

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: Willie Brooks

District for which you are running: 6

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.

My background and experiences as a School Board Commissioner, Memphis Charter Commissioner, Human Resource Professional and serving on several civic boards have given me the knowledge, skills and abilities to work with a diverse group of citizens. Moreover, my in-depth qualifications in business, government, civic programs, and community service have given me enormous insight into the issues that matter most to our citizens as well as the know-how to implement solutions that work.

- Proficient in human relations and leadership skills
- Strong skills in setting, measuring and achieving goals
- Attentive to details; excellent organizational and time management skills
- Experience in planning, organizing and executing large, strategic projects/programs
- Strong oral and written communication skills
- Success in working with people of various backgrounds and political affiliations
- Highly motivated, productive, and community-oriented
- More than 26 years of experience in the Human Resources field
- Senior Professional Human Resources Certification (SPHR)

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

Jobs, Education, Economic Development, Better Government

NAME: WILLIE BROOKS

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. Jobs
2. Education
3. Economic Development

To address these challenge, I plan to do the following:

1. Facilitate relationship with the Memphis Chambers of Commerce and the Business Community, to create incentives that will attract and retain business opportunities that will create jobs and job training. Establish an ongoing review of incentives that keep the various organizations that provide job training current with the needs of local business as well as targeted industries.
2. Engage in a meaningful dialogue with School Board, County Commissioners and County Mayor to provide adequate funding for public education
3. Engage the business community in the decision-making process as a business partner in the development of a business plan to attract new business and help existing ones grow.
4. Engage constituents in critical matters and opportunities to promote future growth via Town Hall Meetings, Neighborhood Associations, Social Media and Faith-based Collaboration.

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?

Our financial plan must align with the mission, goals and projected costs of the County over a five-year period. Priorities include carefully reviewing budget line items, freezing hiring on regular positions, deferring pay increases, eliminating duplicate services provided by the City, and recommending cuts to services that have a lesser impact on our community

NAME: WILLIE BROOKS

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

Public education will not survive without public support. Our goal for Shelby County Schools is to become a high-achieving organization which will require community commitment to investments of financial resources, expertise and volunteerism. The overall student achievement level must be improved and the achievement gaps must be eliminated.

I support and recommend a financial plan aligned with the mission and goals of the school district with projected costs for education over a five-year period. This report would detail education related costs over time.

As a Commissioner and supporter for Public Education, I would engage in meaningful dialogue with the County Commissioners, Superintendent, School Board, State Legislators and key community stakeholders to provide adequate funding for public education. I have and will continue to build support necessary to obtain the resources for public education over and above what it receives from the state and federal government, private and public grants.

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?

Resources should be devoted to renovating and restoring obsolete buildings, stores or houses and providing new infrastructure that attracts investment into the community. Revitalization should be a priority with the intent to foster a vibrant and attractive community where people come together to live, work and visit. Sharing resources to achieve the community-based goals is how the County can contribute. A comprehensive redevelopment strategy involving the City and County would help achieve the goals and encourage the redevelopment of inner-city neighborhoods and affordable housing.

SHELBY COUNTY COMMISSIONER CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME: WILLIE BROOKS

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?

1. Incentives for job training, innovation and expansion along with support programs for entrepreneurs. Business retention and entrepreneurship support programs for economic development investment. Small business creates as many as 90% of the jobs.
 - Provide a good entrepreneur training program and offer it frequently.
 - Support small business trade opportunities by tapping local and regional service providers who have expertise, industry networks and access to the business community
2. Our business needs a literate workforce that is proficient in math and technology. It is important that we cultivate the potential link between higher education and economic development at every opportunity. Education and economic development are natural partners.
3. Provide Government Financial Incentives for business location and enhance the success rate of new and existing businesses in targeted areas.

NAME: WILLIE BROOKS

3. IMPROVING THE SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT

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

Jobs
Education
Safe Neighborhood
Economic Development

What can the County Commission do to reduce that impediment?

Provide incentives to attract companies who desire to locate or expand their operations in our community and stimulate economic development activities are most essential to the creation of jobs

1. Job readiness through matching training with employer needs
2. Job creation and entrepreneur training
3. Education – college, technical and vocational outreach

Provide adequate funding for public education. I believe the County Commission and School Board should collaborate on issues that focus on student achievement, support for public education align resources to support academic initiatives, garnering public support around inevitable school closures, and partnering to communicate effectively with the general public on educational issues and funding, etc.

Work towards a common vision to ensure that neighborhoods become places where all families thrive and have access to the supports, services and opportunities they need to ensure their children succeed.

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

I support the use of incentives to attract companies because it help business retention, provides jobs and supports the local economy. Nike is a perfect example of tax incentives used to expand their athletic apparel North Memphis distribution operations that resulted in creating potentially 500 new jobs.

SHELBY COUNTY COMMISSIONER CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

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

I will keep an open mind on what opportunities may exist for consolidating City and County government. At this point, it would be speculative for me to advance my views without thoroughly reviewing both charters in their entirety; cost benefits (pro & cons); and securing input from civic and business leaders and the citizens that I represent.

I do feel eliminating duplicate services provided by the City and County is a way to reduce cost with the understanding that services to the community will not suffer.

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

I would want my legacy to be one that reflects success in enacting initiatives that are helping to stimulate our economy while creating jobs for more of our citizens. I will also continue to focus on my years of service in the areas of education and mentoring. Our businesses need a competent and empowered workforce and our citizens need a variety of employment opportunities to maintain a good quality of life. Effective educational programs along with strong mentoring initiatives are keys to success in helping to build a more productive and safe community.

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