

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?

As an elected School Board Member and City Council Member, I initiated and hosted numerous public hearings and forums, at the School Board office, City Hall, and in the community, to discuss critical, timely, and controversial legislative issues before the legislative body I served. This is public record for me. In addition, in 1994 I requested and explored how school board meetings could be televised or cablecast in collaboration with City Council meetings to lower costs. I FULLY support upholding all "sunshine" laws because the employers (the taxpayers, residents, voters) should know what their employees (elected and public officials) are doing in terms of policy and finance impacting them, period.

I would recommend more low cost to no cost social networking and internet venues to advertise meetings, agenda items and to publish minutes of meetings. As Recorder of Deeds, I implemented in 2003 internet/remote access to document images in the office. Since then, I have opened other remotely accessible 'offices' for various documents formerly accessible only with a visit downtown. In essence, I brought an office into the 21st century in terms of technology and public access.

I was the first and then only Recorder of Deeds in the state who, despite criticism, refused to record any document bearing a social security number, to prevent identity theft and fraud, especially in lieu of the aggressive backscanning initiative to put documents on-line. We also redacted (blacked out) a social security number from any copy of a document requested. Now all counties have some measure of redaction of personal information on documents. All recorded documents with the exception of Soldier Discharges, are by state law public records.

The office of the County Controller is enabled to audit the accountability of all employees who are privy to private information of individuals, to ensure privacy remains private, and to make clear recommendations to resolve or improve this level of professionalism of employees entrusted with the privacy of individuals.

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?

The office of the County Controller can assess and audit the amount of public space currently available throughout the county for public assembly and information dissemination, to ensure adequacy for constitutional right of assembly and protest. This assessment would shed light on the true degree privatization of former public space has impacted public assembly. While we cannot reverse the policies of prior established areas of public-private partnerships, the County Controller should collaborate with the City Controller to at

least establish a true and accurate assessment of what public space already exists, in order to provide true and accurate informational data for influencing future decision making of further privatization of public space.

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?

While the County Executive and County Council set community sustainability policies, including job development, he/she should be able to rely on the professional office of the County Controller to provide accurate data and measurements in forging those policies. The County Controller should have the right amount of experience and proven competency to properly assess many areas critical to setting public policies. I have had substantive diverse experiences in private industry, school finance, municipal finance, legislative and hands on administrative experience to be able to handle any study the County Executive would need, and to be able to offer recommendations. The types of jobs that are needed are ones that meet the skill sets and competency of the residents. But jobs should never compromise the overall quality of life of others, such as the air we breathe or the water we drink.

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?

Again, the office of the County Controller can be a valuable resource for composited data of various issues, in addition to its perfunctory duties of payroll and fiscal oversight of monies in and monies out. Through research findings of the Controller's office in collaboration with other departments and offices as needed, the

County Executive and County Council would have a roadmap per se, of hard facts and data that can steer them to enacting policies that would address community development, blight, and overall decline. While a member of City Council, I co-sponsored legislation directly addressing slum and absentee landlords, abandoned and decrepit buildings, as I represented and fought for a lower income district fraught with decline in many areas. I also took a lead in landing a Home Depot in a blighted urban area, one of the first of these stores in such an area in the United States. Working with the Mayor's office, our vision was to anchor an area with a venue to bring other residents in, and to then build upon that, with better housing and more business. I pushed to knock down those low income high rises of concentrated apathy and crime, and to build new mixed income housing to replace them. And now we now have a fully redeveloped East Liberty, or Eastside. I intimately know what makes a community sustainable, and what it takes to get there.

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?

Elected officials and government leadership must put in place measures of checks and balances to protect the citizenry, yet encourage business growth. Can you have both? Yes. Businesses want as large a profit margin as possible, but they understand and

accept checks and balances. Though the County Controller should work constructively with other government leadership, the County Controller is ultimately the independent watchdog of the people, accountable to the people, regardless of what other government leadership does. It would be the responsibility of the County Controller to monitor undue corporate influence through independent and thorough review of the myriad of contracts they handle for final approval.

The responses above are written and therefore approved by me, Valerie McDonald Roberts, Candidate for County Controller. The responses are in their final format, and emailed by me. Thank you.