

# Coalition for a Better Memphis Candidate Questionnaire Shelby County Trustee

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 2008, CBM's Candidate Assessment Committee is interviewing candidates for the Shelby County Trustee with the intention of publishing a "voter guide" of candidate evaluations.

Completed questionnaires may be email to: [peggy@bettermemphis.org](mailto:peggy@bettermemphis.org)  
Or Mail to:

**Coalition for a Better Memphis  
7730 Goshawk Cove  
Cordova, TN 38016**

Direct any questions to:  
Peggy Callahan  
[peggy@bettermemphis.org](mailto:peggy@bettermemphis.org)

Please complete this questionnaire and  
return it to

The Coalition for a Better Memphis

**No later than 5 p.m.,**  
**Friday, June 6, 2008**

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

SHELBY COUNTY TRUSTEE QUESTIONNAIRE 2008

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

**Candidate: Paul Mattila**

**1. How does your education, and experience in personnel and technology systems management qualify you for this position?**

Growing up in a manufacturing community outside of Boston as the son of life-long mill workers, I have a special empathy for taxpayers and coworkers who work hard every day to feed their families and make their hard-earned dollars count. As a young man of seventeen, I entered the Navy after my high school graduation in 1961 as an aircraft mechanic stationed outside the country during the Viet Nam War. While serving our country for four years in the military, I came to appreciate the benefits of discipline, the skills of teamwork, and the importance of doing a job with excellence. The traditional values from my parents, my Catholic high school education, and my military service contributed to my desire to improve the lives of others which has now translated into those living on a fixed income and our veterans.

After being discharged from the Navy, I moved to Memphis and went to work for International Harvester for the next 21 years. While working at International Harvester, I became an advocate for working men and women as an elected union official for the United Auto Workers (UAW) Local 988 – the largest UAW Local in the state of Tennessee. As such, my leadership and labor negotiation skills were recognized and developed. With a sincere desire and a dedication to hard work, I progressed to Shop Steward to Shift Committeeman to Chairman of the UAW Local Bargaining Committee for three years. From that position, I moved to representation on the national level as a member of the UAW National Negotiation Committee and then to the Constitutional Convention Committee for the 25<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Convention for UAW – one of only twenty-six representatives selected from around the country. As a local, regional and national leader, I enjoyed meeting people and working together for meaningful change.

As a matter of note, my interest in Shelby County politics developed alongside my involvement with the UAW at International Harvester. Working on numerous campaigns for the last forty years has only heightened my commitment for credible public leadership. As one who values diversity, I have formed both professional and personal relationships that have transcended political, social, and cultural lines for common good.

After the plant closing at International Harvester in 1986, I shifted my time and energies into small business ventures, community volunteer work, and ultimately, legislative efforts promoted by the Shelby County Trustee's office. Throughout my career, I have valued education and looked for opportunities to sharpen my skills and abilities. As legislative liaison to the Shelby County Trustee for the past 11 years, I traveled extensively with my predecessor who encouraged life-long learning and my certification as a Certified Public Administrator through the University of Tennessee CTAS program (Level III will be completed by the Fall of 2008). In addition to this certification, I have completed 12 computer software classes and I am proficient in working with the Microsoft 2003 Office products including Word, Excel, Powerpoint, and ACCESS.

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During my time in the Trustee's Office, I have had the privilege of working closely with a team of professionals recruited from private industry. This unique team is a highly educated workforce that includes 5 MBAs, 4 CPAs, 4 Certified Public Administrators, 2 Certified Treasury Professionals, 3 with MIS degrees, 1 certified Human Resource Professional, 2 with graduate degrees in political science and communications, and 3 other employees working toward advanced degrees. The experience level of the core team (just in the office alone) is well over 100+ years. Because of the focus on continuous improvement, our team has enjoyed a long tenure and offered cutting-edge services to the taxpayers of Shelby County – services that include online research capabilities with digital imaging, e-commerce to expedite cash management functions, payment kiosks, and many Internet options such as online payments and tax sale pictures.

Because one person cannot be all things to all people, I fully support our team approach to providing professional and courteous services to the taxpayers of Shelby County. Based on the positive impact of this nationally recognized team, I remain committed to continuing the progress of the Trustee's office in my role as coach and Trustee team leader. Education, management, and technology are not one-time experiences – these areas continue to evolve over time and it is critical that government, and particularly the Trustee's office, not be left behind.

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**2. How efficient and technologically up to date is our present billing and collection system in the Trustee office?**

The Trustee maintains a network of approximately 12 key software applications. The live production environment (available 24 hours a day 365 days a year) is supported by a test environment where changes are thoroughly reviewed prior to implementation with “live” applications. Primarily, the software is integrated with SQL 2000 and SQL 2005 databases – these databases create an open architecture framework where information can be easily shared among applications and among other offices throughout the county, the state, and the nation. Most applications are written in Generation 3 or Generation 4 programming languages, these languages surpass the limitations of the old mainframe and assembly languages of the 1960s, 70s, 80s, and 90s.

With specific regard to billing and collections, the current STAR (Shelby County Trustee Accounts Receivable) application provides current data to ensure accurate billing and collection information. The Trustee updates this application daily with information from the Register and the Assessor to provide taxpayers with the most current information possible. In addition, all data and all payments are balanced on a daily basis by multiple Trustee departments for maximum data integrity and optimum cash flow.

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**3. How will you ensure effectiveness in the billing and collection of Shelby County taxes?**

#1 As Trustee, I monitor the effectiveness of our billing and collection process on a daily basis. The findings are reported to the public on the Trustee website every day (in the afternoon) to ensure that county leaders and key decision makers have access to current information. By looking at the following Internet address, <http://www.shelbycountytrustee.com/Reports> , the status of monthly and yearly collections can be quickly determined.

#2 As Trustee, I sit down monthly to review and discuss almost 100 different **Accounting reports** that describe revenue and collections. This monthly review occurs with two chief administrators and three other directors from Delinquent Collections, Banking & Operations, and Accounting. These discussions help to identify trends and promote proactive management.

#3 As Trustee, I conduct a monthly **Operational Review** with all office managers for an in-depth review of departmental activities to evaluate the impact of their work on the actual receipts.

#4 As Trustee for the largest county treasury in the state of Tennessee and one of the largest in the nation, I utilize state-of-the-art equipment and software to control every step of many **customized billing functions**. Mailings can be targeted by zip codes, dollar amounts, delinquent status, etc. If changes need to occur, they can be made quickly with resources inside the office.

#5 As Trustee, I make revenue forecasts and share **quarterly collection reports** with the County Commissioners on a quarterly basis and upon special request.

#6 As Shelby County Trustee, I have an experienced staff of collectors in house that routinely work with taxpayers regarding the payment of delinquent taxes. All **delinquent collection activity is performed in the office** under management direction whereby collectors have maximum access to taxpayer information and where assistance can be given on a personal basis.

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**4. Based on your awareness of voter concerns, what should be the Trustee's priorities during the next four years?**

Continuing the Progress by:

- Safeguarding Public Funds
- Accurate Revenue Forecasts
- Efficient Billing and Collection Practices
- Courteous and Professional Services to Taxpayers
- Community Outreach with Tax Relief, Tax Freeze, and E-Commerce Options

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- 5. With the Charter Commission evaluating the merits of appointments versus election of this office, do you have an opinion on which is the better method?**

I have the opinion that voters in Shelby County should have the opportunity to choose their leaders in a fair election process. Men and women have the right to participate in government by choosing their leaders and their leaders must, in turn, remain accountable to the people who have entrusted them with their homes, their children, and their livelihoods. Further, I have faith and confidence in the voters of Shelby County to make good choices and I believe that good government should be open and transparent to the voters.

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