

# Candidate Questionnaire – Johnny Howard

## BACKGROUND

- 1) Have you ever been convicted of a felony, sued successfully, or had a restraining order placed against you? If so, please explain.

**Answer: Yes I was convicted in 1989 on a felony drug distribution charge. To look for the silver lining in this incident, it has given me more true understanding than most candidates have about the effects on individuals of jail time. And I believe I also now have a better appreciation of the difficulty of working your way back from a serious offense. It's given me a deep appreciation for the efforts of the Second Chance collaborative, and I believe it allows me to speak forcefully on certain criminal justice issues.**

- 2) Is there anything we should know about your background which could be used against you fairly or unfairly?  
CAMPAIGN

**Answer: My drug case is public information. It featured in a Mpls St. Paul Magazine story about my efforts to organize against crime in Frogtown. Similarly, Channel 4 did a story on me that also featured this information. I haven't attempted to hide this fact; I've tried to rise about it.**

- 1) Why are you seeking the endorsement of the Green Party, as opposed to any other party or running independently?

**Answer: I agree with your message of bottom-up community involvement, the importance of green initiatives — particularly within neighborhoods such as those in ward one — and the importance of supporting locally grown businesses. I've had the opportunity to view your platform and speak with individuals who are part of the Green Party. I've been impressed by your vision and commitment.**

- 2) What has been your prior involvement with the Green Party?

**Answer: None**

- 3) Have you worked on prior campaigns, as a worker or candidate? If so, please describe your role and what you achieved.

**Answer: I worked on the campaigns of Bill Wilson, Janice Reittman, and Rena Moran. I also ran for the Ward One seat in 1999 & 2001. After these previous efforts I believe I have a better understanding of what it takes to win.**

- 4) How much money do you believe you need to raise to run your campaign successfully? How will you go about raising that money?

**Answer: I believe that it will take at least \$15,000 to challenge an incumbent. I plan on having a series of fund raisers, and will mail fund raising appeals. After 20 years of organizing in Frogtown, I also have a wide network of contacts to tap.**

- 5) What personnel do you believe you need to run your campaign? Who have you approached to be on your campaign team?

**Answer: I'm building an organization that is based on breaking the neighborhood into small groups of blocks that can be managed by a key contact. Again, I'll use my large network of friends to manage these areas. In addition, I've already gathered the support of key figures in the community, such as Yusef Mgeni, Michael Yang and Rev. Spence. I'll continue to pursue key supporters throughout the campaign.**

- 6) What role will the following strategies have in your campaign and how much time will you devote to these activities: door knocking, direct mail, phone banking, lit drops, candidate forums, screenings of other organizations, filling out forms for other endorsements?

**Answer: I will spend the time need to get the job done as far as door knocking, phone calling, mailings, and candidate forums. Obviously, endorsements are significant, but I'm running for the council seat, not the endorsements. I will spend more time door knocking and talking with people.**

- 7) What civic organizations do you belong to? What role have you played in those organizations? Who will support you from those organizations?

**Answer: Please see attachment (A)**

- 8) What groups will you seek endorsement from, beside the Green Party?

**Answer: I have not decided yet. Given my long history as a union member, I will seek the endorsement of the State CAP Committee Labor.**

9) What types of support are you hoping to get from the Green Party, besides our endorsement?

**Answer: I'm hoping to get help in technical areas, such as database management. Research regarding the incumbent's voting record would be helpful. Similarly, research on issues affecting the neighborhood would be helpful in defining meaningful positions. Areas such as housing, mortgage foreclosure, green space development, and planning around numerous light rail issues would be of special benefit. Assistance in completing the numerous screening questionnaires would be an immense help. Shared literature with other Green candidates could help cut all our costs. And naturally assistance or consultation on fund-raising strategies would be a huge boost.**

10) Are you willing to commit to attending Camp Wellstone or a Green Party equivalent, in order to develop your campaign skills?

**Answer; Most likely**

11) Are you willing to commit to twice a month regular updates about your campaign's progress?

**Answer: Yes**

12) Aside from winning, what do you hope to achieve by running for this office?

THE OFFICE

**Answer: I want to help make a positive difference in the lives of people in St. Paul; in particular those who live and work in Ward One.**

1) What do you understand to be the primary duties of the office you're seeking?

**Answer: The major role and responsibility of the councilmember is to set and enforce policy.**

2) How does the office you're seeking intersect with other arms of government?

**Answer: My experience is that wealthier parts of town have more success in getting branches of government such as Parks and Rec, Planning, and Public Works to work effectively for them. Neighborhoods such as those in ward one need a powerful advocate who is willing to make waves to get the job done.**

3) How would you integrate Green values into the office you're seeking?

**Answer: Supporting small business along University Ave. is one obvious step. Building light rail to usher in a host of chain businesses and drive out local business is absurd. I support development of green space within the neighborhood; both to create a beautiful space that adds value to the neighborhood and to (as research indicates) improve the cognitive functioning of children. And I actually believe that the best ideas come from the ground up, rather than the top down. That's what my career in community organizing has been about.**

4) Why are you the most qualified person to hold the office you are seeking?

**Answer: I am capable of being a powerful voice and a powerful advocate. I know how to push for the things that we need in Ward One. My experience is that it is essential to have someone in office who is comfortable pushing hard to advance a neighborhood agenda. We don't have that now. That's why I'm running.**

5) What are your top three issues and how can the office you seek influence or further those issues?

**Answer: Housing, Jobs, and Public Safety. We need to define a policy to reoccupy the 172 vacant registered buildings in Frogtown alone, not to mention the 80 vacant lots. A jobs program that put neighbors back to work in the construction trades would be an obvious step here. Community gardening efforts to use vacant lots would be a natural way to employ youth and increase the availability of healthy, fresh food. Public safety is built from the ground up, with the involvement of neighbors on the street, and by strengthening community policing efforts. This is an area in which I bring particular knowledge and experience.**

6) What are the major concerns of the geographic area under your office's jurisdiction?

**Answer: Housing, Jobs and Public Safety**

7) How will you interact with the other parties in office? If applicable, who will you caucus with?

**Answer: I'm willing to work with anyone who wants to bring about positive change. My experience is that you can often be surprised by who your friends and allies turn out to be.**

8) How will you balance the political need to compromise with your interpretation of Green values? Give an example of where you are willing to compromise and where you would be unwilling to compromise. **I'm not willing to compromise on the safety of children, or on their access to an equal, quality education. Similarly, I don't believe we should compromise on children's access to equal, quality programming in rec centers or in access greenspace. Kids in all parts of the city deserve these things. I suspect there are many compromises ahead on the quality and type of development along the light rail line. The key will be to push for a greater number of positive outcomes for neighbors as opposed to developers.**