

City and County executive, legislative and administrative offices:

I. Privacy, openness, and accountability: What have you done in the past to support "sunlight" laws or encourage public access to information, deliberation, and decision-making? (and/or) What existing or new ideas do you support, going forward, to encourage informed public participation? How have you / how would you protect the information of private individuals, that might otherwise be inappropriately disclosed by the push for greater public openness? From first responders (police, fire, EMT) through higher level administrative positions, what practical steps do you support to encourage professionalism and accountability?

“Under my guidance for nearly eight years, the Allegheny County Controller's Office has maintained a good record of abiding by the letter and the spirit of laws and procedures governing public access to public information. Reporters who regularly contact the office seeking data from public records have said my office is one of the best in their experience when it comes to making the information available promptly with no nonsense about 'red tape.' The same goes for private citizens who contact the office seeking access to public records. As chief executive, I will continue to abide by that standard. Accountability starts at the top. As Controller, I've expected the government employees who work in my office to abide by strict codes of professionalism, as guided by an example I've done my best to establish. All those who are paid for the taxpayers for services should be held strictly accountable for performing their duties as outlined in job descriptions and procedure manuals that gird our system of government. The first practical step is to make sure that all laws and regulations governing public workers, from the chief executive down, are followed. To help maintain an accountable government and focus light on the inner-workings of Allegheny County, I pledge to hold regular news conferences and press briefings as County Chief Executive.”

II. Several public-private partnerships have been set up in areas such as the Schenley plaza and riverside locations on the Northside. While this pseudo-public space is lovely for recreation, it is also considered private for purposes of assembly, rallies, protests, or informational / not-for-profit leafleting--effectively, off-limits, even including the adjacent city sidewalks. Moving forward, how can the city and county prevent or remedy the significant de-facto privatization of public space, without, at the same time, countenancing harassment?

“Those areas mentioned in your question, of course, are under the jurisdiction of Pittsburgh and, as such, wouldn't seem to be directly influenced by decisions of the county Chief Executive. Even so, I would discourage privatization of public space. While I support and will promote the concept of public-private partnerships to improve the quality of life in Allegheny County, any such partnerships must protect the public's interest in arrangements supported by taxpayer money.

Assemblies and rallies that propose to make use of public space should fall under the rules and regulations of the city and county, and be subject to the guidelines of constitutional guarantees.”

III. What sorts of jobs best anchor and sustain a community? What role, if any, should your office play in encouraging / not hindering certain types of job development?

“Obviously, based on our region's experience, the type of jobs that best anchor and sustain a community cannot be based nearly entirely in a single industry, which can cause a collapse or near collapse of our entire local economy if that industry takes a nose dive, as we saw when the steel industry collapsed; nor can we always depend on large employers, such as we learned with US Airways, to be the kind of anchor that sustains jobs far enough into the future to guarantee employment for our children and grandchildren. That's not to say, of course, that we don't need or shouldn't seek major employers, because they can help our economy prosper. But now that we've got the experiences of the collapse of the steel industry and loss of some major companies behind us, we need to learn from our mistakes and forge a lasting new economy for Pittsburgh, Allegheny County and the region. The seeds of this new economy exist in our abundance of colleges and universities, our hospitals and medical industry, the tech industry that already is growing here, and other segments of our economy that show signs of growth. As Chief Executive, I hope to make county government a better partner with business and industry, not only in an effort to attract employers and investors to the county, but to help grow the innovative start-ups that are springing from Carnegie Mellon University and other schools, and other homegrown businesses and manufacturers.”

IV. What sorts of development, redevelopment, or blight-fighting programs best anchors and sustains a community? What could you do, within the bounds of your office, to suggest, encourage, implement or support specific responses to (e.g.) abandoned or decrepit housing, declining schools, and/or other problems that typify a community in decline?

“I first want to survey how well we are enforcing specific laws and policy regarding blight caused by abandoned or decrepit housing and buildings, and see if there are areas where we can shore up efforts that already are under way and make the process more efficient and timely. In terms of the overall problem of blight and problems that 'typify a community in decline,' we need to turn the corner on the perception of being a community in decline, take heart from the progress we've made in recent years toward establishing a new economy, and all of us—government leaders, business and industry leaders, community leaders—form a partnership that shows to the world Allegheny County is making a comeback because our tax dollars are being used wisely, our county services can sustain turbulent fiscal times, and the stability and growth of our economy comes from

within.”

V. *The 800 lb gorillas: Health care is a statewide / national level issue. So is ecological policy. However, benefits, funding, permitting and potentially funding of clinics are city and county issues (within the bounds set by Act 47). Similarly, both the city and county have some say in determining the appropriateness and location of coal and gas extraction / processing / waste product storage, from the standpoint of risks to public health and to infrastructure. In both cases, very large local employers have vested interests that may not be in line with the best interests of the citizenry. What, realistically, do you hope to do to further the best interests of the citizenry, and/or reduce the risk of inappropriate corporate influence?*

“Realistically, as Chief Executive I can push for standards that put a higher priority on the safety and health of our community, and on protecting our natural resources and environment, than on helping private enterprises secure profits. For example, I do not feel we should rush to open floodgates for the exploration of natural gas under Allegheny County, before first being secure in the knowledge that the exploration will be done in a way that maximizes improvements to the local economy and well-being of our residents, while minimizing the dangers and risks to public health and the environment. There is a way to do both, to allow exploration that creates jobs and pumps money into the local economy, and to maintain high standards of public health and safety, and protect resources such as our streams and rivers.”