

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

AN ELECTRONIC VERSION OF THIS FILE CAN BE RECEIVED BY SENDING AN EMAIL TO peggy@bettermemphis.org

Name: Reginald Milton

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 am a lifelong resident of Memphis and a product of the Memphis City Schools system. I hold an undergraduate degree in science from THE LeMoyne-Owen College and a Master of Public Administration from the University of Memphis. My work history includes:

Director of Medical Studies at Branell College
Director of Education and Training for Planned Parenthood of Memphis
Neighborhood Specialist for the City of Memphis
Founder/Executive Director for South Memphis Alliance, Inc.

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

I have spent the past 20 years as a community developer. My connection and commitment to our community residents are my driving purpose. It is my desire to bring to our governing body a different perspective in how we address problems and fine solutions to improving the lives of our citizens.

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?

- 1) The funding of our educational system.
- 2) The lack of effective development and training of our workforce to attract and

SHELBY COUNTY COMMISSIONER CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME: **Reginald Milton**

maintain future businesses.

3) The decline in our population, especially among recent college graduates.

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?

Shelby County has a Pay-As-You-Go plan to address Capital Improvements. If we maintain this practice and continue to reduce our debt through better management of county services, protect our good bond rating, and reduction of services where possible we should have a positive impact on our debt.

Priorities must include job training/workforce development and properly managed tax incentives.

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

The education of its citizens is the single most important purpose of government. For the only thing more expensive than the cost of an education is ignorance.

We must fully fund our public schools. There needs to be an end to the legal battle between the City of Memphis and Shelby County over the \$57.5 million and a settlement found. Presently the only ones benefiting from this battle are the attorneys.

The portion of the funds directed through the PILOT to the public school system needs to be increased.

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?

Absolutely, I was an early supporter of "smart Growth" and still see it as a creditable way to improve our communities.

Community based initiatives build a sense of place and increases residents desire to improve not only their lives but also that of the community as a whole.

I would like to see more funding directed to the development of Family Resource Center in these urban communities. These centers would provide case management services to families that have shown a need for stabilizing supportive services. It is my belief that strong families create strong communities.

SHELBY COUNTY COMMISSIONER CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME: Reginald Milton

- 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 am not satisfied with the economic growth of Shelby County. Clearly our county like counties across the country has been negatively impacted by the turn in the economy.

The county must focus on the question, "Where do we want to be in 5, 10, 20 years?" There must be an assertive effort to engage business owners, community leaders and government officials in conversations that lead to an overall strategic plan. Based on this we can focus our educational institutions toward training our workforce for realistic jobs and at the same time work to lure businesses to our county with the promise of a well educated pool of works for their companies.

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?**

The "us against them" mentality that exists between the City of Memphis and the municipalities is destructive to Shelby County. We are must come to realize we are all in the same boat. All too often decisions are based on politics instead of what is practical.

Spending twenty years as a community developer I have learned the importance of building bridges instead of burning them down. I will use my skills of diplomacy and hopefully bring some level of pragmatism to the body.

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

Payment In Lieu of Taxes is a hotly debated issue. I see PILOTs as nothing more that a tool. Properly used it can be an effective means by which our County can attract new businesses and incentivize existing businesses.

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

I support "smart" consolidation. This is consolidation that is well though out, executed and managed. I have concerns that resent efforts of consolidation have not been well planned and have caused frustration, fear and confusion.

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

It will be the same legacy I seek even if I am not fortunate to ascend to this position. That legacy is not rooted in wealth or fame, but in the personal acknowledgement that in some small way I have made the World a better place.

- end -

SHELBY COUNTY COMMISSIONER CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME: **Reginald Milton**