

# W—MARLOWE— WASHINGTON FOR CITY COUNCIL 2013

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## THE SUSAN B. ANTHONY QUESTIONNAIRE

- 1. In recent years the issue of police and official misconduct has become a prominent concern among the citizenry. What have you done to hold officials accountable for their actions and what do you intend to do as an elected official to ensure the equitable treatment of all citizens?**

In recent past I had the opportunity to lead a half dozen forums on police and community relations, through my crime prevention initiative: YOU BET I TOLD. Through this program, we held both the police and our citizens accountable. The You Bet I Told initiative worked with the police on putting in to practice procedures to maintain confidentiality when obtaining tips and information obtained from citizens during investigations regarding violent crimes. The purpose of this plan was to offer protection for citizens who willingly provided information to assist police during investigations. The citizens were held accountable for telling the truth about what they knew of a crime with the protection of a church- the church acted as a "safe haven". However, concerned citizens would inform the police through the church. The police agreed to meet with informants in a church with either the minister or church officials present instead of going to the informant's home. Once the suspect was identified, individuals returned to the church for disposition and further questioning.

YOU BET I TOLD was so successful that it morphed into an agency called Rise Up Rochester, Inc. Equally important is the equitable treatment of all citizens. The success of this program was made possible by coming together to provide determine the best way to meet the needs of the police and of the community. I believe we can have even greater success by reintroducing police sub-stations. The substations would be located in the hub of the communities being served. This would begin to break down the barriers that exist between the community and the police. The philosophy of the police would be forced to change to better serve the community: we could move into an age of colorblindness, mutual respect, professionalism, courtesy and cooperation.

- 2. The issue of education has become the cornerstone of the current mayoral campaign even though the mayor has little input on school operations. What are your thoughts on the issue of education and what do you believe is the role of mayor, city council and the school board in regards to education policy?**

The fact that state law requires the City of Rochester to submit \$119,000,000 levied from the city's tax base to the school district and the mayor and city council virtually has no say in the direction or governance of our schools is troubling. Be it as it may, this shouldn't stop the mayor and city council from seeking ways to influence the course and positive outcome of our city's schools. Rochester is poised for education reform and it is clear that the current system is not working. I have discovered you don't drown by falling in the water. You drown by staying there for too long! We stayed in the water and now we drowned. Here's my version of how to resuscitate our schools: a system shift needs to occur. We must move from our current antiquated model to **Neighborhood-based schools** as a new form of transformative model.

From the elementary and middle school levels the incorporation of neighborhood-based schools will provide a fresh outlook for viable student outcomes in an academic setting. A neighborhood-based school model return students in grades K-5 to one building (elementary) and grades 6-8 to a separate/dedicated building this allows for more adept social behaviors and development from the perspective of each group rather than having the middle and high school youth in the same buildings. Creating collaboration between the School Board and City Council is ideal only if it bears teeth and fruit "reforming" education, not merely supporting what's there and gaining no results. This is the case with the "3-on-3" committee, it is an ad-hoc committee that consists of three members of School Board and three from City Council coming together periodically to exchange ideas to support schools from an administrative point-of-view. Unfortunately from an outsider's perspective it appears that we have no tangible results as it relates to fiscal management or educational reforms of the schools. The "3-on-3" committee should alter the focus and create plans to move the district to a neighborhood-based model. This model would enable children to walk to school thus saving money on transportation. The money saved could then be used to reinvest in to the schools elevating their quality. And adopting neighborhoods-based schools will not require parents to choose subpar schools for their children but actually provide a process to equalize all city schools in an "integrated" community creating one Rochester.

3. **Other municipalities are using imminent domain laws to claim foreclosed properties. Should Rochester use imminent domain as a tool in its arsenal to fight the foreclosure crisis?**

Imminent Domain is the power of the state to take private property for use in a public project in return for reasonable compensation – usually the property's fair market value. There are tremendous concerns that arise when this law is exercised. Imminent Domain powers can be abused and has become a growing concern in many communities where property developers convince the city to take private property for the purpose of redevelopment for profit. The law has gone as far as defining "public use" versus "for the public good" which is entirely two different things. Under the "public goods" term, cities like Rochester can claim private property and allow private developers to raise new buildings for the sole purpose of profit and growth. As for Rochester's use of imminent domain power as a tool to fight the foreclosure crisis, there are other ways to prevent properties from going into foreclosure. I don't think imminent domain should be used for this purpose.

**4. Poverty is rampant in Rochester with the average household income at \$30,000. How can our school system educate children whose main concerns are food, clothing and shelter rather than reading, writing and arithmetic?**

The city has not done enough to de-concentrate poverty, it must be made a key legislative agenda item. Part of my “Great Communities” platform is to introduce critical legislation that will focus significantly on reducing poverty using a systematic approach. How can we honestly address the city’s budget crisis if one-half of the city is poor! Where is the money going to come from? Current members of City Council argue that the fiscal crisis that exists in our city is their number one priority. My question is how? If literally and realistically we have nearly half its’ citizens classified as “working poor” how do we expect to properly address the fiscal crisis when we haven’t honestly addressed the high disproportionate rate of citizens classified as poor and therefore cannot contribute meaningfully to the tax base and financial systems of the city. We cannot address the fiscal and budgetary crisis without simultaneously addressing the social fabric of the community. It cannot be one or the other, it must be both. The essential strategy for empowering Rochester to spur economic and urban transformation involves an aggressive antipoverty initiative,s and a declaration to fight poverty as a 2014-15 legislative agenda.

To highlight the 2014-15 agenda is the creation of a living wage campaign. Living wage would create the dent we need to reverse the poverty rate faster than just about anything else. Through living wages, Rochester would require private businesses that benefit from public money to pay their workers a “living wage” rather than poverty (minimum) wages. To the contrary, public funds should be reserved for those private sector employers who demonstrate a commitment to providing decent, family-supporting jobs in our community.

**5. Rochester resident often speak of being over-taxed and others complain of the tax incentives given to large corporations. What is your answer to the issue of taxation? Are tax incentives useful in attracting new businesses to the area, do residents suffer when others are awarded these incentives and is the current taxation rate for residents fair?**

New York State, Monroe County, and the City of Rochester are over-taxed. This is an understatement! Priority number one, we must consolidate the over 10,000 separate taxing authorities in New York State. Number two, Rochester and the State of New York both must re-create a more business-friendly and business-oriented state/city. What good is it to create a business-friendly state/city if we have a zillion of tax laws and regulation that hinders growth and economic development. It is important for us to look at ways of changing the climate in Rochester as it relates to the creation of small and midsized businesses.

The business landscape of Rochester has changed, we were once a highly industrialized city. Now with the largest employers being not for profit entities the land associated with these types of employers currently generates no revenue for the city. We must look at ways to engage the large non profit entities and gain financial support from them for the city. Maybe asking the larger non profit employers to voluntarily contribute monies to the city in lieu of property taxes.

**6. Rochester was home to many historical figures who helped to shape local and national issues. How do you see the legacy of this city and what are your thoughts on the historic preservation of areas of local, regional and national importance?**

Dear Susan...allow me to share with you from this perspective of dialogue personally. I admire you and fellow colleagues in social action, Frederick Douglas. What both of you have done was achieved human equality as a sacred right and not a privilege during a time when standing up for human rights, dignity, and respect was not popular. Susan, your having to stand up for women's rights and equality not only helped women persevere; it forced men to rethink the degree of unity and the means to give up fierce defense of policies and strategies that exacerbated racial and gender tensions. But your life's mission and purpose was what put Rochester as a trailblazer within the social progressive movement of your time. If you don't mind, I like to stand on both your shoulder and Mr. Douglas'. I want to continue the fight for human equality. It is my goal to preserve not only your house, the areas where you and Mr. Douglas carried out the business of social justice; however, we will also preserve the social calling that inspired you to liberate the loveliness of women in the public view by ending the racial and gender caste system in America. It is not only important to preserve the historic areas of local, regional, and national significance to what you have done. I declare now that the only way to truly honor the work you did in the past is to call for a new "call to action" to liberate decimated communities of color, advance women's rights in the workplace and ensure that women receive the same equal pay as men for doing the same job. Thank you Susan...Marlowe!

**7. Rochester is home to many institutions of higher learning yet many of these students do not remain in the area after graduation. Also, many local residents leave for college and never return to Rochester post graduation. What can you do to stop the "brain drain" currently going on in the area?**

First, to stop the "brain drain" effect from occurring we have to create more jobs in various fields. Sadly if we graduate all the U of R, Nazareth, St. John Fisher, and RIT seniors tomorrow morning each with magna cum laude, they wouldn't be able to work here in Rochester because there are no jobs available. The city, however, must create new synergy by becoming an entrepreneurial city, spitting out new jobs strengthening the market-based of journalism, business, education, technology and science and the likes.

As a concern with one of the city's policies, it has adopted a rather awkward plan to shrink the city's landscape from over 300,000 to 200,000 residents. Such an idea will only fan the flame as to why more college students who graduate from a local school leaves us to go to other progressive cities or those who left to study in other cities don't return. In essence, there is nothing to return to. While the city is "downsizing" it is also downsizing the potential for future boom and growth.

The City Council and the Mayor should meet regularly at least 3-4 times a year to create "town and gown" meetings with the Rochester Area College presidents – paving the way to create new incentives for

college graduates to stay in Rochester. We can stop the “brain drain” effect by reinventing Rochester as “town and gown “ city and incorporating the business community like Rochester Business Alliance to be at the table for conversations and new incentives for college graduates to remain or return.

**8. There are many camera throughout the city designed to ticket drivers who run stop lights. These cameras and the law allowing them is currently being challenged in court. What is your opinion of these cameras and their effectiveness? Would you want to continue this program or have the use of these cameras discontinued?**

Here are three reasons why I am not in favor of the red light camera program, one, it is not a tool to create public safety. Rather it is a vehicle to generate more revenue for the city. Fiscally speaking, in order for this program to work effectively there has to be “ a hope” that at least some 50-100 cars break the law a day and run through a red light just to break even – but that is still no guarantee that the city will benefit financially from this program. This is costly because the company that maintains, installs, and operates the cameras is not a Rochester-based firm but an out-of-town company.

Two, it’s not always accurate. If I should decide to lend my car to someone and “they” went through a red light, that person won’t be charged guilty of running the light. I would be and I wasn’t there. Furthermore and because there is “the hope” of enough drivers crossing red lights the city benefits from other people’s mistakes.

Three, some of those cameras are densely installed in poverty concentrated areas targeting individuals in at-risk and crime-ridden corners. But this dynamic poses a particular threat to one’s civil liberty and our due process to rightfully defend and be heard of a legal matter before assumed guilty as charged. And I do not believe this is an ethical way of getting money from the misery of poverty-stricken individuals, or people who can’t defend themselves.

**9. What qualifies a candidate for the office you are trying to attain? Why should anyone consider running for public office in the Greater Rochester Area?**

A candidate seeking public office must be a proven leader who understands the art of basic leadership and how one must stimulate the masses to move in a specific course of action without much friction. Even in the art of politics, true leadership **dismiss** the myths and other old assumptions that all politics is bad and it is about the politicians. What qualifies candidates for public office is to provide overall strategies to help the community they desire to serve to prosper and give hope. Of course, being armed with credentials that support one’s claim to provide an overall strategy to help communities move forward in an entirely different and more effective way is appealing to the public eye.

I am not running against anybody, but I am running for something. I am mission-driven and purposed-center – so the idea of running because I admire people and endeavor to see growth from my neighbors and neighborhood is why I feel I am the best person for the job as city councilmember. I am asking voters for their support because I contend that by changing the questions elected leaders ask and their plans, I can frame the core issues of the city’s tax structure, entrepreneurial innovation, budget and structural issues, and the social dilemmas with newer approaches with new eyes, newer purpose, and new ideas. We have current members of city council that are politically **proned** but not public service-

oriented. In other words, they are addicted to partisan politics and want to save their jobs. I contend that if the jobs were done right over the last four years, they wouldn't have to worry about saving their job. It will take politics to get me into office, but it will be public service that keep me there!

**10. There are many candidates running for office. Choose a candidate other than yourself and speak to their qualifications. What makes them worthy of the public's trust and what can they offer the community that other candidates cannot?**

There is a current member of City Council who has incredible integrity that stands out strong. Many people are quite fond of this incumbent. This incumbent is reasonable, tends to listen to all sides of an argument and reserves judgment until the very end. This incumbent has garnered the Democratic Party's endorsement and has won most, if not all recent endorsements from other organizations. The incumbent has received the public trust because the incumbent is humble yet a straight-talker on all of the issues. The other candidates are fiercely partisan and vote the conscious of party bosses and not what's in the best interest of the public. I see this individual acting for the people.

Respectfully submitted,

*Marlowe V.N. Washington*

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