**2015 CHICAGO SUN-TIMES CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE**

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Ward: 38

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Education: B.S. Political Science from Northern Illinois University

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: YES

Please Explain: We can not properly fund a pension system by telling voters that we are going to throw more money at the problem when we have no way of raising this money unless we raise taxes or invent new fees.

We need to know why the pensions were not funded in the first place. Would they have been completely solvent if the city had put its full share into the system? Where did the money go that was supposed to be put into the pensions? Who authorized this money shift? When you answer these questions and many others, we can get a grip on the wheel and take the appropriate measures needed to right the ship.

**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?**

Basically under no circumstance will I agree to drop the burden on the tax payers lap again and again. The average working family has been hit with the bill for a failed and unfunded pension system for decades now. The buck needs to stop here. If your serious about being involved with reforming this city, reforming taxes, pensions, schools or anything that effects the real working families of this city, then you have to be willing to discover and expose why the system failed and who was involved in causing the failure. Only then will we ultimately know how to fix it so that the people of the city don’t have to keep paying for corrupted and foolish deals made by rubber stamp Alderman.

Some Alderman and even candidates feel you don’t need to fully answer those questions to save the pension system. Those are the people to watch out for. Those are the same people who have been part of the problem and or are moving up to take over for the previous Alderman who did nothing to help solve the problem…only add to it.

Those are the people who would kick the can down the road a few years so they can get theirs while stiffing the tax payer again.

The taxpayers, voters and families of the 38th ward and the entire city can expect that when electing me to the City Council, their best interests will be served, plain and simple.

**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?

I have proposed and currently acting with the Local School Council of my children’s school, to redraw the TIF district to include the local public school so that proper funding for operations is made available as well as funds for much needed projects and programs within the school itself.

My answer to the pensions is the same as before. What was the original plan? Why did it not work? Who or what contributed to the failure? Only then will we have an unbiased opinion of how to fix this system. Adding more property tax burden is not what I see as a solution to the problem.

**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, again raising taxes with out a clear path is not the answer. I think we all remember the last increase in sales tax and I don’t believe we have seen anything positive come from it as of yet. Watching a state grow into a larger pair of pants is not progress.

In a few days the state sales tax will return to the 3.75% and already top law makers are complaining about the budget short falls and are trying to dump the financial crisis on the first major movement for change with in this state in almost a decade. I am not opposed to keeping the higher 5% rate but I am hopeful that we are going to make streamlining cuts across every city, county and state budgets. To be clear, streamlining is not by firing and laying workers off but rather a pulling in the belt a few notches and putting the city and state on a money diet. Bringing salaries and operating costs into a more affordable level.

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

Yes or No: Yes…of course this will be interesting to see how this can be done. I believe this might have the city in a few legal battles but depending on how or what we are taxing might prove to be beneficial. Also, if the city is successful in taxing non Chicago residents who work in the city...how will it affect us when every suburb does the same to Chicago residents?

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

Yes or No: Yes, This is a tax that is not based on taking money right out of the pockets of the residents and taxpayers of the city of Chicago.

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: What there to explain? More cops, greater presence and in turn less crime.

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

Stemming the flow of illegal guns into Chicago is not going to be achieved by enacting laws that tell people their U.S. Constitutional rights are going to be ignored.

Harding the laws and punishment for those caught with illegal fire arms is an obvious choice but there needs to be a distinction between those that illegally obtain a gun and those people who have failed to properly register their 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: YES

Please explain: Provided there are safe guards to the creation of these newly elected positions:

* That persons seeking the position do not have any financial interest in companies, organizations, lobbyists or PAC’s that have or will do business with the city of Chicago and of course CPS.
* Those candidates swear to a fully enacted code of ethics laws that includes severe punishment for breaching the code.
* Those candidates are required to adhere to a set of campaign finance reforms that allow for a fair and even election playing field.
* Potential candidates for the Board of Elections must have served at least one full term as an LSC member and have been in good standing in order to be eligible to be placed on the ballot.
* Elected Board members are strictly forbidden to work for or accept compensation from any company, organization, lobbyist or PAC, that conducts business or will do business in the future with the city of Chicago or CPS at the end of their duly elected term.

**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, as a member of Portage Park LSC, we have been working to have the TIF boundaries redrawn to include Portage Park School. This school and many other local schools are in need of a lot more money to be able to provide for basic educational needs for our children. It is ridiculous to ask parents to pay an extra fee and provide basic supplies like toilet paper, sanitizers and even copy machine paper because we are told that there is not enough money in the schools budget. It is absurd to drop the cost onto a teachers lap, basically saying if you don’t want to pay for it then your classroom will not have it. The money is to be provided for by CPS and the City of Chicago.

The lack of budget these schools have in being able to provide its students with full classrooms dedicated only for computer education is a testament to the current alderman lack of response to provide for the needs of its residents.

We need to explore the idea of allowing TIF money to be diverted directly back to local public schools not just a portion of the surplus. When the local schools are well funded and teachers are given the tools to do their job, the local community will benefit.

When young people start looking to buy houses and start their families, the quality of the local schools ranks at the top of their consideration list. No longer can we accept the idea that when these families are starting out they begin looking into the suburbs because they are able to find better schools. Further, as people who are committed to living in the city start the same journey the quality of schools must be the same in all areas of the city.

So as a city, if we concentrate our efforts to increasing the quality of the public schools, we open doors to small and large businesses to set up shop in any of those areas.

This is what makes neighborhoods stabilize and property values increase.

I am a firm believer that if a neighborhood has good schools then people, money and businesses will be attracted to it. Increase the percentage that the public schools get from the TIF surplus but also channel those funds to schools that really need the money. That might not always be in the 38th ward, but unfortunately, that is just what is needed here in the 38th ward.

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

**7) Neighborhood economic development**

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

The city has an enormous amount of vacant warehouse space and other under utilized spaces, that there needs to be a new idea of how to use TIF moneys and tax incentives to the property owners, to allow certain types of businesses to start up and redevelop in those areas. Businesses, that are new and growing. Businesses that are not bound by the changes in international or national events. Businesses that are perfectly designed to serve the city of Chicago, the surrounding suburbs and beyond.

I have a plan to help our city become a boom town in less than 10 years.

If I am elected I will work day and night with the Mayor, the City council and the Governor to get these businesses started and rolling into full production immediately. A new industry that will employ thousands of people and stimulate more job growth as a direct result.

Locally, I would initiate a program to assist new start ups with financial planning and business plans so that new small businesses have a better idea of what is involved in starting and running a business.

Encouraging monthly meetings with speakers from local and not so local businesses to come and speak and to have work shops utilizing experiences to help overcome common hurdles of owning and operating a small business.

I would also recommend a new Booster club for real estate brokers in which residents, businesses and activists are able to show these brokers that the 38th ward is the best choice for their clients whether it is families starting out or seasoned investors and business owners.

Show the home buyers where we are and why the 38th ward is the best place to raise a family….good shopping, fun restaurants, bars and of .course, GREAT SCHOOLS.

**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 don’t agree with reducing the number of Alderman on the city council.

For every reduction in the number of Alderman you increase the number of people that Alderman must serve by over 100%.

If you cut the number of alderman to 25 then maybe we save about 3 million a year in eliminated salary costs. This savings is trumped by the number of people that live in each of the wards. For example, if you have 60,000 people living in each of the 50 wards and we reduce the alderman to 25 there will be 120,000 people looking to one office for its basic service requests. Of course, there will be a need to increase staff to service all the people of the ward that has just doubled in size. (And you think you never see or hear from your Alderman unless it’s an election year!)

On the side note, with a reduced number of alderman, you will have just made it easier and cheaper for super PACs and special interest groups to continue buying politicians and easier for any mayor to control the city council. Not to mention it just became even harder for the non-politically connected people to step up and represent their communities.

50 Alderman is a good number to keep the balance of services provided to the ward residents and to stimulate debate on the city council floor.

Very simply, if you want to stimulate a change in city council behavior then vote for someone that has a strong vested interest in our community and stop blindly voting for the incumbent or his family and friends.

**9) A Chicago casino**

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

Yes or No: YES

Please explain: I think a land based casino in Chicago would be a very good idea and extremely profitable. Keeping in mind our target audience is tourists and visitors…not to target local residents by allowing gambling in the local businesses.

Gambling is NOT the answer to our financial problems, if allowed in the local bars and businesses; it could be the down fall of our communities. I would not vote for local gambling.

Revenues from the casino need to be very specifically allocated and not dumped into a budget slush fund never to be seen again. A small portion of the revenues could even be allotted to help close the gap in the pension crisis.

The majority (90-95%) of the revenues generated from the casino should be directed towards infrastructure upgrades and repairs needed for roads, underpasses, bridges, sewers, schools and parks.

**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: YES

Please explain:

I do support the traffic light cameras.

There is no doubt that this is a great revenue source that is not being created from an increase in property taxes or an increase in fees and is not a totally new \*fee just made up to create revenue for the city.

As you have already guessed I am not a fan of creating new fees just for the sake of making money. The city is not in the business of profitability. The traffic light camera revenues are totally voluntary….if you feel the need to run a red light then you contribute to the fund. Respect the traffic light that is designed to keep us all safe and it costs you nothing and maybe you save someone else’s life in the process.

People will get used to the idea of slowing down in the speed zones and slowing down for the yellow instead of accelerating through. I admit I have gotten a ticket for turning on red with out coming to a complete stop and for driving over 30mph in a park speed zone. Like anyone else initially I was upset…who wouldn’t be? Then if you are able to see it objectively, you know that you broke the law and if there was a police officer near by they would have pulled you over to write you a ticket.

The neat trick is now the camera allows for the ticket to be issued with out discriminating who the driver is and basically not missing anyone. The cameras free up police officers time to allow them to attend to more urgent and pressing matters, rather than spend 20 minutes writing a ticket.

The tickets are not cheap and I do not plan on getting another one of those anytime soon.

**11) Ward issues**

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

**Number one** by far is the level of corruption. People have a strong belief that the city politicians are corrupt and they have been stealing from the taxpayers for ever.

They feel that the fix is in. That real people with real solutions or genuine desire to help don’t stand a chance against machine candidates and their political friends.

There is so much frustration from the voters that they don’t even believe their votes can make a difference in trying to get the old political names out of the city council. Voters believe that the elections and campaigns are a never ending stream of smear tactics and lies set to confuse people into voting for the same old guy.

 There is a strong sense of distrust for politicians that have a lot of money endorsements and people are very blunt that they don’t trust corporate and union sponsorship in the political campaign. They feel that these groups are always buying the elections.

If the mayor wants to win the hearts and minds of the city he should think long and hard about where he puts his money. It is easy for the Mayor to support a candidate that is endorsed by the current political family and that will just say yes all the time but it takes guts to support the candidate that thinks for him self and will challenge him to be a better Mayor, and in turn making himself to be a better Alderman for the people of any ward, not just the 38th.

**Second** issue I hear a lot about is legal and illegally converted single family homes.

Your average taxpayers does not pay much attention but the ones that do understand that when a single family home (a building that was built to house just one family) has multiple units in it, it creates many negative aspects to the area and the city.

They see that the home is allowed to generate income as a multi unit building and only pay taxes as a single family. They also see that the number of people living in the house can cause a drain or an increased usage of city services that the property tax does not support. Lastly, people notice and it is not uncommon that there will be an increased number of people coming and going. Whether true or not, it gives a bad look to the block and a feel that something bad could be going on there.

When I speak to apartment building owners they seem to share the same issues and concerns. Owners of legitimate multi unit buildings are being over taxed. Two and three flats have to pay multi unit tax rates and the guy down the street with the single family house can sneak two extra units in the attic or basement and still only pay one third the property tax.

**Third,** I hear a lot about lost real estate and lost jobs. Obviously they go hand and hand. If there weren’t so many lost jobs then there wouldn’t be so many lost homes to foreclosure and short sales. People that I speak with are shocked at the lack of concern from city and state government leaders. People feel that the elected City Council has no common sense to recognize that we were in a major economic depression and that nothing was done to help. People are losing their homes and families are falling apart as a result of the government’s failure to act and protect the people’s security. The government was right in there with big money and Wall Street taking advantage and selling people out for their own political and financial gains. Voters have a strong feeling of disinterest in politics and elections because what they see is unwillingness from elected officials to make really hard choices to create change in our country.

People seem to have a common idea that I agree with; the city needs a major industry to develop here that is not so one sided, so that if the markets dips, it will not bring down the entire economy. We need to rebuild the tracks of industry and have as many engines moving at one time.

I would like to see the city reinventing itself in a new industry that is as old as civilization itself. An industry that will take a foot hold and spread through out the city and state like wildfire and is completely recession proof. No matter what happens on Wall Street or around the world…Chicago will be in full production and it would be just the revenue source needed to close the gaps from the failed pension system, decaying infrastructure and severely under funded schools. Not to mention the employing and creation of thousand of high and low level skilled jobs.