**2015 CHICAGO SUN-TIMES CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE**

Name: Christopher Vittorio

Ward: 36

Occupation: Self Employed, Owner Spin Productions

Education: St. William grade school, Fenwick high school, 2 years Columbia College Chicago, 4 years Cooking & Hospitality Institute of Chicago (Le Cordon Blue)

Previous political and civic experience: None

**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: No

Please Explain:

I believe we have a contract with current employees and retirees. They have all lived up to their end of the agreement. The city of Chicago has not. I will not support restructuring pensions for those currently working or in retirement. I believe pension benefits and contributions should be modified for any future employees.

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 will only consider property tax increases after every other possible effort has been exhausted. We need a complete audit of our city’s finances. We need to scrutinize our budget and make every necessary cut with the exception of our essential city services, including police and fire. We also need to take a top to bottom approach to any tax increases. This will ensure that our most wealthy residents and businesses will contribute first.

**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 focus on generating more revenue. Our property owners already pay an astonishing amount of money to our public schools. We need to explore other options including a casino, gaming, a commuter tax, and a LaSalle street tax. A percentage of TIF funds should also be used.

**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

\* 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.

**4) Crime**

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

Yes or No: Yes

Please explain:

We need a stronger police presence in every ward, not just our problem areas. This is the best deterrent of crime. We also need to get our residents more actively involved in their local CAPS meetings.

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

We need to discourage everyone from carrying a firearm illegally. The only way to do this is to make the offense punishable by mandatory jail time. Multiple offenses should compound the jail time significantly. HB2265 introduced by Representative Zalewski is a great start.

**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: Yes

Please explain:

A significant portion of our tax dollars fund public schools. Residents, not politicians, should decide what’s best for our schools.

**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?

TIF funds need to be taken out of the hands of our Mayor and brought back to city council. TIF money should be focused on the blighted areas for which it was intended. I think allowing politicians to determine what amount of TIF funds are surplus is questionable. A better approach would be to allocate a small percentage of TIF funds for our schools and city services.

**7) Neighborhood economic development**

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

I plan to use my Ward office as a hub for small business. My vision is to have every resident and business owner actively involved in our ward. I will network with every business in our ward. I will make certain that our residents are well aware of our local businesses and what they have to offer. My goal is to keep our dollars local. I also plan to connect with every commercial property owner. I will make every effort to fill all vacancies. I will include residents in this process to determine what businesses we need. Through their input and petitioning I will persistently fight to bring new businesses to our ward.

**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?

75-100 part-time with minimal pay and no benefits.

Every problem we face is a direct result of those we’ve elected and their self-serving decisions that were not in our best interests. I believe expanding Ward sizes and reducing the number of Alderman would compound the problem. We will essentially be giving Alderman more power and money. If we want to rid ourselves of corruption we need to take the money out of the game. The job of Alderman has become too prosperous and too powerful. All the evidence you need is right here in the 36th Ward. We have a sitting Alderman who has uprooted his family and moved to another neighborhood because he desperately needs this job and he feels his chances of winning are greater in another ward. We also have two candidates who have clearly moved to our ward within the last 18-24 months because this opportunity presented itself and they have the support of some very powerful politicians. I pose this question. If the job of Alderman remained as it was intended, part-time with minimal pay and no benefits, would we be seeing this behavior?

**9) A Chicago casino**

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

Yes or No: Yes

Please explain:

We need to focus on generating more revenue to deal with our debt issues. A casino and gaming are a great way to do this. A casino, in the right location, will also add to the allure of our lake front.

**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:

I do not support the traffic light & speed camera program. This was clearly implemented as a revenue generator and has done nothing for safety. It has compounded traffic congestion. Driver efforts to avoid these cameras have also contributed to huge increases in traffic through our neighborhood side streets.

**11) Ward issues**

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

The greatest concern I hear from residents is the condition of our streets. My focus as Alderman will be on three things. The condition of our ward, the safety of our ward, and the growth of our ward.