

WINDY CITY TIMES CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

RAFAEL YANEZ
ALDERMANIC CANDIDATE

NON-INCUMBENT
FIFTEENTH WARD, OPEN SEAT

- 1 Co you have or would you install a written policy in your office regarding sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination?

YES

- 2 Have you started or would you start sensitivity training for your staff members regarding LGBT-related issues?

YES

- 3 Have you taken or would you take any steps to further HIV/AIDS treatment and education programs?

I am told by organizations who asked that their identities remain confidential that there are delays of nearly a year between the City's verbal agreement to use their services, and finalizing the contracts. In the interim, the agencies cannot borrow funds to finance services, nor can they bill for them. Step one would be to gather representatives of agencies and the various consortiums which deal with HIV/AIDS in Chicago and ask them to outline their needs and to advise me of gaps and barriers they fact in having them met by the City.

The HOPWA program will benefit when I and other independent aldermen increase the share of funds, tax credits, *safe* investment strategies, etal allocated to low income housing, re-directing desperately-needed money away from high-end, downtown development.

It is part of my platform that services such as health education and treatment be returned to local, comprehensive service venues and that will certainly include HIV/AIDS testing, treatment, and education.

- 4 What is your position on abortion as it pertains to the law?

Roe v Wade is the law of the land and any attempts to weaken it legislatively, or to make obtaining pregnancy termination, must be resisted at all costs.

- 5 What is your position regarding HIV/AIDS treatment and education?

Rates of infection remain highest among non-Latino, Black men engaged in sex with other men, and the highest rates of new infections are in the 20 – 29 age group. Clearly, efforts need to be prioritized and directed at that group. Again, I would go to the HIV/AIDS community for advice as to how to reach this and other high-incidence groups. It is my understanding from education providers in communities of color that even as faith-based and other community organizations may be reluctant to deal with the issues, the teens and young adults with whom they deal are open to and very desirous of education and we need to take advantage of that.

- 6 Do you favor marriage equality (marriage between two people of the same gender)?
YES
- 7 Do you favor hate-crimes legislation that increases penalties for crimes committed based on the sexual orientation or gender identity of the person attacked?
YES
- 8 Do you believe LGBs should become foster parents if they are qualified?
YES
- 9 Do you believe LGBTs have the right to adopt children if they are qualified?
YES
- 10 Would you keep committees such as the City of Chicago Commission on Human Relations' Advisory Council on LGBT Issues?

This response will be lengthy but it's important we understand why and how the current administration reorganized government for its own and its friends' benefit, and against the interests of Chicago citizens.

There are local funds to provide tax benefits (TIF an example) to entities involved in economic development and job creation, but there are even larger federal pots which public and private entities can access, supposedly for the same purposes, the most substantial being New Income Tax Credits with a budget for tax exemptions of \$33 billion. Access is, however, earmarked for certain projects while others are excluded.

A good example is hazardous waste site cleanup. Funds are available only if a private developer commits to building on the site and to him or her, the cost of cleanup is free. Emanuel did away with the Environmental Department and took the function of identifying and funding these sites under his direct control, and since then it has been a site's attractiveness to developers and not hazard to human health that has driven and prioritized decisions on which sites receive attention.

Federal funds are earmarked for services to specific groups and not to others. Emanuel commandeered the entities whose issues the Human Relations Council covered and which are entitled to funds and brought them into the Mayor's Office. The others, including Women, African Americans, and LGBTs, he left with the now-ineffective Council.

My commitment is to returning the City to its people, re-prioritizing their needs over those of private interests, and giving citizens as much input and control into their governance as practical.

So yes, I would re-vitalize The Council On Human Relations and further, I would:

- 1) Use it as it was originally created to do, as the vigorous, visible and active forum for discussion of inter-cultural, inter-racial issues we need today as much as we did then in the 1940s, given the divisions which have now fully surfaced over the issue of police/community relations.
- 2) Step away from the temptation to use sub-committees as PR vehicles and rather, appoint working people, young leaders beginning their careers, Black, Latino, Asian and other people dealing with issues and barriers specific to their communities, women and transgendered individuals to join efforts around solving specific problems, resolving discrimination cases, and interacting with other communities.

11 What are your thoughts on a school that would be designated specifically for LGBT students, much like the Harvey Milk School in New York City?

There are pros and cons to that and they need to be debated publically, with the LGBT community's advice the determinant. I would ask PFLAG to organize and direct the discussion, with support from the City.

12 Would you advocate for mandatory anti-bullying policies/training in Chicago public schools?

YES

13 Would you advocate for mandatory LGBT-including history education in Chicago public schools starting in middle school?

YES

14 Would you advocate for mandatory comprehensive, LGBT-including and age-appropriate sex education in Chicago public schools starting in middle school?

YES

15 What would you recommend to have a better relationship between police and the citizens they serve, including people of color and the transgender community?

I am a member of the Police Department and an active volunteer with youth groups through the Department, which has certainly given me a much greater understanding of the communities I deal with. I would work to create incentives for such involvement from officers.

For me building trust between Police and Community is pivotal to public safety. This encompasses all communities. I will work with LGBT activists and residents in the 15th ward in particular, and more broadly, in the City at large.

Of late, we have seen the dire consequences of a breakdown in trust between community and police. We cannot sustain this trajectory. I will work tirelessly to building trust and holding city institutions accountable on behalf of the residents of the 12th ward.

- 16 If you are an incumbent did you vote for the recent increase in the city's minimum wage and if a challenger, would you have? Also, what do you think is the idea minimum wage for the city of Chicago?

We need a \$15/hour minimum wage if people are to afford city housing and transportation, and it needs to happen now as opposed to the Mayor's plan to implement a lower rate, not taking effect until 2019.

- 17 How do you propose to handle the crime rate in Chicago, especially in minority neighborhoods?

We desperately need a long-term as well as a short-term plan. Long term, we must re-open public schools and give them the highest priority in supporting functions which identify and provide intervention for children and families at risk for becoming involved in crime and that means everything... family and individual counseling, day care facilities for working parents, remedial justice programs, tutoring and mentoring, well-supported extra-curricular activities.

In the short term, a critical first step is rebuilding trust with the community as I indicated before. The CAPS program has to be moved to the forefront from the back burner. The mayor's initiative that relies heavily on online tools is not a viable substitute for relationship building needed to do effective prevention instead of being in a reactionary mode of only responding when problems arise. Lastly in this framework of prevention more police officers are critical. The abuse of overtime is costly, ultimately offsetting any alleged cost-savings and resulting in overstressed personnel resources in CPD. It is also does not help when the mayors administration massages data regarding crime statistics.

- 18 What do you feel is the biggest problem facing your ward? How do you propose to tackle that problem?

Public safety and economic development are identified by my community advisors as the issues with which they are most concerned and of course, the two are linked because crime decreases in area where people are working and have hopes for the future.

We need to turn the massive support that's been given to the downtown and to large corporations and financial institutions under the current administration, toward the needs of neighborhoods and communities. We do this by identifying neighborhood needs and developing entrepreneurial facilities to serve them better.

Let me use as an example a simple retro-fit for snow shovels which involves attaching wheels so that instead of lifting shovels-full of snow, the lever principle is used and the person shoveling pushes down to raise the load. For a small investment neighborhood youth can be provided with shovels, earn money clearing snow and re-investing that money in equipment used to modify and then sell the shovels.

There is any number of other examples if we look to the European model of business expansion... finding better ways to serve needs rather than inventing new products and then developing markets... for neighborhood businesses.

- 19 Some studies show that 40 percent of homeless youth are LGBTQ. What would you do to provide more resources for prevention, education and services to the entire homeless youth population?

Windy City Times' own 750 Club, providing apartments for homeless youth, is a project that along with similar efforts, needs additional support from the City.

While it's noted that homeless youth are often not accounted for in statistics because they do find places to sleep at night, that situation might change if real efforts were made to provide additional beds in temporary shelters that can genuinely assure safety and provide access to full support services.

The Chicago Coalition For The Homeless conducts studies that are based on information available through the schools, which identify homeless families and the children who will become, absent intervention, homeless themselves. Again, my education plan aims at vastly expanding full services to children and families identified as being at risk via the schools, and that would include the risk of homelessness.

RE-opening local mental health facilities and support for agencies such as The Center On Halsted are two other measures the City can take to help homeless youth.

- 20 New York City eliminated barriers to transgender people changing their birth certificates. They just need a letter from a doctor to do so. Would you support this for Chicago?

YES

- 21 Are any members of your current staff, either campaign or general office personnel, openly LGBT?

My campaign staff is largely volunteer, and there are openly LGBT individuals who work and otherwise support my campaign.

- 22 Please list any and all experience you have on LGBT-related issues.

(Don't know answer to this)

- 23 What do you feel is the biggest problem facing the LGBT community today?

It seems to me that the LGBT community is to some extent a victim of its own success, having achieved legislative, electoral and judicial wins for many of its long-established goals. The development of new leadership, especially in areas where it seems the more established LGBT leadership fears to tread such as transgender issues, poverty and homelessness especially among youth, and inter-cultural, racial and generational relations, is paramount.

Full support for and enforcement of anti-discrimination laws protecting transgendered individuals is a priority as well.