

CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

GENERAL

Name: Maria D. Quiñones Sánchez

Office sought and political party affiliation: Democrat for City Council – 7th District

Campaign website and/or Facebook page: maria2019.com

Current neighborhood and total years of residence in Philadelphia: 1974-1995 Hunting Park; 1997 - Present Norris Square; I proudly represent both neighborhoods.

Age: 50

Children (if so, what schools did/do they attend?): Oldest Edgar: St. Boniface, St. Mary's, graduated Roman Catholic, attended CCP. Youngest Tomasito: Frankford Friends, Masterman, graduated Central High School, currently a junior at Penn State.

PROFESSIONAL

Education (college/grad school/certificate; degree & year earned in each): Graduated Mastbaum, attended Temple University, graduated Lincoln University with Masters in Human Services.

Current occupation: City Councilperson for the 7th District. Chair of Committees on Appropriations and Licenses & Inspections. Vice-Chair of Committees on Streets & Services and Public Health & Human Services. Member of Committees on Rules, Education, Children & Youth, Housing, Parks & Recreation, Ethics, and Fiscal Stability & Intergovernmental Cooperation.

Previous occupations: Deputy City Commissioner of Elections; City Council aide; Executive Director of ASPIRA, Pennsylvania's largest Latino educational institution; Regional Director for the Puerto Rico Federal Affairs Administration.

Previous/current elected position held and years served (if any): Currently in third term at City Council.

Leadership positions in civic or community groups: Founding member of the Pennsylvania Statewide Latino Coalition; member of the National Conference of Women; see attached biography for all positions.

QUALIFICATIONS

In your opinion, what are the core responsibilities of the office you are seeking? The foremost responsibility of a City Councilperson is to lift the voices of constituents. An impactful Councilperson must dedicate round-the-clock, block-by-block attention to the diverse needs of each and every constituent.

How are you uniquely qualified to meet those responsibilities? As a veteran activist with more than 30 years of civic leadership, my legislation and advocacy is shaped by the diverse experiences of the

families that I represent. My days begin with four o'clock speed dials to my police captains and district commissioners, and do not end until I have responded to each and every concerned neighbor. I am privileged to serve and devoted to improving everyday life in my community.

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? The term limit conversation is important. I am not sure that term limits alone address our city's need for legislators to better account to their constituents. I propose that City Council consider comprehensive ethics reforms including not only term limits, but also financial disclosures, published voting records, and prohibitions against outside employment. These policies ensure that legislators dedicate full-time attention to the needs of their electorate and to the labyrinth of rules, procedures, and precedents that they must navigate to address constituent needs.

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? In 2015, I helped create the Philadelphia Land Bank. My simple goal was to repurpose our city's 40,000 blighted, vacant lots for productive, community use through a simple, uniform process where tax-compliant neighbors clean, green, and maintain side yards and gardens. As a District Councilperson, I consistently support neighbors who apply for vacant lots, and I consistently require that our city solicitor record legal restrictions against any attempt to redevelop these lots. In January, I introduced legislation calling for administrative reform to address city officials who have failed to consolidate public land, failed to process applications, and failed to enforce legal restrictions. My proposal, which calls for transparency in the city's response to land applications and enforcement of redevelopment violations, will ensure that our land disposition process advances community development across the city.

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? City Council should appropriate for the city's implementation a modern, computerized assessment process based on performance-based metrics that evaluate the new system's consistency, fairness, and transparency. I have led Council's push to require that the OPA value all properties the same way, to require a published assessment methodology, and to comply with state and local requirements about how to compare similar-condition properties in similar-market areas. I am encouraged that Mayor Kenney has responded positively to Council's demand for new leadership and systems change, but remain focused on appropriating resources to support reform and monitoring results through performance-based metrics that demonstrate a low coefficient of dispersion and level of appeals granted. At the same time, Councilmembers should educate property owners about their rights regarding tax assessments and promote full enrollment in relief program such as Homestead and LOOP.

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?

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? Yes and no; whether they are elected or appointed, we need to legislate substantial changes to the way do business. Our Sheriff's office needs to ensure a level playing-ground for tax sales at a time of unprecedented appreciation. Our City Commissioners office needs to better engage diverse constituencies and ward against voter fraud. Our Register of Wills needs to proactively monitor against fraudulent recordings and better coordinate with the District Attorney's office. I will continue to legislate reforms that require these offices improve monitoring, reporting, and engagement so that they do everything they can to fight fraud and abuse, which as we know, can undermine the duties of both appointed and elected officials entrusted to serve the public.

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? I define "fair maps" as maps developed by the community. I strongly support a citizen-engaged process for remapping Council districts. And I further support Philadelphia 3.0's efforts to activate the existing citizen-initiated process for remapping wards, where population imbalances vary substantially in almost every corner of the city. Our diverse neighborhoods fundamentally deserve a more cohesive voice. I will work to ensure that remapping is a community-driven process.

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? City Council's "advice and consent" authority over School Board appointments can play a fundamental role in achieving educational reform, but the one substantial policy that I will prioritize is a millage shift so a recurring share of property taxes is directed to schools. I have introduced legislation to increase the rate to 60%, and believe that our present conversation about modifying the tax abatement presents the best opportunity to secure recurring obligations to the School District.

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? Yes, I will continue to advocate for either the extension of PICA beyond 2023 or the creation of a different independent fiscal oversight agency. PICA has critically informed Council's budgeting and appropriations processes in ways that have ultimately secured our ability to borrow at low interest rates, and I would expect any different agency to possess the expertise to similarly evaluate our fiscal health.

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?

Over the past decade, I have led Council's passage of unprecedented economic development reforms including exemptions to BIRT and U&O, reforms to wage and net profits taxes, and targeted growth incentives for manufacturers and sustainable businesses such as BCorps. At the same time, I partnered with the building industry to reform our zoning code and to drastically expand the mixed-income housing bonus in order to leverage our city's growth by unlocking land use value for affordable development. In the coming term, I will facilitate stronger partnerships between City Council and the private sector so that we leverage private sector growth to invest in our students' career and technical education, to grow workforce opportunities in emerging industries, and to expand our package of incentives for naturally occurring affordable housing.

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?

City government wields tremendous capacity to improve the everyday lives of constituents through efficient investments in capital improvements. Ten years ago – far before Rebuild – I developed an unparalleled capital program spanning every neighborhood of the 7th District of Philadelphia, to reduce litter and scrapyards, to increase lighting and sidewalk accessibility, to clean and green vacant lots, and to reclaim parks and recreation centers as vibrant centers of community life.

VISION

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

I consider myself the pragmatic progressive of City Council. Based on my unique executive experience in public and private management, I believe that public-private partnership is fundamental to addressing our unacceptable poverty rate through equitable growth, through efficient government service, and through comprehensive education, housing, economic, and government policy reform.