



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

2019 Council Questionnaire – Challenger

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CANDIDATE CERTIFICATION

Candidate Name: __Melissa Robbins_____ Office Sought __City Council 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.

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? **None**
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.) **Equal Pay for Equal work, I worked as an advocate statewide and testified before committees in Harrisburg and spoke at the signing of Gov. Wolf’s Executive Order ensuring Equal Pay for equal work for statewide positions in June 2018. Advocated and spoke at rally on behalf of**

teachers getting satisfactory contracts. As a radio host I created opportunity for the Stadium Stompers to galvanize the community to stop Temple from building a stadium, I interviewed TURN, victims and Tenants Union and shared info regarding the eviction crisis in Jan 2018. I have advocated with Shutdown Berks Coalition and arranged meeting with AG Shapiro for the group to lobby for the closure of the facility as well as help organize/host "Keep Our Families Rally Together" this past summer with Juntos. As a member of Philly Now I have been interviewed on Fox 29 advocating for equal pay for women, had a front page interview in the Wall Street Journal advocating for equal pay for women, As a member of ADA testified against proposed legislation to sell PGW to UIL, After assisting families obtain housing due to homelessness I've advocated for them and lobbied council to increase funding for single women with children who are homeless, I featured investigative reporter Wendy Ruderman on my former radio show exposing lead, mold and asbestos in Philly schools and called on electeds to make the safety and cleaning a priority. I also lobbied Councilwoman Brown to hold hearing around citywide stop and go's and testified at the hearings held by Councilwoman Bass around stop and go's. Most recent spoke at a press conference denouncing and calling for removal of funding to the Mummer for their historic racist satire.

Jessica Way – 267-307-6167

Brian Sims – 215-266-4696

Jacob Aderniran – 267-471-3093

b. What about your background or experience do you think most qualifies you to be elected? Please attach a brief bio. **I have served our country as a combat medic in the U.S. Army. I interned at city-council, the Philadelphia Jobs Commission, I have lived a life in some of our most poverty stricken neighborhoods and experienced some of our most pressing issues from my children's grossly underfunded schools, being a homeless veteran while in college, being unemployed for extending periods, loved ones incarcerated, food insecurity and many of the issues that Philly residents face. I've worked in politics on political campaigns for the past six years developing messaging based on my contacts with residents all over Philly and the Commonwealth. I've organized on the ground with a number of activist and non-profits promoting a progressive agenda. I've trained with Emerge PA and prepared to legislate. As a paid and volunteer public speaker I have inspired many to get involved and engaged in the field of politics.**

c. What other endorsements have you received? **As of now none.**

d. How do you plan to win? **Continued hard work, speaking directly to the voters in community meeting, church's etc, volunteers, fundraising, good messaging and organizations like NN support.**

e. How much money have you raised? **\$11,100** How much do you expect to raise? I'm not sure many are interested after petitions season.

3. What three things would you most want to accomplish if elected? **I must work with my colleagues to generate the revenue (repeal 10-year tax abatements, take back on street parking from the state) to create state-of-the-art educational learning spaces for Philadelphia children citywide (cap class sizes at 25, create trade trainings for student/adults). Mandate Philadelphia resident 50% minority participation for city contracts, create public/private relationship to invest into small businesses to increase employment rates.**

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? **Raise the minimum wage.**
2. Take \$200 million of City pension funds now invested in the stock market to invest in neighborhood economic development projects? **I'm leaning towards the neighborhoods developments, but I would have to know much more about the impact on the pension fund by the investment dollars being diverted. As well as potential unintended consequences**
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**
7. Bar or limit privatization of City property and work done by City employees? **I would limit significantly.** More specifically are there any circumstances under which you would sell PGW? **I'm cautious with the selling of PGW. We have far too many seniors who rely on the CAP program to sustain in some of our coldest and hottest temps. I testified against the sell to UIL and would not be interested into privatizing such a large entity that so many vulnerable citizens rely on.**
8. Sponsor and sign legislation to create a Philadelphia Public Bank? **Yes**

II. Taxation

Would you:

1. Increase taxes to support City and/or School District services, and if so, which ones? Yes. **Transfer Title Tax, Construction Tax.**
2. Reduce taxes as an economic development strategy, and, if so, which ones? **I'm not convinced that decreasing taxes will benefit those who rely on city services.**

3. Support the Soda Tax? Please explain your answer. **No. This tax disproportionately impacts poverty stricken communities of color. Soda consumption is necessary, which increases health challenges. This tax is regressive in nature and overall not a wise strategy.**
4. Support the 10-year Tax Abatement Program for new development as it currently exists? If not, what specific changes would you make? **I would repeal the tax abatement. Those who can afford the new construction have incomes that can support the taxes that come with new development.**
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? **I would lead on that front. These institutions receive huge endowments and have an obligation to pay their fare share. They are now the largest land owner citywide.**

III. Education

Would you:

1. Enact a plan that would help regulate charter schools by making their budgetary practices transparent, riding them of conflicts of interest, and stopping them from cherry-picking their student bodies? If so, what would that plan look like? **The plan would consist of a basic template that all charters must follow. Transparency with line items for all budgets. Certified and degreed instructors required, curriculum oversight, all sites in compliance with L&I, improved food (new contracts for lunches) equal access for all students, IED mandates as well as access for special education students. Removal of selection by lottery.**
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**
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. **Review most at risk/failing unaccountable charter schools, work to downsized and fill public schools. Work with law/ finance department to create a path to financial stabilization**

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**
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? **Yes**
3. Bar employers from denying jobs to ex-offenders without a specific job-related basis? **Yes, with stipulations dependent on the crime and the potential risk or ability to perform the required duties.**

4. End the stop and frisk program? **Yes**

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? **Yes, we are in a crisis. In April of 2018 over 3,000 applications were filed for eviction. There are no metrics in place to track those displaced families. These families need to be identified and stabilized through subsidies like that revenue from the transfer tax. I would require a percentage of new construction units to accommodate those who are not high earners. Also ensure that federal housing grants intended for low income earners to go to those families who actually need them and qualify for them.**

2. Would you:

- a. Enact a rent stabilization program? **Yes, many residents do not receive a livable wage. They are being evicted at an alarming rate.**
- b. Enact inclusionary zoning requirements to compel inclusion of affordable units in all market rate developments? **Yes, mixed housing can prevent segregation**
- 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? **Limit with specific language from community input.**
- e. Require the land bank to prioritize the disposition of properties for low-income and cooperatively owned developments? **Yes**

VI. Climate Justice

1. What, if anything, can the city do to address the fundamental factors driving climate change? **Hold hearing with CSX to limit cargo pollutants from traveling through our Center City, vote no on the South Philly power plants, impose heavy fine for and violations at the Nicetown Septa plane location, shutdown SW chop shops and strengthen oversight for the power plant near the airport. Prohibit car repairs in commercial parking lots like Pep Boys and Auto Zones, crack down on street repairs and hold local garages and used car dealers more accountable for spills and strewn car parts**
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? **I do support the Green New Deal. It's important that we educate home owners on how they can use more sustainable energy sources to heat and cool off their homes. We as council members can hold companies like PECO more accountable and impose more regulations, create more green spaces in our neighborhood and promote community gardening.**
3. What is your position on the proposal to build a new Liquefied Natural Gas Plant in Southwest Philadelphia? **I vehemently oppose it.**

VII. Money In Politics

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

- a. Accepting gifts or services – **This should be illegal.**
- b. Accepting donations from corporate PACs that do work for the city - **Prohibited**
- c. Public financing of city elections – **I will eventually sponsor this legislation, with term-limits of two terms 8 years max if council does not pass it before I am elected.**

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.

Our city should address the strong police presence in our schools and with our children. Counseling with trauma trained preparedness should be on the front lines when it comes to diverting our children. We are using our police force in ways that are detrimental to the well-being of our students. We should also hold public hearing when it comes to negotiating police contracts. This should not be held in private, taxpayer should have input.