**2015 CHICAGO SUN-TIMES CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE**

Name: Anthony Beale

Ward: 9

Occupation: Alderman

Education: Corliss High School, attended Blackburn College

Previous political and civic experience:

I have served as Alderman of the 9th Ward since 1999. I have been engaged in the civic life of my community and of Chicago for a long time, not just as Alderman, but also as the 9th Ward's Democratic Committeeman; as a community representative on the Gwendolyn Brooks College Prep Local School Council; and through involvement in Rainbow/PUSH, CAPS, the NAACP, Salem Baptist Church, and the Rosemoor Community Association.

**1) City Pensions**

Chicago's fire and police pensions are greatly underfunded, and the city is required by the state to make a $550 million payment into the pension funds by the end of 2015. Do you support restructuring the pension systems, inevitably reducing benefits, to put the funds on sound financial footing?

Yes or No:

Please Explain:

This issue is more complicated than a yes/no answer. The reality is that we have two methods we can pursue to reach pension solvency: reduce pension benefits, or raise revenues (or both). For current and former employees, the courts have sharply constrained our ability to reduce benefits, as is consistent with the state’s constitution and the promises that were made. For future employees, I believe we need to figure out what is an attractive package of retirement and other benefits that will ensure a steady flow of good candidates but reduce demands on city funds in the future. On the revenue side, I firmly believe that long-term, our surest path to solvency is accelerating economic development. Short-term, I support a progressive income tax, and I’m open to other ideas, but I will stand firm against nickel-and-diming my constituents.

Chicago's pension systems for municipal workers and laborers already have been restructured, reducing benefits, but the city has yet to identify where it will find the revenue to sufficiently fund those systems. Under what circumstances would you support a property tax increase to raise the needed revenue for the fire and police pensions and/or the municipal workers and laborers pensions?

As above, I believe that the best paths to raising the revenues we need to achieve long-term pension solvency go through economic development and a progressive income tax, not through property tax increases.

**2) Chicago Public Schools pensions**

Large and growing payments required to keep the Chicago Teachers’ Pension Fund solvent are squeezing CPS' budget, forcing cuts elsewhere and limiting investment. The Chicago Board of Education has increased property taxes, but it is not enough to keep up with the high annual costs. What measures do you support to ensure a solvent retirement system and to improve the district's finances?

In order to fund the investments CPS needs and the operations it performs, CPS needs to work with the CTU to find efficiencies, craft a common-sense labor agreement, and ensure future spending is focused on the most important priorities. Once those steps are taken, as I’ve said above, the key is economic development, and I also support a progressive income tax for Illinois as a means of solving the pension problems we face.

**3) Revenue**  
  
In light of the financial issues discussed above, do you support any or all of the following measures, each of which would require**,** at a minimum, approval by the Illinois Legislature?

\* A statewide expansion of the sales tax base to include more consumer services

Yes or No: Yes.

\* A tax on non-Chicago residents who work in the city

Yes or No: No.

\* A tax on electronic financial transactions on Chicago’s trading exchanges, known as the “LaSalle Street tax”

Yes or No: Yes.

Please explain your views, if you wish, on any of these three revenue-generating measures.

* I will not support nickel-and-diming my constituents, but I would support sales taxes on certain services.
* Taxing non-Chicago residents would be a bad policy for the City’s efforts to attract companies looking for the best employees—being able to hire from the entire metropolitan region is part of the reason companies locate here, and I believe we have to work regionally to lift Chicago.
* I have heard both sides of the argument about a financial transactions tax, and I support it.

**4) Crime**

Do you support hiring more police officers to combat crime and gun violence in Chicago?

Yes or No: Yes

Please explain:

I am proud to be able to say that crime is down 15% in my ward compared to last year. This is a great achievement, and in large part a testament to the hard work of the officers and brass of the Chicago Police Department’s 5th District, particularly Commander Larry Watson. The most important piece of this reduction has been the relationship-building the police have done with the community’s residents. The police have done a remarkable job of building trust with the public, making themselves available to answer questions and respond to concerns. In turn, the public have placed more trust in the police, offering tips and calling in matters of concern. This kind of partnership is key to improving public safety.

Still, we need to make sure that Chicago’s police force is fully staffed to cover all areas of the city with adequate manpower to prevent, interdict, and investigate crime. If that means increasing the number of officers, we should move quickly but deliberately to make it happen. I also have long fought for resource reallocation for the entire city, so that resources are always placed where the problems are.

What legislation in Springfield would you support to try to stem the flow of illegal guns into Chicago?

Gun crime is one of the most pressing issues of the day, and it is a public health crisis afflicting too many of Chicago’s vulnerable areas, including the 9th Ward. I believe it’s worth exploring our gun crime laws to see where we might be able to toughen penalties for those who would supply guns illegally to criminals, and I will consider supporting any constitutional and practicable gun control legislation, as I have done in the past.

**5) Elected school board**

An advisory referendum on switching Chicago to an elected school board, rather than an appointed board, is expected to be on the ballot in more than 30 wards on Feb. 24. Currently, the mayor appoints all seven board membersand the Schools CEO. Do you support a change to an elected school board?

Yes or No: No.

Please explain:

Chicago Public Schools are moving in the right direction. In the 9th Ward, Gwendolyn Brooks College Prep, where I am on the LSC, is one of the standout institutions in the system. Recently, CPS recognized that fact: Brooks is to receive an Academic Center for 7th and 8th graders as well as 200 more seats for high schoolers. The 9th Ward is also home to four level one elementary schools and the Carver Military Academy, “the Jewel of the South Side.” These schools are the lifeblood of their communities, and I hope to raise every school in my ward to their level. Doing so will require significant investments of time, money, and personnel, in addition to the involvement of parents and the community. In order to fund those investments, CPS needs to work with the CTU to find efficiencies, craft a common-sense labor agreement, and ensure future spending is focused on the most important priorities. But none of the work that needs to be done requires an elected school board, and in fact I believe mayoral appointment of the board focuses accountability where it belongs: on the elected chief executive of the City.

**6) Tax-increment financing districts**

TIFs are the primary economic development tool of the city. In a TIF district, taxes from the growth in property values are set aside for 23 years to be used for public projects and private development. Do you support increasing the annual TIF surplus that the mayor and the City Council have declared in each of the last few years, money that goes to the schools and other city agencies?

Yes or No:

What reforms would you propose for the city's TIF program?

This is another issue that does not lend itself to simple yes/no answers. I am a supporter of the TIF program, and I believe a recent experience in the 9th Ward demonstrates how TIF can best be used. The City used TIF funds to upgrade the public infrastructure that was necessary to enable the first new manufacturing site for the south side in decades, where Method, a maker of environmentally-friendly home cleaning products headquartered in Europe, will build a factory. Not a dime of taxpayer money was given to Method. But in order to make the site viable, the City used TIF money to upgrade infrastructure. That’s using TIF for economic development the way Harold Washington envisioned when he brought the program to Chicago.

On the other hand, when TIF money isn’t being used or isn’t needed, I think we need to take a serious look at increasing the returned surplus money. That’s not to say, though, that it should automatically be returned every year—accumulation of funds year to year is how TIF districts build up enough capital to finance the kind of needle-moving projects that my ward needs.

**7) Neighborhood economic development**

What would you do as alderman to boost economic development in your ward, and bring jobs to your community?

My highest priority is working with my constituents and all my ward’s stakeholders to keep it moving forward. We’ve made great progress during my time in office—thousands of new jobs have come to the ward, and hundreds of millions of dollars have been invested in businesses, schools, and infrastructure. Seeing the Pullman Park development fully filled will be a great step forward. Pivoting off of that success, I’m confident we can attract even more economic development, building on the 3,000 jobs we’ve created in the ward just over the last few years.

Also, the Red Line extension to 130th Street is on its way to becoming a reality, which will provide unprecedented and much-needed access to economic opportunity for residents of my ward. It finally seems we are beginning to turn the tide on long years of neglect on the Far South Side, but the battle is from over. I will continue to push to make sure that my ward emerges stronger than ever from the latest economic malaise.

**8) Size of the Chicago City Council**

The City Council has 50 members, but civic groups and other regularly argue for reducing the size of the Council. What should the size of the Council be? Please provide a specific number. And why?

I do not support changing the number of aldermen. Having 50 aldermen allows people real contact with, access to, and accountability from their elected representatives.

**9) A Chicago casino**

Do you support, in general concept, establishing a gambling casino in Chicago?

Yes or No: No.

Please explain:

Casino gambling isn’t right for Chicago. First of all, it would function as the worst kind of transfer tax: sending money from the vulnerable into the pockets of wealthy owners. Second of all, the record is mixed and expert opinions are scattered on the economic development benefits of casino development. Third, gambling too easily becomes an addiction, and it too often afflicts those who can least afford it.

**10) Red light and speed cameras**

Does the city have an acceptable number of red light and speed cameras currently, and are they properly employed?

Yes or No: No and no.

Please explain:

The traffic camera program is in great need of reform. The cynicism of the population toward it is deserved. It is nothing more than a way to enhance revenues, not safety, and the fact that the City lowered the number of seconds to garner more income from unsuspecting motorists is a scandal.

**11) Ward issues**

What are the top three issues in your ward — the ones you talk about most on the campaign trail?

* I am very focused on economic development in the 9th Ward. I believe that bringing additional businesses and jobs to the community is the surest path to prosperity for an area that has gone too long without. Seeing the Pullman Park development fully filled will be a great step forward. Pivoting off of that success, I’m confident we can attract even more, building on the 3,000 jobs we’ve created in the ward just over the last few years.
* The 9th Ward's public safety is a priority, and I am proud to be able to say that crime is down 15% compared to last year. The most important piece of this reduction has been the relationship-building the police have done with the community, and I look forward to continuing to work with the police to further build trust with the public.
* I believe we need to continue to work to make the schools of the 9th Ward and throughout Chicago beacons of opportunity for our children. The 9th Ward is home to two top high schools and four level 1 elementary schools--we must fight to raise all schools to those heights so that we can ensure that our whole city has the education they need to succeed in college and in their careers.