

MEMPHIS CITY COUNCIL QUESTIONNAIRE 2007

NAME: W.B. BATES II

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 have lived in the city of Memphis since 1993. However, as a child, I attended Woodstock elementary before moving to San Diego, Ca, where I attended high school.

Shortly after returning to Memphis in 1993, I enrolled at the University of Memphis in the Criminal Justice program. I later received a bachelor's degree in Criminology & Criminal Justice. I continued my education at the University of Memphis, graduating with a Master of Arts degree in Liberal Studies; and an additional undergraduate degree in Sociology. Achieving two bachelor degrees' and a Master's degree only serves as one third of the qualification required to lead a district. I believe an individual, in order to be qualified to hold office, must have in his/her possession three essentials: Education, Leadership and Vision.

It is my sincere belief that I am wholly qualified to represent the citizens of Memphis and those who live in District 1, as their new city councilman. The qualifications are much more quantified than having an education. I believe leadership attributes compliment my education. Leaders have the ability to make others become agents of change. Leaders have an uncanny ability to respond to complicated issues, less the obstacles of uncertainty. In my honest opinion, people respect leaders, not only for their strength, but for their vision as well.

A clear vision for success can never be confused with the proverbial, "think outside the box" mentality. Whenever I hear someone say that, I ask them, "Why are you thinking inside a box anyway? There is no such thing as a visionless leader. If there are those who respect your leadership, your vision is woven within the fabric of their anticipation. Vision is a well placed road map that never negotiates with arrogance; and embraces a movement that embodies all individuals.

The aforementioned essentials: Education, Leadership and Vision, are what prompted me to run for office. The great citizens of Memphis have a huge challenge of electing individuals to make decisions that will impact not only Memphians, but those who live in Shelby County. The unique qualities that I bring to this position are my abilities to effectively communicate with others of different opinions, foster creative ideas that include and embrace others of different races and languages. Additionally, having worked in the Criminal Justice system; and now Chair of a Criminal Justice Department, I know the sociological and criminological dynamics that have altered the psyche of this city.

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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 have a unified council that is responsible and is dedicated to the concerns of its citizens. The city of Memphis has great potential in terms of race relations, economic development, crime reduction and a fully operable city and mayoral office.

As a councilman, I will have the opportunity to help and serve thousands of tax payers who believe in our city. I envision a city government that is efficient and reliable and holds itself accountable for its actions. I envision a city that uses creative thinking that allows its citizens to stop being overburdened with miscellaneous taxes. I envision a city that will stop paying elected officials first and start investing in the stakeholders and investors, the home owners.

This office will allow me to work with others in creating a consensus approach to reducing crime, inspiring work ethics and promoting the welfare of our children. This office will also allow me a passageway to attract corporations from other states that will actually hire citizens of Memphis to work.

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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?

This is an area that is sorely needed in Memphis government. I would initiate an ordinance that specifically targets diversity in city government. The mayor will not be able to hire his/her friends to high paying positions. City council members would be required to complete diversity training as a continuing education requirement as well.

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4. What are the three greatest issues facing the City of Memphis today and during the future?

The three greatest issues facing Memphis today and in the future are

1. Crime
2. Economic Development
3. Annexation

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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?

Memphis should take a leadership approach in promoting economic development for the community. I would certainly embrace the idea of taking a look at the Industrial Review Board and the P.I.L.O.T. program. Perhaps city council should take a more hand-on approach in this area. Additionally, the Center City Commission should be included in all talks about the development of the city. Communication, communication, communication!!! I can't stress that enough.

Council members must be involved with a hands on approach, especially if it concerns the possible impact of job growth or the lack thereof, for the citizens of Memphis and surrounding areas.

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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?

That is a great question. I would encourage neighborhoods to form a CDC, or Community Development Corporation. Once established, these corporations have access to federal and state money for neighborhood improvement. Also, interaction with the local police precinct. Getting involved in the Citizens Police Academy (I am a proud graduate of the North precinct, class of 2006!!) can help preserve a citizens' trust in the police department. You learn a great deal of information that can be used in community meetings and neighborhood watch meetings. I would continue to support existing neighborhoods by communicating with them. Having access to information is fundamental if provided correctly.

The barriers that I see to community redevelopment are the citizens! If citizens feel they have not been empowered or if they have become disenfranchised, they will behave as such. They will continue to perpetuate and legitimize the Broken Window Theory. We as elected officials have an obligation to keep everyone informed of their right to live in a clean, crime free community. Unfortunately, some of our citizens do not practice the preservation of community. Some of our citizens create barriers by blaming others and refusing to take ownership of their responsibility. Every citizen has the responsibility to get involved with neighborhood activities, keeping litter and trash out of your yard, cutting your grass when needed, removing cars from your front lawn, etc.

The problem of blight can be addressed with code enforcement. Memphis and Shelby County Code Enforcement have serious impairments. First, we would have to hire additional code enforcement officers to handle the multitude of blight in the city of Memphis, and possibly look at consolidating both agencies for efficiency. Secondly, create a "quality of life" ordinance that would effectively respond to homeowners refusing to clean up their property. This would streamline property owners to environmental court for hearings and possible civil action by the city. Third, revamp the Anti-Neglect Housing Code that will include stiffer penalties.

It is my belief that code enforcement and efficiency within the agency will help us fight blight and the perception of crime that invites true crime to our neighborhoods.

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7. WHAT DO YOU REGARD AS THE GREATEST OBSTACLE OR BARRIER TO GROWTH IN THE CITY TODAY?

Mayor Herenton. Attitude is everything. As the leader of this great city, you must be able to effectively lead without letting personal and emotional outburst distract you. I think Mayor Herenton has done more to hurt this city with his tirades and threats than the actual crime problem. Let me explain that comment. Citizens could accept that we have a crime problem if the perception of leadership indicated a clear, concise strategy for reducing crime. However, the leadership is so discombobulated and mangled from the top, the perception of crime is interwoven with the perception of the Mayor. Since crime is rampant, and we have a mayor that is not concerned about our stakeholders leaving to move across the border, I blame him as being the obstacle to growth in the city, in terms of stakeholders.

I always tell people, you get further with sugar than you do with salt. A public figure must be able to communicate with everyone (media included) without feeling everyone is out to get you. He has failed miserably in this area.

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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.

The Charter Commission is great. Change is good! We need an intense and deep look at our charter. The main issues that should be taken into consideration are term limits, antiquated ordinances that mean nothing to today's citizen. Creation of a tax collection bureau to collect taxes on delinquent businesses here in Memphis.

I am a proponent of consolidation. I believe Memphis and Shelby County is more efficiently with one mayor, one law enforcement, one code enforcement, one legislative body, etc. If an individual who was in debt had an opportunity to consolidate all of his bills, for one low monthly payment, at a lower interest rate, and pay the debt off at a faster rate than had he not consolidated his debt, would he do it? Of course he would. Both governments would gain valuable experience from both sides of the spectrum and lose inefficient measures that hinder growth. It's all about efficiency in government and what is the best approach to reducing redundant services. We would have to determine which mayor stayed and which law enforcement, Sheriff or Police, has the legal authority to keep Memphis safe.

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8. 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 City Council falls under the legislative branch of government and is given its authority by the Charter of the City of Memphis. The role of a city council is to approve/reject the Mayor's proposed budget for the city of Memphis. The council is also charged with approving Memphis City School budget. This office is charged with creating the laws that govern the city of Memphis. Additionally, this office sets the tax rate in the city.

I think communication is paramount for establishing a working relationship with other entities. Ultimately, we all have to answer to the citizens of Memphis and Shelby County. We must be great stewards of public trust and talk with one another, regardless of race, religion, etc. We need to support decisions that include moving this city forward and making Memphis the great city it has the potential to become.

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9. 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 council member I would effectively reduce crime by supporting the Memphis Police Department and its Blue Crush initiative. Secure federal funding to fight gangs in urban and suburban areas. Continue to find alternative resources, such as grants, to fight crime fighting initiatives of the police department.

Replace police officers who are administratively laden and get them back on the street, replacing these officers with civilian personnel.

Continue to embrace the aforementioned proposal to consolidate code enforcement and hire additional code enforcement officers to handle the blight within the city.

Enforce the curfew law and implement a zero tolerance policy with that law.

Invest in *Coplink*, crime fighting software; which would compliment the *RTCC* initiative.

I would continue to support the *Real Time Crime Center* initiative of the Memphis Police Department, aggressively seeking grants and other funding to lessen the burden on tax payers.

I would support a measure to place video surveillance cameras in crime riddled neighborhoods.

I would partner with the Office of Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention to facilitate programs targeted for violent youth, such as *Blueprints*.

I would embrace the faith based community and involve church leaders that want to get involved to reduce gangs within their community. Additionally, involve stakeholders in regaining their identity within their neighborhood and make a contribution of redefining who they are as citizens, which in turn will promote a proactive spirit.

I would introduce a program that is currently used in the jail system to stem recidivism, known as *Moral Reconation Therapy*, or *MRT*. This program is a cognitive-behavioral treatment approach that will be implemented in troubled high

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schools to combat anti-social behavior and disciplinary prone students that could lead to gang formation.

I will continue to think of creative avenues that support law enforcement and support the safety of the citizens of Memphis.

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!! I also want to include credit checks. Why not? If your credit rating is low, I am not too sure I want you making financial decisions with my money (Edmund Ford filed for bankruptcy, at least twice)

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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?

It's about time. I believe this ordinance is "okay" for now, but like most issues in government, will have to be revised due to someone inventing another ethical issue.

I would like to see the addition of continuing education classes in ethics, finances and budgeting added as a requirement. City council persons have a great responsibility in that they are handling vast amounts of information with numbers and other data. I think they should be held to the standard that other professionals are. Lawyers, educators, doctors, private investigators, etc, are require to have continuing education courses, why not the Memphis City Council and Shelby County Commission?

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

YES.