

14. Below are the dates of DC 017's public meetings for the remainder of 2024 calendar:

- September 19
- October 17
- November 19
- December 19

Barring unforeseen circumstances, if you are appointed for the vacancy before the end of 2024, will you be able to attend all of the 2024 meeting dates of the District Council that remain at the time of your appointment? *

- Yes
- No

3. BEN

Open-Ended Questions

Please observe any listed word limits.

15. Why do you want to serve as a District Council Member in the 17th Police District? *

250 word limit

My first apartment in Chicago was in the 17th District. It's where I went to college (North Park, 2009) and met my spouse. It's where I received my graduate degree (Northeastern, 2015) and where I spent several years serving as a professor. And now me and my wife are homeowners in this same district, where I'm actively involved in our community.

In addition to my "day job" as managing director of an international trade association, I serve on the Community Zoning Committee for Alderwoman Ruth Cruz and the 30th Ward and am a Board Member and Secretary for the Avondale Neighborhood Association. Through these volunteer efforts, I support neighborhood work focused on economic development and other projects. And with my professional background in economic development (as former Communications Leader for World Business Chicago), I believe neighborhood and community development is a holistic effort that necessitates collaboration from residents, business owners, community leaders, civic institutions, and public servants—including the Chicago Police Department.

Serving as a District Council Member for the 17th District will allow me to further "connect the dots" in our community and support cross-constituency collaboration. The independence of this specific role will also leverage my communications expertise to liaise between these various constituencies and help strengthen our community through proactive promotion of public safety, and recognition that safety is the bedrock of community growth.

Enter your answer

16. What do you think are the most important accountability and/or public safety issues facing the 17th Police District and how will you work on them? *

250 word limit

Based on current data, the most important public safety issues in the 17th District are similar to challenges we see on all sides of the city: property crimes, burglaries/robberies, violent crimes, and various minor nuisances.

Relative to other neighborhoods I've lived in Chicago (including Edgewater and Uptown, where I was witness to violent crimes in several instances), the 17th District has provided a bit more sanctuary and bolstered perceptions of safety. But much like how one person's bad experience at a restaurant can tarnish an entire business page on Yelp—and how that business responds or doesn't respond—a misinterpretation or occlusion of information from a public incident can have a broader detrimental effect on an organization.

Beyond neighborhood crime and public safety issues as such, I believe that right now—at a moment where there is low public trust in police work—there is an opportunity to enhance communications between the District and the community; through frequency, accessibility, and transparency (i.e., here's what we know, here's what we don't know, and here's what we're doing about it). Through consistent and reliable communication, public trust can be strengthened, even if the baseline crime metrics remain within the same margins. (And on the other hand, if the metrics improve, there will be better public reception to celebrate department and neighborhood accomplishments.)

17. Each District Council has a Chair, a Community Engagement Coordinator, and a Nominating Committee Member. If selected to serve on this District Council, your specific position would be that of **Chair**. Please note the role of the chair is very independent and part of the role includes being the primary contact with the 17th District Commander and staff. What does the role of Chair mean to you and how are you prepared to serve in this role? (Read more about the District Council roles here: https://codelibrary.amlegal.com/codes/chicago/latest/chicago_il/0-0-0-2693661#JD_2-80-070) *

250 word limit

In business parlance, the District Council is a liaison committee, and the chair of this Council must necessarily reflect the obligations and ethos of that liaising role. This starts with a duty towards responsiveness, both to District Commander and staff requests, as well as to the broader community.

As Chair, I would commit to holding regular public meetings at least monthly, but more frequently as needed, depending on community or department interests. And as I'm already active in the community through my neighborhood association work and service with the 30th Ward office, I'm a ready partner to work with the District Commander and the community to develop and implement policing initiatives—especially those modeled to meet the diverse needs of the 17th District.

As a skilled communicator (with experience in reputation management, crisis communications, public relations, and similar fields), I'm also an adept writer, spokesperson, and public speaker, and would commit to consistent reportage and clear, accessible presentation of information for all Council communiquees, meetings, and other points of engagement.

Finally, as Chair, I would focus on volunteer recruitment (per 2-80-070(h)). Through my work with the Avondale Neighborhood Association, I'm actively building relationships across Wards 30, 31, 33, and 35, and meeting dozens of competent neighbors looking to get more involved in our community. This has significantly expanded my recruitment capabilities, which I would be proud to carry into this role.

18. Please describe what a productive relationship with the police in the 17th District would look like? What role will you take in building that relationship? *

250 word limit

A productive relationship between the community, the District Council, and the 17th District would be built on trust and consistent, reliable communication. If a community member approaches the Council with a request or idea, we should be equipped to quickly respond to that request, or refer that person to the appropriate channel without any time lags or communications gaps (which allow mistrust to fester).

Similarly, the District Council should be equipped to support (and also serve as a sounding board) for 17th District proposals, programs, and initiatives. As a liaising committee, the District Council should serve as a trusted resource and platform for community initiatives—and as a place for celebrating community accomplishments.

As the managing director of an international trade association, I'm used to working across communities and constituencies, finding common interests, and mobilizing collaborative efforts with specific outcomes. I'm doing this work globally by day, and I already bring these same principles to my work right here in the community—which is itself informed by the 15+ years I've spent working in and for Chicago (especially at World Business Chicago, which is a public-private partnership necessitating strong relationships between civic leaders, business leaders, elected officials, and communities).

I approach my work professional, agnostically, and apolitically. I'm focused on shared outcomes, regardless of ideology because—regardless of the differences of faith, income, race, or upbringing in the 17th District—we all want to see our community thrive.

19. The 17th District Council is committed to advancing and promoting diverse voices within the 17th Police District and the City of Chicago. How would you support the District Council duties as described in the ordinance? Please include any relevant experience. (Read more about District Council duties here: https://codelibrary.amlegal.com/codes/chicago/latest/chicago_il/0-0-0-2693661#JD_2-80-070) *

250 word limit

The 17th District has some of the most diverse Wards and zip codes in Chicago, which is part of why I've chosen to live and invest in this community. This underscores the priority of the first listed purpose of the District Council: to build connections between the police and the community. This connection-building relies on relationships and communication. And based on my current role in the community, I'm well positioned to serve as a liaison, connector, and collaborator between the police and the community as such.

Much of my experience in this area derives from my professional background. As mentioned, I'm currently the managing director of a global trade association (501c6) of large, institutional investors across private, public, and state-level finance. We have more than 180 member organizations from 25 countries who represent approximately \$3 trillion AUM. The groups within this organization are often in competition with one another, but at the same time, it is the responsibility of our association to represent their business to the rest of the world. And as such, much of my role functions as a translator: taking the arcane language of the industry practitioners and translating them into plainspoken language for the broader public.

Because Police speak a certain institutional language, which does not always match the dialect or nomenclature of the broader community, I would prioritize the organization of community forums, using tools to collect opinions from diverse voices, and likewise understand police priorities to help strengthen connections across the district.

20. OPTIONAL: Is there anything else you would like to add about your skills and experiences that make you uniquely qualified for this position?

250 word limit

In July 2024, I received my Certified Association Executive (CAE) credential from the American Society of Association Executives. This credential requires 100 hours of specialized training, more than five years of requisite association leadership experience, and a four-hour test which only has a 60% pass rate. The credential primarily focuses on governance for civic and nonprofit organizations.

From 2018 to 2023, I served as an adjunct professor of communications at Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU), where I also have a master's degree in communications. NEIU is a federally designated Hispanic Serving Institution, and its demographics are an accurate reflection of the diversity of the broader district. In this role I served as an educator, mentor, and counselor for students from a wide range of background and experiences. It's also where I sharpened my own public speaking skills.

I also have several years of experience in public affairs, reputation management, and public relations. From 2015 to 2017, I was an account executive and chief copywriter for Aileron Communications, focused on improving community relations and other efforts between large-scale businesses and their local communities, including relationship-building and mobilization of community leaders. And from 2017 to 2018, I led communications for World Business Chicago, the City of Chicago's economic development agency (Rahm Emanuel was Mayor and Chair of WBC at that time). This was another complex "liaison" type role, connecting civic institutions, foreign partners, business leaders, and public servants in Chicago to advance our marketing imperative to position Chicago as a leading global city.

Resume and Candidate Questionnaire

Please remember to email your resume or biography to Anna.Mangahas@cityofchicago.org.

21. Did you email your resume or biography? *

Yes

No

22. If selected, are you able to be interviewed in person on Tuesday, September 24, 4:30pm - 7pm, Wednesday, September 25, 5:30pm - 8pm or Friday, September 27 if needed. *

Yes

No

23. I understand my first name, answers to the open questions, recommended qualifications and my biography (if submitted) will be shared with 17th District constituents to ensure an inclusive and transparent process. No contact information, identifying information or resumes will be shared. *

Yes

No

Benjamin Biography

I'm a fourth-generation Chicagoan and homeowner in the 17th District (Ward 30). By day, I'm the managing director and editor-in-chief for a global trade association of institutional investors in real estate (180 organizations from 25 countries with \$3 trillion AUM). I'm also Board Secretary for the Avondale Neighborhood Association and a member of the Community Zoning Committee for Alderwoman Ruth Cruz and the 30th Ward.

I have more than 15 years of award-winning experience as a communications and strategy executive working across global association, nonprofit, corporate, and consultant contexts. I also have civic experience in Chicago as the former communications leader for World Business Chicago. And from 2018 to 2023, I served as an adjunct professor of public relations at Northeastern Illinois University.

I hold an MA in communications from Northeastern Illinois University, and dual bachelor's degrees in English and philosophy from North Park University (both campuses are in the 17th District). I'm part of the 2024 cohort of the Chicago Council on Global Affairs' Emerging Leaders program. And as of July 2024 I hold the Certified Association Executive (CAE) credential from the American Society of Association Executives.