



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

2019 Council Questionnaire – Challenger

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CANDIDATE CERTIFICATION

Candidate Name: Nicolas O'Rourke 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.

Candidate Signature: Nicolas O'Rourke Date: 5/31/19

Please complete, sign and return this form via email in Word format to: shapsj@comcast.net and mail a copy with the signature page to

**Stan Shapiro
7213 Cresheim Road
Philadelphia, PA 19119**

INTRODUCTION

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.

BACKGROUND

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

Mass Incarceration/Bail Reform, Policing/Police Contracts, Education Funding – Graie Hagans, Greg Holston, Hannah Sassam Dwayne Royster

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

I believe my commitment to progressive values and my understanding of the power of organizing with working people is ideal for elected office, particularly in this era of American politics.

Rev. Nicolas O'Rourke is the Pastor (Supply) of the Living Water United Church of Christ in Oxford Circle and Community Organizer for POWER. A strong proponent of social justice & spiritual awareness, he works across wide ranging lines of thinking to highlight common spiritual ground for all people in an effort to contribute to the realization of "beloved community" in Philadelphia. Since joining POWER his focus has been towards dismantling the crippling effects of Mass Incarceration and Police Brutality on people of color and combating Islamophobia within the city of Philadelphia. Nicolas has studied at Central State University in Wilberforce, OH, Crossroads Bible College in Indianapolis, IN, & Lancaster Bible College: Center for Urban Theological Studies in Philadelphia. He considers himself a "sacred activist" and contends for the rights of people with the guidance of God.

c. What other endorsements have you received? N/A

d. How do you plan to win? In order to turn out a minimum of 40,000 votes, we are preparing to run a robust campaign that includes live conversations through phone banks, door to door canvassing, mass texting, and mailers that champion the points laid out in the People's Platform for a Just Philadelphia.

e. How much money have you raised? \$30,000 How much do you expect to raise? We have a goal to raise a minimum of \$250,000.00

3. What three things would you most want to accomplish if elected? A Public Hearing and ultimate reform of the 10 Year Tax Abatement, A \$1.5 Million Increase in funding for the Police Advisory Commission and subpoena power, Move to end transfer fees and make SEPTA free for students and persons with low income

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.

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

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. Increase taxes to support City and/or School District services, and if so, which ones? Yes, by rolling back the 10 year Tax Abatement, 55% of the funds should go to support the school district. Also increase the Use & Occupancy Tax from 1.21% to 1.5% and restore the business income and revenue tax.
6. Reduce taxes as an economic development strategy, and, if so, which ones? Yes. I am interested in identifying the heaviest tax burden on our most vulnerable citizens and redistributing that weight to corporations that do not pay their fair share to support the expenses of the city.
7. Sponsor and sign legislation to create a Philadelphia Public Bank? Yes

III. Education

Would you:

1. 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? Yes
2. 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
3. Provide universal pre-k to all 3 and 4 year olds in the City? Yes
4. Compute the cost/benefit ratio for the School District of all proposed KOZ zones before they're approved by Council? Yes
5. 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.

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
4. End the stop and frisk program? Yes

V. Reducing Corporate Power Over Our Politics and Economy

Would you:

1. 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? I have not developed a position on this. Expanding community control wherever it has been limited would be a top priority for me. I remain open to learn what benefits the most vulnerable in our city.
2. Move Pension Fund investment decisions in-house? I have not developed a position on this.
3. 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
4. Require the City to withdraw subsidies from corporations that fail to provide jobs or other benefits to City residents? Yes
5. Publicly finance City elections? Yes

VI. 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. The lack of accessibility for many homes in Philadelphia and the ever-increasing price of living reveals a housing crisis that can be averted. With Philadelphia becoming increasingly a preferred option for settling down, the price of rent is rising, following a trend in other large cities. To prevent becoming a city that is known for its high cost of living while simultaneously maintaining the highest poverty rate in the country, rent control legislation should be enacted and a fortifying of good cause eviction policies.

2. Would you:

- a. Enact a rent stabilization program? Yes
- 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
- e. Require the land bank to prioritize the disposition of properties for low-income and cooperatively owned developments? Yes

VII. Climate Justice

1. What is your position on the proposal to build a new Liquefied Natural Gas Plant in Southwest Philadelphia? My concern would be the impact on an already plant heavy Southwest Philadelphia and the impacts the plant would have on the environment of this section of our city. I believe City Council should vote NO.

2. What is the fundamental factor causing climate change? How should we address it? 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 support a Green New Deal for the country generally and Philadelphia specifically, which first looks like advocating for a federal Green New Deal and a consistent investment in a renewable and equitable energy system as pointed out in the People's Platform. Initiatives that can be taken include commissioning and funding community and labor led studies on transitioning Philadelphia Gas Works to 100% renewable energy and a public study to take community control of PECO.