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Metropolitan Baltimore Council AFL-CIO Unions
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Metropolitan Baltimore Council AFL-CIO Unions
CITY CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE - 2016

Candidate for: Baltimore City Council, 14th District

Name: Mary Pat Clarke

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Present Occupation: Fulltime Baltimore City Councilmember

Who is your Employer: City of Baltimore

Party Affiliation: (Please check)

Democrat

Congressional Dist: 3rd Legislative Dist: 43rd Councilmanic Dist: 14th

Have you ever received labor's endorsement? Yes

If yes, when? City Council elections of 1975, 1979, 1991, 2004, 2007, 2011.

Previous elected/appointed office(s): City Councilmember, former 2nd District (1975-1983); City Council President (1987-1995); City Councilmember, new 14th District, 2004-present.

Length of service: 28 years

General:

1. Why should organized labor support your campaign? Please explain.

In my 28 years of service in the Baltimore City Council, I have consistently worked with organized labor to support its initiatives to provide better benefits, wages, and working conditions for both public and private sector workers. As President of City Council, I introduced the nation's first Living Wage law, enacted in 1994. As 14th District representative, I (vehemently but unsuccessfully) opposed the elimination and the shameful rollback of 20-and-Out retirement benefits which deprived active Fire & Police employees with less than 15 years service of the 20-and-Out they had been promised upon hiring and had already earned! I demonstrated and helped in the successful effort to allow Hyatt Regency Hotel employees to unionize. I have consistently demonstrated and voted on behalf of labor's issues, because I personally understand that our society as a whole must re-tool to ensure that workers receive a fair share of the wealth and benefits their labor provides. Baltimore's current crisis bears witness to the unrest which festers when such basic opportunities are denied and the current imbalance of opportunity prevails.

2. Have you ever been a member of union? If yes, please give the union name, local number, and dates that you have been a member.

No

3. Do you support collective bargaining and the rights of all workers to form a labor union?

Absolutely YES.

4. What are the three most crucial issues facing your constituents?

Rights of Baltimore's children and youth to be safe, well educated, healthy, adequately supported by their families --- and newly confident, along with their families, of a fair and positive future in which to thrive.

Need for minimum wage mandates to uplift the entire City by requiring decent-paying jobs for City residents and the training and family support systems required to help city residents take advantage of such opportunities in reversing generations of poverty.

End to violence through widespread support and promotion of meaningful alternatives, including decent jobs and careers for our adults; and, organized clubs, teams, and recreation for our youth in lieu of leaving them on their own in harm's way.

5. Would you sponsor and/or support legislation that would require all contractors bidding on public works jobs to provide health benefits for their employees?

Yes.

6. Would you support and/or sponsor legislation that would require interest-based arbitration in disagreements between public employees and management?

Yes.

7. How would you address the increasing health care cost for active and retired city employees?

Support the right of labor and retiree representatives to initiate and present to City Council alternative projections and fairer cost-sharing solutions than the usual and unilateral “pass through” projections and recommendations of the City’s Bureau of the Budget.

8. Contracting-out of services is sometimes seen as a way to save money and/or make the government more efficient. Do you see outsourcing or contracting appropriate in any circumstances? If so how?

In fairness to the City’s contractual workers and to balance the playing-field for fulltime City employment, I sponsored and City Council enacted Living Wage requirements in 1994 for workers employed by Baltimore City government contractors. The hourly wage rises annually based on the hourly rate break-down of the federal poverty level for a family of four. The recent snow storm is an example of an emergency in which contracting is necessary for a limited time. I generally prefer fulltime employment with benefits in conducting City business. Fulltime employment builds experience and career opportunities for the workers; and, such a stable workforce benefits the City’s economy as a whole.

9. All of the counties surrounding Baltimore City currently have FiOS access, but Verizon has not brought FiOS broadband to the city. Will you work to create a political environment to press Verizon to bring FiOS to Baltimore?

I have often met in City Hall, in the company of City Council colleagues, arguing with Verizon to bring FiOS to Baltimore City. Verizon has always refused, I believe because of its estimates of insufficient profit margins based on Baltimore City’s average household earnings and neighborhood density statistics. My preference is to work to open up opportunities for affordable and accessible broadband competition.

To explore those emerging possibilities, I have introduced

City Council Resolution 15-0263R: Improving Broadband Internet Access in Baltimore, scheduled for public hearing before City Council’s Judiciary & Transportation Committee on WEDNESDAY, MARCH 16, 2016, at 5:00 pm, City Council Chambers, City Hall, 100 North Holliday Street 21202

(Picture ID required for admission to City Hall.)

Hope AFL-CIO representatives will attend and testify.

10.As an elected official of Baltimore City, would you support efforts to ensure that Verizon properly maintains land line service?

Yes.

11.In 2015, the governor significantly cut education funding for Baltimore City's Public Schools. Some in Annapolis have argued that the city itself, not just the state, should be contributing much more to its public school student who are living in areas of very high concentration of poverty will have enough funding and resources to be successful?

Especially with this session's budget projections from Annapolis, including the fiscal impact of major and costly reductions in student enrollment, the City of Baltimore has an obligation to provide adequately for our public schoolchildren. At the same time, the Mayor and City Council have a related obligation to seek the restoration of more direct control of the public school system's budget than exercised since the State/City agreement of 1997, in which the Baltimore City Public Schools became basically autonomous in its fiscal decision-making. The two issues go hand-in-hand.

12.Is there a pension crisis for city employees? How would you address structural issues in the Baltimore City Pension System?

City Council has lacked the expertise to take issue with Finance and their consultants on their projections and recommendations. The best way we could and should address the validity of these structural issues is to engage our own pension professional to guide us through a wide range of perspectives and remedies. I plan to urge that City Council engage such a professional to undertake this task on our behalf and the behalf of our City's active and retired employees.

13.Should teachers in Baltimore's Public Charter Schools be considered employees of the charter school or employees of the local school board? Should they remain in the bargaining unit covered by the collective bargaining agreement between the school system and the Baltimore Teachers Union?

My positions are that 1) Charter school teachers should be employees of the local school board; and, that 2) they should remain in the bargaining unit covered by the collective bargaining agreement between the school system and the Baltimore teachers Union.

14.In the past, the city administration has adopted a practice of rotating closures and complete closing of firehouses. Would you support this practice as a budgetary fix?

No. I do oppose and have consistently opposed both rotating closures and complete closings of firehouses. The culture of Fire officers, Firefighters, and EMS professionals is to respond immediately and effectively to emergencies. They are who we mean by “first responders,” and we cannot afford to move them any farther away from us or from each other than the City already has. In addition, in these violent times, firehouses in neighborhoods are a positive 24/7 sign of the City’s commitment to keep us safe. It’s important to neighbors that these first responders “walk in our shoes” --- by working, sleeping, cooking, and eating in the very neighborhoods they protect.

15.Currently, all seats on the Baltimore City School Board are appointed. Legislation is introduced in Annapolis every year to allow for at least a partially elected school board. Would you be in favor of such legislation?

I have not been in the past, but I am now.

16.Baltimore’s schools are among the most overcrowded in the state. How can we work to reduce class sizes, especially for younger children and children with disabilities in the city’s public schools?

Where the City’s birthrate and youth population are expanding most --- and where schools are most crowded --- we need to review these overcrowding and class size priorities for the construction of new schools and the expansion of existing school buildings. In the 21st Century planning and design process, stakeholders must be sure to designate and document adequate space for specialized programs of capped enrollment and to lobby for elementary/middle school classrooms of limited class size. Without documentation, the newly constructed or rehabbed building may eventually be assigned a capacity number which fails to account for gross square footage exceptions, as happened at Waverly ES/MS.

21st Century plans are underway. This and local capital planning could at least set the stage for an operational funding of school staffing formulas which provides limited class size accommodations. As a first operational step, we could begin lobbying to avoid classroom overcrowding by implementing current class size standards.

This is brave talk in this time of the school system’s current funding crisis. But capital plans are already ongoing, and we will work for operational recovery. A good time to be involved and to plan for the future.

17. DISPLACED WORKER PROTECTION ACT:

Many union members work for university and private building services like cafeterias, engineering, cleaners and security. These operations are often run by private contractors, not by the primary institution. For example, workers who prepare and serve meals to students at Johns Hopkins University work for Compass Group, not for the university.

If the primary institutions change the contract company, the workers are at risk of losing their jobs through no fault of their own. In several US jurisdictions (e.g. Montgomery County, MD and Washington, DC) legislative bodies have passed *Displaced Worker Protection Acts*, requiring incoming contractors to hire the existing workforce for at least a 90-day trial period.

Would you support enacting a DWPA act in Baltimore City? If so, how would you actively work to pass such an act?

Yes. I support the fairness of a Displaced Workers Protection Act (DWPA) for Baltimore City workers in both public and private work places. I would research the Washington, D.C. and Montgomery County DWPA legislation and talk with sponsoring councilmembers about changes they made to their original concepts and why and the major groups they worked and negotiated with to secure enactment. I would then either sponsor or co-sponsor Baltimore City DWPA legislation in the Baltimore City Council and work for its passage with stakeholders and my City Council colleagues.

18. Do you support raising the minimum wage to \$15 per hour for all workers in Baltimore by 2020?

Absolutely YES.

19. What do you think is the best strategy to assure that our school buildings are safe, structurally sound, and welcoming environment for children, teacher, and other education professionals in Baltimore?

The 21st Century School Construction Program is the City's major effort to replace or significantly rehabilitate our public school buildings, but the pace and extent of that effort require the school system to upgrade our existing school buildings in an equally transformational manner, with a citywide "all hands on deck" emphasis and commitment.

Much of the building assessment work has been accomplished. Private sector investors would need to be engaged to commit resources and call positive attention to targeted schools. The challenge is to build community support for these two crucial strategies in tandem, at both the State and City level --- announcing the initiative's annual goals, reporting periodically on accomplishments, and announcing school-by-school successes with the ribbon-cutting flamboyance of opening the 21st Century's new and rehabilitated schools.

20. Would you be in favor of expanding the community school strategy in Baltimore by working to make more public schools community schools? If so, Why? If not, why not?

Yes. As chair of City Council's Education & Youth Committee, I partnered with Councilman Bill Henry as lead sponsor of the City Council Resolution (unanimously approved) which resulted in the Mayor's addition of \$4 million to the current city budget's community school/after-school/out of school line items. Currently, our struggle is to retain that \$4 million as the baseline on which to add more funding in these categories for the fiscal year 2017 city budget. (Finance advisors seek to label the \$4 million as "one time only," not as a baseline for the coming year's growth.)

21. If elected, how will you urge developers and contracting companies to adopt PLA language into their bidding documents on large-scale projects in your district?

I will support Project Labor Agreements (PLA's) and will work with labor, developers, and my Council colleagues to develop authorizing legislation and its specific requirements and benefits.

22. Do you support the strengthening and expansion of the City of Baltimore's Prevailing Wage Law?

Yes, but I am interested in discussing the Metro Council's specific recommendations for this strengthening and expansion. I am already engaged in strengthening the responsibilities and authority of and expanding public representation on the Baltimore City Wage Commission which administers Prevailing, Living, and Minimum Wage requirements and provisions.

Thanks for this opportunity to apply for endorsement by the Metropolitan Baltimore Council AFL-CIO Unions. I will submit the signed copy of this questionnaire at my interview of February 1, 2016. Mary Pat Clarke