

## **Tonya Myers-Phillips**

**Age:** 32

**Education:** Renaissance High School, University of Michigan B.A.Political Science with Honors, University of Michigan Law School, J.D.

**Felony Convictions:** None

**Campaign Website:** [www.tonyaphillips.com](http://www.tonyaphillips.com)

**Campaign Contact Number:** 313-779-9357 or 313-924-8633

### **What do you consider to be your relevant experience that qualifies you to be a Charter Commissioner?**

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 led to an inquiry and analysis of the City's removal and forfeiture powers as detailed in the City Charter. In addition to this, I worked with the Sugar Law Center to investigate and strengthen Detroit's enforcement procedures of the Living Wage Ordinance. I am also active in several Detroit based organizations, including the Wolverine Bar Association, Detroiters Working For Environmental Justice, PATCHES, and the Village Gardeners.

### **How do you feel about Detroit's current "strong mayor" system of government?**

I believe there needs to be a more equitable distribution of power between the executive and legislative branches of government; while the city can retain a "strong mayor" system, we need greater checks and balances. Council should have codified authority to inquiry about and obtain information from the executive branch to a) more effectively respond to resident inquiries and complaints and b) have a more informed process for making budgetary and legislative decisions. For department heads and executive appointments, I would also like to see a limited "advice and consent" hiring process, and "for cause" termination provisions. I believe this will provide a comfortable level of insulation to better enable persons to perform duties in the city's best interest and free from inappropriate political influence. I also would like to see block grant funding return to Council's jurisdiction.

### **How do you think we should change the City Charter to improve the Ethics and Accountability of our elected and appointed city officials?**

I believe we should concisely define and closely regulate lobbying activity, requiring full disclosure of such interaction with elected and appointed officials. We need to strengthen the removal and forfeiture provisions of the Charter to make it easier, faster, and less expensive to remove persons who abuse the public trust. We should employ strict indemnification criteria before paying elected and appointed

officials' attorney fees. We must raise the level of transparency in city operations by increasing public reporting of financial expenditures from both branches of government.

**Do you favor electing City Council by districts? If NO - Why? If YES -What kind of district structure do you foresee?**

Yes. I am a strong Council by District proponent. I personally favor a pure district system, but am very receptive to a hybrid model. If council were to move to a district system, I believe Council persons should be given a limited programming budget (that still flows through and is accounted for in the central budget process). There must be a great deal of consideration in drawing district lines, and the census count will be vital in making that final determination. I would also like to explore smaller districts with Council member being tied even closer to a distinct neighborhood population, rather than larger districts (this could be similar to state rep district lines and result in a slightly greater number of council seats).

**What should be the guiding principles under which Charter Commission should identify, deliberate, and address issues?**

I believe the guiding principle under which the Charter Commission should identify, deliberate, and address issues should be a research-driven, community-based, "best practices" approach.

The Charter Commission should strive to make legally sound revisions that most directly increase the efficiency and delivery of services, quality of life for Detroit residents, and position the City for long-term socioeconomic growth.