

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:

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Position Sought: Atlanta City Council District 6

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Secondary contact information: (If you prefer that CBA direct scheduling inquiries to someone other than the candidate, check here. PLEASE SELECT)

Name: [Click here to enter text.](#)

Relationship to candidate: [Click here to enter text.](#)

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

Address: [Click here to enter text.](#)

City, State, ZIP: [Click here to enter text.](#)

Telephone: [Click here to enter text.](#) Cell phone: [Click here to enter text.](#)

E-mail address: [Click here to enter text.](#)

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?

1. Public Safety

Improving public safety is at the top of my list. No governmental responsibility is more important than ensuring the safety and security of its citizens. Top-notch public safety is essential to public confidence in government, to economic development, to quality of life, and to a robust future for the City.

Until recently, Atlanta was steadily making progress towards improving public safety. Unfortunately, the trend has moved in the opposite direction in the past few years. This negative trend stands to worsen if effective and immediate measures are not taken. While many public safety decisions are in the hands of the Mayor, I will take an active role as a City Council Member to address the public safety challenges facing Atlanta. I support a sound fiscal approach for the City, but I will not sacrifice public safety to achieve other objectives.

There have been debates about whether Atlanta has a public safety problem or just the perception of one. The people I speak with do not view it that way. They see closed fire stations, slow response times, and furloughed police officers and fire fighters. Citizens read about home invasions, smash-and-grab robberies, and stolen cars. Atlantans deserve action now, and I will do everything I can as a Council member to address their public safety needs. We need actions that go beyond the words of increasing the staffing of our public safety departments; we need specific actions. Within the police department, the city must recognize and address the growing issue of gangs. The recent action of the Administration to increase the size of the Gang Task Force from 6 to 25 is an improvement. As a Council Member, I will be asking and requiring demonstrated returns on the investment, specific targeted goals, and action plans.

2. Fiscal Soundness and Prudence

The financial soundness of Atlanta is a close second in importance. No city can thrive unless it operates on a fiscally sound basis. Some of the causes of this financial problem are beyond the control of the City, but solid and sensible fiscal practices can correct this situation. We are in a dire financial situation but the opportunity exists to emerge from this crisis stronger than ever.

It is easy to balance a budget when the economy is strong. The real test of leadership is when unexpected and difficult circumstances arise such as those facing us today. The City will be required to invest in the necessary information, budgeting and auditing systems and to demand openness, transparency and accountability to understand developing trends and policy options. As a Council member, I will do everything possible to ensure the City uses best practices to regain a solid financial footing.

3. Economic Development

Economic development is my third area of focus. Atlanta must regain its competitive edge and has must proactively work to promote economic development. As a Council Member, I will aggressively push innovative policies and programs to bring in new businesses, support and grow existing businesses, encourage job creation, develop a top-notch 21st century labor force and restore Atlanta's competitive position. For example, Atlanta must develop international economic relationship policies with Latin America and Asia. We have the existing infrastructure and expansion opportunities at the airport to become a primary U.S. air cargo hub. Our lack of relationship building with the leading growth economies is placing Atlanta in jeopardy for significant economic growth. The airport provides a strong existing resource to grow jobs and income with new sources revenue.

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.)*

I offer a sturdy foundation of education, practical business experience, military and public service, and a proven ability to run a viable campaign.

- Masters Degree in Organizational Development from the American University, School of Government and Public Administration.

- Over 20 years of management consulting experience, ten of which were with Cap Gemini Ernst & Young. I specialized in strategic planning, implementation of process improvement plans with established benchmarks, and integration of systems technology. My client base was Fortune 500 companies seeking to transform their business model; they generally were not entrepreneurial in nature, had multi-tiered, complex management structures, and strong, involved CEOs.
- Extensive history of public service and a demonstrated ability to produce results in a team based organization. I volunteered and served nine years in the U.S. Military during the Vietnam War. Afterwards, I was assigned to serve on the Personal Staff of the Commanding General of Forces Command where I was responsible for assisting in the planning and implementation of an all volunteer Army. I was one of five members advising the Commanding General of Forces Command and the Army Chief of Staff. I was awarded the Army Commendation Medal for my service.

My career success and military experience illustrate that I have the necessary skills to build coalitions with diverse groups to achieve goals and implement change. As an individual Council Member, these are core competencies needed to achieve change in Atlanta and to create a positive working relationship with the new administration and City Council.

My 2005 run for City Council clearly demonstrated strong public support for my qualifications and issues when I won 49.88% of the votes; 3 votes less than the incumbent. I was rated as "well qualified" by the Committee for a Better Atlanta and received a higher score than the incumbent. During my campaign, I gained virtually all endorsements made, most notably from the Police and Firefighter Unions.

My public service in Atlanta began with my election as Chair of the Atlanta Human Relations Commission. I was subsequently elected to Board positions and served on several committees including NPU-E, Midtown Neighbors Association, and Beltline SubArea 6 Steering Committee and public safety, historic preservation, sidewalks, traffic and transportation committees.

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

- **Atlanta's Financial Distress**
 - Failure of City Council to pass or meaningfully amend in a financially prudent manner the Administration's Budget in June 2008
 - Unprecedented foreclosure rate
- **Public Safety Declines in Atlanta**
 - From 2008 through 2009, meetings with Chief Pennington and Mayor Franklin on public safety and the recognition that Atlanta's leadership was not in tune with the perceptions of the general public and Zone Commanders
 - Implementation of furloughs (especially public safety) 2008
 - Plight of disabled public safety personnel
- **Deteriorating Economic Conditions in Atlanta**
 - November 2008 to present: No new applications for major development in SPI-16 and 17; along with the abandonment of proposed and permitted projects.
 - Significant decline in convention business
 - Inability of Atlanta Development Authority (ADA) to address needs and concerns of small business and the historical unemployment rate of Atlanta
- **Infrastructure Concerns throughout Atlanta**
 - Disclosures about the unacceptable state of Atlanta's financial and business systems
 - BeltLine mismanagement
 - Handling of water and sewer services
 - BeltLine Bond hearing in Fall of 2008
 - BeltLine Subarea 6 meetings by ABI from mid 2008 through June 2009

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

- 1) International Brotherhood of Police Officers Local 623
- 2) Michael Tyler, Kilpatrick Stockton
- 3) Jenifer Keenan, Alton + Bird
- 4) Amy Stout, President Candler Park Neighborhood Association
- 5) Elston Collins, President, Midtown Neighbors' Association

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

As a Council member I will seek to close the City's budget gap via a five-part approach:

- Audit City financial systems
- Make City financial information transparent
- Increase city revenues
- Improve efficiencies and eliminate low-value programs and waste.
- Increase community, business, and expert involvement in financial matters

A. City Audit with Detailed Action Plan to Raise Standards

Good financial decisions and plans cannot be made without accurate, timely, and accessible information. I will seek an immediate audit of the City's financial systems and resources so that the Mayor and the Council are properly positioned to make intelligent and informed choices. In addition to an audit, I will strongly advocate for a detailed action plan to transform the entire financial reporting system and make it an integral part of the contract and vendor system.

B. Transparent Information

The public will have confidence in the City's financial decisions if they know what is going on, the available choices, and the reasons for decisions. Transparent financial about the City's finances--in terms of records, information, and meetings--will allow the public to understand plans, options, and decisions, to participate in those activities, and to monitor progress.

The City should make more financial available—online wherever possible. To this end, as a Council member I will propose that *comprehensive* information be *easily accessible* and available on a *timely* basis. By way of example:

- Departmental and agency budgets should be posted online,
- The City check register should be available for download into a spreadsheet format
- City contracts should be posted online with amount of contract and amount paid to date
- City pension performance should be posted and updated quarterly
- City revenue, both anticipated and actual, should be updated quarterly
- Budget information should be posted online.
- The budget process should be open and transparent.

C. Increase City Revenues

To help close the budget shortfall, the City must look at revenue enhancing opportunities. New sources of revenues need to be considered and existing revenue options need to be scrutinized. For instance, reliable data projects that up to 30% of businesses have not paid their license fees. This is just one area of potential revenue enhancements.

D. Improve Efficiency and Eliminate Waste

A commonly held view is that the City a bureaucracy with considerable waste, inefficiency, indifference and with little or no accountability. The City Council can make a difference in this regard, and I intend to do so. I will aggressively urge that policies and programs throughout the City be re-evaluated for relevancy and need, revamped to make them more efficient and effective, and terminated if they do not create good value. Comprehensive job audit with a competency based performance evaluation system for job supervisor and above job grades is a necessity to begin this renewal effect.

E. Improve Public Involvement in Financial Matters

I strongly support and advocate business, expert, and community involvement to put together realistic plans to bring the City's financial matters under control. This will help curtail economic surprises in the future while also contributing to certainty and accountability to the City's financial planning process.

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 support increasing the Atlanta Police Department to 2000 officers.

Increasing the police force to 2,000 will involve significant additional cost. But Atlanta needs a top-notch, properly staffed police department and the financial challenge must be met. Public safety cannot be sacrificed because of other goals.

However, increasing the number of officers must be part of an overall public safety initiative, and other areas must be simultaneously addressed including leadership, management, efficiency, and best practices. For example, the City must maintain a healthy and concerned relationship with the police officers on the street. Inattention to their basic needs and unsafe scheduling levels, put Atlanta's police officers at risk. The recent revelations of mistreatment of disabled officers underscore that APD personnel management needs an overhaul and new leadership and approaches.

As the police force is being increased in size, other changes need be made within the police department and elsewhere in city government. Some of these changes will produce cost savings and these savings can be used partly to defray the increased cost of a larger police force. For example, the budget of the Chief of Police is out of control. While each Zone has suffered under the budget cuts, the top office is heavy in personnel and is inefficient. Also, the city pension plans--including the two for public safety personnel--need to be reviewed and changed if necessary to bring them in line with marketplace practices, to make it sustainable, and to ensure the City receives good value for its investments.

Atlanta has an outstanding resource in its existing police and firefighter training staff and facilities. The City needs to investigate the viability of

offering certified training to other government agencies (possibly on an international level) using a revenue generating model. Atlanta has underutilized resources that can be transformed to new revenue streams to fund public safety.

The additional expense of a 2000-person police force must be supported by changes and efficiency improvements throughout the City while pursuing generating new revenue with our existing resources. We need a thorough review of spending practices and priorities throughout the City. I am willing to make the types of reductions and changes needed to allow us to pay for the needed investment in public safety.

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?

The City has had mixed results with its redevelopment efforts in recent years. For instance, Atlantic Station has been very successful and is a reasonable model for comparable future projects, but other TADs and other initiatives have fallen flat or are struggling. Since most economic forecasts are for modest growth during the next few years, Atlanta needs to ratchet up its efforts to foster an attractive environment for existing and new businesses. Some of my ideas follow.

1. Attract and Support Small Businesses

Atlanta has been doing a credible job supporting and attracting larger businesses, and I support continuing these efforts. However, Atlanta needs to

do a better job supporting and attracting small businesses. This group is a catalyst for good economic and job growth. The ADA states that 50% of all employment in Atlanta is with small businesses. I support establishing a results-driven entity with the expertise, responsibility and accountability to:

- Grow and create the number of small businesses
- Become a grantor of micro-loans with more attractive standards than federal grants
- Administer and find resources for small business loans that do not require ownership of property
- Develop innovative concepts to provide financing for retail space leasing

The City also needs to analyze the Code of Ordinances (e.g. parking requirements) to determine how to improve the environment for small businesses. Too often the City is a roadblock to small business development. An analysis of the processes and procedures of the steps needed to open a business and successfully operate need to be conducted. City procedures must be streamlined and meshed with best practices and today's economic realities.

2. Strengthen Initiatives to "Fill" and Improve Existing Properties

Atlanta has traditionally focused on new building. Due to current economic conditions, it behooves Atlanta to concentrate more for the foreseeable future on "filling" rather than building. To be a vital and desirable City, we need to fill the millions of square feet of empty commercial space. Our historic business districts sprinkled throughout our neighborhoods need new life. As we fill, revitalize, and firm up our foundations, bigger business will once again be attracted to Atlanta, along with tourists and conventions.

3. Engage the City Council in Business Development

I will propose that the City Council form a new committee dedicated to economic growth and job creation, and international economic policy.

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.

Traffic is one of Atlanta's most challenging issues. There are no silver bullets that will fix the problem in four years. Effective solutions will take far longer to implement. But we cannot sit and do nothing while those longer-term remedies are being crafted.

The one action I would suggest to reduce Atlanta's traffic congestion in the short-term is to have the City work closely with business and community leaders to better spread out traffic flows at peak times. I would want these groups collectively to design a comprehensive set of templates, tool kits, and programs for businesses, government, and others (e.g., schools) that encourage people to drive less, drive at different times, and utilize other than single-occupancy vehicles. Options could include more widely varied work and school hours, car-pools and van-pools, working from home, better utilization of mass transit, bicycling, and walking, and similar programs.

Coordinated and organized voluntary traffic mitigation programs have, for instance, been successfully implemented in the Galleria area in Cobb County and other places. If the City, business and civic leaders actively and creatively craft initiatives to address this universally vexing problem, traffic congestion might decrease while at the same time a consensus can be built to achieve effective long-term solutions.

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) Inadequate Surface transportation (e.g. roads, rail, mass transit)

- 2) Uncertainty of water supply
- 3) Inadequate City information systems

Transportation

As a Council Member, I will vigorously support a range of road improvements, from better traffic signalization to an improved street grid to better maintenance. The BeltLine is a top priority of mine and I am committed to recruiting a more effective Board and management team, renewing the commitment to the original BeltLine vision and promises, and better involving businesses and the community in decisions. Atlanta's surface transportation problems can be effectively addressed only with regional cooperation, and I will urge the establishment of a high-level organization (including business and community leaders) to start planning, designing, and building a multi-modal transit network that will enable the Atlanta metropolitan region to grow and prosper for many decades.

According to the ADA and Atlanta BeltLine Inc., (ABI) the current thinking about traffic congestion in growing cities is that it "cannot be reduced, but it can be managed." Attempts at relieving congestion over the past decades in growing cities have failed and new approaches are being taken to "manage" congestion. According to ABI, signalization and traffic pattern flow are the primary tools to reduce congestion in neighborhoods which will encounter significant increases in traffic congestion due to future growth.

Given this is the current direction of Atlanta, the above recommendations are prudent and in line with the planning of the City. However, another component should be considered: Increasing mass transit on an expedited, cost effective schedule. Atlanta has laid out a long-term plan with the BeltLine and the discussions of the Streetcar. There is an alternate option to provide mass transit more quickly and at a lower cost than "traditional" transit.

The basic framework for this model is a public-private partnership that would create multiple networks within the City for a protected territory for the system. The City can expedite a Request for Proposal for a public-private partnership to provide an alternative energy, wheeled

street-car system similar in design to the Georgia Tech system that connects the main campus with off-site facilities in Midtown.

Water Supply

Atlanta will wither without a stable and ample water supply. The recent court ruling threatening Atlanta's use of Lake Lanier as a back-up water supply vividly underscores the challenges in this area. Our area and the State have been in denial for too long about the magnitude of this threat. As a Council member I will urge the City to develop long-term water plans and supplies, to better conserve this precious resource, and most importantly, to be a leader in the regional and multi-state effort to develop fair and satisfactory solutions to this enormous challenge

City Information Systems

Atlanta must invest in 21st century information systems. This area may seem unexciting and mundane, but the City cannot make good decisions and establish reasonable plans without adequate information and decision-making tools. Plans to fix the problem must be developed and put into place. The starting point for a financial overhaul is controlling and understanding how much money the City has, knowing how much is owed, recognizing pending fiscal commitments, and having realistic projections and accountability for the billions in City bonds. None of this can be done with the current financial systems.

Other City information systems are equally weak, and the City's systems are unreliable and do not network with one other. These weaknesses undermine the City's ability to know what is going on and stymies good decision-making. Improving the City's systems will take time and money, but further delaying the introduction of necessary systems will only frustrate the changes that must be made to keep Atlanta vibrant and successful.