

LIBERTY CITY LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL AND TRANSGENDER DEMOCRATIC CLUB

2009 CITY CONTROLLER PRIMARY ELECTION QUESTIONNAIRE

Name: **Brett Mandel** Office Sought: **Controller** Date: **March 26, 2009**

- 1) What is your experience with the LGBT community both generally and/or professionally? If elected how would you support and participate in LGBT based events and organizations?

Like most Philadelphians my age, I've spent most of life among gay friends, neighbors, and colleagues. The denial of their equality is an ugly blemish on the 21st century. As I have the right to marry, so should we all. As I have the right to adopt, so should we all.

As Controller, I would be proud to affiliate my Office with Liberty City and any LGBT organization committed to establishing a new consciousness and equality.

- 2) How have you advanced, through professional and personal achievements, the rights of the LGBT community, racial and ethnic minorities, and persons with disabilities?

Through my work with *Philadelphia Forward*, in the Controller's Office, volunteer activities such as Big Brothers Big Sisters, and service on the board of Smith Playground, I have worked to improve life in Philadelphia for all citizens, regardless of race, gender, socioeconomic status, or other factor. In my book, *Philadelphia A New Urban Direction*, I address accommodating speakers of other languages and working to ensure that we create a welcoming environment in this City for all people.

I take no credit for great social advances, but I am acutely aware that our society can be cruel and violent to those who seem different. I share that awareness with my children who meet gay friends and neighbors. Moreover, I want my children to grow up with a good spirit that assumes and accepts the equality of all people. We all have a right to educational and employment opportunities; access to healthcare; and to love and be happy.

- 3) Do you support the rights of LGBT people to the following:

- a. Marriage? **Yes (the only truly equal option).**
- b. Civil Unions? **Yes.**
- c. Domestic Partnership? **Yes.**
- d. Second-parent adoption? **Yes.**
- e. Protection from workplace discrimination? **Yes.**
- f. Protection from housing discrimination? **Yes.**
- g. Protection from acts of violence based on their sexual orientation or gender identity? **Yes.**

- 4) Do you consider transgender rights a civil rights issue? Explain your answer.

The imperatives in the lives of our neighbors must be respected and protected equally under law. The lives and imperatives of transgender citizens should be supported via all our institutions — hospitals, insurance companies, employers, other institutions, and government at all levels. Gender should have no bearing on a person's rights or the interpretation of those rights.

- 5) Do you have any openly LGBT members of your staff? What will you do to make your office a safe

place for openly LGBT staff members?

Because of the city's civil-service system, which provides for merit hiring and promotion, gays and lesbians are better represented in city government than in corporate America, where discrimination can go unchecked. But, a diverse workplace must be managed with ideas and policies that embrace differences and encourage personal fulfillment.

I know from gay friends that "coming out" in the workplace is challenging. As Controller, I will set a tone of acceptance that will send a clear signal to those in the LGBT community and those who are unsympathetic. The workplace belongs to all who work there.

I would feel quite comfortable consulting Liberty City for policy and personnel advice in the recruitment of members of the LGBT community for employment in my Office.

6) Given the current state of the economy what would you do specifically to minimize the impact on Philadelphians?

I would audit every City agency every year to show where there is waste and fraud to make sure all tax dollars are spent effectively. I would post every city payment online so that Philadelphians can determine for themselves whether their money is being spent effectively. I would do the job of the Controller as clearly defined by Section 6-400(c) of the City Charter. Section 6-400(c) reads: The Controller "shall audit at least annually the affairs of every officer, department, board, including the accounts of any board of directors of City trusts, any commission of the City and, as far as may be necessary, the accounts of any other agency receiving an appropriation from the City."

7) Given the financial state of the city how will you prioritize the funding of LGBT issues and groups?

The ability to prioritize funding for specific issues or groups is outside the authority of the City Controller. The Controller can, however, ensure that the city's money is spent as authorized by the Mayor and Council and create the transparency which allows LGBT advocates to be more effective.

8) Have you ever belonged to any organizations, associations or clubs that prohibit or limit its membership on the basis of race, color, religion, sexual orientation, gender, disability, national origin, sexual orientation or gender identity?

No.

9) Do you support a woman's right to choose?

Yes.

10) How would your office be more transparent than the previous administration?

First, I would do the job of the Controller.

According to the City Charter, the Controller is obligated to audit every city agency each year so you and I can know how our tax dollars are being spent. The current Controller has failed to abide by his legal obligations. As a result, taxpayers have been deprived of the essential mechanism for providing municipal transparency.

The current Controller is woefully behind on issuing agency audits. For example, the current Controller issued on February 19, 2009 an audit of the Fairmount Park Commission. The audit covered Fiscal Year 2005. The information provided by that audit is more than four years old. It doesn't help us know how our tax dollars are being spent and it certainly does not help us make the tough choices that now confront us.

Second, I will make use of the Controller's pre-audit authority to create even greater

transparency.

Under law, the City Controller is required to approve the legality of every payment the City makes. The exercise of this authority, the Controller's "Pre-Audit Authority," requires the Controller to make sure that a proposed payment is being made out of properly authorized funds or that the recipient is eligible to receive City payments (e.g., he or she is not a tax cheat).

Using this authority, I plan to post every payment approved by my office online to create a fully searchable database so that taxpayers will be able to track how each and every one of our tax dollars are spent. This transparency would allow citizens and advocates to make their own determinations and recommendations about how the City could spend its money more wisely. I will welcome the opportunity to discuss the City's spending with groups like Liberty City who are committed to ensuring a quality of life for every Philadelphian.

Please return by Friday April 3rd via e-mail to matt@libertycity.org

Or via mail to:

Liberty City Lesbian and Gay Democratic Club
C/o Matthew Woodcock
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