

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

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TO peggy@bettermemphis.org**

Name: Mark H. Luttrell, Jr.

Section 1: Qualifications and Background (2 questions)

Section 2: Vision and Strategies (3 questions)

Section 3: Improving the System (2 questions)

QUALIFICATIONS AND BACKGROUND

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

My academic and professional development has been fundamental in establishing my basic credentials for the County Mayor's Office. Over the past 30 years, I have assumed positions of increasing responsibility, requiring supervision of advanced programs, greater number of staff and increased budget resources. Today I have managerial responsibility for more than 6,000 employees, a budget exceeding \$1Billion and an array of programs addressing every aspect of a Shelby County citizen's life.

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

Dating back to my high school years, I have been intrigued by the integrating functions of government. How a variety of issues, seemingly different on their surface, interrelate to sustain a community. My education and experience has been a growth process to better understand how government can become more productive and efficient.

After 8 years as County Sheriff in 2010 I saw an opportunity to apply my knowledge, skills and ability to the broader stage of the County Mayor's Office. We are a large urban county and my professional experience and vision for the future can contribute significantly to resolving many of our most challenging issues such as public health, public safety, education advancement and job development.

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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. Education is fundamental to all things progressive in our society. Economic development, poverty, homelessness, crime, and health all improve when society is better educated. We must quickly stabilize our public education system against the past two years of transition and ensure that adequate funding is provided in all districts.

2. Economic development is more than just growing jobs and employing people. Improving the livability of our community is equally important. When the focus is placed on livability, communities become more vibrant, entrepreneurs more generous, community amenities more plentiful and critical infrastructure updated.

3. Safe communities save lives, prevent emotional stress and build young people to assume responsible adult roles. Increased emphasis on public safety is needed to raise our children in an environment that allows them to realize their full potential. Reentry programs focused on properly directing youth and adults exposed to the criminal justice system can significantly impact life trajectories, increasing their prospects for productive lives in future years. We must work towards decreasing levels of violent behavior and further developing the leadership potential of our next generation.

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?

The County has been following a progressive debt reduction plan that over the past 6 years has reduced our debt by \$409 million. This plan, coupled with strict budget discipline and spending for operations, has stabilized a high bond rating of AA+, ensuring low interest loans and fiscal stability. Fulfilling our fiduciary responsibility going forward will require more efficient management of resources, while reducing the size of government and targeting education and job development as our goals going forward. These two priorities serve as a catalyst for stimulating the economy and growing jobs.

3. 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?

Satisfied, no. Encouraged, yes. Progress has been made by streamlining our procedures for recruiting and retaining jobs. More collaboration is taking place among Coalition for a Better Memphis

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the Chambers of Commerce across the county and with the various city governments. However, our unemployment rate is still above the state and national average. More focus and time must be invested in raising the livability standards throughout the County. What are the things that sell Shelby County and make this a place where people want to live? Improvements must focus on schools, healthy lifestyles, safe neighborhoods, and entertainment venues. The Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOTs) incentives are good but are only fully successful when they coincide with livability/sustainability efforts. Much work is being devoted to developing small business incentives to strengthen the backbone of the local economy.

IMPROVING THE SYSTEM

- 1. 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?**

A balance should be achieved by offering incentives for development in areas where infrastructure has been in place but over the years has been neglected or abandoned. This would achieve community revitalization at a lower cost. Simultaneously, new development cannot be discouraged because of the potential for growth and enhanced economic development for cities looking for new opportunities. Strategic planning that balances both priorities can ensure smart growth and community revitalization, enhancing capital investments at a lower cost.

- 2. Many considered the consolidation of city and county schools to be the greatest impediment to the consolidation of city and county governments. Since that is no longer an issue, what is your position on consolidating city and county governments?**

The failure to embrace consolidated government had less to do with schools than citizen distrust of a larger government and the desire to maintain an urban/suburban separation. Fewer than 50 large urban governments have consolidated. Most have recognized the unique differences between city and county functions and operate comfortably within those defined parameters—examples being Chicago (Cook County), Los Angeles (Los Angeles County), Dallas (Dallas County), and Atlanta (and the 5 contiguous counties). Rather than seeking to consolidate, we should strive to coordinate the needs of the 7 cities within Shelby County, recognizing the value of each and focusing on those issues mutually beneficial to all.