

COALITION FOR A BETTER MEMPHIS
Shelby County Commissioner Candidate Questionnaire
Election Date: May 4, 2010

Name: **Jim Bompreszi**

District for which you are running: **District 4, Position 1**

Section 1: Qualifications and Background (2 questions)

Section 2: Vision and Strategies (4 questions)

Section 3: Improving the Education System (4 questions)

1. QUALIFICATIONS AND BACKGROUND

1. Describe your qualifications for holding the office of Shelby County Commissioner. (Please answer in the space below and attach a resume.)

I have many years of administrative, legislative and management experience.

Served my country in the U.S. Navy, 1956 - 1959.

Was a public servant on the Memphis Police Department, retiring as a Lieutenant and squad commander in 1987.

Elected to two four year terms, one as a City Commissioner in 1995 - 1997.

Elected in 1997 – 2001 as Mayor of the City of Lakeland, Tenn.

Served on several government boards, and planning committees and commissions,

Served four years on the Chickasaw Basin Authority.

Served four years on the local government, council of Mayors and in 2000 as Vice Chairman.

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Served 4 years on the M.P.O. (Metropolitan Planning Organization).

Appointed and served on the Shelby County Chapter 1101 twenty year growth and land use coordinating committee.

My resume is attached.

2. What events or experiences caused you to decide to run for this office?

I feel with my Government experience, legislative and Municipal background and being retired, I am the best qualified of my opponents who are seeking this position and can be an asset to Shelby County citizens and district 4.

I am also concerned about the financial condition of Memphis and Shelby County Government and the schools and crime problems that we face today.

I have had a passion and desire to serve District 4 for many years and being retired I have the time to give to do the job properly.

2. VISION AND STRATEGIES

1. In your opinion, what are the three greatest issues (problems or opportunities) facing Shelby County in the next four years?

Problems

The County's Debt
Schools funding and Taxes
Crime and blight

Opportunities

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Utilize Memphis and Shelby County's natural resources, promote Mississippi River front development with a river walk and tourist attractions. Conservation of wetlands, rivers, and canals for businesses and recreation along rivers throughout the county and suburban municipalities, with parks, walking, biking and hiking trails connecting all seven cities throughout the county. Utilize and promote Elvis Presley attractions for more tourism dollars to assist hotels, restaurants, and businesses and improve the Memphis image and economic development.

Bring back the cleanest, quietest most desirable city concept, luring quality economic growth and development by the private sector to produce good paying jobs and a strong tax base for the future.

2. Shelby County's debt is seen by many people as a threat to county government. How would you propose that the county pay down its debt? How would you prevent additional debt in the future?

In 2006 when I ran for District 4, I campaigned on the fact that the County's debt was a real problem and out of control. Today the debt is even greater and growing.

To pay down the debt is going to take Leadership and total cooperation of all the members of the County Commission, the

Leadership of the City and County Mayors and the County Administrators and Directors.

Budget cuts and unnecessary spending will be required and decisions on resolving economic burdens such as the Pyramid and the Med will be required immediately.

To prevent additional debt in the future will require advanced annual budget planning to keep spending under control. As anyone has to do when they get in debt is to cut back, budget monthly, quarterly, Semi-annually and annually.

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The schools ADA (Average Daily Attendance) formula needs to be eliminated and replaced with a reasonable lesser tax burden. Unnecessary city and county employees should be eliminated. Reduction in salary should be considered rather than total layoffs in times of unemployment as it is today. Employee raises need to be eliminated until the debt is reduced, otherwise we keep getting further and further in debt. In essence, it's better to have a job and earning a salary rather than no salary at all. Times are tough.

To prevent future debt, commissioners need to know what they are voting on, scrutinize line items and question, rather than just always following staff's recommendations.

3. The Memphis City Council has taken steps over the last few years attempting to shift the burden of funding both city and county schools to Shelby County residents. What are your views regarding the best way to fund public education of Shelby County and Memphis children?

First the City and County Boards of Education need to present

budgets that the tax dollars derived from assessments can support without tax increases. That has not been done.

While most Private schools operate without debt and crime, then something is wrong with public schools leadership and staff when it continually has debt and crime.

As to the best way to fund schools is to first determine the absolute needs and resources necessary to educate the children and then use funds allocated by tax dollars to meet those needs without having to increase taxes. Continually increasing taxes is not the answer.

School construction needs to be addressed as it appears there is

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much wasted space in the design of new buildings and facilities.
It appears construction cost can be reduced.

Education is very important and the commission needs to pay close attention to the needs of the school system. Good schools with high standards produce skilled workers.

Economic development follows good schools with high academic and technical skills and standards.

4. Some people believe that urban communities should adopt policies that encourage what is called "smart growth." Do you believe Shelby County should have a general policy about new residential and commercial developments? If so, what should that policy be?

Smart growth is certainly smart and keeps value and desirability high in my opinion.

Shelby County should definitely have a general policy about new and commercial development, including existing development and the demand for new schools. Growth affects the need for more schools, firehouses, firefighters, and law enforcement protection.

The policy should be derived and followed from information gained through professional planning, meetings and seminars throughout the county to determine what the people of Shelby county want and desire and how growth will effect water runoff, our ground water supply, wetlands, the environment, creeks, streams, lakes, waterways and tributaries. Green is important to our environment.

Engineers, builders, and developers of these projects should be given the opportunity to give input regarding infrastructure, design and cost and their desire to build these developments. Elected officials should determine how this will affect the overall tax base and environment.

Some studies have shown the larger a population is, the harder it is to control taxes, school systems, crime, and desirable jobs.

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Smart growth in my opinion could increase property values and possibly reduce the tax burden if done properly.

3. IMPROVING THE SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT

1. What do you regard as the greatest obstacle or barrier to economic growth in Shelby County today? What can the County Commission do to reduce that impediment?

Crime, high taxes, blight, inadequate infrastructure.

Reduce crime and promote and provide good academic and technical educational training facilities, offer incentives to eliminate blight areas, offer tax incentives to encourage adequate housing and hotel facilities for conventions.

Improve public relations and work with all suburban cities and Memphis to be assured everyone is on the same page and not fighting one another.

2. What is your philosophy about offering incentives to companies that are considering major new investments or job expansions in Shelby County?

It is necessary in my opinion. Shelby County needs new good paying jobs.

3. What is your view regarding the best way to address financing of The Med and the need for public health options?

The Med in my opinion serves Tennessee, Mississippi and Arkansas and the States and Federal governments needs to assist equally financially in being sure each state provides its fair share toward financing the Med to provide adequate medical care. This is to big a burden for Shelby County and Tennessee alone to carry the entire burden.

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4. When you complete your service as commissioner, what do you want your legacy to be?

That Jim Bompreszi gave his best and always did what was in the best interest of Memphis, Suburban Municipalities and Shelby County citizens to promote a desirable county of good abode.

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