



1199 SEIU 2009 Endorsement Questionnaire

Name of Candidate: Howie Hawkins

Position running for: 4th District Councilor, Syracuse

If running for re-election how long have you held this position?

I am not the incumbent.

Nursing Homes and Hospitals main source of funding is:

Government health insurance: Medicaid and Medicare.

Why are you interested in running for this position?

I have issues.

The living wage ordinance, a policy I first raised in the 1995 councilor at-large race, is being resisted and undermined by the city administration. In 1997, the council passed a resolution asking city contractors to pay living wages. But it took until 2005 to adopt a limited living wage law and it is still not fully implemented in 2009. The councilors are silent the latest retreat, including the incumbent I am challenging whose signature issue is supposed to be the living wage.

In 2005, I raised public power in the mayoral race and it received widespread support. It took until 2008 to get a feasibility study funded, but now it has been put on hold by the administration and all but one of the councilors are silent on this issue.

Things move too slowly in city government. I want to push from the inside after the election, not just raise the issues from outside during the election

I was urged by people in the district to run for this office, initially by Democratic committee members in my neighborhood on the South Side and then by other committee members and activists on the East Side when I asked what they thought. Many people in the district feel they don't have a responsive advocate representing them. I'm told by progressive Democrats that they want me on the council to say the things that Democrats on the council won't say for partisan reasons but would like said to give them leverage within their caucus.

This campaign is different: I can win it. In past races I wanted and tried to win, but knew it was most likely going to be an educational campaign to put issues on the agenda. This time there is widespread dissatisfaction with the Democratic incumbent among Democrats. No Republican is running, so the “spoiler/lesser evil” dynamic should not be a factor. It is a matter of convincing enough Democrats to come off their line for this race and vote for the Green.

What does the 1199 SEIU endorsement mean to you and your campaign?

It would mean 1199 SEIU is supporting a rank and file union member for public office.

1199 SEIU has a history in the 4th District and South Side of beating designated Democrats in Democratic primaries for District Councilor and County Legislator. 1199 SEIU puts in more phone banking and other organizational resources into city elections than any other local union. That would be a tremendous help for my campaign.

An 1199 SEIU endorsement of an independent Green would send a signal to the Democratic elected officials in the city that they cannot take labor for granted, that there is a political price to pay for sabotaging the living wage law, stalling public power, and granting economic development benefits to anti-union developers.

What are the major issues you will be discussing during your campaign? Why are these the issues that you are focusing on?

1. Responsive representation:

There is much dissatisfaction in the 4th District that the incumbent District Councilor is not responsive to constituent calls and concerns and is not a forceful advocate for the district's needs. Even when I can't get the other councilors to vote with me on policy reforms, I can return phone calls promptly, hold regular office hours in the neighborhood, organize community meetings for people to discuss issues and organize to realize community goals, and speak out for community goals. That kind of representation would be a change for the 4th District.

2. Follow through on policies already adopted, namely Living Wages and Public Power:

We need a stronger living wage law, as its proponents on the council said when the existing ordinance passed in 2005 and promised to revisit to strengthen. They haven't come back to it and the existing law is still not fully implemented. I will work to enforce the existing living wage ordinance, expand it to cover all workers with the city and its contractors, and seek to cover all workers in the city through a citywide minimum wage, as Santa Fe, New Mexico has done. I will also work include in an improved Living Wage Ordinance a Community Hiring Hall (what the AFL-CIO calls “Living Wage Plus”). The Community Hiring Hall would help contractors meet employment goals for ethnic minorities, who are underrepresented by more than 50% in jobs with city contractors, according to the data in the Onondaga County Human Rights Commission reports. The city now has no program or employment goals to increase jobs for city residents or ethnic minorities with city contractors

or city departments, except for the police and fire departments pursuant to court settlements from the 1970s. The Community Hiring Hall would help city residents to qualify, get into, and stay in training programs and jobs with the city, its contractors, and other employers. It would also be central part of a coordinated Green Jobs program to train and recruit city residents for the skilled workforce of the new Green Economy.

Public power promises to reduce electricity costs for residents and businesses by one-third, according to a pre-feasibility study done by a former Niagara Mohawk engineer for the Public Power Coalition of Central New York. Public power will be an economic development stimulus as well as a way of developing green power generation. Whether it is laziness, or fear of taking on National Grid, or both, the council and administration have stalled the feasibility study. Public power needs a strong advocate on the council to get the feasibility study completed and then push for the public power agency.

3. New issues to put on the agenda:

There are many policies I advocate which are enumerated in the platform on my website (www.howiehawkins.org). But most of them revolve around the economic crisis the city faces, which is manifest in both stagnation in business development and big structural deficits in the city finances going forward. My top new priorities are for the city to take a more direct role in business development, to make sure the schools and youth programs are fully funded, and progressive tax reform.

Business Development: It is clear that the massive debt overhang in the national economy (household and business even more than government) will depress consumption and business investment for years to come due to principal, interest, and tax payments. Relying on big outside businesses to come to Syracuse for the various tax, subsidy, and enterprise zone incentives has not worked and is even less likely to work in the coming years given the economic climate. It is also clear that the federal government's commitment to military spending for overseas wars and the bailout of big financial institutions means that Uncle Sam will not be devoting resources to the renewal of depressed cities like Syracuse.

What this all means for Syracuse is that we are going to have to do it ourselves. The city government needs to be the lead developer. It needs to take a much more direct role in developing local businesses. It will take creative public enterprise—public power, municipal broadband, a municipal development bank with a business planning and development arm, a planning department to help neighborhood-directed development—to provide the economic infrastructure and services for the development of new community-owned enterprises whose ownership structures anchor them, and the wealth they create, to our community, unlike the absentee-owned corporations that abandoned Syracuse. By community-owned enterprises I mean worker and consumer cooperatives, resident owner-operated small businesses, and community corporations where voting shares are restricted to residents (like the Green Bay Packers).

Schools and Youth Programs: Graduation rates this year were between 38 percent and 52 percent at the four city high schools. Many children are running the streets while parents work multiple jobs. These realities yield a low skills, high unemployment, and high crime. I support fully funding public schools by a regular annual increase in the city contribution to

the school budget at least equal to inflation and by fighting to reform the state funding formula in accordance with the principles in the court decisions won by the Campaign for Fiscal Equity. I support increased funding for the Department of Parks, Recreation and Youth Programs to enable it to open and staff schools and parks nights, weekends, and summers so children have safe, constructive alternatives to the streets and the gangs.

Progressive Tax Reform: The poorest 20% pay 14% of their income in sales and property taxes while the wealthiest 20% pay only 7% in New York State (Fiscal Policy Institute, 2003). Meanwhile, the city of Syracuse faces a recurring annual structural deficit. We need a more progressive local tax structure to make taxes fair and sufficient to fund city services, schools, and youth programs. I support funding studies to examine the options for local tax reform that will make the structure more progressive and yield more revenues. One study should examine a graduated City Income and Commuter Tax, including a tax on the incomes earned in the city by 40,000+ commuters. Commuters use city services (police, fire, roads, infrastructure) but make no contribution to pay for them. Another study should explore progressive property tax reform through Land Value Taxation, which can make the property more progressive and stimulate inner-city development by taxing land values more and improvements to homes and businesses less.

1199 SEIU represents close to 8,000 healthcare workers in the CNY area. What are your views on the healthcare industry in CNY? If elected, how will you work to ensure healthcare providers, workers and facilities thrive in your community?

I will support unionization of health care workers, defend the funding of public health care facilities, and support Common Council memorializing the state legislature and Congress in favor of a single-payer universal health service (not just public insurance).

The health care is central to Syracuse economy and one of the few sectors that has not contracted radically. But the economic viability of the whole system is threatened by escalating costs driven by for-profit insurance, pharmaceutical, medical supply, and hospital companies and the fee-for-service system of reimbursements.

If health care reform does not effectively control costs, the reaction to the unaffordability of employer-provided private insurance and public insurance programs could result deep cutbacks in both, a contraction of the health care industry, and a two-tier system of decent care for the well off and minimal care for the working class.

The current thrust of national health care reform—including all four of the “public option” bills passed out of the committees of Congress and the Senate to date—is to maintain our inefficient, high-cost mixed system of public and private insurance that shuttles costly old, poor, and sick people to public insurance and publicly-subsidized private insurance and leaves profitable young, affluent, and healthy to private insurance. This kind of reform will only exacerbate the cost crisis. That then sets the stage for a reactionary deep cuts in public insurance programs as the next “reform.”

The only kind of reform that can achieve quality care, cost control, and universal coverage is a public health service, a single public payer financed by progressive taxes to fund budgets for public and nonprofit multi-specialty facilities of salaried providers. Health care should be a public service, not a pay-or-die commodity. Health care providers should be paid

salaries, perhaps with bonus payments for good health outcomes for their patients. They should not remain enmeshed in a piece-rate fee-for-service system where all the incentives encourage maximizing patients and procedures for fees.

The only bill introduced in Congress to meet these goals is the Josephine Butler United States Health Service Act (HR 3000) (Barbara Lee), which goes beyond the single-payer insurance features of HR 676 (John Conyers) and HR 1200/S. 703 (John McDermott/Bernie Sanders) to also establish a health service of salaried providers at public and non-profit facilities, directed by boards elected by health care consumers and providers. The Lee bill creates a more democratic, accountable system than the single-payer public insurance bills do. The Lee bill is also much more effective at controlling costs because it eliminates the major the cost drivers: fee-for-service and profit seeking throughout the system.

Central New York is a strong labor community. If elected, how will you help advance the labor movement in this community? Have you received any endorsements from any other labor organizations? If yes, who?

I will join picket lines in solidarity with workers in labor disputes.

I support Project Labor Agreements to ensure fair wages, to maximize jobs for local labor, to facilitate more accurate bidding, and to minimize labor-management disputes that delay project completion.

For the same reasons I support card-check and neutrality agreements for projects receiving public incentives.

I support barring companies guilty of labor law violations for a number of years from receiving municipal contracts and economic development benefits.

I support all giving all public employees who fall under the Taylor Law the same rights to binding arbitration that the Police and Fire unions enjoy.

I oppose the privatization of public services. The short-term cost savings come at the expense of public unionized workers who are often replaced by low-wage workers for non-union contractors. And it is not long before private contractors, having secured initial contracts by low-balling bids, escalate fees once they have captured the market and cutback on the services delivered to maximize profits. Public services have accountability built in to the democratic process that can keep the quality of service up.

The public should elect Industrial Development Agency boards, like it elects school boards. Pending the changes in state law such elections would require, I support putting representatives of unions and community-based organizations into seats that the City of Syracuse appoints.

I am in the process of approaching labor organizations for questionnaires, interviews, and endorsements, including Teamsters Local 317, AFSCME Local 400, SEIU 200 United, and the Greater Syracuse Labor Council.

For many years the City of Syracuse has extended special tax breaks to companies that promised to create jobs in our community. How would you rate the success of that program and would you be in favor of continuing it?

Location and investment decisions by companies hinge on considerations of workforce, transportation, market access, industry density and synergy, and public amenities. Then they seek tax breaks by playing one city off against another. Tax breaks to promote urban development was greatly expanded with low-tax enterprise zones, a Jack Kemp Republican idea from the 1980s adopted as well by Bill Clinton Democrats in the 1990s. This tax break program has only accelerated the mutually reinforcing off-shoring of manufacturing and financialization of investment. The wealthy with surplus capital due to lower taxes have invested in repressed cheap labor abroad and financial assets everywhere instead of new productive investment in the US. A look around rustbelt cities like Syracuse in the Northeast and Midwest shows this trickle down economic development strategy to be a catastrophic failure.

The city's resources for economic development should be used for public investment where the city gets its share of management and net income rights like other equity investors. The city's allocation of state and federal economic incentives (including Empire and Empowerment zones since for now we have them) should give first preference in awarding public subsidies, tax breaks, and other incentives to cooperatives and other community enterprises that are owned by workers and/or community institutions so that public investments are anchored to our community for the long term.

In all economic development contracts, accountability should be built into enforceable performance goals as conditions to receive public subsidies, tax breaks, and other incentives. Performance goals should include:

- ∞ a minimum number of jobs retained and created;
- ∞ compliance with labor, civil rights, and environmental laws;
- ∞ neutrality on union organizing;
- ∞ 2-year early warning of intention to move or close;
- ∞ worker/community right of first option to buy if the firm or plant is to be sold;
- ∞ prevailing wages;
- ∞ health insurance for all employees;
- ∞ surety to reimburse the public treasury if the company fails to meet performance goals.

I support the concept of accountability of private contractors but my priority is to revitalize the public sector by securing a stronger revenue base through progressive tax reform and by expanding the public sector, including a city-owned gas and electric utility to replace National Grid and a city-owned broadband system for cable, internet, and phone services in place of the exclusive Time-Warner franchise, whose Syracuse franchise agreement expired in 2007.

I also think the city should have its own development capacity instead of simply reacting to private developers' proposals, specifically, a municipal bank, with a development department that can help plan, finance, and advise community-owned businesses.

Healthcare is an important issue for everyone but especially 1199SEIU. In the position which you seek what steps would you take to ensure quality, affordable care for Syracuse residents?

Access to care is a crisis in the city. The school superintendent's State of the Schools address said that about 7000 city school children, or almost one-third of all students, are without health insurance. A Post-Standard editorial recently said that 110,000 Central New Yorkers are not covered. Many of the insured, or their employers, are struggling with the costs and/or are underinsured.

In addition to campaigning for a single-payer universal health service at the state and national levels (as discussed three questions ago), for interim relief the city should study the feasibility of a city public option like Healthy San Francisco. In the San Francisco Health Plan, low-income workers are able to access subsidized health insurance while those with higher incomes are given an option to buy into a public health insurance option at reduced costs than they would face in the private market. Pending effective health care reform at the state or national level, this kind of interim relief should be studied to assess its feasibility at the city level, or perhaps jointly with the county if they are interested.

Decent affordable housing continues to be a problem for upstate cities like Syracuse. What steps would you take to improve the housing situation in Syracuse?

I oppose the tax breaks given to many developers for high-end condos downtown. Low-income people are being driven out of downtown between the high-end condo developments and the closure of Kennedy Square and the Presidential Plaza towers.

I also oppose grants, interest-free loans, and tax breaks from the city to large landlords. For example, on August 24 Common Council unanimously approved \$170,800 in funding plus additional tax breaks for a big landlord who already owns 500 units in the city for five properties whose rehab costs will be \$462,000.

Housing funding should be directed to public and non-profit developers. The city should also negotiate Community Benefit Agreements with for-profit developers and adopt an Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance that would require developers to include a certain percentage of units for low- and moderate-income tenants in their developments.

The incentives for property owners—businesses and home owners as well as landlords—that I believe the city should consider should be built into the property tax structure in the form of Land Value Taxation. Land Value Taxation would tax land values more and improvements to businesses and residences less. Land Value Taxation would make the property tax progressive, discourage speculators from holding on to undeveloped properties waiting for speculative gains often due to public investments, and encourage businesses, homeowners, and landlords to make improvements without worrying about resulting tax increases.

The city should also lobby state and federal representatives to fund new public housing. The only substantial “public housing” built in Syracuse in recent decades has been the county “Justice Center” jail. Since the 1970s, federal low-income housing policy has emphasized tax incentives to private developers. The result is Syracuse is projects that were allowed to run down once the tax breaks ran out. They have had to be destroyed or bailed out by the public sector, as we have seen with the Cherry Hill, Presidential Plaza, Kennedy Square, Hill Top, and other such projects.

Do you support the use of tax-payer dollars for the services of law firms with union-busting practices?

No.

Do you think there should be publicly owned and operated hospitals?

Yes.

If yes, how often should the state or county comptroller audit such entities?

Annually under normal circumstances. If the hospital is in financial trouble or recently convicted of billing fraud, then more frequent audits would be in order.

Will there be a primary for this seat?

No. I am on the ballot as the Green Party candidate for the November 3 general election by independent nominating petition.

As an elected official what do you feel your role can be in labor -management disputes?

Speak out publicly against management abuses and in support of organizing drives. Walk picket lines in solidarity with workers in labor disputes.

Support fair contracts for municipal workers.

Who are you supporting for Mayor of the City of Syracuse in the 2009 election?

I am not supporting any of them. They are all for economic development, better schools, and less crime. But none of them spell out the clear reforms they support to realize those goals. I can work with whichever one of them is elected.

Your Background:

Positions held that are relevant to the seat you are running for:

Active in movements for peace, justice, labor, and the environment since 1967.

Past Labor Connections (Strikes, pickets, labor organizations you have been a part of)

Organizations:

Member, International Brotherhood of Teamsters, Local 317, 2001-present

Member, Teamsters for a Democratic Union, 2001-present

Member, US Labor Against the War, 2003-present

Member, Labor Party Advocates/Labor Party, 1995-present

Member, Industrial Workers of the World:

Building Construction Workers Union IU 330, 1975-1991

General, Legal, Public Interest and Financial Office Workers IU 650, 1991-2001

Motor Transport Workers IU 530, 2001-present

Member, American Serviceman's Union, 1972-1978

Labor solidarity work, some highlights:

- UFW grape and lettuce boycotts, late 1960s to 1977
- SEIU's support of Fred Harris in 1976 New Hampshire Democratic Presidential Primary
- ACTWU's J.P. Stevens Campaign, 1976-1980
- FOSATU/COSATU's sanctions/divestment campaign in anti-apartheid movement, 1976-1988
- USWA's Phelps Dodge Copper Strike, 1983-1986
- Anti NAFTA campaign, 1992-94
- Global justice demos in Seattle, including the Labor Rally at the stadium and the Battle in Seattle downtown, 1999
- Auto Workers Caravan to save and create manufacturing jobs through public ownership of GM and Chrysler and public infrastructure spending to create markets for converting auto plants to green production (energy-efficient vehicles, mass transit, high-speed rail, wind and water turbines, solar panels), 2008-2009

Any other information we should know:

Website: www.howiehawkins.org

Name and Address of Committee and maximum contribution amount

Hawkins for Council
P.O. Box 562
Syracuse NY 13205

\$1000 is the maximum contribution amount.

Please submit this form by September 4, 2009 by fax to 315-479-6716, by e-mail to Jennifer.tuttle@1199.org. Or by mail to 1199 SEIU, Jennifer Tuttle, 404 Oak St, Syracuse, NY 13203

If you have any questions or concerns please contact:

**Jennifer Tuttle
Central New York Political Coordinator
315-532-4351**

****If more room is needed please feel free to use the back or additional sheets of paper.**