**2015 CHICAGO SUN-TIMES CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE**

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Ward: 9th

Occupation: Real Estate Broker

Education: BS, Chicago State University. MS, IIT

Previous political and civic experience:

See attached media lit

**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: ***Restructuring the pension system would be something I favor but I would not be in favor of diminishing any of the pension obligations to existing pension recipients who have paid into and expecting there anticipated payout, all in good faith.***

***There needs to be a “look forward” mechanism to project how many people are in the system, what the government agencies can afford and what level of funding is required to maintain the proposed system, based upon these projections***

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?

***In order to address the shortfall of approximately $26.8 billion , there are some immediate ideas that come to mind. Utilizing $1.5 billion of the TIF general fund slush fund would address approximately 3 years of the shortfall required. One other suggestion that has potential is establishing a city lottery that is dedicated to the pension funding. Other options to consider are a city owned casino., closing corporate tax loopholes and a possible Chicago commuter tax and a transaction tax on the financial district activity. All of these need to be investigated, developed and implemented in the most effective form before I would be willing to look at the property tax increase for revenue.***

**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?

***This is addressed in the response for #2. Part of the $26.8 billion shortfall includes the Chicago Teachers’ Pension Fund.***

***What was not previously discussed for all of these retirement systems was the future retirement plan option for workers entering the work force. Every employee working should have an opportunity to invest in Social Security with the required employer match in place. Understanding that Social Security may not provide a livable monthly amount for future retirement, employees should be provided an option of qualified retirement programs to provide supplemental income such as 401ks, 403bs, Roth IRAs, etc… This would not be supplemented by the workplace. Benefit days i.e. sick, holidays and vacation need remain in place, but possibly at a lower level to start and moving upward as employment tenure increases. The future of health benefits needs to follow the Affordable Health Care model.***

**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: ***Yes, if there can be a fair equitable for not just municipal workers***

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

Yes or No: ***Yes, with some small percentage that would not adversely affect our financial markets trades***

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

Casino – It is estimated that our the neighboring

**4) Crime**

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

Yes or No: ***Yes.***

Please explain: ***The hiring of more police officers is a mandatory. We need to get back to the levels of police presence that existed over six years ago. That would mean the training and hiring of 2000 officers over the next two years. Reassignment is not an option. Retirement and slow hiring have strapped the department for too long. Chicago’s crime statistics for violence and murders are known around the world. No matter how many gimmicks are introduced, the present numbers of police do not support a city of this size or population. All of the modern building, wonderful museums and efforts to increase and enhance tourism will be fruitless if the common opinion is that the city is unsafe.***

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

***I would first look at all the current legislation to best evaluate what systems are in place, and those systems that are most effective and least effective. Then work with all bodies of state government to incorporate better laws that are the best of what other states have adopted to stem the flow of illegal guns. There is also a component of working with other states that have more lenient gun laws to make it more difficult to purchase out of state and bring them into state. I don’t have the total solution but I do know by working together with city, state and federal lawmakers much more can be done that won’t infringe on the constitutional rights of the many while severely hampering the ability for those who wish to own and use illegal firearms.***

**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: ***Absolutely***

Please explain: ***The present system used in Chicago is not supported in any other county in the State. The closing of over 50 neighborhood schools last year, the increase in selected enrollment, special programs and charter schools syphon the monies from the neighborhood schools, all furnished with taxpayer dollars. The taxpayers who are footing the bill have no say so in how the decisions about schools are determined. The elected school board would provide a voice for taxpayers to be heard. Elected school board members should come from representative districts and not elected in a citywide at large election. The CEO search, process, selection and retention should be within the power of the elected school board.***

**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?

The concept of monies set aside for development is a much needed

***The concept of monies set aside is much needed and that was the intention of TIF from its inception. The issue has become those monies set aside for the intended beneficiaries are being diverted to big corporate developments or moved around to adjoining areas that take away from wards that most need it. Or in its worst case, the mayor who has no accountability to the people for the use of the discretionary/slush fund account and has the ability to assign any amount to any project he sees fit.***

***I would like to see all TIF monies be utilized for the taxpayers within a ward and there be limits of corporate TIF awards. There should be strict limitations on TIF monies to any large corporation that makes billions in revenue yet pays little to no corporate tax and its use places even more burden on the individual taxpayer. Supporting TIF’s original intent, to use the money for community development specifically in the area of home/residential redevelopment and infrastructure .***

***If TIF monies are not used by a specific time the monies should not revert to an unaccountable general account. A percentage of those monies would go into that community’s improvement account for improvement of needed city services that have not been delivered by the city and a percentage would go into a pension support fund to help with that crisis and a percentage into economic development and jobs.***

7. Ward economic and job development

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

***As Alderman, what I would do to boost the local economy and bring jobs is look at using some TIF funds to help promote a more vibrate business environment. I would work with the community on a business and economic development board level to determine what exactly my ward wants and needs. I would go to companies that have gone away from or never been present in the ward to encourage them to come here for the resurgence of the ward business community. Developing this avenue will then trigger the ability to market communities within my ward as a destination for all residence of the city to enjoy. Within my ward I would maximize the potential of business surround the redline extension. I would promote and court the medical and health community to come take advantage of all aspects of developing with us one of the rare “medical districts” within the city.***

***This would be a powerful mechanism for creating jobs within the ward. I would not stop there. I would also appeal to and find ways that would encourage hi-tech companies to set up a vibrant south side/9th ward technical training and skill development program. These partnerships would then create a more vibrant modern workforce within the ward that many other businesses and wards could benefit from.***

***These are a few of the things I would work hard to accomplish.***

**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?

***There is some validity to the consideration. However, the question would be the representation of the people in the larger scheme of things. For example, if the council were reduced by half (1/2) to 25 members, this would double the number of persons represented in a district, from 60,000 to 120,000 persons per ward. There are some large cities that have smaller city council membership, but represent more people per district. In Chicago, there would be no reduction in how aldermanic offices would function, no reduction in provision of services to city residents, police and fire services, other city departments would remain the same. Where is the cost savings? Only the potential decrease is salaries of 25 less aldermen.***

***While it will streamline the council, the rationale does not seem to be very compelling.***

**9) A Chicago casino**

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

Yes or No: ***Yes/depends***

Please explain: ***If the city retains ownership of a casino and revenues are for city services, then it could be an option.***

**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 cameras and speed cameras have not proven effective improving safety for drivers and pedestrians. Recent studies on red light cameras has supported their ineffectiveness. In addition, to supplement the perception of safety, the vendors delivering the red light cameras have reduced the yellow light timing. These methods are merely in place to have citizens fined by camera. The driving force is the revenue, not safety. There are also strong arguments that should be pursued about the constitutionality of usage of both camera systems.***

**11) Ward issues**

What are the top three issues in your ward — the ones you talk about most on the campaign trail? ***Sorry, there are four!***

***CPS Educational attainment (or lack of attainment) for elementary and secondary schools. In the 9th ward, 70% of the public schools are on probation. The 9th ward also had a large percentage of schools closed during the closings last year. The results of the closings added to the discourse throughout the area by requiring students to go into unfamiliar areas to continue their education.***

***Career development/job opportunities as a deterrent to the high crime evident in the 9th ward. This includes adding more police on the street. (See response #4)***

***Enhancing present businesses on established business corridors throughout the 9th ward***

***Addressing the abandoned property and underutilized vacant lots throughout the 9th ward.***