

CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

GENERAL

Name: Jamie Gauthier

Office sought and political party affiliation: I am a Democrat, running for Philadelphia City Council in the 3rd District

Campaign website and/or Facebook page: website: jamieforwestphilly.com, facebook: jamieforwestphilly

Current neighborhood and total years of residence in Philadelphia: Cedar Park, I am a lifelong Philadelphian

Age: 40

Children (if so, what schools did/do they attend?): I have two sons, ages 15 and 11. My oldest attends Carver School of Engineering and Science and my youngest attends Science Leadership Academy Middle School.

PROFESSIONAL

Education (college/grad school/certificate; degree & year earned in each): I hold a bachelor's degree in Business from Temple University and a master's degree in City Planning from University of Pennsylvania.

Current occupation: Consultant

Previous occupations: Executive Director, Fairmount Park Conservancy, Executive Director, Sustainable Business Network, Program Officer, Local Initiatives Support Corporation

CIVIC

Previous/current elected position held and years served (if any): N/A

Leadership positions in civic or community groups: Current: Board Member, University City District, Vice Chair, Philadelphia Crosstown Coalition, Board Member, Garden Court Community Association

Previous: Board Member, PennFuture, President, Garden Court Community Association

QUALIFICATIONS

In your opinion, what are the core responsibilities of the office you are seeking?

I'm running to be a member of City Council in the 3rd District because I believe that City Council can be a force for good in our communities through its power to enact legislation as well as its role as a steward of taxpayer dollars. This power comes with a responsibility to pursue the common good and serve and represent the interests of all Philadelphians. A member of City Council should be an advocate for her constituents, ensuring that residents are getting the services they deserve. More importantly, a Council member should also embrace her role as a leader in her communities by providing a vision for how residents, civic organizations, local businesses and institutions, and government can work together for the common good.

How are you uniquely qualified to meet those responsibilities?

I've dedicated my life and my professional career to public service, helping to solve some of the most intractable social and economic problems facing the 3rd District and the city. Throughout all of these experiences, I learned how to empower people and connect them to opportunity so that they could work to tackle the challenges they faced. As a leader in the non-profit sector, I worked to increase opportunity for others by founding Mommy Grads, a program that helped single moms handle the struggles of raising children while attending college; I helped to make housing more affordable and revitalize neighborhood business districts as a program officer at Philadelphia Local Initiatives Support Corporation; I worked to create an economy that values people, planet, *and* profit as the Executive Director of the Sustainable Business Network; and I worked to make our parks stronger and improve our public spaces as the Executive Director of the Fairmount Park Conservancy.

Additionally, I have an extensive history with volunteerism and civic engagement in the 3rd District, including serving as president of Garden Court Community Association, and serving on the board of University City District.

For each statement below please indicate, where applicable, whether you agree or disagree, and comment to elaborate on your response. You can agree in whole or part. Do not feel limited to the available comment space; we want to hear your thoughts.

GOVERNANCE

City Council has considered legislation that would institute a three-term limit for Council members. Should Council approve this or similar legislation, thereby putting the question of term limits for the office of City Council before the voters of Philadelphia?

Y N

Yes. I support three four-year terms, as outlined in Councilmember Allan Domb's bill, and I would be a vocal advocate as a Councilmember, if elected.

City Council's convention of councilmanic prerogative allows public land use decisions to be made by a single elected official. What is the optimal role for City Council members in the land disposition process? For District candidates: What will be your office's process for making decisions about the sale of publicly-owned land?

I believe we should end the practice of councilmanic prerogative because it empowers single politicians and a well-connected few at the expense of the people and the common good. Councilmembers should empower residents and neighborhood civic organizations to take part in constructive conversations with developers. Building the capacity of resident-led organizations has been a career-long focus for me, and is something I'd continue as a Councilmember. Additionally, part of my platform is to pass legislation that will implement the zoning plans of "Philadelphia 2035". Implementing these plans will honor the voices of residents in charting the future of their neighborhoods and communities.

Philadelphia has made some important strides to remove politics and favoritism from the property assessment process; however, recent reporting has shown that the City still has significant work to do. How do you believe the property assessment process should work? And what role, if any, should Council play in this process?

I believe that politics and favoritism should play no role in the property tax assessment process. Assessments should be based on accurate, up-to-date valuations of property. Council's role in this should be to monitor the overall process (to ensure it is sound and fair), listen to constituents, and legislate on programs that can provide relief and assistance to homeowners in need. I share the concern of current council members that our property tax assessment process should have more uniformity and equity-- currently, for example, properties are being overvalued in neighborhoods where residents can least afford it-- however, I think the answer lies in broad fixes to the system, not council intervention on individual assessments, as suggested in a recent proposal. Additionally, the audit recently-commissioned by City Council seems to offer good steps for moving forward.

Philadelphia's government includes three independently-elected row offices: The City Commissioners, the Sheriff, and the Register of Wills; a fourth office, the Clerk of Quarter Sessions, was abolished in 2010. Are Philadelphians best served by the functions of these offices being administered by elected officials?

Y N

I don't believe Philadelphians are currently being well-served by these offices. I tend to lean most often towards empowering people to participate in the democratic process, and think officials who administer important functions of government should be accountable to the people, however, sometimes the lack of transparency and political connections of a given elected official make it difficult for the electorate to impose accountability. This lack of accountability makes it

hard for citizens to get the level of competency and effectiveness they deserve out of these offices.

I will say, though, that I find encouragement in the new slate of candidates for City Commissioner. There are candidates running who seem to want to transform the office and make it more accessible.

In 2021, City Council will draw and adopt a new District Council map. Council members will have data from the 2020 Census for this purpose. How do you define "fair maps"? And how will your office work to ensure that the Council map adopted during your term is fair, according to that definition?

A fair City Council District map will have a roughly equal distribution across wards and districts. Additionally, a fair remapping process will make no attempts to divide voters with similar interests (as was the case previously with the 7th District, when Latino voters were intentionally split so as to lessen their power and representation in Council). As a Councilmember, I would work with my colleagues to ensure the remapping stood up to these standards.

EDUCATION

City Council has several direct levers of influence with regards to the School District, including its position in the budget process and its "advice and consent" authority over School Board appointments. How would you articulate Council's role in education? And what single policy objective would you prioritize to improve educational outcomes?

I think Council's role with respect to education is to have a keen sense of the conditions of schools as well as the welfare of students in the district, help community organizations in-district that wish to offer resources to connect to local schools, approve the budget (and through that process, assist the Board to prioritize and meet the needs of constituents), and advise/veto School Board appointments. With regards to a single policy I'd pursue, I think that our public schools need more resources. One way I think we can meet that need is by reforming the 10-year tax abatement, and returning the bulk of our property taxes to our schools. I am also in favor, moving forward, of a democratically-elected school board, as I think Philadelphia's voters deserve the opportunity to select (in a direct manner) the people governing its schools.

FISCAL STABILITY

The Pennsylvania Intergovernmental Cooperation Authority, or PICA, sunsets in 2023 when its bonds are repaid. Would you advocate for the extension of PICA or the creation of a different independent fiscal oversight agency, such as a city budget office? If so, what form should the new oversight agency take?

Y N

Yes. I believe it's in the interests of all Philadelphians to have a non-partisan, independent fiscal oversight agency to help ensure prudent management of public finances. I would advocate for

an agency that has the authority to analyze long-term fiscal sustainability; monitor compliance with fiscal rules; provide policy costings; and provide normative advice.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Since 2009, the 25 largest cities in the US have averaged 2.3% annual job growth, while Philadelphia averaged only 1.4%. What is your vision for economic development that would significantly increase job growth? And how would you preserve affordability as the city experiences growth in jobs and population?

We can generate job growth in the city by prioritizing the creation and growth of small businesses and by creating a more business-friendly government. Economic development in our city has tended to focus on the attraction of large businesses when it is proven that job creation is happening through the start and advancement of small and mid-sized ones. In order to thrive, these businesses need access to capital, a streamlined tax structure, and better ways to communicate and transact business with the City. These are issues that I would champion as a councilmember.

I also believe that we have to push local medical and educational institutions to prioritize local businesses in their procurement plans, and that we must invest in the equitable development of commercial corridors like 52nd St, Lancaster Avenue, and 60th St. Additionally, there is a whole economy that can be stimulated by moving towards renewable energy as a city. All of these are things that I'm passionate about and wish to move forward.

I believe the 3rd District lacks a vision and plan for how to encourage smart development that allows communities to flourish without driving up costs and dislocating long-time residents. If we empower residents and communities, though, I am certain that we can grow while tackling harmful effects of gentrification and rising costs. We do that by ending councilmanic prerogative, and passing legislation to implement the zoning plans from "Philadelphia 2035"; and expanding just cause legislation to better protect renters and homeowners.

QUALITY OF LIFE

Philadelphia is the only major American city without regular, citywide municipal street sweeping. Additionally, numerous studies have demonstrated that Philadelphians are deeply concerned about short dumping and litter. As a Councilmember, how would you address this persistent quality of life issue?

Our residents deserve a clean city with clean streets and an effective sanitation program. I support bringing back the city's defunct street-sweeping program and will advocate for it throughout the campaign. I was glad to see Mayor Kenney's recent efforts to expand the street cleaning program by allocating more resources for this in the municipal budget, however, I think we need to be even more aggressive (including requiring residents to move their cars and expanding beyond a pilot to a full-fledged operation)..

VISION

You are running for a four year term in City Council. What do you hope to accomplish during these four years?

I believe we can tackle the biggest challenges facing the 3rd District if residents are empowered and better connected to opportunity. I believe this because I experienced it first-hand as a leader in the non-profit sector ensuring more equitable development, creating sustainable jobs, increasing access to affordable housing, and investing more in our parks and public spaces. I'm running on an Empowerment Agenda that seeks to shift the balance of power away from politicians and back towards the people.

We can tackle gentrification by ending councilmanic prerogative and building up the capacity of neighborhood civic organizations; passing legislation to implement the zoning recommendations contained in "Philadelphia 2035"; expanding "Just Cause" legislation to better protect renters and homeowners from unfair evictions; fixing the broken property tax assessment process to prevent homeowners from being priced out of their neighborhoods; and providing resources to preserve and fix up low-income homes so that more people can stay in their homes.

We can tackle poverty by expanding programs, such as the West Philadelphia Skills Initiative, that train unemployed and underemployed West Philadelphians to do jobs provided by our local institutions; encouraging our institutions to patronize local businesses in West Philadelphia and help local entrepreneurs; and investing in the equitable development of all of our commercial corridors, like 52nd Street, Lancaster Avenue, and 60th Street.

And we can tackle climate change by establishing a Community Commission to create a Green New Deal for Philadelphia; transitioning to 100% renewable energy in Philadelphia by 2030; investing in our parks and public green spaces to help draw down greenhouse gasses; and rethinking our infrastructure to allow for more active transportation and carpooling, and increased transit ridership.