



Coalition FOR A Better Memphis ANNUAL REPORT 2007

PURPOSE

The Coalition for a Better Memphis is an independent, non-partisan, not-for-profit organization composed of a diverse group of Shelby County individuals, businesses and organizations focused on enhancing the quality of life for residents of Memphis and Shelby County. The Coalition's goal is to serve as an information channel to better educate citizens and enable them to more effectively participate in the process of making Memphis and Shelby County a better place to live and work.

MISSION

Quality of Life - In Shelby County

The Coalition for a Better Memphis works to improve the quality of life for residents of Memphis and Shelby County. The Coalition designs, implements and supports programs for the education of citizens, voters, public officials and candidates. The core belief of the organization is that the more information that a community has available, the better decisions it can make. The Coalition also believes that good community leaders are necessary for any community to succeed. CBM members research and discuss the priority issues of the community and add factual context to those for distribution to the general public.

History

Early in 2005, a group of Memphis community leaders became aware of a successful project called The Committee for a Better Atlanta that had been operating since 1996 and has been credited with helping to elect highly qualified public officials in Atlanta, GA.

The Memphis group felt that a similar effort might assist Memphis voters. After reviewing the initial research, the group went to Atlanta and met with the Atlanta Committee. Two of the members of the Memphis group – Calvin Anderson and Dean Deyo of the Leadership Academy – took on the role of co-conveners of a planning task group to develop The Coalition for a Better Memphis (CBM).

2006 Elections

2006 was the first election cycle for the newly established Coalition. Two elections were rated: The May primary of the Shelby County Commission and the August General Election of the Shelby County Mayor, Sheriff, County Commission, and School Board as well as the Memphis City Charter Commission and the Special Election for District 4 of the Memphis City Council.

In the May Primary, the top rated Coalition candidates won in eight out of ten of the County Commission races that were rated.

There were a lot of qualified candidates running for a number of offices as indicated by the scores some of the candidates received during our rating process.

Many of the candidates received scores of 80 or higher from the Coalition. We are not in the business of endorsements. Our mission will always be to provide non-partisan, un-biased information to citizens to help them in their decision-making process.

Our ratings process is a resource to help voters as they determine which candidate they will support. Only VOTERS determine the outcome of any race, and it is our mission to provide citizens with non-partisan, un-biased information. How they use our rating system in finalizing their decision... is a personal process for each voter.

In the 2007 election over 150 people were involved in the rating processes, either through on-line rating or live rating panels.

OTHER CBM ACTIVITIES

Membership Meetings

The Coalition held a membership meeting on August 29 to release the ratings.

Board Meetings

Board meetings were held regularly throughout the year.

COMMUNICATIONS

Weekly Email Newsletters

The Coalition broadcasts an Email Newsletter each Friday to keep both the Membership and Prospective Members up to date on activities of the Coalition and in the community. This Email Newsletter is broadcast to over 337 email addresses.

Website

The Coalition Website (www.bettermemphis.org) provides many sources of information to the public.

During the election cycle the Candidate Responses are posted. Members are allowed to rate the candidates on-line. Non-members have access to the responses to become better informed voters.

The Coalition will continue to post the responses so the public can review those of the elected officials to see how they are adhering to their ideas.

Other information is posted on the website highlighting the activities of the Coalition. Many links are also available to help guide the voting public.

NEW RELATIONSHIPS

The Coalition has just recently developed a relationship with the Christian Brothers University Center for Ethical Leadership. The Center will supply an ethical question for each election. These ethical questions have no right or wrong answer but are a means of determining how the candidates solve problems. The first question was added to the February 2008 Shelby County Property Assessor and Shelby County General Sessions Court Clerk Qualification Statements.

The CBM hopes to continue and develop this relationship.

CONTACT US

You can contact the CBM office by calling (901) 752-9902, FAX (901) 752-0743 or email peggy@bettermemphis.org.

In the August Election the top-rated Coalition candidates won in ten of the 15 contested positions. There were seven positions where the candidate participated but had no opponent and there were five positions where the only candidate did not choose to participate.

MEMBERSHIP

Business Members

Includes businesses (Corporations, LLC's, Partnerships, sole proprietorships, etc.) that have a presence in or do business in Shelby County, TN.

In 2007 there were 23 Business Members.

Accredo Healthy, Inc.

AT&T

Baker, Donelson Law Firm

Belz Investco GP

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of TN

Bronze Construction

Clark & Clark

Commercial Advisors, LLC

Drexel Chemical

Fransworth Investment Co.

FaxonGills Homes Inc.

First Tennessee Bank

Hnedak Bobo Group, Inc.

Industrial Developments International

International Paper

Lipscomb and Pitts Insurance

Medtronic Sofamor Danek

Pinnacle Airlines

Pittco Management

Southeastern Asset Management

Southland Capital

Thomas and Betts

Waddell and Associates

Organization Members

Includes non-profit or other organizations, trade associations or groups that serve Shelby County, other than 501(c)(3) organizations.

In 2007 there were 10 Organization Members.

Associated Builders and Contractors

Black Business Association

McGehee, Holly & Lucius

Memphis Area Assoc of Realtors

Memphis Area Home Builders Assoc.

Memphis Education Assoc.

Memphis Hotel & Lodging Assoc.

Memphis Restaurant Assoc.

New Path

St. Jude Children's Hospital/ALSAC

Contributing Members

Includes 501(c)(3) organizations and individuals.

In 2007 there were 9 Contributing Members.

Leadership Academy

Leadership Memphis

Memphis Area Women's Council

Memphis Bioworks Foundation

Memphis Tomorrow

Planned Parenthood

Shelby Farms Park Alliance

Southeast Memphis CDC

Women's Foundation of GreaterMemphis

In-Kind Members

Includes companies and organizations which contribute to the Coalition through products and services

In 2007 there were 5 In-Kind Members.

Chandler Ehrlich & Company

Husch & Eppenberger

Methodist Le Bonheur Healthcare

University of Memphis

Watkins Uiberall PLLC

The Coalition is governed by a Board of Directors:

Past Chairs: Bobbi Gillis and Roby Williams
President: Beth Flanagan
Vice President: Cato Johnson
Secretary/Treasurer: Michael Mullis

Board:

Calvin Anderson	Happy Jones
Rob Clark	Aubrie Kobernus
Dean Deyo	Kristi Stanley
Valerie Johnson	

Executive Director:

Peggy Callahan

2007 HIGHLIGHTS

Administrative:

In May the Coalition hired Peggy Callahan as the Executive Director.

October election:

The Coalition covered 14 races, City Mayor and all City Council districts:

Of the 10 completed races:

- 9 winning candidates had a score above 80
- Only one winner was unrated and did not participate

Of the 4 run-off races:

- 6 of the 8 candidates had a score above 80
- Only one candidate had a score below 80

Only one candidate was unrated and did not participate

Overview of October 2007 Election

- 14 Races
- 12 winners above 80
- 1 winner below 80
- 1 winner did not participate

Other Info

- All 4 TRUE incumbents cruised to easy victory with little opposition
- The 2 appointed incumbents
- Dozens of new candidates ran for office
- The majority of the council will be made up of new candidates (9 of 14)

COALITION'S SUMMARY OF 2007 ELECTIONS:

"It is apparent that the citizens of Memphis were energized and got involved in this year's municipal election. Most citizens understand that their votes do in fact count, and they know that voting is a duty we must all take seriously. If we are to create a better Memphis for all residents, it begins at the ballot box. The Coalition for a Better Memphis worked tirelessly to provide non-partisan, un-biased information on virtually every candidate. Our process was a transparent process that involved a diverse group of citizens, businesses, and non-profit organizations. While everyone may not agree on the outcomes of our rating process, we are excited that there is dialogue surrounding this important work. We will always challenge ourselves to look for innovative ways to improve the candidate evaluation process."