

# Coalition for a Better Memphis Candidate Questionnaire Memphis City Council

## Rosalyn Nichols – District 8, Pos 2

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 am a native Memphian and a proud graduate of our Memphis City School System having received my H.S. diploma with honors from Booker T. Washington High. My employment history includes experience working alongside some of Memphis well respected entrepreneurs and small business owners as well as working in three major corporations in our city. For over 18 yrs I have worked in community service and advocacy as the founder of a nonprofit which addresses the epidemic of domestic and relationship violence in our community. For 16 yrs now I have served as the organizing pastor of Freedom's Chapel Christian Church having moved from my father's dining room table to our current worship space at 2768 Colony Park Drive. I have been actively involved in organizations including the Board of MIFA, Leadership Memphis Class of 2002, the Memphis Board of Education Community Task Force, and recently the Clergy for Equity in Education.

I chose to run at this time for two primary reasons. I have been called upon to serve at various times on various committees to provide input as a community leader. Those opportunities made me interested in wanting to serve in a larger capacity in order to be able to not only give input but help to shape policy and courses of action for our City. I have chosen to run at this time because I am able at this time, both personally and vocationally, to give the necessary passion, energy, time and commitment to the work that will be required.

I believe these collective experiences have provided me with a unique breadth and depth of understanding of Memphis from its history, the significance of economic development, the critical importance of education, the vital need for community advocacy and the role of government in supporting and undergirding each of these areas that work to make our community vital,

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healthy and strong. It is my experience in these various areas, along with a deep passion and commitment to service that I believe qualifies for this position at this time.

I believe what differentiates me from the other candidates in this particular race is that I bring an uncompromised perspective to the position.

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

My vision for my hometown is for each community and neighborhood to be vibrant, safe and thriving so that all citizens have a positive sense of connection and a hopeful outlook for their future and the future of their children. My vision for my hometown is for there to be support and encouragement for the business community and for those businesses to be connected to and invested in the overall health and welfare of the citizens of our city. My vision for my hometown is for the rich diversity and cultural expressions to be celebrated and nurtured so that the City is seen as a welcoming place for artist and creative expressions.

To this end I would use the office as a member of the Memphis City Council to utilize and manage the resources of the City in ways that support community policing and training in order to restore trust within our communities and support to those who protect and serve. I would use the office to advocate for ways to address the crisis of domestic violence which impacts the overall economic and social development of our city. I would use the office to work on economic development that supports and encourages small, minority and women-owned businesses, particularly those interested investing in neighborhoods and communities that are underserved. I would use the office to partner with and support nonprofit agencies that seek to rebuild and restore our communities from blight and neglect.

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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 very much celebrate and honor the rich diversity of our city. I am in relationship and organizations with Pastors of different faith traditions and I stand with those whose cultures, experiences and life styles are considered outside that which is traditional in our community. I believe that the Council should be a reflection of that diversity and as such I would support proclamations and ordinances that support and provide equity for all our citizens.

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

I believe there are three primary areas of concern for the voters that need to be addressed they include Neighborhood Revitalization, Economic Development and Education. I believe it is possible to address these concerns through the support of city programs to restore our neighborhoods from blight and neglect, as well as working with neighborhood associations and CDCs and residents to build communities that are safe, clean and vibrant. We can strengthen the infrastructure of our neighborhoods by growing wealth through the development of small of small business, minority and women-owned businesses through the city. It is also vital to the we continue to provide adequate funding for education as we encourage partnerships among all sectors of the community to advance the goal of quality education.

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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 process by which the City issues contracts is vital to economic development. The measure of its success in this area can be determined by the number of small businesses, minority and women-owned business that have equal access and equity in the process when those contracts are issued. I believe the increases the number of partner and participants who are invested in the welfare and success of the city, while also creating a process by which opportunity and success seem possible.

The City of Memphis government is also responsible for not only providing incentives for economic development, but also holding those developers accountable so that the overall economic welfare of the community improves.

I support creative initiatives such as Community Lift that brings together stakeholders whose efforts would not only revitalize our community but also lead to economic development. I would support initiatives such as the Minority Business Loan Fund. I would support actions that would ensure that the City holds businesses that receive incentives accountable.

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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?

Urban communities are strengthened and supported when there is ease of access to goods and services within both walking distance as well as through adequate means of public transportation. Urban communities are also strengthened through community based programs and partnerships in which the residence in the community feel that they have a voice in what happens in their community and that their issues and concerns are being heard and addressed by their governmental leaders. Homeowners plays a major role in strengthening and supporting these neighborhoods because homeowners tend to have a greater stake in how their neighborhoods and communities are maintained. Therefore the barrier to overcome is in how to not only support those currently in these communities, but to also provide opportunities for mixed income housing and development where both there is both affordable housing and incentives for those would take abandoned or neglected properties and convert them into renovated and refurbished homes. Supporting opportunities for small, minority and women-owned businesses to both live and operate in these communities helps to over the barriers, and finally providing community policing and training within these communities helps to rebuild trust and gives those who protect and serve a greater investment in the communities as well.

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

I believe that it is the citizens' overall perception of the City and its leadership that is the greatest obstacle and barrier to growth in the City today. In the 21st century image becomes the brand by which we are identified. Building a positive and productive brand in our great city calls for leaders who are willing to demonstrate prudent management of the resources, equity in addressing the concerns of the community, and a level of communication that informs and the ability to work collaboratively with diverse groups for the overall greater good of the community.

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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.

The role of the City Council is to be that voice of representation between the citizens and their local government. The duties of the City Council within the parameters of the city's charter and state laws are to ensure that the fiscal resources of the City are managed properly so as to support initiatives, programs and services that serve the greater good of the community. They carry out these duties in and through the legislation they propose, appointments they approve and ultimately the tax rate and budget for which they are responsible for approving.

It is my opinion that the relationships between the Council and the City Mayor should be goal oriented for the betterment of the community and not personality driven. There should be working relationships in which the two entities are able to work through their differences in ways that demonstrate to the community that their leaders are working not only well together but ultimately for the good of the City.

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

I am very much interested in supporting strategies that directly address the epidemic of domestic violence in our city makes up approximately 52% of the crimes against individuals and greatly impacts the fiscal resources of the city. I am in support of additional training and resources in the area of domestic violence for our law enforcement, while providing adequate support for those who protect and serve. I am also in support of a fee charged to repeat domestic violence offenders with those fees collected being used in support of community based programs focused on prevention and healthy family systems.

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

Yes

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

I support the local ethics ordinance and do not have any recommendations at this time.

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

I am in full support of a unified school district. I am grateful to see that we are moving in that direction. Having said that until that becomes a reality I do believe that we have moral obligation to the children of Memphis to ensure that they are provided the funding needed for their education. I also believe that even after unification takes place that it would be in the best interest of the city to continue to support education even if through project based funding for the greater good of the city.

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

I believe that Council can use its position with regards to the approval of the city's budget to hold the city accountable for equity in the bidding process. The recent study indicates that there is great disparity with regards to small, minority and women-owned business in the bidding process. While the Mayor is solely responsible for these contracts, it is also the Council's responsibility in approving the budget to ask for and secure evidence that such equity is taking place.