

Coalition for a Better Memphis Candidate Questionnaire Memphis City Council

The Coalition for a Better Memphis is an independent non-profit organization, made up of Shelby County individuals, businesses and organizations. Its mission is to assist area voters in identifying qualified candidates for public office.

In 2007, CBM's Candidate Assessment Committee is interviewing candidates for the Memphis City Council with the intention of publishing a "voter guide" of candidate evaluations.

We hope that you might be able to use an electronic version of this questionnaire. If you would like an electronic version please immediately contact Peggy Callahan at peggy@bettermemphis.org. A full electronic package will be provided to you.

Completed questionnaires may be sent to:

Coalition for a Better Memphis
PO Box 172163
Memphis, TN 38187-2163

Electronic versions can be emailed to:

Peggy Callahan
peggy@bettermemphis.org

Direct any questions to:
Peggy Callahan
peggy@bettermemphis.org

Please complete this questionnaire and
return it to

The Coalition for a Better Memphis

No later than 5 p.m.,

Wednesday, August 1, 2007

*Please answer all questions carefully – your responses will be printed on the
CBM website EXACTLY as they are provided to us.*

MEMPHIS CITY COUNCIL QUESTIONNAIRE 2007

NAME: _____

Antonio '2 Shay' Parkinson

1. Please describe your background and your qualifications for this position? What experiences caused you to run for this office? What unique qualities would you bring to this position and what differentiates you from other candidates in your race?

I come from a poor background, single parent home. During my childhood I experienced the plight of the homeless. That experience helped to develop my independent spirit. I believe in the fact that if you can dream it, you can achieve it. I am a born again Christian. I am an active member of Breath of Life Christian Center. I am married with four children (all girls).

My motivation for running for this office is simply that of grave concern for our city, how it is perceived both internally and externally, quality of education, and lack of workforce and economic development.

The unique qualities that I bring to this position are: Leadership, Drive, & Team Building Skills

What will differentiate me from the rest of the candidates; is the hardships and experiences of my childhood that has enabled me to be empathetic to the challenges that some of our families and youth face on a daily basis. I worked my way through it when most would have found people or "the system" to blame. I feel like I am a living example of a success story that can serve as an example to our youth today. I also possess the unique ability to communicate at every level and to every segment of the population.

Leadership – I am in leadership positions within the community in which I live.

- Frayser Exchange Club (President)
- Raleigh Community Council (Vice President)
- Memphis & Shelby County Music Commission (Past Chairman)
- Shelby County Fire Dept. (Lieutenant)

Driven – I led, organized or coordinated several successful community initiatives that were built through partnerships with diverse community organizations working together.

- The Raleigh-Frayser-Cordova Town Hall Meeting (Focus on Crime & Solutions) 300 plus in attendance
- P.R.E.P 14 Initiative (For Academic Excellence)
- The Raleigh Fire Victims Fund and Donation Center (Raised funds and necessities for the Avery Park Fire Victims; 8 families)
- Toys in the Garden (Distributed toys to every child in the Horton Garden Housing Projects; 157 kids received toys for Christmas)
- The Raleigh Frayser Block Party for Peace (2000 in attendance)

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- The “Listen” Tour (Series of small community meetings focusing on immediate community needs of specific communities.

Team Builder – I am a team builder. All of the initiatives that I created, organized or led were successful due to multiple partnerships between other organizations and citizens.

Antonio ‘2 Shay’ Parkinson

2. What is your vision for the City? How would you use this office to achieve the vision?

My vision for the city is to see our city as a place that is viewed both by our citizens and the world as a positive and progressive city with racial harmony, opportunity for all and a model for quality education.

I would use this office to create a branding initiative that will bring to light the assets and **infrastructure** that the city has in place while **developing** the **workforce**. Leveraging of the infrastructure and assets of the community will lead to **New Business Recruitment, Increased Employment** and an **Increased Economic Impact** for the community. Workforce development will aid in new business recruitment and employment **while diminishing crime**. Please be reminded, workforce development starts during childhood and continues through adulthood.

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3. How do you plan on insuring that there is diversity, (including race, age, gender and socio-economic) represented in the development of public policy and government?

I plan on insuring that there is diversity by:

1. Having a compassionate spirit when it comes to all segments of our population.
2. Ensuring that accountability measures are in place to guide the process
3. Creation of a taskforce made up of the parties that have potential to be affected by the policy that is being created.
4. Listening and addressing complaints that may arise from citizens that feel that they were not or should be included in the process
5. Going out into the community and speaking to the citizens.

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4. What are the three greatest issues facing the City of Memphis today and during the future?
 1. Crime
 2. Lack of quality education
 3. Economic and workforce development

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5. What role should the City of Memphis government play in promoting the economic development for the community? What specific initiatives or actions would you promote and/or support?

The City of Memphis should play a key role in **promoting** economic development in the community and the key role should also be played by the business and development community in supporting community quality of life.

I would promote/support initiatives to re-brand our city and its infrastructure as a cultural center and a business and distribution hub.

I also support the Memphis Fast Forward Initiative that has been presented by Memphis Tomorrow and The Regional Chamber of Commerce

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Antonio '2 Shay' Parkinson

6. How would you strengthen and support existing neighborhoods that are within the urban core? And what barriers to community redevelopment do you see in these areas today? How do you propose to address the current blight in many of these areas?

To strengthen support existing neighborhoods we must –

1. Create neighborhood associations, watch groups
2. Improve our neighborhood schools
3. Create empowerment zones for communities in need of a boost
4. Neighborhood branding, highlighting the positive initiatives in progress and forthcoming in our communities
5. Business recruitment
6. Workforce development
7. Restoration of pride
8. Branding and beatification projects
9. Reduction of blight

Barriers –

1. Poor performing schools
2. lack of workforce development
3. lack of business recruitment
4. reduce blight

In addressing blight, I would strengthen ordinances that would not only speed up the process, but hold landlords to a higher level of accountability for their abandoned or deteriorating properties.

I would budget for more code enforcement officers as well as support our environmental courts.

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6. What do you regard as the greatest obstacle or barrier to growth in the City today?

I regard negative perception and lack of unity as our greatest obstacle to growth.

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7. Give us your thoughts on the Charter Commission. What are the main issues that should be taken into consideration by this group and what items in the City Charter should be considered for change? Please comment specifically on your ideas around consolidation and/or a metropolitan government.

I think the charter commission is needed. The main issues that should be considered are:

1. Term limits
2. Residency requirements for city employees
3. City Council in full time capacity

The items that should be considered for change are the items listed above.

Consolidation is a good idea to some and a sore subject to others. I feel that some services can and should be consolidated while some items like schools should be delayed until all citizens are comfortable with the idea.

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9. What is the role of this office? What do you think about the relationship between the City Mayor/City Council and other legislative bodies, Shelby County, Memphis City Schools, MLG&W, Chamber, Center City Commission, etc.

The role of this office is to serve as a legislative body to the city of Memphis. According to the charter it is the responsibility of the Memphis City Council to consider the mayor's budget request and to take final action on it which may consist of approval, rejection, or approval with amendments. Additionally, the charter gives the council the responsibility for setting the tax rate and establishing other lawful taxes and fees necessary to secure sufficient revenue to fund the budget as approved. Under the provisions of the City charter the council makes the laws that govern the city. The council also serves as an appeal board for decisions of certain city government departments and boards; for example, decisions of the Land Use Control Board are appealed to the City Council, as are decisions of the Alcohol Commission.

The relationship between the Mayor, City Council and other legislative bodies should be that of cooperation, professionalism and shared vision.

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10. How would you, as a member of the City Council, effectively reduce the crime rate in the City of Memphis? What current strategies would you continue to support and what changes would you propose?

As a member of City Council, I would reduce crime through these measures:

1. Increase budget for adequate amount of police officers with consideration given to the amount of officers needed to fill the vacancies. Due to attrition and other and other various reasons, we continue to lose officers from our ranks at the police dept.
2. Continue to utilize blue crush.
3. Develop and/or create more community policing
4. Aggressively encourage the creation of neighborhood associations and watch groups
5. Aggressively fight to reduce neighborhood blight
6. aggressively fight truancy
7. reinforce curfew laws
8. implement my workforce development plan

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11. In light of recent events, would you be willing to submit to a background check and then allow the results to be published?

Absolutely.

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12. Discuss the recently passed ethics ordinance/policy at the State and local levels? Is this sufficient and if not, what changes would you recommend?

I feel that the ethics ordinance passed by City, County, and State legislatures was needed due to all of the ethical issues that we faced over the last year. I feel that the rules put in place by City Council are adequate and with the creation of the ethics board, I feel this will go a long way in curbing ethical issues if adhered to.

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13. Should the City Council Committee and full Council Meetings be video cast live?

I think video casting of some of the meetings would be a great idea. Of course, some sensitive issues would deserve more discretion than others.