**2015 CHICAGO SUN-TIMES CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE**

Name: Faheem Shabazz

Ward: 8th

Occupation: Barber Stylist/ Licensed Real Estate Agent

Education: Walt Disney/ Lane Tech HS/ Cain’s Barber College/ Tim Rice Real Estate

 Previous political and civic experience:

I started the SAVING THE YOUTH MOVEMENT in 2003 to bring attention to the highest murder rate in the nation that Chicago had that year. I then followed with a STOP THE KILLING initiative in 2005 which brought together over 300 parents and youth to march and rally against gun violence in the 6th, 7th and 8th Wards, all based out of my barbershop at the time where I held gang intervention meetings weekly. I went on to create a community watchdog alert team in 2006 that led to the arrest of Larry Barlow, the murderer of Antoinette Means who was the manager at a KFC located at 83rd and Jeffery. Later that year I obtained 1000 signatures from residents to plead with CTA to bring bus service back to 83rd St. Along with about 50 supporters we marched in the winter cold with megaphone in hand.

As the community started to see me appear on news channels I was asked to run for 8th ward Alderman in 2007. I placed 3rd out of 10. By 2011 I had worked with CPS in the Culture of Calm program and increased my visibility in high crime areas to show that it wasn't just about being the Alderman and collecting a check. I was inspired to run in 2011 and placed 2nd. Shortly after I started the B.M.U. organization [Black Men United] which fights on all community levels to secure our neighborhoods by direct intervention with gangs, citing and protesting unfit stores in our communities which sell outdated products, drugs and cigarettes even to minors.

**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: The police and fire systems are less than 30 percent funded. When you allow something to get as bad as Chicago's pension system has, there rarely are any good options for repairing it. We don’t want to be the next Detroit.

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?

Under state law, Chicago will be required to more than double that $476 million pension contribution by 2016, and the annual tab is scheduled to continue rising rapidly after that. The city says it can't afford the higher contribution, but even the new payment is barely half of the $2.2 billion payment Chicago should make according to GASB rules. (Government Accounting Standards Board)

I support a graduated income tax system where more affluent people pay higher rates than less wealthy individuals.

**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?

Cut non-essential spending, and streamline non-classroom departments. Use reserves to close the budget gap.

**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.

A tax on non-Chicago residents may be a tough sell but in the end, the city needs the revenue to survive.

**4) Crime**

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

Yes or No: YES

Please explain:

The presence of more professional non biased police is always a great idea to thwart crime and gun violence. I am also a supporter of more community based coalitions to remedy crime toward protection for the community residents when police are not around.

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

I will support legislation that promotes stricter rules on gun sales. Chicago has no gun stores or ranges but still has one of the highest gun violence ratings in the nation.

**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:

I am 100% for an ELECTED SCHOOL BOARD

Ald. Michelle Harris, 8th, who as chairman of the Rules Committee decides which ballot questions get voted on. She has blocked issue over and over again because she votes 100% with the Mayor, who is not in favor of an 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: No

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

Mayor Emanuel cuts benefits to retirees, jacks up your property taxes, and brings in more cash for things like the [River Point](http://www.chicagoreader.com/chicago/mayor-emanuel-tif-charter-nato/Content?oid=6476465) office building in the West Loop, the [Hyatt hotel](http://www.chicagoreader.com/chicago/mayor-emanuel-taps-shrinking-tif-funds/Content?oid=6984977) in Hyde Park, the aforementioned South Loop basketball arena for DePaul, and that South Loop hotel for Marriott. Loopholes in TIF laws need to be remedied and transparency with accountability is a must.

**7) Neighborhood economic development**

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

I am a firm believer in revitalizing and opening new Trade Schools and creating a local business directory of professional qualified businesses that exist within our community. The 8th Ward has become an economic dessert with no help (on a whole) from the Alderman. Certain areas of the Ward are beautiful business areas while the vast majority looks poverty stricken.

I also am heavily involved in summer job programs for our youth.

**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?

Chicago is big. Keep the 50 but the remapping every ten years need to be overhauled.

**9) A Chicago casino**

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

Yes or No: No

Please explain: I’m against Casino’s and what they stand for. Revenue at the cost of creating addicts? I’m not for it.

**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:

There are several Red Light cameras in my Ward, which the Alderman voted YES on. They flash all night and day but I don’t see them downtown.

**11) Ward issues**

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

1) Unemployment with no programs for funding and job creation.

2) Crime is rampant especially murder and gun violence.

3) False leadership. The Alderman votes 100% WITH the Mayor on ALL council floor issues. Who does she represent? The residents of the 8th Ward or Rahm Emanuel?