

WINDY CITY TIMES CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

Aldermanic races

Return responses by fax (773-871-7609), regular mail (Windy City Times, c/o Andrew Davis, 5315 N. Clark, #192, Chicago, Ill., 60640) or e-mail (Andrew@windycitymediagroup.com). Feel free to call 773-871-7610, ext. 201, if questions arise.

DEADLINE: Friday, Jan. 9, 2015, by 5 p.m. LATE RESPONSES WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED.

Please feel free to use additional paper as needed.

YOUR NAME: **Leslie Hairston** INCUMBENT? **YES**
OFFICE SOUGHT: **Alderman** WARD (if appropriate): **5th**

- 1) Do you have or would you install a written policy in your office regarding sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination? **Yes. I have always advocated in the City Council for measures that prohibit discrimination for any "reason."**
- 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? If so, what are those measures? **I support increased funding for all phases of addressing HIV/AIDS, including in schools. It is part of wellness events my aldermanic office sponsors for the 5th Ward.**
- 4) What is your position on abortion as it pertains to the law? **I support Roe v. Wade and a woman's right to choose.**
- 5) What is your position regarding funding for HIV/AIDS treatment and education? **It should be increased, particularly to ensure coverage of African American communities, which are disproportionately affected.**
- 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 that LGBT individuals should become foster parents if they are

qualified? **Yes, they should be subject to precisely the same parental “fitness” measures as opposite-sex parents.**

9) Do you believe that LGBT individuals have the right to adopt children if they are qualified? **Yes, and the qualifications should be the same as for opposite-sex individuals.**

10) Would you keep committees around such as the City of Chicago Commission on Human Relations’ Advisory Council on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Issues? **Yes.**

11) What are your thoughts on a school that would be designed specifically for LGBT students, much like the Harvey Milk School in New York City? **I believe an advisory panel composed of diverse representatives of advocacy groups, educators and potential students should explore this option. This should be done in conjunction with examinations of how best to serve students at general-attendance schools as well. Recommendations for a special school should include proposed location, admissions requirements and how it could be a resource for students at other schools. My concern is that it not be viewed as an adequate “solution,” since it could only take in a fraction of the city’s LGBT students. It should also not overshadow ways to optimize the mutual benefits of more integrated environments.**

12) Would you advocate for mandatory anti-bullying policies/training in Chicago public schools? **Yes, this has become an increasingly critical need.**

13) Would you advocate for mandatory LGBT-inclusive education in Chicago public schools starting in middle school? **Yes.**

14) Would you advocate for mandatory comprehensive, LGBT-inclusive 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? **My experience is that CAPS could be a great facilitator of that. In my ward, CAPS partners with my aldermanic office and others, particularly around youth issues. With the right training, these officers could become credible advocates in terms of “making it real” for both their colleagues and diverse elements of the community.**

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 ideal minimum wage for the city of Chicago? **I co-sponsored the \$15 minimum wage ordinance and supported the \$13 minimum wage ordinance the City Council recently voted to approve.**

17) How do you propose to handle the crime rate in Chicago, especially in minority neighborhoods? **We cannot rely on taking officers from behind desks to fill shortfalls in the ranks. A fully staffed force includes hiring new officers and promoting to fill spaces due to retirement, so that sufficient resources can be allocated to the areas where they are needed most. That said, primary attention should be focused on the root issues. So many studies have shown the connection between crime and lack of access to necessary education, skills, job opportunities and positive alternatives. I recently read “Summer Jobs Reduce Violent Crime Among Disadvantaged Youths,” about research done right here in Chicago.**

I have hosted “positive loitering” events, “take back our streets” marches, public forums with University of Chicago police officers, as well as conversations about how youth can respond positively to police. My office maintains an excellent relationship with ward district commanders, CAPS and beat officers. We have a Youth Leadership Academy, Tri-Masters triathlon, South Shore Drill Team and other programs for young people. However, these efforts must be supported by the city, which continues to feed the problem by steering low-wage jobs and undermining educational anchors in the very communities where people have the fewest avenues away from crime.

18) What do you feel is the biggest financial problem facing your ward? How do you propose to tackle that problem? **I have already implemented TIFs in my ward – considered among the city’s most appropriate and successful. We had community meetings to determine how we wanted to use our TIF funds. I personally sought out quality enterprises and attended business conventions. We attracted an array of previously unavailable services and flagship companies, some of who are expanding their presence in the ward. They include Aldi, Staples, K&G Fashion Superstore, the city's first South Side drive-through Starbuck’s, Jewel/Osco, Anna’s Linens, and Save-A-Lot. The majority of managers and employees hired have been from the ward. I created a Special Service Area not only to ensure the upkeep of a commercial district, but also to hire the difficult to employ through the CARA program, which has classroom and workforce components. I am currently involved in negotiations to replace a major brand name grocer, which closed all its Chicagoland stores, as well as seeking to replace a former community bank. I have been working for the past two years with former South Shore residents to develop small businesses and grow them into larger businesses within the community.**

I will continue aggressively marketing the ward from an asset-based vision. Unfortunately, other city officials tend to steer quality businesses away from the South Side, and instead encouraging low-end dollar stores and fast-food franchises. I see potential in bringing in more national retailers, nurturing our growing base of

small businesses and increasing opportunities related to tourism. I have worked with my chambers of commerce to identify trends, demographics and areas of value to potential businesses. The South Side has vacant land and buildings and people anxious for employment. Aldermen should have support from the city in marketing our areas to potential employers.

I will also continue advocating on behalf of the South Suburban Airport, which two city administrations have spent millions to prevent. The FAA says that 10 airports the size of O'Hare are needed by 2020. If Chicago is to remain the transportation hub of the nation, then we must be able to capture the increase in air travel instead of diverting it to other hubs such as St. Louis, Denver, and Dallas-Ft. Worth. We have lost hundreds of jobs to Indianapolis and Cincinnati, because there wasn't room at O'Hare and Midway for companies to expand. The inaugural phase of the SSA will create 15,000 direct and indirect jobs at every skill level. Many of these jobs will have a direct economic impact on South Side communities like mine.

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 for the entire homeless youth population? **I began implementing eight years ago "innovation houses," where vacant scattered site residences are rehabbed into homes for young people, turning vacant buildings into art/housing centers and establishing living quarters that incorporate social services. I would make sure appropriate attention is given to addressing the special needs of LGBTQ youth. My office has partnered with local schools and organizations to feed and support the homeless youth population.**

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? **Yes, in my aldermanic office. One of her responsibilities is working on LGBTQ issues. I have had workers in the past, and they are volunteers in my campaign. As someone who believes in and has fought for civil rights, I would welcome all individuals – without bias – into my campaign and my office.**

22) Please list any and all experience you have on LGBT-related issues. **The 5th Ward is very diverse, with the Hyde Park area in particular being a place where openly "different" partners and individuals can work, play, host events and otherwise engage in community activities. We have several LGBT clubs, which I have partnered with on HIV/AIDS awareness, as well as food and clothing drives. I pride myself on contributing to the ward's welcoming environment and have been noted**

for my support of rights for all groups. Gays and lesbians are well represented in the ranks of organizations that have endorsed my campaigns over the years. I will pursue and would be honored to receive the support of those closely aligned with LGBTQ issues.

23) What do you feel is the biggest problem facing the LGBT community today? **When they talk with me as their alderman, they generally express concerns similar to other -- e.g., employment, getting rid of nuisance behavior or properties, attracting good businesses, maintenance of parks or streets. However, they are well represented among the African American, low-income and homeless populations, which suffer at a higher rate from social ills. As I watch what has been happening in the local health arena (e.g., closing of mental health centers, access to medical care), I believe we should be vigilant that they not become a substrata overlooked when it comes to funding that incorporates their needs.**