

## 2015 CHICAGO SUN-TIMES CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

Name: FLORA DIGBY

Ward: 7TH

Occupation: FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Education: MBA DeVry University, Keller Graduate School of Management;  
International Business and Finance  
BSBA Roosevelt University; Accounting

Previous political and civic experience:

- . Block club member – annual school supply drive and back to school cook out
- . Special Service Area [49] Commissioner – fiduciary steward of business tax levy
- . Progressive Missionary Baptist Church – financial consultant
- . CAPS – meeting attendance and information source
- . Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Chicago Alumnae chapter – Economic Development Chair

### 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: *I believe in restructuring pension systems.*

Please Explain:

*I do not believe in restructuring that results in benefit reduction. I do not believe that those diligent in preparing for their tomorrow should have to sacrifice their investment because of poor pension plan management. Those investing in the pension plan did not make this \$550 million dollar mess. They satisfied their part of the plan – making the investment with consistent contributions. The possible resolution via restructuring to bridge the gap is the responsibility of those held responsible for management.*

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 support program restructuring which includes implementing process efficiencies and contingency strategies. I would consider supporting proportionate property tax increases across the city - taking into account property values and economic capabilities.*

## **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?

*The measures that I support to ensure a solvent retirement system and improve district finances do not include service cuts. I support responsible spending and fiduciary responsibility with checks and balances, transparency.*

## **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: *No*

\* A tax on non-Chicago residents who work in the city  
Yes or No: *Yes to support infrastructure maintenance*

\* A tax on electronic financial transactions on Chicago's trading exchanges, known as the "LaSalle Street tax"  
Yes or No: *Yes to provide investment funding*

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

## **4) Crime**

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

Yes or No: *Yes for job creation purposes*

Please explain: *I do not support the thought more police officers more arrests. We need to think outside of the box and provide wrap around services resulting in invested community partners.*

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

*I support legislature for illegal guns and ammunition be placed on manufacturers with hefty fines and penalties.*

**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 members and the Schools CEO. Do you support a change to an elected school board?

Yes or No: *Yes I support an elected school board*

Please explain: *I believe that the school board should consist of stakeholders that represent the students being serviced. It is important to provide representation aligned with the thoughts and needs of those receiving the services.*

**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: *I support increasing the annual TIF surplus given that it is applied to schools and improves services from city agencies.*

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

*Before proposing reforms for city TIF's I would propose an audit of existing TIF's to confirm compliance on the use of the dollars requested. My next step would be to propose reform that allocates the TIF dollars across the city, focusing on truly blighted communities. Areas considered blighted include high unemployment, rising property vacancies with a diminishing tax base and below poverty economic levels.*

**7) Neighborhood economic development**

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

*As Alderman, to boost ward economic development and community job creation, I would continue to think outside of the box:*

- . identify and implement small business credits to provide sustainability for existing businesses and to entice new businesses*
- . continue to provide workshops to teach needed entrepreneurial classes to arm business owners with tools for sustainability*
- . provide a comprehensive plan that includes but is not limited to grocery / food options, green initiatives for healthy living, community development centers, business incubators, big box and boutique retail.*

**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?

*In order to provide a recommendation for a City Council size reduction, I would need to understand the effectiveness of the existing size. After an analysis of the impact on constituent services, a potential recommendation may be given.*

**9) A Chicago casino**

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

Yes or No: *In general concept yes I support a gambling casino in Chicago.*

Please explain: *In general because people are going to gamble and Chicago residents are currently taking dollars from their communities into other cities and states. We need to find a way to regulate gambling and hold business owners accountable so that we recirculate Chicago dollars in Chicago communities.*

**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: *There is no acceptable level or number of red light and speed cameras.*

Please explain: *Based on research it appears that there is a disproportionate number of red light and speed cameras in select Wards. If red light cameras remain they need to be distributed appropriately. I support a moratorium on the installation of any new cameras and recommend returning the funds collected to constituents. I also disagree with changing the timing of the yellow light on the traffic cameras to bridge the revenue gap on the backs of the City residents.*

## 11) Ward issues

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

*As I continue to canvass the Ward, walking door to door, neighbors continue to share dissatisfaction to unresolved major issues: Community Safety, Economic Development and Job Creation, Quality Education.*

*I am running for 7<sup>th</sup> Ward Alderman because **We Deserve More !!!***

*The residents Deserve . . .*

***LEADERSHIP** that understands the role of the Alderman – an available, engaged community steward to provide high quality services and assuring the return of collected tax dollars from all levels of government to the community for infrastructure;*

***A SEASONED PROFESSIONAL** with 20+ years of experience in budget preparation and management, capable of making tough decisions and identifying potential revenue resources for a community that is unnecessarily blighted;*

***CHOICES** of safe communities, unlimited fresh foods, flourishing business corridors and high performing schools;*

***A PUBLIC SERVANT** with profit / nonprofit Economic Development experience, raised in a family of entrepreneurs understanding that small business contributes 80% of business revenue; a former Special Service Area Commissioner [49] and steward of the use of the business tax levy for business corridor security, beautification and sustainability;*

***AN EDUCATOR** that supports an elected school board of those that are impacted by the services provided and high quality curriculum that addresses the needs of the students.*

*As a committed, vested and compassionate Alderman TOGETHER we will continue community policing, making streets safer, creating jobs, recirculating community dollars, increasing small business presence and improving the quality of education. These challenges may seem overwhelming but working together we can Rebuild a Stronger and Sustainable 7<sup>th</sup> Ward.*