

COALITION FOR A BETTER MEMPHIS
Shelby County Commissioner Candidate Questionnaire
Election Date: May 6, 2014

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TO peggy@bettermemphis.org**

Name: Geoffrey (Geoff) Diaz

District for which you are running: Shelby County Commission District 10

Section 1: Qualifications and Background (2 questions)

Section 2: Vision and Strategies (4 questions)

Section 3: Improving the System of Government (4 questions)

1. QUALIFICATIONS AND BACKGROUND

- 1. Describe your qualifications for holding the office of Shelby County Commissioner.**

I'm qualified to serve on the County Commission because of my 15+ years of experience working in government at the State and National level. Also, since moving to Memphis in 2010 I've worked with a number of organizations that try to influence the deliberations at the city and county level.

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

I've always been service minded and I have an intense interest in government and history. Also, the creation of a new commission district provided an opportunity to serve the community more directly.

SHELBY COUNTY COMMISSIONER CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME: ___GEOFFREY (GEOFF) DIAZ_____

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?**

In no specific order:

- 1) Workforce Development
- 2) Community Redevelopment
- 3) Public Safety
- 4) Economic Development

- 2. How would you recommend we continue to pay down County debt and still fulfill the financial obligations of the County? What budget priorities must take precedence?**

- 1) Stop incurring new debt**
- 2) Balance the Budget**
- 3) Adopt policies that promote economic activity**

Budget Priorities:

- 1) Public Safety
- 2) Education
- 3) Workforce Development
- 4) Community Redevelopment

- 3. What are your views regarding the best way to fund public education of Shelby County and Memphis children?**

A growing economy that gets us near full employment locally will provide enough tax revenue for government to fund all of our obligations, especially education.

SHELBY COUNTY COMMISSIONER CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

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- 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?**

Of course when public/private development projects are being planned the County should have a plan in place that will maximize the positive impacts of these projects. This vision should establish our development goals over the next five and ten years. Prior agreement to the vision will allow the Commission to focus on enacting policies that will make this vision a reality.

Any policies adopted under the banner of “smart growth” should also strike a balance between encouraging private investment in our community and our public infrastructure’s ability to absorb the increased demand. In terms of the urban core where there’s not a lot of room to grow horizontally we should explore options that allow us to grow vertically. There may be untapped opportunities to renovate existing structures into residential and commercial spaces that will stimulate the downtown economy. I believe there’s enormous potential for economic growth in the urban core and throughout Shelby County.

- 5. Are you satisfied with the economic growth (jobs and income) of Shelby County today? If not, what should the county government do to improve economic development efforts? What incentives would you support or oppose be used to attract future economic development?**

I don’t think government at any level should ever be satisfied with the level of economic growth. Economies are always evolving and government policies should change to maximize every opportunity a dynamic economy offers.

While I believe that capital will naturally flow to places where it is welcomed and stay where it is well treated; I realize that we are competing with neighboring counties for private investment. I support the use of incentives to attract private investment but any package of incentives should ensure that the public investment is not wasted and the promised benefits will be fully realized.

NAME: ___GEOFFREY (GEOFF) DIAZ_____

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?**

Often times the biggest impediments to economic growth are high taxes, burdensome regulations, bureaucratic red tape and debt. The City of Memphis and Shelby County are at present unable to provide the high skilled workforce that companies need in order to fill the high wage jobs they can offer.

The Commission should review its expenditures to eliminate waste, fraud and abuse, streamline the bureaucracy to reduce the compliance burden for private investors and reduce taxes so more people can keep more of their money. Adopting these policies along with reducing our debt and balancing the budget will stimulate our economy.

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

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- 3. What is your position on consolidation of city and county governments?**

I'm open to the discussion of consolidating the city and county governments because on the surface having two governments operating parallel to one another appears redundant and wasteful. In any proposal I'd want to see that the new consolidated government offered adequate representation for the residents of the city, is invested with enough authority to govern and of course is approved the people.

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

I'd like the people I represent to feel I was an honest, fair minded Commissioner who worked every day during my term to provide all of them with opportunities to find their prosperity. I'd like the urban core to be the economic engine for Shelby County that it clearly can be and I'd like the population of the City of Memphis to be at or above 1 million.

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