

GATEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION
CITY OF BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL CANDIDATE
QUESTIONNAIRE

1 - What is your motivation for running for this office?

I've worked tirelessly for my neighborhood and for the entire city for more than a decade, most recently on the Citizens' Advisory Board, which I'm honored to serve as president for a second term. But our city's needs are so great that I believe I can have a bigger impact as a Councilor. In short, I want to be where I can do the most good for the people of Birmingham.

2 - What is your greatest virtue, especially as applied to stewardship and the law?

ONE OF MY CORE VIRTUES: Mark 10:42-45 (ESV) -And Jesus called them to him and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. ***But whoever would be great among you must be your servant. and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all.*** For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Also, in Matthew 25, Jesus says that if we have helped "the least of these," you did it to me. I have sought to live by that principle, helping those who are in need throughout the city. When Snowmageddon hit, the people in my neighborhood organized to take care of those stranded, and we made sure everyone stuck on Crestwood Boulevard had a good meal and a bed to sleep in. I try to remember each day that my challenge is to help those who need it the most.

3 - If you currently attend a house of worship, what is the name of it and how often do you attend?

My world view and relationship to my fellow human beings is inextricably linked to and informed by my faith experience. However, for reasons that include relevance and inclusion, I have chosen to exclude personal religious practices as a point of evaluation for my eligibility to serve as City Councilor for District 5.

4-What impact will your faith have on the performance of the duties of this office?

I believe we have a duty not only to our fellow citizens, but also to a higher power. Time and again, we see that Jesus was kind to those in greatest need but could be harsh toward those who pursued power, especially if they were corrupt. I believe this is a worthy example for all of us to follow, and it will guide my actions as Councilor for District 5.

5 - How will you establish a good working relationship with the elected Mayor to ensure the city's success?

I've been fortunate enough to have cordial relationships with people from all perspectives, and I think I have a reputation as someone who can negotiate and work to make things better without being disagreeable about it. I will approach the mayor as I do anyone else -- as someone who is entitled to a basic respect and civil treatment. At the same time, I will be my own person so that it is clear I won't be part of any practices that I believe run counter to the city's best interest.

6 - Suppose the City Council faced a development proposal that meets all the regulations, yet a large number of citizens appeared before the City Council to stop it. How would you vote?

We always need to be sensitive to the needs and desires of our citizens, but we also have to make decisions that are permitted by law. It would be the cynical, and the easy way out, for the City Council to vote in favor of some action under pressure from citizens, only to have that action overturned on legal grounds.

7 - How would you stay informed about City issues and what the City Council is working on?

My roots are in my grassroots engagement with citizens throughout the city. I've been working to make things better for a decade and have established many relationships with people who will continue to serve as an early alert system to emerging issues and concerns. Of course, there is no substitute for listening, continuing to be out in the city, and encouraging people to give me the benefit of their views.

8 - Have you thought about any legislation you are interested in seeing the City Council enact, repeal or revise? If so, what is it? What would you propose?

The changes to the Mayor-Council Act last year place too much power in the hands of the Mayor (particularly in regards to the BWVB) and remove the Council from too many vital functions and decisions, so I definitely would favor a reversal of those. This is true especially in light of the fact that Oliver Robinson, who has since pleaded guilty to crimes, sponsored that legislation and blatantly disregarded the protestations at a public hearing in the Jefferson County Courthouse on April 4, 2016. In general, I believe the city should continue to work with our legislative delegation to provide for more home rule for Birmingham

9- How will you determine the City's wants v. needs?

Government is always about priorities, and there's no single criterion that can provide the right answers in all cases. To be sure, our driving concern should always be helping our citizens -- providing the best possible education, transportation and city services. But sometimes the best thing we can do is invest in infrastructure and programs where the payoff may not be immediate.

10 -What do you see as Birmingham's major challenges and assets?

Challenges - Poverty, job growth, and ability of Birmingham City Schools to help its students overcome their challenges.

Assets - The Citizens Participation Plan framework for community engagement (i.e., the Neighborhood Associations, Community Advisory Committees, and Citizens Advisory Board). Birmingham has natural beauty, an abundance of green space, and generous citizens as well as a supportive business community.

11 - How long have you lived in Birmingham, and how would you characterize the City's quality of life? How should it be improved?

We moved to Birmingham 17 years ago and were immediately struck by the strong sense of community. That was the driving force in our decision to throw ourselves into the work of making that community better. Looking forward, I believe it is imperative to remember that one out of every three citizens of Birmingham is living below the poverty line. Providing our people more opportunity and better education have to be foremost.

12- What distinguishes you from the other candidates?

I am a scientist by training, and I believe that background provides a certain discipline and ability to view things objectively. In addition, I have certainly paid my dues in service to the city for many years before ever running for office. In short, I show up. I am consistently available and visible in the community.

13 - What issue is not getting enough attention?

Poverty. This is particularly true as evidenced by our current proposed city budget; there is no coordinated plan from City Hall to address this issue.