

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

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Name: Patrice Jordan Robinson

District for which you are running: District 9

SECTION 1: Qualification 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 sincerely believe that my combination of advanced educational attainment, 30 plus years of relevant work experience as well as 12 plus years of political experience has prepared me to serve this community in this new capacity. Additionally, I served as the president of the Board in 2004 and 2007 as well as other leadership roles. I have the business background, community service experience, and the motivation to continue to serve as "A Voice of Reason." I am a proven leader committed to excellence.

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

I am seeking the Democratic nomination for County Commission District 9 to complete the work that I began on the school board by encouraging and supporting sound fiscal policies, management and strategic planning. I seek to influence the administration and my colleagues to create a balanced approach to educational funding. Additionally, I believe that quality vocational, technical, and job specific training programs are needed in Shelby County in order to attract new businesses and better jobs. I personally commit to informing the public on major issues in order to create a better informed constituency that can work together and move collectively in the same direction creating synergy and strength.

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?

The three most significant challenges facing the Shelby County in the next 4 years are:

1. FY 2015-2018 Budgets--These budgets must address the OPEB Liability (retirement benefits) and Educational funding for Shelby County Schools and the municipal school districts.
2. Dwindling availability of revenue sources: 1) shrinking residential property values, and 2) extension of multi-year Pilots, etc.
3. True transparency in County Government at all levels.

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?

I would recommend that the County participate in a strategic planning process supported by experts to produce a 3-5 year plan that will address the needs of this County and provide a guide with specific goals, objectives and activities. Additionally, I would investigate the following areas as revenue sources:

1. Wheel tax-Possible reallocation
2. Employee Benefits-Review and recommend reasonable changes, if necessary
3. Compensation-Conduct a valid salary survey and make the necessary adjustments
4. Special Programs/Projects-Assess the results and determine the ROI
5. Professional Services-Review and assess the results and ROI

I recommend the following budget priorities:

1. Educational Funding
2. Health and Welfare of the Community
3. Maintaining a competitive tax rate

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

I am an advocate for public education and it should be funded by a pre-determined formula for the academic success of ALL children based on national, state and local levels. All citizens should participate in the funding of schools because all citizens benefit from a well-educated and highly skilled community. As a part of a strategic plan for educational dollars, we could consider taxes on other items or services; grant opportunities; support provided by educational foundations and philanthropic organizations.

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?

Yes, I support smart growth (strategic planning that includes the coordination of all public services). My understanding of smart growth is that it was designed to boost the economy, protect the environment, and enhance a community's vitality. Examples of a policy statement for smart growth are listed below:

"The County will implement a program to identify and dispose of vacant and abandoned buildings or find an alternative use."

"The County will give priority to "smart growth" projects that support smart growth in the allocation of federal housing and community development block grants."

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 development efforts? What incentives would you support or oppose be used to attract future economic development?

I am not satisfied with the economic growth (jobs and income) in Shelby County. The most essential economic development activities to the creation of jobs are:

- Workforce development-Highly skilled workers via job specific training, vocational/technical training and retraining
- Sound fiscal management and tax policies, and
- World-class education opportunities that include life changing research and development.

Therefore, I believe that the most effective means to move citizens from unemployment to employment is **to provide:**

- Essential vocational, technical and jobs training skills via programs designed to provide encouragement, support and work experience.
- Jobs that pay a living wage, and
- Support programs that teach and reinforce life skills that include budgeting, job readiness and life skills.

3. IMPROVING THE SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT
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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?

I believe the greatest obstacle to economic growth in Shelby County is the lack of permanent full-time jobs that result in more middle class residents. The location of these businesses (jobs) should be a consideration as well as public transportation. Minimum wage temporary and/or full time permanent positions cannot and will not improve the economy in Shelby County.

Shelby County Commissioners can study, review and revise the County's Pilot program, develop "smart growth" policies to encourage companies to relocate to urban areas, and support a highly skilled workforce.

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

I believe incentives to attract companies who desire to locate or expand their operation in our community are necessary in order to be competitive. However, in order to preserve our basic economic growth engines, we need sound fiscal policies and economic development best practices at play at all times. This should include for example an educational tax be included in all Pilots. Just like companies have a bottom line figure, as a community our bottom line should always include educational taxes to support the foundation of economic growth and development--Education and/or Jobs Skills Training to produce highly skilled workers.

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

Some members of our community have not fully accepted the will of the people via the democratic process of voting, bought into, and/or support the merging of the school districts. I believe that civic leaders should develop a plan to inform, engage and transition the members of the community resulting in higher acceptance levels, cooperation and healing. Financially, aligning resources is in our best interest. However at this time, I do not believe that consolidation of the city and county governments should be the priority or focus in the near future. I also believe that we have to do a better job of developing and articulating the vision for our future and the strategic planning process necessary to bring about the desired results. This process must include change management and education on the benefits of consolidation of the city and county government such as **savings** in real dollars and/or additional **benefits/services** for all citizens and not just another campaign.

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

I want my legacy to be that I served this community with dignity and respect as a servant leader; I served as "A Voice of Reason" and made a positive difference by leaving the County in a better condition than I found it.