

TONYA MYERS-PHILLIPS'
CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION QUESTIONNAIRE

Tonya Myers-Phillips

3/18/1977

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Vision Legal Services PLLC

Attorney

5 years

Renaissance HS, 1995

University of Michigan, B.A. Political Science with Honors, 1999

University of Michigan Law School, Juris Doctorate, 2003

1. I am running for City Charter Commission to advocate for changes in the Charter that will make local government more responsive and accountable to its citizens, more transparent in its dealings, and enact strong safeguards against political corruption and improper political influence.
2. I am a corporate attorney, experienced in reviewing and drafting contractual documents. I am experienced in municipal law and have worked extensively with the Detroit City Charter. I recently worked with Attorney William Goodman and the Detroit City Council to investigate former Mayor Kilpatrick and the City Law Department's settlement of the Gary Brown case. This work lead to an inquiry and analysis of the City's removal and forfeiture powers as detailed in the City Charter. I also worked closely with Mr. Goodman to represent the City Council before the Wayne County Circuit Court as well as the gubernatorial removal proceedings led by Governor Granholm. In addition to this, I worked with the Sugar Law Center to investigate and strengthen Detroit's enforcement procedures of the Living Wage Ordinance.
3. a.) I bring specialized expertise not only as a corporate attorney with municipal law experience, but I have worked recently with legal issues concerning the Charter. b) To date, I have been endorsed by the Teamsters Joint Council #43 (I am still in the process of attending endorsement screenings). I am also active in several Detroit based organizations, including the Wolverine Bar Association, Detroiters Working For Environmental Justice, and the Detroit Association of Black Organizations led by Rev. Horace Sheffield, and have broad support from individual constituents of these groups. I also have the support of my colleague William Goodman.

4. B

5. I would change Articles 3, 4, and 5. I believe we need to reapportion power between the executive and legislative branches of government and move to a system of electing our council persons by district. I would change Article 3 to elect council persons by district because a) representatives should be more directly accountable to residents, and b) every neighborhood in the city needs an advocate. Some areas of the city are systematically overlooked and neglected, particularly in the planning and development processes. I would change Article 4, particularly Sec 4-113 to a model that grants the City Council more powers to inquire about and obtain information from the executive branch in order to: a) more effectively respond to resident inquiries and complaints and, b) have a more informed process for making budgetary and legislative decisions. I would ideally change several provisions within Article 5, but will place particular emphasis on Sec. 5-103, so that department heads would be terminated "for cause". I believe this change, especially in areas such as law, police, and human resources will better enable appointed persons to perform their duties in the city's best interest, free of inappropriate political influence.
6. B
7. Yes. I believe City Council should be given the opportunity to object, with cause, to the selection of the Police Chief. I also believe some commissioners should be elected by the public.
8. I would support a record retention policy that mirrors state law (e.g. to maintain records for seven years), a requirement to possess credentials that demonstrate a knowledge of business investment and risk evaluation prior to being appointed, a requirement for continuing education, a mandatory conflict of interest and disclosure policy, adoption of a fiduciary oath, and the Auditor General or one acting in a similar capacity, to become a part of those governing boards.
9. Yes.