stakeholders in these pension plans.

3. Require City-funded or tax-abated projects to employ a high percentage of City resident workers, especially low and moderate income City residents?

Yes

4. Create a program to provide technical assistance and start-up funding for cooperative, worker-owned businesses?

Yes

5. Reform PIDC, the City's main economic development funding agency, so that its Board has a majority of public and community members, rather than Chamber of Commerce appointed members?

Yes

6. Require the City to withdraw subsidies from corporations that fail to provide jobs or other benefits to City residents?

Yes. I don't support subsidies for the sake of subsidies. Any abatement or incentive we provide must be in service of advancing a progressive vision for this city: advancing economic equity, sustainability or opportunity for those communities which are not sharing in Philadelphia's new prosperity.

7. Bar or limit privatization of City property and work done by City employees? More specifically are there any circumstances under which you would sell PGW?

Yes to the first question.

To the second, I can't think of any circumstances under which I would. To sell off a publicly owned utility that exists for the common benefit of our citizens and hand it to a private entity motivated by its own profit, for a one-time financial injection, represents the kind of desperate, short-term thinking we need to put behind us. This is especially true now, when it is critically important that we, the public, make decisions about our future energy sources. To end fuel poverty, reduce health risk factors in low-income / black and brown communities and combat climate change, our utilities need to be more responsive to public needs, not less.

8. Sponsor and sign legislation to create a Philadelphia Public Bank?

Yes. A public bank could serve our needs in ways that the private banking system has failed: It could provide basic financial services such as check cashing, debit services, and accessible home and small business loans without excessive fees and penalties (the "poverty penalty") and without discrimination. The benefits of keeping our investments within our city, guided by our pursuit of equity and sustainability, could be game-changing. I would also consider options such as a consortium of credit unions operating under city guidelines.

II. Taxation

Would you:

1. Increase taxes to support City and/or School District services, and if so, which ones?

Yes. Quite simply, Philadelphia will need to increase its local investment in public education. Over the last decade we've been relying on property tax increases to provide this needed funding. I believe that in an era of rapid property value increases, combined with the large numbers of low, moderate, and fixed income Philadelphians who own homes, this is no longer the right path. I am strong believer that this city needs to create separate rates for Commercial Real Estate tax, so that homeowners won't be overburdened. I also believe that broad-based low-rate taxes, like gross receipts, are the right taxes to rely on going forward. These policies will encourage the growth of locally owned businesses, and our local economy, while making sure that everyone is paying their fair share in Philadelphia.

2. Reduce taxes as an economic development strategy, and, if so, which ones?

I don't believe that Philadelphia can afford to surrender tax revenue, but I do believe that the composition of these taxes must drastically change. We currently rely on regressive taxes that put great pressure on Philadelphia's lowest income residents. We rely on business taxes that

are overly punitive to local companies and neighborhood businesses but reward suburban corporations and large chains.

I think moving towards a progressive, Philadelphia-first tax code could have a huge, positive impact on our local economy. But these reforms must, at the very least, be revenue neutral!

Within that framework, I would favor the reduction or elimination of the Business Income tax. This tax harms our local economy and is frequently avoided by large corporations and national chains. This will spur local economic growth. I support moving to a progressive wage tax model that was championed by former Councilman David Cohen, that will put more money in the pockets of the working poor, and more money into their communities. This will spur growth.

I believe that tax reform, not tax cuts, is the right way to spur healthy, sustainable, and equitable growth in Philadelphia.

3. Support the Soda Tax? Please explain your answer.

The things it's paying for are needed. I don't support repeal, or anything else that will open a hole in the city budget. But I do have concerns with taxes that are disproportionately paid by the poor. We have far too many taxes like that in this city. As we've discussed in previous answers we need deep reforms to the tax system; for example, I believe we should be collecting more revenue from out-of-town businesses that profit here so that this kind of regressive tax isn't needed.

4. Support the 10-year Tax Abatement Program for new development as it currently exists? If not, what specific changes would you make?

No. I am in favor of completely overhauling our 10-year tax abatement. The current abatement scheme should be replaced by abatements that advance a vision of an equitable, just, and sustainable Philadelphia. I support abatements for low- and middle-income first-time homebuyers, abatements that incentivize historic and community preservation and that help existing homeowners improve the sustainability and energy efficiency of their homes (including renewable energy sources), and help individuals rather than large developers. These abatements would be cheaper than the abatements system we currently have, so I would expect some returns compared to the current abatements.

5. Bring suit to challenge the nonprofit status of the University of PA and other huge non-profits if they don't agree to make payments in lieu of taxes to the City?

We have large and expanding institutions in this City that are taking very valuable property off our tax rolls. Cities across the country are dealing with this and pursuing agreements and commitments from their large non-profits. I think Philadelphia needs to be in the lead in pursuing these new agreements. I think all options should be on the table.

III. Education

Would you:

1. Enact a plan that would help regulate charter schools by making their budgetary practices transparent, ridding them of conflicts of interest, and stopping them from cherry-picking their student bodies? If so, what would that plan look like?

Yes, you have pretty much described what I would like to see. In many communities, charter schools have provided options for parents who have been failed for generations by their district school. Many are doing a good job, but certainly not all. They should be subject to strict accountability standards because they are using public money. Funding poorly functioning charter schools with public money amounts to turning our children into commodities. I do think we need to be cautious in distinguishing between "cherry-picking" and the selection processes of thematic schools, which can be charter or district schools.

2. Provide universal pre-k to all 3 and 4 year olds in the City?

Yes

3. Compute the cost/benefit ratio for the School District of all proposed KOZ zones before they're approved by Council?

YES! This is a great idea.

4. Develop a plan to deal with the bankruptcy facing the School District due to the growth in the number of charter schools in the City, all of whose expenses must by law be paid by the District? Please explain.

I would support efforts on the state level to restore the Charter School Reimbursement line item. I support a moratorium on charter expansion so we can reassess what we need to do to stabilize our district run schools, and make sure that fair and clear standards are in play across all publicly funded school options in the city.

IV. Criminal Justice

Would you:

1. Grant the civilian police review board subpoena power with the ability to suspend or fire police officers found to engage in misconduct?

Yes, but we have to recognize that there is a collective bargaining process involved. The PAC has not been able to fulfill its purpose. We should look to the cities that have more effective models and seriously study the weaknesses that have crippled review boards and advisory commissions in most cities that have them, including our own.

2. Use savings from closing the House of Corrections to invest in job training programs and opportunities for formerly incarcerated people, in an effort to combat mass incarceration?

I support efforts to expand restorative and transitional services. Savings from reduced incarceration should assist re-entry and create real opportunities for formerly incarcerated people to rejoin their families and communities with options and with pride.

3. Bar employers from denying jobs to ex-offenders without a specific job-related basis?

Yes. The excesses of our criminal justice system (now starting to improve), along with the difficulty and limited availability of expungement — not just for “ex-offenders” but in many cases for people who were never convicted at all — is one of the main factors that keeps this a two-tiered society, drawn along racial lines. There have to be exceptions but the default should be ban-the-box.

4. End the stop and frisk program?

Yes. We don't seem to be able to actually end stop-and-frisk even though it is already illegal to stop and frisk people without reasonable cause, and even though the practice is proven to be overwhelmingly racist in its application. I want to put an end to these daily indignities and violations by whatever means it takes, up to and including a charter change.

V. Housing

1. Do you think Philadelphia is facing a housing crisis? If so, why? If not, why not? What changes would you make to bring housing policy more in line with your vision?

Philadelphia is certainly facing a housing crisis. For a city with a relatively high supply of housing, the supply of decent, affordable housing is small and shrinking as once-affordable neighborhoods see huge rises in rent and purchase price. Still, Philadelphia's housing costs are not unusually high — its rate of poverty is, and that's where the problem comes from. But until we solve the poverty problem (by raising wages and creating job opportunities through a New Deal for Philadelphia), we have to address the cost issue. Property tax adjustments have hit poorer neighborhoods too hard. Property tax abatements should be shifted from large investors to low- and middle-income homeowners and made available for home improvements aimed at sustainability and energy efficiency, and shifted from “luxury townhomes” to affordable units instead. The Land Bank should be made more efficient and more transparent and put housing more quickly into the hands of people who need it without the distortions and delays introduced by political interference.

2. Would you:

a. Enact a rent stabilization program?

I'm not able to say yes to this without seeing a Philadelphia approach to rent control that addresses and mitigates the undesirable side effects that traditional approaches have often had on the very people they are intended to help. Philadelphia's housing costs are not unusually high, compared to other large cities — its rate of poverty is, and that's where the problem comes from. I believe that our path to affordable housing is connected to our fight against poverty. But until we solve the poverty problem (by raising wages and creating job opportunities through a New Deal for Philadelphia), we have to address the cost issue. There is a large and needed role for government in making housing affordable and advancing the socioeconomic integration of neighborhoods. I am open to any policies that advance those goals.

b. Enact inclusionary zoning requirements to compel inclusion of affordable units in all market rate developments?

Yes

- c. Support a dedicated fund to provide technical assistance and start up funding for land trusts and housing co-ops?

Yes

- d. End, limit or curtail Councilmanic prerogative over land disposition?

Yes. I and others have pointed out that councilmanic prerogative is not something you can just wish away. I want a charter change that would give Council more power to do its real job for the whole city, which is legislate, oversee the budget and work with the Mayor to drive programmatic goals, and less power over individual property decisions. That would help us move unused properties more quickly into use and do it transparently, fairly, and in ways that respect and protect the character of our neighborhoods. At the same time I recognize the value in the knowledge and understanding of their own districts that district councilmembers bring to the table. They have been elected by their communities. I think there is a role for local powers vested in the District Councilmembers, I think we need to determine what are the right powers, and the right processes.

- e. Require the land bank to prioritize the disposition of properties for low-income and cooperatively owned developments?

Yes, as described in my answer to Question V.1 this should be the priority for the land bank. We have housing, and we have people who need housing. Let's finally put them together.

VI. Climate Justice

1. What, if anything, can the city do to address the fundamental factors driving climate change?

We can lead the fight against climate change while generating green jobs, accelerating our shift away from fossil fuel through conservation, using solar and wind, and increasing our commitment to our urban tree canopy and restoration of native ecosystems throughout the 10,000 acres of Fairmount Park. We can create property tax incentives that help all homeowners reduce their carbon footprint and shift to renewable energy sources. Instead of blanket abatements for new construction, we can be abating sustainable infrastructure for our future. We have great shared history and unique communities here and we need to protect both, by becoming a leader in preservation and by offering homeowners new preservation incentives and abatements that keep our communities intact.

2. Do you support a Green New Deal for Philadelphia and, if so, what does that mean to you and what will you do if elected to City Council to implement it?

Yes. My New Deal for Philadelphia is a Green New Deal. I want to see a faster shift to a carbon-free future, with aggressive job creation in general, but including jobs in conservation and renewable energy efforts as opposed to new fossil fuel infrastructure that is too often imposed on black and brown neighborhoods. In short, the building of a sustainable city where sustainability in terms of the environment is one and the same with sustainability of our neighborhoods, cultures, health and lives.

3. What is your position on the proposal to build a new Liquefied Natural Gas Plant in Southwest Philadelphia?

Against. We don't need new fossil fuel infrastructure and we don't need the gas company we own to build any or help anyone else build it. Selling LNG to reduce gas bills by a couple of pennies won't end fuel poverty, and doing it this way makes us complicit in our own destruction.

VII. Money In Politics

In light of the recent indictments involving elected officials, what is your position on:

- a. Accepting gifts or services
- b. Accepting donations from corporate PACs that do work for the city
- c. Public financing of city elections

a: Absolutely not, including by staff

b: Reject such donations or return them if they get through

c: Strongly in favor, and very intrigued by the public financing program in Seattle

VIII. General Statement

Use this space to provide any further information that you would like us to consider about your candidacy, not covered by the questions above.

I organize my priorities into what I call the New Deal for Philadelphia, which means uniting behind the common goal of a Philadelphia where opportunity and excellent public services reach every neighborhood, measuring the greatness of our city in our common wealth — our schools, libraries, streets and parks; art and culture — and incorporating equity, integrity and justice into everything we do for our city. That's more than a vision, I mean it, and I've lived it, and I've worked with so many who also do. I truly believe that we can achieve it.