**2015 CHICAGO SUN-TIMES CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE**

Name: Tom Tunney

Ward: 44

Occupation: Alderman, 44th Ward; Owner, Anne Sather Restaurants

Education:

Undergraduate degree in Restaurant Management from the University of Illinois Master's degree in Hotel Management from Cornell University.

Previous political and civic experience:

Alderman, 44th Ward

Committee on Economic, Capital, and Technology Development, Chairman

Democratic Committeeman, 44th Ward

Illinois Restaurant Association, Chairman

Chicago Economic Development Committee, Small Business Subcommittee Chairman

**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:

**Yes.**

Please Explain:

**Ideally, pension reform will move forward with a compromise. However, we need to begin by retooling retirement plans for new hires, then examine what, if any, reforms we are allowed to implement for current workers. Everything needs to be considered in regards to pension reform and I believe the Supreme Court’s upcoming decisions will help guide us.**

**We need more flexible pension options for new hires who may opt into a 401K system. We need greater flexibility in how we invest our pension funds so that we are getting the greatest return on investment. Finally, we need to reform the rules on double-dipping so that retirees are only receiving one pension from the city.**

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?

**I am against a property tax increase.**

**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?

We need to reform the TIF process so that more money is going to schools instead of being diverted for other uses. TIFs are a key player in economic development but we need to make sure that they are only being used in blighted areas, that they are transparent, and that TIFs are expiring when they have accomplished the goals.

In addition, I support exploring new revenues sources dedicated to education, including the possibility of a land-based casino in Chicago.

**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:

**No**

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

**Non-residents spend money in our shops, eat at our restaurants, and buy things in Chicago. That revenue is crucial to the local economy and I worry that taxing non-residents for working in the city could lead to businesses moving to the suburbs to avoid taxation.**

**I am afraid that taxing Chicago’s exchanges will lead the exchanges leaving the city. These exchanges create many jobs and can easily move to the suburbs or to other major cities. Losing the exchanges would lose vital revenue for the city and cost us jobs.**

**4) Crime**

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

Yes or No:

**Yes.**

Please explain:

**I work closely with my local police officers and believe in getting our officers the resources they need to decrease crime in the 44th Ward and in our City.**

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

I believe in stopping guns from coming into our communities and I support any legislation that will accomplish that.

**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:

I would be interested in exploring the specifics of certain proposals that create a hybrid system, but I do support the mayoral appointed school board because it takes politics out of our children’s education and allows parents to hold one person accountable for the quality of education in this city – the mayor.

**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:

**Yes.**

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

**I believe that we need to reform the TIF program so that the City can hold companies and developers accountable for the promises they make, so that the TIF program is more transparent, and most importantly, that it is only being used as an economic development tool for blighted areas.**

**7) Neighborhood economic development**

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

**I have been proud to see the growth and development of the 44th Ward since being elected Alderman. I believe in a hands-on approach to economic development so that we are attracting quality businesses that act as good neighbors. We have a thriving commercial district, a growing number of small businesses, and a world-class entertainment district. In the past term, I worked with community groups, businesses, and developers to expand both Advocate and St. Joseph Hospitals in addition to the expansion of Wrigley Field. All three of these major developments will create jobs and were accomplished without taxpayer subsidies. Even when not considering these major projects, the 44th Ward has seen a 100% increase in our permit value since 2012.**

**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 caution against reducing the number of City Council members because there is a great need for the services that Aldermanic offices provide. An engaged Alderman can play a huge role in growing and improving their community. I am open to exploring reducing the number of Aldermen to reflect any reduction in city population.**

**9) A Chicago casino**

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

Yes or No:

**Yes.**

Please explain:

**A casino in Chicago will attract crowds that are already gambling in Indiana, Michigan, and Wisconsin. Instead of losing that revenue, we could be keeping that money in Chicago.**

**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.**

Please explain:

**Red light and speed cameras need to be about safety, not revenue. In the 44th Ward, we analyzed the impact that a red light camera made on Halsted and Belmont. The camera did little to improve safety or traffic conditions so we removed it. That is the type of diligence the City needs to implement for all cameras in Chicago. A thorough review of cameras is needed so that we using the program as an efficient way to prevent traffic accidents.**

**11) Ward issues**

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

**Public Safety, Schools, and Economic Development.**