

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.

For the October 6, 2011 election, 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 or visit our website www.bettermemphis.org under the "Candidate Ratings Guide" tab you will find the files to download.

Completed questionnaires may be mailed to:
Coalition for a Better Memphis
7730 Goshawk Cove
Cordova, TN 38016

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.,
August 8, 2011

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 2011

Name: Raymond Bursi

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 Memphis for over 37 years, 32 in Frayser and 5 Downtown. My family goes back to over having e lived in Frayser for over 115 Years.

I have owned or managed small businesses for over 20 years. Currently I am a Real Estate Broker with over 10 Years in the industry. I took early retirement from Federal Express and will be retired as of 7-1-14. In the 13 years that I worked at FedEx I went from cargo handler to Management, and thru a 6 month Leadership Management Course. I am currently a Reserve Officer with the Memphis Police Department with 8 years on the Force.

I was on the board of Directors of the Frayser Community Development (FCDC) until January of this year and left the Board due to term limits. At the FCDC I was President of the Board for 3 years and Chairman of the Housing Committee.

In higher education I earned a Bachelors Degree in Commercial Development from Memphis State University and an Associate Degree from State Technical Institute at Memphis.

By living in District 7 for 37 years I know the area quite well. I know what's good and what's bad, what works and what's broken.

As a small business owner and in management for a Fortune 100 Corporation I learned to be innovative; To be able to identify problems quickly, and make a plan to fix the problem. You have to be able to implement the plan and monitor the progress and modify the plan according to results. I know not to Confuse Effort With Results and how to convey that to groups and individuals. I know how to teach people How to Work Smarter Not Harder and increase efficiency while doing it. In 3 years as a Hands On President of the Board of the FCDC, our small non profit went from being in the red, to having a net worth over 2 Million Dollars. I know works and what is broken in City, County, State, and Federal Government., especially City Government.

As Police Officer I have been in locations and situations that only Police Officer would go to, but rather not have to experience. I know the issues and causes on why almost 1 in 4 Memphians live in Poverty.

The reason I am running is that I am tired of the lack of leadership displayed by several of our locally elected official. We have one of the Best Mayors in the country. He will be elected by a landslide. Mayor Wharton has a vision to make this City Great. He can't do by himself so I am running to Help the Mayor Make Memphis a Great City.

Name: Raymond Bursi

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

Jobs, Efficient City Government, and Quality of Life Issues are the three greatest issues facing Memphis today.

With unemployment at over 12% in Memphis we desperately need many jobs. With the extremely poor performing global economy, it has made competition between cities for new Industry fierce. The most Important Indicator for most Industries that determines where they want locate is having an educated, job-ready work force. Memphis Has Neither. Particular attention should be paid to unemployed young people who are at high risk of entering the criminal justice system.

With only 4 out of 10 students graduating from Memphis City Schools (MCS) we will remain a backwater river town. MCS Is Broken. To add to the problem, MCS and the Shelby County School Board are in a turf war over consolidating the two School Systems. I have no Faith in either school Board doing the right thing with this great opportunity.

Now that we have a broken MCS, and a Horrendous Consolidation Process going on, What do you do? What I am calling for is to hire the Best Consultants in the country to do a Detailed and Thorough Review and Analysis of MCS and the Consolidation Process. Once the consultant's recommendations are put forth we need to implement them ASAP. Even if we have to pull funds from our Reserves, it is Imperative that we Fix this Problem or we will be regulated to low paying menial jobs coming to Memphis.

In Regard to Jobs, We have 2 local agencies, Workforce Investment Network (WIN) and Economic Development Growth Engine (EDGE) that have gone through Radical change in the past few months. WIN, a City Agency that was created to help Train and Educate Memphians on how to get and keep a Job, was restructured about a year ago. When WIN did not use 10 Million Dollars in State Funds and was kicked out of the States Program for failing to comply with guidelines.

EDGE is an umbrella group that will combine of 7 city/county agencies, that presently exist. EDGE will be a one stop shop to streamline and bring together in one place the related economic development work now spread over several existing agencies. There will also be a newly created Department In EDGE to help Small Business Grow. Edge is so new that it does not have a Director, website, or phone number. EDGE should be instructed to work to attract smaller businesses to neighborhoods, in addition to landing large employers for the Memphis area.

As a Councilman I would have a Hands on Approach to closely Monitoring these 2 Agencies, which are so vital in Bringing Jobs to Memphis.

These are just 2 of the many things I would do to Bring Jobs to Memphis.

Name: Raymond Burgess

City Government Efficiency.

Mayor Wharton should change his name to Fire Fighter Wharton. In the 2 years in office he has had at least 7 Fires (Major Problems). To name a few---the 1st animal issue, Rape Crisis , the Cities Vehicle Repair Division, The Performa Inc. issue, WIN, EDGE and now a 2nd animal shelter issue. These are just the Fires we know about, I am sure there were plenty more that never went public. The Mayor inherited these problems from previous administrations.

Through experience with the FCDC, as a Hands On, President and Chairman of the Housing Committee I have learned what works in our City Government and What Does Not Work. I myself would do a personal and in-depth analysis immediately after my election of Code Enforcement and Housing and Community Development. These Departments are Broken. I know that some of the Problems are due to State Laws, but not all of them. I would work with our State Legislators towards having those problems corrected.

I would quickly look into the feasibility of merging the Riverfront Development Corp.(RDC) with the Downtown Memphis Development Corp.(DMDC)

After Reviewing and Analyzing these 3 Agencies I would like to Review and Analyze at least 1 Department and/or Agency a Month. By the end of the year I Feel very strongly that if my Recommendations are implement that the City will save at least 10% or approximately \$60 Million Dollars, and probably much more than that.

Quality of Life Issues: The Quality of Life Issues in Memphis effects everyone every day, whether you know it or not. Just to name a few, -- Education (see previous page), Babies Having Babies, City Cleanliness (see Question 6), Parks and Recreation, Roads and Sidewalks and the Continuous Cycle of Poverty.

Teen Pregnancy is at an alarming rate in Memphis. The MCS should start teaching Sexual Education in the Middle Schools. Read My Lips-- I Did Not Say Abortion. If you still have problems with this Recommendation, then have a friend Google the word "Pornography", while you are sitting down. Kid's today have easy accessibility to graphic pornography. To break the Continuous Cycle of Poverty We must educate our kids that it is detrimental to their life and the Baby. The quickest way to break the Cycle is to educate the kids not to have babies.

Good parks and recreation are wanted by all. We needed the Greenline,, Wolf River Trails, and the Harahan Bridge Project should have been finished Yesterday. With the savings generated in the above answer and State, Federal and Private Funding We need to build these Projects.

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?

City of Memphis Government should play a large role in economic development for our community. The Mayors Wharton and Lutrell did a great thing in creating EDGE. City of

Name: Raymond Buzzi

Memphis Government needs to make sure our work force is ready, and break down any barriers that would prevent the City from working with any groups like the Regional Chamber.

One specific initiative I would do is trying to find the funds to Complete the Harahan Bridge Project. This would end up being the Largest Pedestrian Bridge in the USA. I believe this Bridge Will draw more tourist then any other site in the State. At a cost of less then \$10 million Dollars, it would become financially self sustaining in it's first year. The Jobs it creates would be in the hundreds.

I would also put cars back on Main St. We need to get retail back Downtown. Of the 135, or so Pedestrian malls in the country only a handful have been successful. Studies have shown this can be done for as little as a half million dollars.

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?

First: People must take pride in their neighborhoods!!! People will not take pride if their neighborhood is not clean. Our urban core is not only not clean; it is filthy!

We have to clean up the neighborhoods. To start with, we have to tear down over 500 abandon and dilapidated houses. We Must make sure every lot is cut and litter free. From the \$60,000,000 in savings we recouped by running the city more efficiently (see question 3), we need to invest some of that back into some of our older neighborhoods.

To demolish and dispose of these 500 structures should average about \$2, 000, at a total cost of approximately \$1 million. To keep the lots cut and litter free will run us less then a \$1,000. , per lot annually, for a total cost of less than a half million dollars. These jobs of cutting the grass and keeping the lots litter free should be contracted to local people who live in the immediate area. This will provide jobs in the most difficult areas in which to find work.

Now that we have a clean canvas, I would fence off these areas where there are large concentrations of vacant lots. I would then lease these parcels to local non-profits at the going property tax rate for agricultural property. One Stipulation is that they would have to hire people from the neighborhood.

I would add- incentives to build and develop in existing neighborhoods. The City would save money by giving a 10 year tax freeze on new building in the City's core, versus having to build new roads, schools, sewers, etc.

Name: Raymond Bursi

Benefits of this program would include reduced crime, improvement of "food desserts, and skyrocketing neighborhood pride.

The Second thing I would do is work for legislation that made Memphis Sign Ordinance parallel those of Germantown by the year 2025.

With 6 years of experience on the Frayser Community Development Corporation (FCDC) Board of Directors, 3 as President and 3 as Chairman of the Housing Committee, I believe these are just two of many proven techniques that can help improve our urban core.

The 2 major barriers I see for helping our urban core are the office of Code Enforcement and Housing and Community Development. (See Question 3)

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

EDUCATION, EDUCATION, EDUCATION!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

We have the infrastructure to bring quality jobs to town. What we don't have is an educated, work-ready workforce that would make industry want to locate to Memphis.

School Consolidation is going to happen. What we don't know is how and when. Consolidation is a political football, a turf war at best. Too many lives lie in the balance for us to screw this up.

Out of the \$60,000,000 saved by running the City government more efficiently, I would do what ever it takes; hire the nation's best consultants to analyze the schools and the consolidation process. I would then follow up to make sure their recommendations were implemented.

Only 6 out of 10 Memphis City Schools students graduate from High School. With statistics like that, the only jobs coming to Memphis are low- paying menial jobs. We have a great opportunity, but we must act now.

8. What is the role of the City Council? What do you think about the relationship between the Council and the City Mayor; as well as other elected or appointed bodies, such as: Shelby County Commissioners, State of Tennessee Shelby County Delegation, MLGW, Greater Memphis Chamber, Downtown Memphis Commission, etc.

Name: Raymond Bursi

The City Council/Mayor relationship has many similarities to a large Business. It is the Councils/Board of Directors job to make Policy and sometime Procedure and have a mechanism to measure and hold those responsible and accountable. It is the Mayor/Chief Executive Officer job to run day to day operations. The two groups do not always have to agree, but they should always be civil to each other.

In regard to Shelby County Commissioners, State of Tennessee Shelby County Delegation, MLGW, The Chamber, or the DMT, we must realize we are all in this together. We must dispose of the "Us Verse Them Mentality." Whether it is racial or city/county. We are all in this together and we are now competing on a global level. We can't have this kind of mentality if we are going to survive and prosper as a city. There is just too much competition out there for us to fight amongst ourselves and be able to compete with other cities.

9. With regard to the crime rate, what current strategies would you support and what changes would you propose if any?

The Memphis Police Department is a very innovative force that is respected world-wide by other law enforcement agencies. It has excellent leadership. Thru the efforts of MPD and other local law enforcement agencies violent crime is down 27.4%, and major property crime is down 34.2%, compared to statistics from 2006.

As a Councilman it would be a top priority to insure sure MPD has the tools it needs to continue its fight against crime. One tool I would like to see every Officer have is a Defibulator. With the Defibulator Officers would be able to save more lives then they do now. This would earn the MPD more respect from all parts of our community. The other tool is Tasers. I would like to see all Officers issued and trained with Tasers. I believe this to be a Officer, Suspect, and Mental Consumer Safety Issue. With the Taser injuries to all parties would be reduced saving the City Potentially Millions of Dollars.

Finding jobs for the "corrosive" youth of our urban neighborhoods should be a priority.

Assisting the police in reforming burglary laws should be addressed. The police have said for many years that sentencing laws are inadequate and do not properly protect our neighborhoods.

10. Would you be willing to submit to a background check and then allow the results to be published?

Yes and a Drug test as well.

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Name: Raymond Bursi

11. Do you support the local ethics ordinance? Is the Ordinance sufficient, and if not, what changes would you recommend?

My legal counsel has advised me that they are fine as they are written. I would add in random drug testing for all Council Members.

12. What are your ideas with regards to the City's responsibility for funding Memphis City Schools?

With Memphis School System and Shelby County School Systems tied up in Federal Court We do not know for sure what the outcome will be, or the time frame with regard to this subject in the future.

It is possible this Consolidation issue could take a long time. If that's the case I would work with our State Legislators to change the double taxing of Memphians when it comes to funding MCS.

I am 100% for Single Source Funding.

13. What are the Council's responsibilities for making the City contract bidding process more equitable and transparent?

The contract bidding process should be put on line with all drawing, specifications, and other pertinent information included. Once the contract has been awarded, all bids should be put on line as well as a statement justifying the winning bidder. The Council should oversee this process.

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Candidate Qualification / Position Statement For *Coalition for a Better Memphis* Website

The CBM will post your completed statement on our website, www.bettermemphis.org, exactly as it is submitted. It is important that your information be complete – please use extra space if needed and feel free to attach a resume or any supplemental information. Is questionnaire is also located on the website www.bettermemphis.org under the tab “Candidate Ratings Guide.” Please email the statement to peggy@bettermemphis.org or Fax 901-752-0743 by August 8, 2011.

Name: Raymond Bursi _____

Website: _____

Candidate for: City council, District 7 _____

Why do you believe you are qualified for this position? _____

I know the problems that affect District 7, and I know how to fix many of them. _____

Name three specific things you would like to accomplish if elected: _____

Do a major review and analysis of City hall _____

Complete the Hanrahan Bridge Project _____

Put cars back on Main _____

Have you ever been delinquent on your property taxes? Yes _____ No

Have you declared bankruptcy? Yes _____ No

Have you ever been convicted of a felony? Yes _____ No

If you answered “yes” on any of the above items, please list the year and provide details. -

List other elected positions you have run for and the outcome of the election:

None _____

Current Employment

Company: Bascom Realty _____

Length of Employment: 4 years _____

Brief Job Description: Real Estate Broker _____

Education

Please list all college/advanced degrees attained.

<u>College/University</u>	<u>Degree</u>	<u>Graduation Year</u>
Memphis State University	BS	'85 _____
State Tech	AS	'83 _____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Additional information relating to your educational background (optional): _____

Six month leadership and management course at FedEx _____

How long have you lived in Memphis? _____

Where did you grow up? _____

Marital status/children: single/none _____

Please identify up to five organizations that are actively supporting your candidacy and provide a contact (with phone number) for each.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Please list your association memberships and identify any leadership positions you have held in the past.

1. Memphis Area Association of Realtors _____
2. Memphis Police Association _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Please list up to 10 current or past civic/community memberships.

1. Frayser Community Development Corporation- President 3 years, Chairman of Housing Committee 3 years _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____

10. _____

Other Contact Information:

Campaign Chair: Monte Robinson _____

Treasurer: Bruce Newman, CPA _____

Any other information you would like to share with the voters:

