**2015 CHICAGO SUN-TIMES CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE**

Name: Sherita AnnHarris

Ward:24

Occupation: United States Postal Worker

Education: High School Graduate – George WT Collins High School

Previous political and civic experience: Revitalizing Grey Stone within the 24th ward - 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:

Please Explain: Restructuring is the logical way to go. Our Financial Institutions have taken a huge hit over the last 6 years or so. When Congress and then President Bush passed legislation that created the $700 billion troubled Assets Relief Program aka (TARP), and the many other bailout programs by the Federal Government. We must figure out a way to restructure these programs without further depletion, while creating a long term strategy to restore sound financial foundation.

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? Raising property taxes at this point of my opinion is No! The people have paid dearly over the last decade to support national and local law makers. There must be innovative thinking and measures to come up with how to fund these systems. It cannot be business as usual…

**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?

**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:

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

Yes or No:

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

Yes or No:

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:

Please explain: No, Keep the hiring on the normal scale. COPS need to do their job. We have many COPS abusing the clock, and not earning their pay. As alderman I will look at how the internal operations of CPD operate. Is there waste within the agency? When was the last time an over haul of operations occurred? CPD is one of the highest budgetary entities within the city. Are we getting the bang for our buck??

What legislation in Springfield would you support to try to stem the flow of illegal guns into Chicago? I’m not familiar with the current legislation on the floor currently, but any legislation that potentially halts the flow of illegal gun trafficking, I will support.

**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:

Please explain: With so much debate over school closings and other important issues plaguing, Many people feel it’s a conflict of interest for the Mayor to direct this large entity and run the city adequately. CPS is the largest school district in the state of Illinois. With an entity that large, transparency is always good.

**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? I’d rather abstain on this question at the moment. I don’t know enough to give a sound answer..

Yes or No:

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?If elected I will focus on increasing the economic value of each home within the 24th ward..

Addressing the foreclosure issue that’s plaguing our community by forging a relationship with financial institutions. The vacant lot, vacant building and red X building issue that’s plaguing our community is an unique opportunity to give aspiring entrepreneur’s a realistic chance to work in the real-estate industry, whether it’s through residential or commercial. The opportunity will be there, and I will push programs to give people a chance to own and have a stake in the community in which they live.

**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’d rather abstain on this question at the moment. I don’t know enough to give a sound answer..

**9) A Chicago casino**

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

Yes or No:

Please explain: The concept in general works for me, putting proper measurements in place would be the work that’s needed – It’s an alternate route to raise revenue for systems in need of overhaul.

**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: I’d rather abstain on this question at the moment. I don’t know enough data to submit a sound opinion on the red light and speed camera issue.

Please explain:

**11) Ward issues**

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

1. Local government should be efficient, responsive and treat all residents equally regardless of income, background or age in order to keep our community safe. The single most important way to keep this true, is to hold me accountable to managing and governing the 24th ward with integrity. Politics as usual cannot continue to plague our community, bribery, scandal, and anything else that’s going to tear our community down will not be a part of my administration!!!
2. If you look at any thriving community, recreational centers are a huge part of building a community. The system is broken and not structured for success. We will work to revitalize our community rec centers and also look to build new ones that establishes a fresh curriculum for building character, leadership and self-esteem within our youth / community
3. Our team will take a hard look at the Economic development. We want to ensure we have businesses that are right for the community, but also listen to the residents regarding their needs. The Economic development program will be one that we will take a close look at and decide how best to keep all projects inclusive of the residents – from helping construct, to owning, to putting folks to work.

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1. One of my first action items will be to clean up the 24th ward block by block. I will be implementing a clean community program. We must get back to taking PRIDE in our community. We can’t begin to solicit business or garner any type of change, if we don’t start to clean up our own house first.
2. One of the major objectives will be to foster a relationship between the police and citizens of the 24th ward. For example having the beat cops interact more with residents. The more a positive relationship can be fostered between CPD and residents, the more trust can be built between the two parties.