

Candidate Pre-Interview Questionnaire

The Committee for a Better Atlanta (CBA) is a coalition of business organizations concerned about Atlanta. In 2009, CBA is interviewing candidates for mayor, City Council president and City Council with the intent of publishing a voter's guide of candidate evaluations. The evaluations will be based on the answers to the questions in this document, plus in-person interviews to be held this summer.

Your answers to these questions are very important to the CBA interview and evaluation process. ***Candidates who do not complete this questionnaire will not be scheduled for an interview with CBA.***

Please complete this questionnaire and deliver it to the Committee for a Better Atlanta so it arrives **no later than 5 p.m., July 31, 2009**. Questionnaires can be filled out electronically and emailed to cwatkins@macoc.com or mailed to:

**Committee for a Better Atlanta
235 International Blvd., NW
Atlanta, GA 30303
Attn: Che Watkins**

If you have any questions about completing the questionnaire – or about the CBA process – please contact Che Watkins at (404) 586-8468.

Candidate information:

Name: Dwanda L. Farmer

Position Sought: Atlanta City Council Post 1 At Large

Address: 277 Ralph David Abernathy Blvd SW

City, State, ZIP: Atlanta, Georgia 30312

Telephone: 404-222-0820 Cell phone: 404-451-3812

E-mail address: dwandafarmer@comcast.net

Campaign Web site address: www.forwardwithfarmer.com

Secondary contact information: (If you prefer that CBA direct scheduling inquiries to someone other than the candidate, check here. **no)**

Name: Mizette Coakley

Relationship to candidate: Executive Assistant - Scheduler

(e.g. Administrative assistant, campaign manager, etc.)

Address: 450 Piedmont Road #502

City, State, ZIP: Atlanta, Georgia 30308

Telephone: Cell phone: 4049830956

E-mail address: Mizettec@yahoo.com

Please answer the questions in the space provided on this questionnaire.

1. In your opinion, what are the three greatest issues (problems or opportunities) facing Atlanta?

OUR CITY FINANCES - The greatest problem facing the City of Atlanta at this time is our financial crisis. It is imperative that we challenge our government to be fiscally responsible and to insure the pensions of our city employees, improve the delivery of government services and do so through a film of transparency. Managing limited budgets in the face of declining revenue will present problems that require fiscal astituity if Atlanta is to emerge as the epi-business center of south

OUR INFRASTRUCTURE & ENVIRONMENT - The opportunity in Atlanta rests in our ability to become a cleaner and greener environment, improve infrastructure, transportation, public parks and provide recreation for citizens, visitors and neighbors. We have learned delaying infrastructure improvement projects only lead to more costly investments for taxpayers. Atlanta is currently last in public park space. The lack of green space contributes to smog and reduces air quality and most recently has resulted in the loss of convention business for Atlanta.

OUR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT - Additional opportunities for Atlanta is to create new industry through gaming, green initiatives, infrastructure and transportation development opportunities. Atlanta has the opportunity to reinvent itself and emerge as the business epicenter of the south providing new jobs, more police and security downtown, additional human services dollars and could potentially reduce property taxes for Atlanta residents and businesses.

2. Describe briefly your qualifications for holding this office. *(Please answer in the space below, but you may also attach a resume or other description to provide us with additional detail.)*

Dwanda Farmer is a long time community servant and advocate. She is a small business and non profit development consultant and certified grant writer. Ms. Farmer has worked with the tools of government including Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, New Market Tax Credits, Bond Finance, HUD HOME, ESG & CDBG funds to create affordable housing, housing counseling, youth programs, micro-enterprise development projects. Dwanda has helped developers deliver more than 500 units of affordable housing in Atlanta in-town neighborhoods and has created a variety of programs and services for the non-profit community. She cares about people and their expectations of government.

Dwanda has two masters degrees in Organizational Development and Human Resources Management. Dwanda's corporate experience includes a career in Compensation and Benefits where she worked for a Fortune 100 company developing compensation, benefits, executive compensation, short and long-term incentive plans for 11,000 employees worldwide. This experience will be useful as the next administration will have to deal with the pension plans of city workers which is currently grossly underfunded.

Dwanda Farmer is a founding member of the Fulton County Workforce & Employment Services Board and has served diligently since 1999. Ms. Farmer has served as Vice Chair of the board and has Chaired the ITA Committee. She has also served as liaison to Atlanta Regional Commission ITA Committee. As Chair of ITA, Ms. Farmer is responsible for deploying WIA funds to serve dislocated, unemployed and underemployed adult workers and approving training providers eligible to receive ITA vouchers. She also serves as a member of the Governor's Work Ready Task Force representing Fulton County Office of Workforce Development. Dwanda is certified Work Ready GOLD and is ready to work for Atlanta.

Ms. Farmer is internationally distinguished as one of about thirty Doctoral Candidates in the world with a degree in Community Economic Development. She is currently ABD and scheduled to complete her Ph.D. in 2010. Her dissertation project seeks to answer the question "Is Housing Choice a Choice in Atlanta?"

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

I have been involved in politics since my freshman year at college (Howard University) in Washington DC. I have served my community my whole life. My first campaign was the 1985 re-election campaign of Marion Berry. In 1987 I helped elect the first black Mayor of Baltimore, Kurt Schmoke. I love helping people. The work I do everyday is about making a way for someone to succeed, to achieve a dream, to change a life and running for office seems like a natural progression of that service. Our city is at a critical juncture and at this time we need leadership with new ideas who are willing to make tough choices, do what is right and stand on the city charter and continue to make Atlanta the city of hope and opportunity for hard working people.

I live in the Mechanicsville neighborhood and I have been a victim of crime on more than one occasion. On November 7, 2004 I was carjacked by a masked gunman in my own driveway. On October 14, 2008 two men broke in my home and backed a truck into my garage and unloaded every valuable electronic item out of my home while I was out of town. In 1999, when I first moved to

Mechanicsville there were prostitutes who worked the corner of Ralph David Abernathy and Cooper Streets where I live. I would set my alarm clock for 2:30 a.m. and I would go out and talk with the prostitutes every night for about an hour. They quickly got the idea they couldn't do business with me hanging around and they left! There was a drug dealer who sat on the adjacent corner by the pay phone (for years) who I befriended and eventually ran off the corner and out of the neighborhood with the threat of snitching on him! I offered him "deal drugs on my corner and get 10 years in jail or take it somewhere else." I even tried to help him find employment. He left my corner more than 5 years ago. I know every citizen can't take these steps, but I believe if we work together, treat people with decency and respect we can all enjoy a higher quality of life.

4. Please identify up to five organizations or individuals who are actively supporting your candidacy.

- 1) Rev. & Mrs. Cameron Madison Alexander & the Antioch Baptist Church North Family
- 2) Rev. Stanley Calloway & the New Fellowship of Praise Community Baptist Church Family
- 3) The Honorable Sheila Jones House District 44
- 4) Tom Cook – Restaurant Owner and Entrepreneur
- 5) Myrtle Davis – first female Atlanta Mayoral Candidate (1997)

5. The city government faces a \$50 million budget shortfall this fiscal year. How would you close the budget gap?

1. Immediately stop all non-essential spending! Evaluate budget for waste and cut expenses.
2. Generate new revenue by offering appropriate business tax incentives and retooling city contracting to promote a healthy and vibrant local business economy. (Priority points for local businesses employing Atlanta residents)
3. Generate new revenue by offering police and fire academies as regional training institutes.
4. Investigate new industry opportunities to generate jobs and revenue for the general fund, i.e. gaming, green jobs, infrastructure and transportation projects.
5. Evaluate commuter tax option on non-resident workforce (with appropriate tax credits).
6. Create a new licensing program to establish permits for food service carts and mobile food service vehicles.

6. Since 2004, the city's official goal has been to have 2,000 police officers. The Police Department is now at 1,615 officers. Do you support the goal? If so, how would you pay for the additional officers given the city's budget problems?

I believe the City of Atlanta needs a "minimum" of 2000 officers and it would be better if we had 2,500 officers. I believe our city is undermanned and therefore under performs. I would operationalize the Atlanta Police Department in a different manner that would provide costs savings. I would also open the training center and market it regionally to other law enforcement jurisdictions. Our APD training center could become the training provider to neighboring governments at a cost less than they can carry out the training on their own. Regional training of first responders might create better opportunities for disaster readiness preparation throughout the region. It might also help stop the bleeding of officers leaving Atlanta for neighboring forces because those governments know Atlanta has the best trained officers in the region. Additionally, I would seek grant opportunities to fund community policing programs, equipment, homeland security efforts and disaster preparedness planning, training and implementation.

7. Mayor Franklin has used tax-allocation districts and tax abatements to support redevelopment projects. What would you have the city government do to support desirable redevelopment projects in the years ahead?

I would encourage city government to access all federal grants and stimulus money available through Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) and American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). I would pool NSP II, Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), HOME, Emergency Shelter Grants (ESG) and Atlanta Development Authority Bond opportunities with for profit/non-profit partnerships to capture abandoned and foreclosed properties to be rehabilitated and sold or leased to low and moderate income individuals/families. I would use Senior Citizen Owner Occupied Rehab Program (SCOORP) & Owner Occupied Rehab Program (OORP) funds to encourage neighboring homeowners to make needed improvements and promote revitalization one city block at a time. As the market demand for housing improves, property values will increase and therefore the city revenue fund will increase. As the market absorbs the unoccupied housing stock, new infill housing can be developed along targeted corridors which will spur additional private investment.

8. Traffic congestion is a major problem in Atlanta. If you could implement only one initiative, enhancement or management change to reduce congestion in Atlanta in the next four years, what would it be? Note: This should be something within the city government's ability to implement.

I would implement a commuter tax for employees who drive to work in Atlanta and do not live within its defined boundaries. Corporations may offset this cost with an equal tax credit for employees who live within the city, carpool, walk, bike, or take public transportation to work.

Additional revenue generated from a commuter tax might be used to pay for infrastructure improvements and transportation projects like the beltline, multi-modal station or even light rail (Athens to Macon to Savannah) which might be expedited through this additional funding stream.

Over the last eight years residents of the City of Atlanta have shown an overwhelming willingness to pay more to make our city vibrant and sustainable. It's time those who use our city every day pay their fair share to continue to make Atlanta the greatest place to live, work and play in the South.

9. In your opinion, what are the three greatest infrastructure problems facing Atlanta over the next four years? Please rank them in terms of importance and urgency.

- 1) Water & Sewer projects
- 2) Sidewalks, streets, bridge and road improvements
- 3) Parks and Greenspace