

IVI-IPO 2004 WATER RECLAMATION DISTRICT QUESTIONNAIRE – Section 1

DATE January 15, 2004 **PARTY:** Democrat

NAME: Patricia Young

VOTING ADDRESS: 526 N. Spring Avenue LaGrange Park, Illinois 60526

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(This is at the Water Reclamation District. Please do not call this number for campaign-related matters.)

CAMPAIGN ADDRESS: PO Box 11561 Chicago, Illinois 60611

CAMPAIGN PHONE: 312/280-1362 **FAX:**312/751-0313 – Please include a cover sheet.

EMAIL: PYOUNG1105@aol.com

CAMPAIGN MANAGER: Myself

NUMBER OF PETITION SIGNATURES FILED: 22,000 **NUMBER REQUIRED:** 5154

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

A) Elective or appointive public or party offices previously held including dates. **Elected Commissioner of the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District in November 1992. Re-elected in November 1998. Appointed a Commissioner of the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission (NIPC) in January 1993, and continue to serve on the NIPC board. This is a voluntary position.**

B) Other elective offices for which you have been a candidate. Clerk of the Courts, Committeeman, Clerk

C) Principal business, education, professional and civic activities of the past ten years. **I have worked as a full-time Commissioner at the Water Reclamation District since I was elected in 1992. I do not have another job. I hold a Master's degree in Public Administration from the Illinois Institute of Technology and an undergraduate degree in Communications from Columbia. In addition I earned a certificate in Public Finance from the Wharton School of Business. I am a member of the Friends of the Chicago River, City Club, Association of Metropolitan Sewerage Agencies, Water Environment Federation, Chicago Women in Government, Cook County Democratic Women, IVI-IPO, 18th District Police Steering Committee, Emerald Society, Greater North Michigan Avenue Association and the Greater South Loop Neighbor's Association.**

D) What subjects have you studied and what experience have you had which will be most helpful to you in the office you seek? **My Communications degree has been helpful in dealing with the public, and my Master's degree in Public Administration provided additional information on reviewing public financial reports and budgets, and assessing our budgetary needs to effectively carry out our mission of protecting the health of the citizens of Cook County; and preventing pollution of Lake Michigan and the Chicago river system.**

Serving as a commissioner for more than 11 years, and handling public relations for the district for 15 years prior to that, provides me with more experience and knowledge of the district than any other candidate in this race. While working on staff at the district for so many years I have learned a great deal about our wastewater treatment, flood control and solids material disposal programs. This knowledge provides me with the information needed to formulate decisions regarding our expenditures and policies, and the confidence in making those decisions. I have the ability and resources to conduct my own research without having to rely on limited, selective information that may be provided by management. When I speak out against what I believe to be an unnecessary expenditure or detrimental to the Cook County taxpayers, I have the information and data to back up my reasons for opposing or supporting whatever proposal may be being presented. Often times when I ask questions or raise an issue other commissions will follow with their own inquiries.

Refusing to be a "rubber stamp" may not always make me the most popular person on our board, but I did not become a commissioner to win popularity contests (except on election day). I became a commissioner to represent the taxpayers and ensure that they are getting the most professional and cost-effective service for their tax dollars. I have been told by many of our employees that when I take a position and speak out on an issue, they know that it is in their best interest and that of the taxpayers.

E) Activities for other candidates. Please be specific. **I am running for reelection with two of my colleagues on the board, Commissioners Gloria Alitto Majewski and Barbara McGowan. I will be working with them to ensure our nomination as the Democratic candidates in the March primary, and reelection to the board in November.**

F) Please list all endorsements you have received so far. **The Chicago Federation of Labor, the Chicago and Cook County Building Trades Council, the Northeastern Council of Carpenters, the Cook County Democratic Party, numerous mayors and other elected officials throughout Cook County.**

G) As concisely as possible, please state why you feel you should be endorsed over the other candidate(s). What goals for the office you seek are most important to you personally? **Since I was initially elected in 1992, I have maintained independence as a commissioner. Due to my experience and understanding of district operations I am able to analyze and formulate opinions on the various issues and challenges that face our agency. I continue to be an advocate for open and honest government. I am committed to representing the taxpayers and ensuring that they are receiving the "best bang for their buck." As chairman of the flood control committee, I am committed to seeing the Tunnel and Reservoir Project through to completion. The completed portions of this project (which began in the early 1970s and became operational in 1985) has already prevented billions of gallons of combined sewer overflow from entering local waterways and, as a result, significantly improved the quality of Lake Michigan and the Chicago River system. Two of the three reservoirs for floodwater storage have been completed and subsequently, county residents have saved billions of dollars in floodwater damage.**

Disposal of the solid material that is the by-product of the wastewater treatment is one of the most challenging and expensive aspects (nearly 40% of our maintenance and operations budget) of wastewater treatment. As chairman of Maintenance and Operations, I am committed to seeking innovative technology, programs and methods for the safe disposal of this material.

H) Please outline the place of patronage, personnel codes, race, gender, and sexual orientation in establishing criteria for hiring and promoting public employees. **The district is an equal opportunity employer and does not discriminate against applicants or employees due to their race, gender or sexual orientation.**

Most of our employees, as mandated by state statute, are hired and promoted through the civil service process, which means they must take an examination for the position they are seeking. Only those successful candidates who score in the top categories are interviewed and considered for employment. Employees must demonstrate their knowledge and expertise prior to their appointments. This is the reason we have such a professional staff. Each year we receive numerous awards for our treatment methodologies and financial planning, budgeting and reporting.

I) What is your campaign budget? How much have you raised to date? **My campaign budget will be approximately \$30000 - \$40000. To date I have raised about \$28000.**

J) How many people are on your campaign staff? How many volunteers are on your list? **I have five volunteers on my campaign staff and about 200 people on my volunteer list.**

IVI-IPO 2004 WATER RECLAMATION DISTRICT QUESTIONNAIRE – Section 2

1. Should the Water Reclamation District be a separate special government unit or should it be subordinate to the County Board? **The district should continue to be a separate unit of government as created by the Illinois General Assembly in 1889. We are considered to be one of the best-operated governmental agencies in Illinois, and we have received numerous awards attesting to that. Since 1975 the Government Finance Officers' Association (GFOA) has presented the district with awards for its financial reporting and budget preparation. Out of all the government agencies throughout the United States and Canada, we are the only agency to receive these awards each year for more than 28 years.**

Following the policies of the board, the district has decreased its workforce through attrition rather than laying off employees. We have had a self-imposed 5% tax cap that we established long before it was mandated by the state legislature. We have never had a financial crisis as currently being experienced by other governmental agencies. The old adage applies here: "If it ain't broke – don't fix it."

2. Should Commissioners be elected
- at-large?
 - by district?
 - by cumulative voting?

Commissioners should continue to be elected at large. The district serves most of the Cook County areas and operates seven wastewater treatment plants, numerous pumping stations, hundreds of miles of interceptor sewers, dozens of flood control reservoirs, more than 100 miles of tunnels for capturing combined-sewer overflows (Deep Tunnels). There are two additional reservoirs that store billions of gallons of combined-sewer overflows when the tunnels reach their capacity (plus a third in the planning/construction stage). All are strategically located at various locations throughout the county. No area has been neglected or not serviced by our operations. Having such a facility within their community has discriminated against no ethnic group. We are a regional agency. Effluent (the reclaimed water) from our treatment facilities, whether it is in the northern part of the county or the southern portion, is tributary to the Des Plaines and Illinois rivers (and eventually flowing into the Mississippi river and the Gulf of Mexico). Since what we do is so regional in scope, commissioners should be elected to represent the ENTIRE county areas we

serve. **If a commissioner were elected from a fraction of the county, no wastewater treatment of flood control facility would be constructed because that commissioner would fight to prevent it from being located in “their back yard.”**

3. Do you have a business relationship with any entity doing business with the MWRD or other governmental bodies in Cook County? **No, I do not have a business relationship with any entity doing business with the district or any other governmental body in Cook County or anywhere else. Serving as a Commissioner on NIPC is voluntary and not compensated.**

4. Will you accept or have you accepted campaign donations from current or potential suppliers or employees of the District? **I have accepted donations from suppliers and employees. Our vendors and contractors must competitively bid for contracts and the low bidder is selected. Their being awarded a contract has nothing to do with whether or not they attended an event for me or made a donation to my campaign fund. I worked on staff for the district for 15 years prior to my election to the board. During those years I developed many friendships with my co-workers. Most of them were genuinely happy for my success and to see me be elected. Many have voluntarily supported my candidacies and continue to do so. I do not solicit employees. I do not accept donations of more than \$150 from any individual employee. Most of the employees who attend my functions are there as my guests (free) and out of friendship. I have been known to return checks that I have felt were too excessive for an individual employee to donate.**

5.a. In what circumstances should the District contract for outside professional services? Most of our work is best suited to be performed by district employees. **Employees are familiar with safety requirements and can perform work more efficiently because they are familiar with our operations. When outside contractors do work that can be done in-house, it takes them longer to get acclimated to the plant layout and important safety rules and regulations that must be adhered to when working inside a wastewater treatment facility.**

There are times when it may be appropriate to initiate a Request for Proposal (RFP) for highly technical engineering design projects because you need to provide detailed information and specifications regarding the scope of the project, and interview a number of engineering firms that may specialize in that area of expertise.

b. In what circumstances should competitive bidding for contracts be required? **I believe most contracts should be competitively bid to ensure more competitive prices. Contracts over \$10,000 must be advertised and competitively bid. Sealed bids must be submitted and opened during our regular public bid openings on Tuesdays at 11:00 a.m. In the past other commissioners have initiated raising the level for competitive bids from \$10,000.00 to \$20,000.00. I have opposed this because having an open bidding process encourages the participation of more vendors, and provides more opportunities for minorities, women and small businesses to participate and be awarded contracts from the district.**

Contracts under \$10,000.00 are solicited from contractors on our vendors’ list. Our purchasing staff is required to receive three bids from various vendors selected from the list and generally selects the low bidder as well. We have had a very successful affirmative action program in place since the late 1970s. Our staff carefully monitors these contracts to ensure the inclusion of protected class enterprises (PCEs), 20% minority, 10% women-owned and 10% small businesses, in our contracts.

c. Please comment on any existing abuses. **Our staff carefully reviews bids that are submitted for accuracy and compliance with the Purchasing Act. If the low bidder did not submit the paperwork properly, fail to include PCE participation and not request a waiver; the purchasing agent has the authority to select the next lowest bidder. We have a program called Job Order Contracting (JOC) where contractors bid for a variety of work under one multi-million dollar contract. They can be awarded millions and millions of dollars in contracts for miscellaneous work, and only submit one bid. The contractor has the discretion so select his/her own sub-contractors. Since this program allows the contractor to sub work only to his favorite contractors, I am not a fan of this. This lessens the opportunities for small, minority and women-owned businesses to bid these contracts on their own and not be beholden to a general contractor. I have heard numerous complaints from these other contractors that they are not invited to participate because the prime contractor selects the same companies over and over. Even though he may hire minorities, women and small businesses, it precludes the participation of a greater number of companies to do business with the district. I believe we should make every effort possible to encourage small, minority and women-owned companies to bid for our services and contracts.**

6. Should MWRD tradespersons be paid the prevailing wage rate? **Yes. It is only fair that our trades people be paid the same wages for the same work that their brothers and sisters are performing outside the district. Our trades people are also required to take civil service examinations. Only the highest-ranking candidates are appointed to their respective positions. Our trades people also enjoy reputations for being some of the finest craftsmen and mechanics in their fields.**

The salaries and benefits of our trades people negotiated by our Collective Bargaining Unit and the respective labor union representing the employees.

7. Do you favor permitting MWRD employees to hold other public sector employment concurrently. **No I do not. There is too much unemployment for an employee to hold more than one public sector position.**

8. Do you favor permitting MWRD employees to have outside employment or contracts with entities, which do business with the district? **No, I do not. I also believe that employees should be prohibited from working for a company who does business with the district for at least one year after they have left the district. This avoids potential conflicts of interest. It also prohibits employees from arranging for a company to do business with the district, with the understanding that they will go and work for that entity when they leave/retire from the district.**

9. Is the District in good financial condition? Please comment on both expenditures and sources of revenues. **Yes, we are in excellent financial condition. We do not operate with a deficit. For years we have had a long-term strategy to reduce our work force through attrition, not layoffs. Revenue for our operations is generated through ad valorem real estate taxes, user charge fees, leasing our property, and bond sales. The district consistently maintains a AA or AAA bond rating, so when our bonds go to market they are in great demand.**

We are continuously looking for ways to reduce the burden on taxpayers. Even the Civic Federation commended us this year for lowering the tax levy by \$2.7 million from our original FY2004 budget proposal. Our final budget for 2004 is \$882,356,649.00, making us the fourth largest budget in the state of Illinois. Our levy this year is only \$8.5 million more than last year (2.1% more than in 2003 – less than the statutory limit of 2.6%).

10.a. What should be the MWRD's role in policy on lakefront, riverfront and canal development? **The interest in developing property along the lakefront and inland waterways is a direct result of the revitalization of the waterways due to the success of the Deep Tunnel project. Billions of gallons of combined sewer overflows have been captured by the tunnels since the system went on-line in 1985. Pollution (raw sewage) that previously would have entered the river and backflows to Lake Michigan during severe rainstorms has been mostly eliminated. This pollution is captured and stored in the tunnels, and subsequently pumped to a wastewater treatment plant for processing. Before the operation of the Deep Tunnel the river was so heavily polluted that buildings were built with their back entrances facing the river. Now river property is a premium, and front entrances to many buildings face the river. As a result of our efforts to eliminate pollution in the waterways, property along the lakefront and Chicago River system has become a valuable commodity and asset to the city of Chicago and suburbs.**

In past years, few people one wanted to recreate along the riverbanks. The only fish that survived were bottom-feeding carp. Today, there are more than 50 species thriving in the river, ranging from large mouth bass to rainbow trout. Canoeing and boating along the rivers and channels has become a popular sport.

Our scientists monitor the aquatic life in the river as a measure to determine the cleanliness of the water. Fish are tagged, and can be tracked all the way to the Gulf of Mexico and miles out into Lake Michigan. We take great pride in the dramatic transformation of the river quality.

b. What responsibility should it have for planning or monitoring such development? **Our mission and statutory responsibility is to protect the health of the citizens by prevention pollution of the waterways. Development of the property along the riverbanks is not part of that mandate. Development should be overseen by the city and civic organizations such as Friends of the Chicago River, who have dedicated their organizations to increasing access to the river and providing public recreational opportunities. Any input from the district would only be in an advisory capacity to ensure that development does not interfere with the navigability of the waterways. I applaud the city for its new program asking for financial assistance from the business community to provide walkways and cultural exhibits along its banks. This will be a great addition to the river, and provide an outstanding place for residents and visitors to relax and appreciate one of Chicago's crown jewels.**

11. a Do you support public access to the Chicago River and should access be a priority for the MWRD? **Absolutely. I enjoy working with members of the community to provide this access. I want visitors and residents to be able to enjoy the beauty of the rivers as much as I do.**

b. Do you support the recent agreement between the district and the property owners on the north branch of the river? **I can fully understand the unique situation that these homeowners have and their desire to have direct access to the riverbanks from their back yards. If I lived there I would probably want the same. However, there is no agreement. We thought that after many, many years and many, many discussions we had finally reached an agreement that would permit homeowners along the North Branch to utilize our property along the banks, but one of the absolute requirements was that they were to provide insurance indemnifying the district and taxpayers. Since none of the owners have yet to provide that insurance we have reached an impasse. Furthermore, there is pending litigation so I am not at liberty to discuss this in any greater detail.**

12. Are present systems for monitoring and eliminating water pollution from industrial and domestic waste adequate and appropriate? **Yes, our industrial waste monitoring and enforcement has been so successful in monitoring industries which require additional treatment, and getting many businesses into compliance, we have been able to reduce our staff members in this area. Companies are still monitored, either by our pollution control technicians collecting samples, or automatic monitoring systems. Many companies have also improved their reporting methodologies and have come to more fully understand and comply with our Ordinance.**

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? **If this question refers to adding the collection of city wastes into our operation, no, I do not believe we should assume this responsibility. As I stated earlier, our solids material program for disposing of the by-product of the wastewater treatment is very challenging to us, particularly financially. We are continuously seeking methods of disposal. Currently, a portion of this material is transported downstate to Fulton County. The district owns 15,000 acres of land there. Much of this property had been strip-mined for coal and left barren and unproductive. We have been applying our material there and revitalizing the area since 1970. Our solids material is also utilized on golf courses, highway construction fill, sod farms and by farmers applying the material to their crops. We are continuously seeking more cost-effective and innovative methods of handling this product.**

14. How do you propose to address issues of flooding and pollution before TARP is completed? **TARP only serves the city of Chicago and 52 adjacent communities that have combined sewer systems – sewers that collect both sewerage and rainwater. Completed portions of the tunnels and reservoirs started operating in 1985. Our most recent reservoir in South Holland, the Thornton Transitional reservoir, was completed last fall and will provide flood control in southeast Cook County until the larger Thornton Reservoir, currently under construction, is completed in a few years. Last fall the success of this reservoir was proven when a torrential rainstorm fell on the southeast suburbs, and all of that floodwater, which previously would have wound up in homeowners' basements and in the streets, was captured by the reservoir. As a result, millions of dollars in floodwater damages was avoided, saving local taxpayers millions of dollars.**

15. What precautions, if any, do you believe should be implemented to protect the environment surrounding the TARP wastewater reservoirs? **Tunnels are concrete-lined to prevent leeching. Most of the time infiltration pressures exceed exfiltration pressures. Exfiltrated water is returned to the tunnels when the tunnel is dewatered. In 1979 we began installing 111 monitoring wells adjacent to the tunnels. An additional 39 groundwater level monitoring wells have also been installed. The IEPA requires us to monitor the tunnels and groundwater, and any data that is collected is sent to them for review. There are about 3000 samples collected annually. Results over the years have indicated no adverse impact on groundwater quality or quantity. The monitoring program has been so successful that the IEPA has reduced the numbers of samples and sites required.**

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