

IVI-IPO 2004 WATER RECLAMATION DISTRICT QUESTIONNAIRE – Section 1

DATE: January 11, 2004 PARTY: DEMOCRATIC
NAME: Xochitl “So She” Flores
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CAMPAIGN MANAGER: Ezequiel Flores

NUMBER OF PETITION SIGNATURES FILED: 12,000 NUMBER REQUIRED: 5,200

Please use an additional sheet to complete the following background information:

A) Elective or appointive public or party offices previously held including dates:

- None

B) Other elective offices for which you have been a candidate:

- None

C) Principal business, education, professional, civic activities of the past ten years.

Business

I currently serve as chief of staff to 1st Ward Alderman Manuel Flores (no relation) on Chicago’s northwest side, where I oversee the delivery of city services to taxpayers and have developed various community outreach programs to make the alderman’s office more open and accessible to constituents.

My prior experience includes working as a Strategic Government Services Consultant with Bronner Group, LLC. My focus areas include Government Strategy and Planning, IT Operations Management, Organization Assessment and Design and Business Process Reengineering. At Bronner Group, I worked as a consultant to the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA). I advised the agency on streamlining their procurement and human resource processes for its multimillion-dollar technology plan. My work has helped make the agency more accountable to taxpayers and CHA residents.

My professional career started at GAINSystems, a privately held software solution and consulting firm specializing in Supply Chain Management and Inventory Chain Optimization. As a consulting project manager, my primary responsibilities included conducting client process and technology environment assessments, managing project implementations, and developing software functionality specifications to meet client requirements. While at GAINSystems, my project teams successfully designed and implemented software solutions for clients throughout the United States, Europe, and Latin America.

Education

I received my degree in Industrial Engineering from Northwestern University.

Civic

My commitment to family and community includes my volunteer work for Chicago CARES, FUERZA a non-profit educational advocacy organization, the Association of Latino IT Professionals, the Society of Women Engineers, and as a Northwestern University Alumni Mentor. I am also a lifetime member of St. Gall’s Parish on Chicago’s southwest side.

D) What subjects have you studied and what experience have had which will be the most helpful to you in the office you seek?

- Educational Background in engineering
- Professional Technical Background as Consultant
- Worked on projects aimed at restructuring Fortune 1000 firms and public agencies

E) Activities for other candidates. Please be specific.

I served as Alderman Manuel Flores' campaign manager in his 2003 aldermanic race.

F) Please list all endorsements you have received so far.

Congressman Luis V. Gutierrez

Senator Rickey R. Hendon

Senator Iris Martinez

Representative Antonia Berrios

Representative William Delgado

Representative John Fritchey

Representative Susana Mendoza

Commissioner Joseph Berrios

Commissioner David Chang

Commissioner Roberto Maldonado

Alderman George A. Cardenas

Alderman Rey Colon

Alderman Manuel Flores

Alderman Ricardo Muñoz

Alderman Billy Ocasio

Alderman Ariel Reboyras

Alderman Danny Solis

Alderman Ray Suarez

Committeeman Patrick Botterman

Committeeman Ray Frias

G) As concisely as possible, please state why you feel you should be endorsed over other candidate(s). What goals for the office you seek are most important to you personally.

I believe that voters should have independent and qualified elected officials who are capable of bringing reform to all levels of local government. My candidacy represents the diversity of qualifications, experience, and vision necessary to bring change and reform to the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District and to ensure the ongoing protection of Cook County's water environment.

H) Please outline for the place of patronage, personal codes, race, gender, and sexual orientation in establishing criteria for hiring and promoting public employees.

I do not believe that patronage should be a criterion for promoting public employees.

I support affirmative action based on race, gender and sexual orientation in establishing criteria for hiring and promoting public employees.

I) What is your campaign budget? \$70,000
How much have you raised to date? \$20,000

J) How many people are on your campaign staff? 4 unpaid staffers
How many volunteers are on your list? 300

IVI-IPO 2004 WATER RECLAMATION DISTRICT QUESTIONNAIRE – Section 2

1) Should the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (MWRD) be a special government unit or should it be subordinate to the County Board?

The MWRD plays a crucial role in protecting our water environment; I believe that the MWRD should continue to be an independent unit of government. Because of the District's large and ongoing infrastructure needs, Cook County needs an independent Water Reclamation District.

Currently, the MWRD maintains a AAA bond rating and a separate budget process. In addition, the District administers its human resources and procurement processes separately. Placing the MWRD under control of the County Board places Cook County's MWRD at risk of the rampant mismanagement that is found at such County administered agencies such as the Forest Preserve.

Instead, I believe that the MWRD should implement new fiscal controls and ethics reform that will save taxpayer monies. I believe that I have the qualifications and leadership qualities that will allow us to end the rampant waste found at the MWRD and transform the MWRD into a model governmental agency.

2) Should Commissioners be elected

- a. at-large?**
- b. by district?**
- c. by cumulative voting?**

b) Commissioners should be elected by single-member districts in order to ensure that Commissioners are more accountable to voters. Furthermore, I believe that the number of Commissioners currently serving on the board could be reduced.

3) Do you have a business relationship with any entity doing business with the MWRD or other governmental bodies in Cook County? NO

4) Will you accept or have you accepted campaign donations from current or potential suppliers or employees of the District?

As a candidate, to my knowledge, I have not accepted donations from any MWRD employee or potential supplier. I consider all contributions made to my campaign to be voluntary and as a Commissioner would not pressure either employees or suppliers into contributing to my campaign.

5) a. In what circumstances should the District contract for outside professional services? b. In what circumstances should competitive bidding for contracts be required? c. Please comment on any existing abuses.

a) I believe that the District should contract for outside professional services only after a thorough review has demonstrated that the services could not be performed within the District at all or without significant financial or personnel costs.

b) A competitive and transparent bidding process for professional service contracts needs to be established in order to ensure that the District is receiving the best services at the best prices. The process should be similar to the bidding process for non-service contracts. As a Commissioner, I would conduct a thorough review of other governmental agencies professional service procurement processes in order to establish benchmarks at the MWRD.

For example, recent legislation at the state level imposes a moratorium on public employees from immediately working for a project in which they had regulatory oversight as a state employee. While legislation at the city level places prohibitions on the ability of businesses owned by city employees and their immediate families from obtaining city contracts. I believe such ethics reform serve as best practices that can be implemented at the MWRD.

c) Currently, the District is rampantly abusing the use of contract for outside professional services. This has led to the loss of thousands of dollars in taxpayer monies. This abuse includes but is not limited to awarding professional service contracts to retirees, political supporters, and firms who employ District employees who have recently left the MWRD.

6. Should MWRD tradespersons be paid the prevailing wage? Yes

7. Do you favor permitting MWRD employees to hold other public sector employment concurrently? No

8. Do you favor permitting MWRD employees to have outside employment or contracts with entities that do business with the district?

I am firmly against a District employee having any type of direct financial relationship with a firm that they might regulate or work closely within their official capacities as a District employee.

Instead, I favor an annual notification process in which District employees must disclose any outside business relationships or employment. In this manner, supervisors are aware of any potential conflicts of interest. In addition, this information should be available to the public.

In cases in which an MWRD employee is employed or has a contract with entities that do business with the district, strict guidelines should be followed. In addition, MWRD employees (or their direct family members) should not have any form of direct ownership with an entity that does business with the District.

Furthermore, I believe that all firms that are seeking a contractual relationship with the firm must also disclose any financial or personal relationships with MWRD employees.

9. Is the District in good financial condition? Please comment on both expenditures and sources of revenues?

To my knowledge the District is in a stable financial condition, but I believe that with my skills I can save taxpayers monies by eliminating waste and inefficiencies. Currently, the District receives funding from residents and businesses in the form of property taxes, bonds, user charges and permits, as well as federal and state grants.

The leadership at the MWRD has utilized this healthy stream of revenues in order to increase the bloat and bureaucracy at the District. This is particularly true at the managerial level in which every department head is making over \$150,000. In contrast, the Governor's Cabinet members receive similar or lower salaries and administer much larger departments.

**10 a. What should the MWRD's role in policy on lakefront, riverfront and canal development?
10 b. What responsibility should it have for planning or monitoring such development?**

a) I support, the MWRD's current policy to ensure that the County's lakefront, riverfront, and canals under its jurisdiction remain available for public access. As Commissioner, I believe that the

MWRD needs to take a leadership role in ensuring that local municipalities are balancing the need for local development with the need to ensure that our water environment is protected. I understand that this is not an easy process but as a Commissioner I would not allow the MWRD to become a rubber stamp for approving new development projects in our waterways.

- b) The MWRD must take a proactive and reasonable stance in reviewing, approving, and monitoring waterfront development projects. Approval should be made on factors that include but are not limited to environmental assessments, community input and economic needs. As a Commissioner, I want to work to ensure that such a system is put into place to monitor development throughout the County's waterfronts. My work in the public and private sectors allows me integrate the need for local input as well as thorough financial assessments of projects in order to make decisions that will benefit all of Cook County.

11. Do you support public access to the Chicago River and should access be a priority for the MWRD?

I support public access to the Chicago River so long as the safety of residents can be assured. As Commissioner, I would work with organizations such as the Friends of the River and the Friends of the Parks in order to ensure that monies are available for programs that protect large amounts of the Chicago River.

In addition, I would want to work with companies that operate on large portions of the river. Only by working with a variety of groups can we ensure that we achieve a balance between the need for public access to the river and the need to ensure the sustainability of these firms that are important to the area's economy.

12. Do you support the recent agreement between the district and the property owners on the north branch of the river?

I do not support the agreement because I believe that the MWRD did not negotiate in good faith with property owners and utilized District resources to strong arm property owners into an agreement. For example, the District asked for extremely high permit fees for the docks. As Commissioner, I would want to work with residents and community organizations in order to ensure that a more equitable compromise is achieved.

13. Should the MWRD assume responsibility for solid and other wastes in addition to its current responsibilities to prevent water pollution? If so, what should be the scope of the responsibility and how should it be exercised?

Yes, the MWRD should assume additional responsibilities for solid and other wastes. In order to fully attain its mission to protect the water environment, the MWRD needs to have a role in managing the disposal of other wasters. I also believe this authority would allow local municipalities to save monies by providing centralized control of waste management issues.

14. How do you propose to address issues of flooding and pollution before TARP is completed?

Phase 1 of the TARP project is now complete and the entire project is anticipated to be completed within the next 10 year. Nonetheless, flooding and pollution will continue to be a problem that most negatively affects the County's smaller municipalities. In the meantime, the MWRD needs to incorporate sound environmental practices that will allow us to find creative solutions to flooding until TARP is completed. For example, possibilities exist to channel the rain water that the MWRD collects to aid agricultural areas in the Midwest instead of dumping the water in the lake or the rivers. This will

help conserve drinking water in agricultural communities and prevent pollution the MWRD dumps wastewater into our lake and river after a large storm.

15. What precautions, if any, do you believe should be implemented to protect the environment surrounding the TARP wastewater reserves?

The TARP wastewater reserves need to be properly sealed and monitored to protect our drinking water sources, such as wells, rivers, and springs. We need to start investigating solutions now so that they can be implemented as wastewater reserves are being built for the TARP project.