

2015 CHICAGO SUN-TIMES CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

Name: SCOTT WAGUESPACK

Ward: 32

Occupation: Alderman, 32nd Ward

Education: B.A. Political Science, Colorado State University; J.D. Chicago-Kent College of Law, IIT.

Previous political and civic experience:

Alderman, 32 Ward since 2007

Several political campaigns in Illinois and nationally

City Administrator, Berwyn, 2006

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:

The Illinois lower court ruling that says the reform legislation violated a provision in the state constitution that declares retirement benefits cannot be "diminished or impaired" requires us to fix our other financial problems first. We need to reprioritize our spending first, and revamp the Tax Increment Financing system. As TIFs continue to grow and more dollars are spent without any layout of the financial impact on taxpayers. \$500 million per year is going into TIFs, which clearly detracts from our ability to manage payments on pensions and other obligations.

Second, without several solutions on the table, we cannot make any headway in the discussion about which solutions are financially viable or not.

Solutions should include 1) TIF reform, 2) large scale reassessment of PINs throughout the City, and a new system implemented by the County Assessor to balance the scale, 3) put an end to pay to play within the pension system, and add some type of Special Master overseer in the city pensions to act as a watchdog over pension boards, municipal advisors, pension earners (to prevent double dipping) and the fees earned and distributed, 4) provide the Inspector General with appropriate authority and financial to watchdog expenditures and waste, and provide a counterbalance to fiscal

analysis within the executive branch, 5) look at other sources of revenue including any decision on casino profits with majority of profits going to Chicago, 6) any sales tax, transaction tax, or property tax should have a five year sunset provision with all proceeds going to pension payments, 6) and review contracts for possible renegotiation in light of poor contracting methods and vastly negative outcomes for the City.

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 Mayor and Council need to have a serious public discussion with the state, led by the mayor about how the funding disparities between Chicago and the rest of the state will be fixed. Fixing the property tax assessment system and scaling back TIF coverage will help and finally, the CPS Board should renegotiate the toxic swap deals.

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

*** 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.

Sales tax expansion is a necessity to meet the type of economy we are becoming more like each day. Other cities and states have expanded their tax base to include these service oriented economies.

Some type of commuter tax should be discussed, and the Inspector General tried to start that conversation in 2011. I'm not entirely sold on the idea of such a tax, but there are possible versions of it that might work.

A financial transaction tax can generate revenue for the city without impacting residents' purchasing power. All three, and any other revenue generators should have sunset provisions.

4) Crime

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

Yes or No: Yes

Please explain:

I have supported hiring more officers in the past few years as their numbers have dwindled. We need more officers to make up for the lack of manpower in many districts and inability of the City to keep up with the calls for service throughout the year.

The inability or lack concern by the Administration to provide real details on \$100 million plus in overtime is appalling and should not be allowed to continue. The quality of life and safety of our citizens is at stake and playing games with numbers in overtime, manpower and crime stats is damaging Chicago's reputation and hurting all of our communities.

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

I support universal background checks. I support efforts to block straw man purchases.

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

Please explain:

Based on the continued bad news coming from the Board, including the lack of motivation to renegotiate swaps, and fiduciary duty, and ethics breaches by board members, I think it is time for a partially elected board.

The board could be made up of elected members and mayoral appointees. The elected members would have to first serve on a local school board, be elected or serve on a regional board, and then be required to run for an election to the higher board. Equal representation from a qualified representative from each region of the city would allow for a diverse school board while still allowing a mayor some influence.

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?

Some TIFs are open and transparent, others are not at all and the Mayor's call for confidentiality and expansion of TIFs is financially risky. I have supported TIFs in my ward and will continue as long as the funds are directed to what they were initially set for and not for slush funds that the administration taps into whenever they want for unrelated projects. I support a higher surplus and I support reigning in the TIF program by ending expansion, and scaling back TIFs where they are not required. Chicago has the highest number of TIFs nationwide, the largest geographic area of any city by far covered in TIFs, and the largest imbalance foisted on Chicago property tax payers than ever before. I have denied TIF to several developers, and they have almost always come back and built their projects with their own funds. I do not support the TIF to the DePaul Arena and Marriot. My office wrote an analysis of this deal and it was clear that the firm that wrote the City's analysis in support of the deal contradicted prior similar analyses that showed the deal shouldn't be made. Furthermore, the deal was clearly misleading when the recent pricetag rose over 75%. I will continue to fight for greater transparency in TIF creation and the spending of TIF funds.

<http://ward32.org/featured-news/report-on-the-proposed-depaul-arena-and-entertainment-district/>

7) Neighborhood economic development

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

I have a robust ward with businesses opening frequently. My staff and I are very proactive and look for ways to help advocate for businesses and our chambers of commerce that support small to large businesses. I reach out to businesses as well through my contacts with business people, and find locations that fit the needs of potential businesses. We have frank conversations about taxes, licensing, and the include all of our communities in the process of bringing in business. We also make sure all economic development, both residential or commercial, fits the needs of the community and make sure we have the appropriate infrastructure in place before starting projects. I provide clear assessments to businesses to let them know ahead of time what to expect and how they can budget and plan accordingly. We have seen an influx of many new businesses in the past year and 2015 and beyond are looking very good with new types of businesses coming in, including a hotel built in a wonderful historic structure, a Ford dealership, and a mixture of food, retail, and services related businesses. We are also advocating for reuse of planned manufacturing districts, and new areas of the ward. I'm confident that we will continue to have a ward that is a large source of the City's new businesses.

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 2011, our Progressive Reform Caucus proposed 35 aldermen based on community areas and roughly mapped out a 35-Ward map that would result in each Alderman representing about 77,000 people. We also started a process with several universities and law schools to find a way to create a panel and guidelines for the aldermen to follow in 2020 remapping. The closed door, backroom dealing that took place, to put it lightly, disenfranchised several communities, especially in the 2nd Ward. Aldermen drawing maps through alleys, and making up boundaries without common senses requires us to create this panel, and reduce the number of aldermen. The reduction in aldermen would increase political power with aldermen and reduce some of the expenditures.

Draft Map based on community areas- <http://ward32.org/news/draft-35-ward-map/>

9) A Chicago casino

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

Yes or No: Yes

Please explain:

In concept yes but the practical implications are scary. The original plans from a few years ago lacked oversight and the so-called great revenue generator for Chicago was not at a high enough percentage to make it worthwhile. I would prefer to put all other possible options on the table first and discuss them before diving into a casino. The social implications and economic benefits are not always as rosy as made out to be and we need to look at the implications for each strata of our society.

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:

The City Red Light Camera program has turned out to be another poorly conceived and poorly managed city program that focuses on revenue versus safety. The corruption and bribery that has plagued the program since its inception should be reason for us to scale back the program or shut it down once the Xerox contract is finished. There are cameras, whether speed or red light that might work in certain areas, but the City has not shown any investments in the actual intersections with cameras. (See Inspector General Ferguson reports). Speed cameras have been deployed on streets not always in need and the manner in which the deal was sealed was also another veiled attempt at generating revenue. It wasn't until there was push back that the details were released by the Administration. Dynamic displays would have been a better approach. The revenue generation promised also failed and created a budget hole with money spent but not generated.

I favor increasing the yellow light by one second, but this would require changes to the state law. The increased one second would allow for vehicles and cyclists to safely pass through an intersection. The additional one second would greatly improve the entire

program.

11) Ward issues

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

As Alderman I have delivered on promises made when I was first elected in 2007. My office focuses on education, crime, infrastructure and development, and businesses in my ward and we have a great record on these issues. I communicate directly with over a fifteen (and now more under new remap) neighborhood organizations, and have built great relationships with my groups, including several business organizations and chambers of commerce. Performance and interaction with the community in our schools has improved greatly, and our rapport with parents and teachers is excellent. Our crime is down in the neighborhoods but we have created very active neighborhood watches and our community relationships with the different police districts has improved over the years. I operate my office in an open and accessible manner and communicate to residents and businesses citywide on all sorts of local and citywide issues.

Zoning, development, infrastructure improvements and business development has continued to be a robust part of our ward and we expect this continue well into the future.