

John Willingham

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

- 1a. Please describe your background and your qualifications for this position. What experiences caused you to run for this office. What previous experience qualifies you more than your opponents to lead on Day 1?

I attended public schools and won all-conference and all-state honors in high school football. I majored in Business and Public Administration at the University of Missouri with a minor in Industrial Education. I signed with the St. Louis Cardinals. At the completion of the first season in professional baseball, I was inducted into the U.S. Army

My first venture as a businessman was in the concrete casting industry. I achieved international recognition for pre-cast concrete technology. In addition to my business success, I have been active in many successful political campaigns, including Winthrop Rockefeller, the first Republican governor of Arkansas. During the 70's, I was appointed by President Richard Nixon as Director of Technical Evaluation of Industrialized Housing. This position was for the Department of HUD's operation "Breakthrough", a \$660,000,000, twenty state program. During the 80's, I began a new career and developed my international reputation for my culinary barbecuing skills. I have received awards in barbecuing contests throughout the nation and have appeared on national TV demonstrating my recognized cooking skills. My book "World Champion Bar B Q" was published in 1996. I am currently in partnership with Jack Eaton on the "John & Jack" Radio Talk Show on 990 AM.

- 1b. What previous experience do you have running a business, managing employees or controlling a budget?

I have been the owner and manager of Willingham Bar-B-Q products for forty-three years. I served as the General Manager of Alodex Corporation in Memphis. For five years, I was in equal partnership with Winthrop Rockefeller in the concrete business with 200 employees.

- 1c. Beginning with the most recent position, please list all public offices you have held. Please include positions on appointed boards or commissions.

I was elected to and served on the Shelby County Commission from 2002-2006 I served as the chairman of the Public Service and Tourism Committee and was a member of the Budget, Land Use, Housing, and Delinquent Tax Parcel Committees. I've been a member of the Board of Directors of the Cook Convention Center I've served on the National Board of Transplants.

- 1d. If you have previously run for elected office but were not elected, please list those races below.

City Mayor 2003 County Mayor 2006 City Mayor 2007 City Council

John Willingham

- 2a. What is your vision for the City – how would you use this office to achieve the vision?

Memphis is a great city. With the right leadership, the citizens can be proud to live in the city, and outside industries can look forward to bringing their employees to live and work here. With the right leadership, families will feel that their children can get a proper education in a safe environment. Basically, my vision is provide the leadership to insure safe streets and neighborhoods, a clean and quiet atmosphere, and sound financial policies with common sense growth. I believe I can provide that leadership for the citizens of Memphis.

- 2b. What are the three greatest issues facing the City of Memphis today?

Crime, Corruption, and Cronyism!!!

These three things are the contributing factors to the high profile issues we citizens face in our everyday living --- schools, quality of life, and taxes.

- 2c. What issues do you believe will shape the City over the next few years?

We need to raise the educational standards in order to attract excellent teachers. We also must encourage better parental involvement. These two factors are essential to improving our educational program.

There must be close cooperation among the school system, industry, and the Chamber of Commerce in efforts to prepare and provide a qualified work pool for higher pay level of jobs.

There must be more accountability from the city and county governments toward addressing and enforcing codes and ordinances involving community quality of life issues.

We need a closer working relationship between city and county law enforcement.

Spending is out-of-control!! Let's apply common sense to our budget.

We should provide tax relief for seniors, promoting Memphis as the place to retire to.

We should allow the many thousands who receive pay checks from Memphis, but live elsewhere, to pay their fair share and provide some relief for those loyal citizens choosing not to move from our city.

John Willingham

3. How do you plan on insuring that there is diversity represented in the development of public policy, staffing and appointments, and city contracting?

This is an issue that solves itself if merit is always relied on as the criteria on which the final decision is based. In my administration, merit will always be the criteria I will rely on when I make decisions, whether I am making an appointment, filling a staff vacancy, or deciding on public policy. Merit-based decisions will be my standard.

John Willingham

4. 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 regarding both large and small businesses?

Personally I believe less government is better than more government. I believe Government's role should be supportive, and I strongly encourage our city government to support laws and codes designed to promote quality of life within communities. When crime and quality of life issues are properly addressed and a level playing field is provided, then businesses can prosper or fail by their own efforts.

John Willingham

5. How would you strengthen and support existing neighborhoods that are within the City of Memphis and what barriers to community redevelopment do you see in these areas? How do you propose to address the neighborhood blight in a proactive manner?

I will meet with community leaders to determine specific needs and encourage community involvement in keeping neighborhoods clean. I will give City Divisional Directors the challenge of providing a work plan for correction of the problems and sustainability. The plan will provide areas of responsibility and accountability for both city employees and community volunteers. The plan will also include a time frame for initial completion. Community Centers will be utilized more effectively by extending hours and offering services for youth including job services and training, while for seniors we will offer activities of their interests and programs of their issues.

John Willingham

6. Discuss the current administrative structure and do you have a vision for altering this structure? How would you strengthen a culture of accountability and outcome based on performance standards for Divisions of City Government as well as appointed positions?

The current administrative structure is so out-of-control and non-productive. New job positions are rampant, and rewards appear to be given to personal friends and for political paybacks.

My administration would hire according to need and job qualification. I strongly feel the city is supporting and providing in excess of required need. Each job and/or position has its own specification and requirements. I will simply add responsibility and accountability. Obtainment of high standards promotes enthusiasm, high work ethics, and excellent job performance. I will consider hiring Six Sigma trained individuals to make our administration run more efficiently.

John Willingham

7. Give us your thoughts on a metro form of government and/or consolidated services.

Until such time as Memphis becomes a responsible and self-sustaining entity, I can't entertain the likelihood of consolidation approval by the county. It is unreasonable to consider it unless it can be shown that it will result in increased efficiency in services along with a decrease in taxes and fees assessed to the citizens.

John Willingham

8. What is the City's responsibility to Memphis City Schools? How should the relationship between the City and Memphis City Schools be structured?

Our schools and their output are critical to our city's well-being now and into the future. Our schools and their value are directly tied to the success of our city. The Mayor has no direct authority over and within the system, however, the Mayor does have resources and influences to support the system. Memphis City Schools are caretakers of our children, and our children are our future. The City's relationship with our school system should be more partnership and oversight. Certainly the school system is autonomous, but it should not be so much to the extent of failing to take advantage of the Mayor's ability and interest toward opening doors of opportunity to various helpful city services and influence with the business world. My administration would absolutely be more involved with the positive development of our future, our school children.

John Willingham

9. How can the Mayor effectively contribute to the reduction of the crime rate in the City of Memphis? What current strategies would you continue to support and what changes would you propose?

The Mayor must lead by example!!! I will allow the Director the freedom to do his job, but I **will hold him responsible and accountable**. I will encourage and promote more cooperation between city and county law enforcement.

I will work diligently toward establishing programs designed to cut the excessively high recidivism rate for incarcerated individuals. I will work with the State Legislature to secure the needed legislative changes to deal with the revolving door syndrome.

Memphis law enforcement has been receiving national recognition for its leadership role of applying innovative high technology to crime fighting. I will support and promote these efforts.

John Willingham

10. State your position regarding residency restrictions for City workers, including police officers.

If my plan is put into operation, required residency will not be a factor as city employees will want to live in Memphis. I certainly prefer that our workers live in Memphis, but safety and the well-being of our citizens hold top priority.

John Willingham

11. Are you familiar with the current budget and what would be your major budget priorities?

I have a basic knowledge of the City's current budget. As City Mayor I will be charged with the administration of this budget, and I will go through it with a fine tooth comb, line-by-line, searching for excessive and unnecessary spending, of which I expect to find copious amounts. I believe we have plenty of money in the system. The problem is not how much we have, but how it has been spent. I am committed to careful and considerate oversight of public money as the people's Mayor.

John Willingham

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

Yes.