

Mayoral Candidate's Responses to Philadelphia Crosstown Coalition's Questionnaire

1. TAX ABATEMENT

Should the ten year realty tax abatement continue as is?

ABRAHAM: Yes.

DIAZ: No. The benefits of the abatement have overwhelmingly gone to Center City, and the rest of the City has not sufficiently benefited from the program.

KENNEY: On City Council, I supported legislation to create the tax abatement program, and it has done much to spur real estate development in some parts of Philadelphia. However, I believe that we must consistently review and examine all of our tax programs, credits and abatements to find their true cost and whether they work. We must ensure that these programs are effective at either retaining or creating jobs.

One change I believe we must make is in the land/improvement value of properties after reassessment under AVI. As the members of the Crosstown Coalition knows from their years of advocacy on this subject, throughout the majority of the City, land values account for small portion of the total assessed value of a property, and for properties receiving tax abatements this percentage is even lower on average, specifically for some of our most expensive property. As Mayor, I will look to raise the land value of the total assessment, which keeps property taxes the same on properties without an abatement, ensures those benefiting from the abatement pay a fairer share of taxes, and keeps the abatement program intact so development is not inhibited.

OLIVER: The ten-year realty tax abatement should be modified. When we tax abate properties, we steal from the City's revenue base. We have forgone \$80 million over the last ten years in property taxes, of which \$44.2 million would have gone directly to the School District and \$36 million to general budget. These funds could certainly have aided our failing schools and bolstered our poor City services.

Should it be modified or abolished?

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ABRAHAM: The ten-year abatement has served the City well. Analyses done by Econsult, Kevin Gillen and Jones Lang LaSalle confirm that overall the abatement has been and continues to be effective in growing the City and strengthening the tax base. We should also evaluate the efficacy of extending the abatement to 15 or 20 years in neighborhoods just beyond the reach of development. This could be a game changer and transform those areas in the years to come. Legislation will be needed in Harrisburg to authorize the extension extend the abatement beyond ten years.

DIAZ: It should be modified.

KENNEY: Answer above.

If you favor modification, what modifications should be made?

ABRAHAM: See above.

DIAZ: Now that Center City is hip and booming, the abatement has done its job there, and it's time to make other neighborhoods boom as well. The momentum towards luxury developments in Center City is largely self-sustaining at this point. Ending the abatement in Center City will have a marginal impact, but it will not end or even significantly reduce growth and reinvestment in Center City. The program now needs to be transformed to more heavily promote development in outlying commercial corridors that haven't shared in recent growth.

KENNEY: Answer above.

OLIVER: The tax abatement in its current form is being overused. The purpose was to encourage development, however, now that the development has occurred, a reevaluation is appropriate. Developers would likely be willing to pay to be in certain neighborhoods even without receiving the benefit of a tax abatement. We can now test the theory without hurting the City. We want to encourage development, but not at the expense of the City tax base.

2. REAL ESTATE TAXATION

How frequently should reassessments occur?

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- ABRAHAM: Best practices across the nation suggest annual re-evaluations. Changes in value should be monitored each year. Because of budgetary constraints, three years would make sense.
- DIAZ: Abrupt, dramatic changes in tax levels are not fair. More frequent, less dramatic changes would better serve residents and businesses.
- KENNEY: In order to avoid dramatic property tax increases like Philadelphians recently experienced after the most recent AVI, future reassessments should be done every two to three years. As Mayor, I will work with the Office of Property Assessment to ensure they are using accurate sales information, along with street-level data to make sure our system does not fall into disrepair again. We must also continue to support programs like LOOP, the Longtime Owner Occupant Program, of which I was a proud supporter and which has helped many Philadelphians stay in their homes.
- OLIVER: We should look to reassess every five years.

3. WAGE TAX

Should Philadelphia shift more of its revenue sourcing from wage and business taxes to real estate taxes?

- ABRAHAM: This question does not admit of a yes-or-no answer because of complexity. There has been a movement to go to Harrisburg and work to change the Pennsylvania Constitution to permit Philadelphia to tax commercial real estate at a 15% premium above residential real estate with certain conditions. The Mayor recently proposed a nine plus percent increase in property tax across the board to help fund the schools. Governor Wolf proposes an increase in personal income tax throughout the Commonwealth, with the prospect of reducing the property tax in Philadelphia. There is a case to be made to eliminate the net income tax, reduce the wage tax and increase the gross receipts tax in order to encourage business to come to the City. Simply put, we need to make sense of all these ideas and develop a coherent strategy to achieve full funding of our schools, pay for vital City services and begin to deal with our pension liabilities. Everything needs to be on the table.
- DIAZ: Yes. One of my top economic priorities is to make our tax system more competitive by supporting fundamental tax reform. As one report from the Center City Development Corporation and Center City District put it, "it is not that Philadelphia taxes too much, rather it taxes the wrong

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things: our dependency on wage and business taxes disproportionately pushes mobile office tenants and entrepreneurs to lower-cost suburbs.” Tax reform can bring in more money more efficiently and more progressively right now, while helping business out at the same time so that we’re broadening the tax base over the long term.

KENNEY: Yes. Philadelphia’s wage and business taxes are regressive and hamper our ability to attract businesses and create jobs. I fully support the plan circulated by the Job Growth Coalition headed by Paul Levy and others to shift away from wage and business taxes and increase revenue through a higher tax rate for commercial properties. This would lessen the tax burden on individuals and employers, while taxing static assets, like property, that can’t leave the city.

As I said previously, I would also reevaluate all our current tax incentive programs to ensure that we’re not wasting tax payer dollars on economic incentives that don’t result in additional revenue for the City.

OLIVER: Yes

If you believe we should shift away from wage and business taxes to real estate taxes, how would you propose to do this?

DIAZ: I support a version of comprehensive tax reform closely modeled on the Levy---Sweeney Plan. That plan increases commercial property taxes and decreases the wage and business receipts taxes. I also support an expedited reform process, proposed by no other candidate or elected official, to pass reform quickly through the General Assembly and shorten the timeline for reform from years to months.

KENNEY: See Above.

OLIVER: When we shift away from wage and business taxes to property taxes, we tax a source that cannot leave the City, a source that is more elastic, and a source that funds our schools. At the same time, we put more money in the pockets of workers that they can spend to help improve our local economy. Lastly, we discourage businesses and people from exercising their mobility.

If you do not believe that such a shift should occur, why not?

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ABRAHAM: As Mayor, one of my first actions would be to establish a commission charged with the responsibility to establish a consensus plan on tax reform. We need a tax policy that is fair, straightforward and far simpler. The commission will consider a complete overhaul of business and other taxes, with a goal of encouraging business to come to the City, encouraging small business start-ups to thrive and stay in the City and to strengthen the overall tax base. Reducing the wage tax should continue until it is no longer an obstacle to attracting and retaining business. We also need to pay attention to retaining middle class families, which not only revolves around property tax, but also the quality of schools and job opportunities.

DIAZ: N/A

KENNEY: N/A

4. DELINQUENT TAXES

Should the City sell tax liens to private investors?

ABRAHAM: Yes. Because so much revenue is at stake, I will, as the next Mayor, investigate any and all methods of reducing delinquency and increasing collections.

DIAZ: This should be one of the options on the table. People should pay what they owe, and there is no excuse for the unacceptably high amount of delinquent taxes in our City. I would aggressively enforce the law to ensure that we are bringing in tax revenue. My preference is to appoint people who will do this through the existing process, because experience in some other cities that have sold off loans en masse have not always been positive, but all options have to be considered.

KENNEY: With nearly a third of our residents living in poverty, it's nearly impossible to collect all of the delinquent taxes due to the City. Our best option for increasing revenue through delinquent tax collection is to focus on real estate taxes. Any future tax lien sale should use New York City as a model, where the government conducts yearly sales of their most marketable liens. According to a 2013 report from the City Controller, the City can collect nearly \$100 million through the sales of investor-owned residential properties, along with delinquent commercial and industrial properties. A sale of these liens would allow us to wipe this debt from our books, and provide an immediate source of revenue that could be used,

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among other things, to improve our revenue collection system and assure this massive backlog of debt doesn't happen again.

OLIVER: Yes, I believe the City should sell its tax liens to private investors. To the extent we are able, we should attempt to negotiate a prioritization of which liens are collected or we should look sell a portion of the tax liens, for example, the liens for out of state property owners that can be aggressively pursued. This would allow the City to maintain control of the liens for City residents who may not be able to pay their taxes because of their financial condition while we work to get them the jobs they need to come current.

If not, what steps would you take to ensure that the delinquency is addressed?

DIAZ: N/A

KENNEY: In addition to the lien sale, we must modernize our Revenue department, especially its tax collection methods. As Mayor, I will undertake a complete review of our tax collection system and determine where changes can be made to simplify tax forms and payment avenues. It should not be overly difficult for people to file their taxes.

5. PGW SALE

Do you believe that City Council should have conducted public hearings on the PGW controversy? Please explain your answer.

ABRAHAM: Yes, absolutely. I was the first and only candidate to take on Council and the Council President for failing to hold hearings on the UIL proposal to acquire PGW. Not one Councilmember had the courage to move for a hearing. UIL was sent away without fair consideration and so, in the process, the City lost a potential investment of millions of dollars. It was an embarrassment. As to the future of PGW, we shall evaluate the pros and cons of a sale proposal – in the light of day – and make a judgment that serves taxpayers, homeowners and the folks relying on the strength of public pensions.

DIAZ: Yes. While I did not support the Mayor's plan, it should have been given due consideration by the City Council. With that said, most of the blame for the impasse falls on Mayor Nutter's shoulders. It is no surprise that, after refusing to bring the City Council in early in the process, they were

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not willing to listen later on. This should have been collaborative from the start, rather than devolving into the mess it became.

KENNEY: Yes. As a member of City Council, I had hearings on the subject nearly 15 years ago and supported the possible sale. However, in part because of the Nutter administration's refusal to discuss amending any part of the deal including discounted rates for senior citizens or wage protections for current PGW workers my fellow Councilmembers were unwilling to consider a hearing. I could have grandstanded on the issue, but I would have angered and embarrassed my colleagues. Now, if I'm elected, I'll have a significantly more positive relationship with Council than the Mayor's Office does currently, and we'll reduce the political dysfunction that plagues important conversations like the sale of PGW.

OLIVER: Yes. Even if the ultimate answer was to reject the sale, I believe public hearings would have given the public an opportunity to hear all sides of the debate. Involving the public in these types of decisions is critical. Also, I believe that City Council, as a legislative body should make their decision publicly in the form of a yes/no vote, as they would in almost any other scenario. That way there is a record of how each member voted. This information is important for election cycles when council members are held accountable for their record – regardless of how they may have chosen to vote.

What is your vision for the future of PGW?

DIAZ: I do not support privatization of PGW. Privatization of public assets should only be used as a last resort when all other options have failed.

KENNEY: While PGW has improved greatly over the past few years, we still have an aging gas pipeline infrastructure that is increasingly dangerous. We also have the opportunity to expand LNG production and possibly increase PGW's contribution to the City. As Mayor, I will work with City Council to develop a comprehensive plan for a public-private partnership that protects the current PGW workforce, but also seeks to more quickly replace our aging pipes and takes advantage of our prime location near the Marcellus Shale deposits to make Philadelphia an energy hub on the East coast.

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OLIVER: I believe PGW is a well-run organization and a valuable City asset. In addition, I believe we should streamline the governance structure to make PGW more nimble and able to respond to market opportunities.

6. PENSIONS

Do you believe that the City can “grow” its way out of this deficit– i.e. that prosperity in the City, as distinguished from tax hikes, will produce higher realty and business tax revenues so that the additional funds can be used to pay down the deficit OR that the City can somehow change its ways and pay down the deficit by better practices?

DIAZ: When I was on the Board of Directors at Exelon, we also faced a pension- fund that was significantly underfunded. Our \$11 billion pension fund only had 65% of the funding it needed, better than Philadelphia's 47% but still far from ideal, and unfunded liabilities were threatening our long term health. I lead our efforts to put the fund on firmer financial footing by hiring our first ever Chief Investment Officer and appointing an advisory oversight board of members with investment experience. We brought in a new class of asset managers, including a significant number of women and minorities across the fund, and in a few short years managed to increase our funding ratio from 65% to 85% without significant capital infusions.

I would take that same approach to our pension system in Philadelphia, and seek to turn it around the same way I helped turn around Exelon's fund. Based on past experience, I estimate that management changes alone can likely improve our funding ratio to 60-65% in the medium term, and more long term, solving a significant portion of the problem.

KENNEY: It is important to understand that this underfunded pension liability did not happen overnight. To fix it will require a concerted effort by my Administration to create new revenue by growing the overall City tax base; to negotiate fair contracts with our municipal unions; and to work with the Board of Pensions to ensure that we are making smart investments without losing any money or the opportunity to grow the Fund.

I will work with Governor Wolf and the legislature to amend the Uniformity Clause of the Pennsylvania Constitution so that we can finally fully reform Philadelphia's antiquated business tax system and place a greater emphasis on commercial property taxes as a revenue source. This will allow Philadelphia to be a more competitive economy for businesses to

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locate and operate, and allow us to grow our tax base and generate further revenue to pay into the Pension Fund.

I will negotiate contracts with our municipal unions that are both fair for workers and the City. As the son of a union firefighter I have a unique respect and perspective on the collective bargaining process. While treating workers with the dignity and respect that they deserve, I will negotiate contracts that take into account the general wellbeing of the Pension Fund, and ensure that current and future workers are paying enough to keep the Fund sustainable so that they can actually collect a pension in retirement.

Finally, I will make sure that the Fund is being managed effectively and we are not losing money through failed investments or poor contracting. Shortly after being sworn in as Mayor I will convene an independent Public Pension Funding Commission made up of private sector leaders to take a fresh look at how the City manages and engages others to manage the Pension Fund. This Commission will evaluate the performance of professional service providers and evaluate the availability of financially responsible local investment opportunities so that our pension fund dollars can work for Philadelphia's economy.

OLIVER: Yes, we can and must grow our way out of the pension crisis. We can do this by finding ways to attract people to the City and getting them to stay here. At the same time, we have to reevaluate how we much contribute into our pension fund moving forward and where those funds are invested. Historically, these calculations were based on how long we thought people would live and how much we believed our investments could earn in the market. People are living longer and the market is volatile which creates uncertainty for the people retiring and for the City. We must change our pension assumptions based on people living longer and a market that may not perform at the levels we would like.

If you do not believe that "growth" alone will suffice to address this issue, which do you favor: raising taxes, cutting spending or selling assets? Depending on your answer, specifically identify the taxes to be raised, the names of the programs that should be cut (please no generalities like eliminating "waste and abuse"), or the assets to be sold.

ABRAHAM: Growth alone will not suffice. The City needs to evaluate a multitude of ways to increase pension funding through a combination of efforts. These include, as an example, eliminating the wasteful requirement of mandatory bonuses in any fiscal year in which the City's pension fund

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outperforms its investment objectives and the selling of city assets, such as PGW and municipal parking facilities.

DIAZ: The change identified above would lessen our amortization costs by $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{3}$ annually, equivalent to somewhere on the order of \$100-150 million in today's terms. That would significantly reduce the pressure on the general fund. With that change, this situation is likely manageable without resorting to drastic measures. For the rest of the problem, attempting to have the Mayor dictate these changes leads nowhere as we saw with the PGW sale. This would have to be a collaborative process in which we were engaging all other stakeholders to determine what is politically feasible.

Moreover, while saying you'll reduce "waste and abuse" is indeed often a dodge, in my case it accurately describes my resume in City government. I am the only candidate in this race who's ever actually managed to reduce "waste and abuse" in a bureaucratic system. When I was Chief Administrative Judge of the City Court system I was able to achieve significant operating efficiencies by reforming operations. We saved the taxpayers more than \$100 million over 10 years and made the system work much more smoothly. So when I promise to do the same thing in the rest of the City, you can have confidence that I know how to accomplish that goal because I've done it before.

KENNEY: As I mentioned above, I will work with the Governor and legislative leaders to reform Philadelphia's business tax environment and place a greater emphasis on commercial property taxes. This, along with strategic partnerships between businesses, the Community College of Philadelphia, and the School District, will help create an environment where businesses will want to locate and operate in Philadelphia, as opposed to the current regressive tax structure in place now.

OLIVER: I believe that multiple strategies need to be put in place to address the issue. We should create efficiencies that reduce City spending and seek to collect monies that the City is owed. Only as a last resort should we look to sell City assets or increase taxes.

To gradually improve the pension plan's funding status, do you favor continuing the defined benefit plan for existing employees while instituting a defined contribution plan for more recently hired employees?

ABRAHAM: Yes.

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- DIAZ:** I believe the City's Plan 10 hybrid model is the right approach for new hires. The recent agreements between Mayor Nutter and some municipal unions provide a politically feasible and fiscally responsible model for how we move forward.
- KENNEY:** As Mayor I will negotiate contracts that are both fair for workers and fair for the City. As part of these negotiations we will develop a hybrid plan that will actually entice employees to join, instead of the current Plan 10 that has failed to gain voluntary membership by City employees. This and any other concession can only be gained by negotiating with our workers in good faith, and with mutual respect from all involved.
- OLIVER:** Yes, however, there are a lot of voices that should be heard prior to determining what the appropriate structure should be.

DEVELOPMENT QUESTIONS

7. CHANGING NEIGHBORHOODS

Other than providing real estate tax relief to long-time residents whose assessments have increased due to rising values in the neighborhood, do you believe that government should intervene regarding these neighborhood changes?

- ABRAHAM:** No. As a general matter, increased property values are good for neighborhoods and the City in general. I do not support government intervention to alter the marketplace.
- DIAZ:** Absolutely.
- KENNEY:** I am proud to have been one of the prime sponsors of the Longtime Owner Occupant Program that has helped many residents stay in their homes and avoid large tax increases. With that said, I do believe that more can be done. I believe that neighborhoods are best when there is a mix of residents with different backgrounds and ages. The newly graduated college student should be able to live next to the 80-year-old African-American woman who moved to Philadelphia in the 1960's and has lived through tremendous change in our City during her lifetime. I believe that government's role here should be as a facilitator of these arrangements with a mix of protections for longtime residents, and incentives for new residents. I also believe the City can leverage our vacant, non revenue-producing vacant land into affordable housing opportunities.

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OLIVER: Yes, I believe that long-time residents need to be protected from “capital gains” taxes. The fact that the value of property has increased doesn’t mean that an individual can afford or should pay higher taxes until the property changes hands.

If so, list the disruptions you would target and the remedies you would suggest.

DIAZ: One of my signature proposals in this campaign is Inclusionary Zoning, a requirement that new developments include affordable housing. By making sure current residents get preference in applying for that housing, we can ensure that they can share in the growth and prosperity of their longtime neighborhoods. Another of my signature proposals is an aggressive plan to tackle our epidemic of vacant lots and abandoned property, and build new affordable housing and green space in their place. By creating new opportunities in growing areas, we’ll again help residents stay in their neighborhoods, and by removing blight we’ll improve the quality of those neighborhoods for everyone.

KENNEY: The major disruptions that affect longtime residents are obviously rising property taxes for owners and rising rent for renters. As Mayor, I will work with City Council to extend the LOOP program for residents who face either large future tax increases due to reassessment or for residents who failed to apply for the program last year but qualified after AVI went into effect. I will also work with City Council to develop a program modeled on LOOP to help longtime renters who face higher rents due. Finally, I will work with the Land Bank to make sure that we are using our vacant and City-owned land to provide affordable housing opportunities for Philadelphia residents who are in need.

OLIVER: The specifics for how to protect these individuals is up for debate; protecting these individuals is non-debatable. The Mayor’s job is to be a vision setter and in this instance to protect those long-term property owners who may be on a fixed income yet live in an improving neighborhood. “Grandfathering” long-time homeowners is a reasonable first step. And a re-structuring of how tax abatements are offered or how long they are in effect is a good way to pay for the protection of long-time residents.

8. ZONING RELIEF THROUGH COUNCIL

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Would you vote for (or sign) ordinances enabling developments contrary to the zoning code and which have not received a variance from the Zoning Board of Adjustment? If so, under what circumstances would you vote for (or sign) such ordinances?

ABRAHAM: The unfinished business of zoning reform is the remapping of large areas of the City. The Planning Commission has not been funded or staffed to do what needs to be done. As a result, there is the temptation to zone project-by-project, which involves ad hoc decisions, and nourishes a pay-to-play culture. I will fund the Commission to complete the remapping. Until we complete remapping, the Planning Commission should look carefully at site-specific remapping bills and report formally on those bills that do not conform to the comprehensive plan or comprehensive planning principles. As Mayor, however, I would sign bills consistent with planning principles for projects that fit well within communities after complete Citizen Design Review where all parties can be heard.

DIAZ: Yes. I would sign ordinances that I thought were in the best interests of the City and had been the subject of a public hearing.

KENNEY: During my time on City Council, I was happy to support the adoption of the new Zoning Code, which has improved the City's processes considerably. I believe the Code is a living document, and there will always need to be some exceptions to the rules. Most of these exceptions can be handled by the ZBA, but there will be times when a zoning change will be necessary through Council Ordinance. As a Councilmember-at-Large and a member of the Rules Committee, I participated in many hearings to discuss zoning changes that presented positive changes for neighborhoods, but may not have been approved by the ZBA. As opposed to District Councilmembers, I was able to view each zoning change impartially, and with a view of how the change would effect not only the surrounding area, but larger City as a whole. As Mayor I would take that same approach. I would not seek Council Ordinances for simple changes that could easily be handled by the ZBA, but when there is a larger project, that requires robust debate before a committee of City Council, and then by the body as a whole, I will make my decision to sign and support the legislation based on its impact on the neighborhood involved, and its impact on the City as a whole. I believe this approach will allow all interests to be considered fully.

OLIVER: No. I would not. The Zoning Board of Adjustments is the proper place to receive variations from the Zoning Code.

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9. CITY OWNED VACANT PROPERTIES

Will you vote to amend the ordinance by eliminating the Council ordinance provision? Explain your response.

ABRAHAM: I would encourage and support the introduction of an ordinance amendment eliminating the Council ordinance provision. The Land Bank process should be transparent and free of politics and favoritism. If the transaction makes sense, it should not require the approval of Council or the District Councilperson.

DIAZ: I believe that the process should be consolidated so that only one body has to give its approval. This would make the system much more functional and efficient. To compensate the Council for the end of explicit Council approval, I would expand the membership of the committee to give a much broader role to the Council on it.

KENNEY: I was happy to support the creation of the Land Bank, and I am excited for the progress the interim Board has made in the creation of their Strategic Plan. Before suggesting changes to the Land Bank Ordinance, I would like to work with the Board and City Council to determine the most effective procedures to dispose of and redevelop this land in a fair and equitable way. If the current processes cause unnecessary delays, then I will work with City Council to rectify that by ordinance.

OLIVER: First and foremost, the 10,000 vacant properties owned by the City represent an opportunity to not only bring revenue property tax revenue to the City but also to reclaim the \$21 million spent annually to maintain these properties. I do believe it is important to have a process in place to protect public interest and to get the buy in of communities, however, if a long review process jeopardizes the closing of sales, it is prudent that a system be put in place to streamline the review process and to ensure the most value possible accrues to the City.

GOVERNMENT & ADMINISTRATION

10. ETHICS: CREATING A PERMANENT INSPECTOR GENERAL

Are you willing to support for Bill 130001 calling for a ballot referendum to amend the City Charter to establish an independent Inspector General funded by taxpayer dollars who would have oversight over every city department?

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DIAZ: Yes, and I would go further by expanding the scope of the office, combining it with other bodies, and turning it into an overarching “Ethics Czar” position that would be better able to accomplish its mission.

KENNEY: I was happy to introduce and sponsor Bill 130001 while on City Council, and as Mayor I will advocate again for the passage of this Bill to place the office of the Inspector General in the City Charter. The work of the current I.G., Amy Kurland, has saved the City millions of dollars in former waste and abuse, and I would be happy to have her continue in this role in my administration.

OLIVER: Yes, I believe that accountability is important and an independent Inspector General can assist in ensure that there is accountability in City government affairs.

If elected Mayor, would you leave the current Executive Order in place and promptly fill the Inspector General's position?

ABRAHAM: No. At present, City Council seems to be amending the Charter piecemeal, without due consideration. The current proposal to reorganize all of the planning and development agencies in the City and not deal with the L & I situation is an example. It is time for a comprehensive evaluation of the Charter. The Executive Order, however, should remain in effect.

DIAZ: Yes.

KENNEY: Yes. Understanding that even with City Council approval, this change to the City Charter would not take effect until after being approved by the voters, I would sign an Executive Order to continue the current Inspector General office under the Mayor.

OLIVER: As Mayor, I would reauthorize the executive order to maintain the Office of the Inspector General staffed with an independent Inspector General with jurisdiction over City government to investigate abuses.

11. UNFAIR ELECTORIAL DISTRICTING

Would you vote to amend the City Charter in 2015 so that the next redistricting in 2020 will be conducted by an independent, non-partisan commission?

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ABRAHAM: Yes. I support rational redistricting as part of a comprehensive review of the Charter. There is no valid excuse for gerrymandering. I would support an amendment to the City Charter to ensure that the 2020 redistricting is carried out by a non-partisan commission.

DIAZ: I believe the City Council and Mayor should maintain a role in the process, but I do support significant change because the current system is not working. I would like a non---partisan, independent committee under the jurisdiction of the Courts to draw fair and impartial lines that prioritized simplicity, the need to keep communities of interest intact, and the dictates of the Voting Rights Act. The City Council would have the ability to vote up or down on the proposals or make minor changes to the lines, defined as changing some set percentage of residents in the district. By setting a neutral baseline, we'd see significantly better and less gerrymandered districts.

KENNEY: As a member of City Council, I took part in two redistricting debates that were difficult and contentious. The process, however, is very important, specifically for District Councilmembers who have represented the interests of certain communities and areas for some time. The idea of an independent and nonpartisan commission for redistricting is worthy of further study as we approach the 2020 census and subsequent reapportionment.

OLIVER: Yes.

12. ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

Would you vote to amend the City Charter, eliminating the City Commissioners and adding the position of an election administrator that reports to the Mayor?

ABRAHAM: Yes, as part of comprehensive Charter reform.

DIAZ: I believe this change is worthy of strong consideration, and I would likely support it, but not before the City studied the decision in depth. In general, I believe we need to reduce the number of patronage positions in City government, which is what I did in the Court system.

KENNEY: I believe the City Commissioners and their staff serve a very important function through their role as the conductors of Philadelphia's elections. There is value to having one appointed individual in this position, but people who hold elected office are oftentimes held to a higher standard

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by their constituents. As someone who had the honor to be run for elected office several times, I know that Philadelphia voters are knowledgeable about pertinent topics, and when an elected official is performing poorly, in most cases, they will make sure they do not get reelected. Given the arguments on both sides, I believe this issue is worthy of further study.

OLIVER: I believe that the City should better educate voters to the official duties and responsibilities of each elected office for which they can vote, including the City Commissioners office. Any discussions of what the proper disposition of the City Commissioners office should be should include many voices – including the City Commissioners themselves, City Council and the voters of Philadelphia.

13. SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Would you vote to abolish the Sherriff's office, transferring to other City agencies its functions (Sheriff's sales, courtroom security and inmate transfer)?

ABRAHAM: No. I am in favor of keeping the Sherriff's office intact. Voters should remain in control of electing who should conduct Sheriff's sales and perform the other duties traditionally performed by the Sheriff's office. This way, the Sheriff remains accountable to the voters.

DIAZ: I would prefer that the Sherriff be appointed by the Courts rather than elected. I would allow the Board of Judges to appoint a Sherriff, which I believe would make the office significantly better run and more professionally managed.

KENNEY: I do not believe that the elimination of an office that is elected by the voters of Philadelphia is necessarily always the best way to improve government. The Sheriff's office must be updated, specifically when it comes to their operations and future investments in technology to make the office operate more effectively and efficiently. As Mayor, I will work with the Sheriff and his/her office to ensure that funds are fully accounted for, and that smart investments are being made to make their operations more open, transparent, and accessible for the public. Similar to the City Commissioners, as Mayor I will focus on working with the publicly elected officials to improve their operations before advocating for their elimination.

OLIVER: Similar to question #12, the City should be looking to make Government as efficient as possible, including the streamlining of redundant

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responsibilities wherever they occur. If there are ways of providing needed services more effectively, we should move toward it. Any attempt to amend the charter should be made with all affected parties at the table. As a Mayor, I would happily convene a broad group of affected stakeholders to discuss what the best structure for the Sheriff's office should be.

14. ROLE IN NEIGHBORHOODS IN DEVELOPMENT AND THE QUALITY OF LIFE

What would you do to give neighborhoods more meaningful roles in decision-making and more effective engagement as partners in the city's goals and mission?

ABRAHAM: The new zoning code was designed to encourage civic engagement in land-use decisions. The Planning Commission, however, is not sufficiently staffed with neighborhood planners to connect with the community. This should be a priority. Unfortunately, budgeting priorities at this juncture have underfunded the Planning Commission, the Historical Commission and Licenses and Inspections. And the City has paid a price. In my previous role as District Attorney, I was present in almost every neighborhood in the City and will continue to be present as Mayor, to hear the voices of the community.

DIAZ: Yes. One of the great tragedies of recent growth in our city is how little of it has come outside of a few concentrated areas. That's why the first plank in my economic agenda is to refocus on community economic development. When I was Executive Director of Spanish Merchants Association, I saw how small businesses and social communities struggle in our city. In response, we provided support, expertise, and guidance and got real results. During the Wilson Goode administration I helped take the business development models that worked and apply them in neighborhoods across the city. We don't do that today. I would work with PIDC, Community Development Corporations, and local business groups to develop real plans for growth based on models that have worked when tried elsewhere.

KENNEY: On City Council as a member of the Rules Committee dealing with numerous zoning matters, I have always considered the opinion of the local community impacted by the development to be vitally important. In a City as dense as Philadelphia, having a good relationship with you neighbors, both residential and commercial/industrial, is paramount to creating a high quality of life in every neighborhood. The new Zoning Code adopted by City Council has moved this process forward

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substantially by codifying the input of RCOs into the zoning process. The City Planning Commission has also done much community outreach as a part of their Philadelphia 2035 planning process. As Mayor, my goal will be to further increase the input and involvement of community organizations who are the grassroots of Philadelphia's political process. Your community groups will have access to my Administration, and I will work with your District and at-Large Councilmembers to make sure they are responsive to community concerns.

OLIVER: Specifically, I would promote and encourage the providing of open data so residents have access to unfiltered information about the work that their government is doing. I would also work to ensure that open and public hearings are a part of any initiative that affects neighborhoods across the City. These would occur BEFORE a final decision has been made. No one likes to feel that they are an after-thought – particularly in those matters that affect them most.

More generally, I would continue efforts to get Citizens to vote. By doing so, we create lines of accountability between our elected officials (and the decisions that they make) and residents across this entire City (including those in neighborhoods all across this City).

15. SCHOOLS

What is the dollar amount of the contribution that you believe the City should make in fiscal year 2016 – 2017, your first year in office, and how you would finance it. Explain your conclusion.

ABRAHAM: The recent proposals made by Governor Wolf and Mayor Nutter present opportunities to rethink answers to the very questions posed. Clearly, a greater commitment from the City to fund our schools should in principle be looked on favorably in the Legislature. The Governor's proposal provides tax relief to the City property owners, but increases the personal income tax state-wide. Both the Governor and the Mayor will have challenges in the relevant legislative bodies. It is premature to decide "dollar amounts."

DIAZ: In the short term, I believe that, between additional State and City revenue sources, we can generate just enough to close the \$300 Million gap between current funding and what our schools need to provide a basic, quality education. Over the long term, I believe those same changes would generate closer to \$600 million annually for the schools. I

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will be releasing a detailed breakdown of that funding plan prior to your organization's forum next week.

KENNEY: The School District has not yet released their budget information for Fiscal Year 2016, other than to say that they expect to start their budget request with a deficit of \$80 million. With this lack of information, it is impossible to give an exact dollar amount of the City's contribution to the School District. It is clear however that more funds are necessary both from the Commonwealth and from the City of Philadelphia to create better educational outcomes for our school children. As Mayor, this process begins by working with Governor Wolf and legislators in Harrisburg to create a funding formula which takes into account Philadelphia's poverty level and the realities of educating children in an urban school district. I will also increase collaboration between City Departments and the School District, so that the City can replace or supplement services for which the District is paying. This money can then be reinvested directly into schools. Increasing school funding from the City will require a multipronged approach.

One revenue generator will be changing the land/improvement value of City properties so that the land value is a greater percentage of the total assessment. This will lead to increased revenue from commercial tax abated properties without raising taxes for the vast majority of citizens. I will also work with our nonprofit institutions, specifically our colleges and universities, to setup PILOTs and SILOTs so that they can leverage their money and expertise to help the School District education our children.

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OLIVER: I believe the City should first determine what type of School District (including the curriculum) best prepares our students for productive and fulfilling lives. Additionally, the City must be fully aware of where and how every single dollar that the School District receives is actually spent and if it is spent on things that improve educational outcomes for our children. Only once we are clear on these things, we should seek to fund it fully. This may mean that the contributions (local, state and federal) need to change. I suspect that for the sake of our children's future, and given the state's reluctance to offer full and fair funding, the City may need to increase its local share. To finance that, I would explore PILOTS, more aggressive collection of delinquent taxes, keeping Philadelphia open past 2am and restructuring the City's tax abatement program. Only as an ultimate last resort, selling City assets and/or raising taxes are options that, while wildly unpopular, could be considered.

Do you believe that any strings/conditions should be attached to the City's contributions to the School District budget and, if so, what are they?

ABRAHAM: As a City, we should expect that our children are taught in a safe and secure learning environment, that teachers are well-trained and given the tools needed to teach and that the system can produce responsible citizens who have the skills necessary for the modern job market. If that is considered a string or condition, I accept it. The system needs to be accountable to the community, both fiscally and for educational outcomes.

DIAZ: I believe in ending the SRC and establishing mayoral control of the school system. The Mayor should be completely in charge of our schools and should be held accountable for their performance. That's obviously a fundamental change in the relationship, but one that I think is desperately needed.

KENNEY: Increased accountability on the expenditure of City funds is very important, and I was pleased to see that the City's Inspector General will now be conducting investigations for the School District on their funds. Specifically I would like the City and the School District to partner to create new oversight of the City's Charter Schools. The recent failure and closure of several Charter Schools has shown that the current model of oversight is greatly flawed, and with Charters taking a larger chunk of the School District's budget, it is imperative that this money be managed and correctly, and school administrators be held accountable for that management.

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OLIVER: As a practical matter, funding the future of our children makes the City's budget and the School District's budget one and the same. We can't care for our City without providing for our children's needs. Contributions to the School District's budget should be given without conditions, but with the expectation that every dollar accrue to the ultimate benefit of the student.

LIFESTYLE

16. HOUSING FIRST

If housing is readily available for homeless people, should they be permitted to live in public spaces?

ABRAHAM: Generally not, but the system needs to assure sufficient housing and offer ways to assist people who are not emotionally prepared to live in suitable housing made available to them.

DIAZ: As a City, we should provide housing to the homeless.

KENNEY: Through the work of Project HOME and advocates like City Councilwoman Jannie Blackwell, Philadelphia has improved greatly in meeting the needs of our homeless population. By utilizing vacant and City-owned land, we have a real opportunity to provide affordable housing for our neediest populations, especially homeless Philadelphians. Treating mental health or medical issues that could be exacerbating homeless Philadelphians' situations is also paramount. As Mayor, I will work with the Department of Behavioral Health, along with our nonprofit partners like Project HOME to make sure that the needed services are reaching this population effectively, and we are not just housing someone without treating the other issues that have caused their homelessness.

OLIVER: People living without homes should be encouraged to take advantage of any housing that is readily available. Most homeless who are not living with mental health challenges would appreciate the opportunity to move into available housing. For those that do not wish to, the City should work to connect them to mental and behavioral health services that they may need. In times of extreme cold or heat, the City should require that homeless people move to a safe location. Beyond these scenarios, the City must respect the right of Philadelphians (even homeless people) to

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make choices for themselves, while simultaneously balancing the needs of the City.

Do you favor sidewalk ordinances to regulate aggressive panhandling and other antisocial behavior?

ABRAHAM: There is already an ordinance that regulates sidewalk behavior, but often with no real consequences. Enforcing the ordinances through the legal system is often ineffectual. Understanding that homeless people often have no source of income other than street donations, citizens have the right to walk down the street unmolested by panhandlers. The police have statutory authority to intervene in situations involving repeatedly aggressive panhandling by homeless people.

DIAZ: Our goal has to be to end the root causes of such behavior by providing better services to such groups. As you note, a substantial percentage of those on the streets are suffering from mental illness, and we need to provide them with treatment, not punishment. I have substantial worries about any policy that would effectively criminalize mental health issues.

KENNEY: During my time on City Council, I passed multiple ordinances trying to counteract this type of behavior. Pedestrians shouldn't have to either fear for their safety or be accosted by panhandlers while walking on Philadelphia's sidewalks. With that said, I firmly believe that we can not fix these situations just through restrictive ordinances. People resort to this behavior because they believe they have no other place to turn to feed themselves and their families. We must make a concentrated attempt to create more jobs in this City for our population who may not have graduated from high school or college.

As Mayor, I will partner with the Chamber of Commerce and other business organizations to make sure that our Community College curriculum contains real skills that these employers need in their employees. I will also work with the School District to create community schools that will serve as the center of each community and provide social services and job training programs to adults in the evenings. Additionally, I will work with the state legislature to amend the Uniformity clause of the Pennsylvania Constitution so that we can reform our business tax system and foster a tax climate that will attract businesses to Philadelphia.

OLIVER: Yes. I do favor sidewalk ordinances to regulate aggressive panhandling - key word being "aggressive" – and anti social behavior. But before

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pushing for more regulation, I would attempt to operate under already established and existing ordinances that may exist.

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