



Detroit Free Press City Council Candidate Questionnaire

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Website address: www.DearingforDetroit.com
Employer: Self-Employed
Occupation: Owner/Operator Bert's Jazz Club and Bert's in Eastern Market
How Long: 20 years
High School Diploma: Martin Luther King High School – 1989
College degree: Completed 3 years at Wilberforce University – left school before graduation to help run the family business when my father became ill.
Advanced degree: N/A

Please list any public office to which have been elected or appointed, beginning with the most recent:

Commissioner – Detroit Housing Commission (appointed by Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick)
Chief of Staff – Councilman Lonnie Bates (resigned before his indictment)

1. *Explain in 50 words or fewer why you are seeking a seat on the Detroit City Council:*

I am running for city council because I am answering Detroit's call for change and new leadership. I have the vision, experience and innovative new ideas it will take to deliver jobs, better schools, safer streets and a balanced budget. Visit www.DearingforDetroit.com to learn more about how, working together, we can fix Detroit.

2. *Describe any professional, educational or civic experience that has prepared you to play a constructive role on city council:*

Both my business and civic experience have prepared me well to not only play a constructive role on city council, but to provide innovative new ideas and leadership that will drive Detroit's progress. Through my business experience I understand how to create jobs, how to grow a business and most importantly, what small business owners need from the city and in an economic environment to be successful. Furthermore, my experience working with City Council, and as Detroit's Housing Commissioner, has given me an acute understanding of how

city government works, where its inefficiencies are and how to fix them. As housing commissioner I managed nearly half a billion dollars in federal funds and our agency budget. I cleaned up corruption and worked hard to improve services for the residents of Detroit who depended on the Housing commission for affordable and respectable living conditions. I believe that the combination of my civic, business and personal experience is what our city needs in its leadership. I am not running for council because I need a job, I am running for council because I have the right, well-rounded experience to go do the job.

3. *What do you anticipate spending on your campaign? How much have you collected so far? How many people have contributed?*

We plan on spending close to \$150,000 on the primary election with a budget for the general election still to come. For more information concerning fundraising, our current and future reports are and will be available with the Wayne County Clerk.

4. *Please list what you consider to be the three most important functions of city government:*

- To ethically maintain and administrate a balanced budget that delivers efficient and effective city services.
- To maintain order and provide the citizenry with responsive, effective public safety.
- To educate the city's children.
- To create an economic environment that gives new and existing businesses every opportunity they need to create jobs and be successful.

*I have included a fourth function if you are not including the Detroit School Board as a function of city government as a whole, and simply referring to the three most important functions of the city council.

5. *Please identify three governmental departments or functions you would be willing to eliminate:*

- Eliminate Forest, General Services Department (only bureaucracy) and move services, workers and other functions to Department of Public Works.
- Eliminate the Department of Administrative Hearings
- Eliminate the Civic Center Department in the transfer and lease of Cobo Hall to a regional authority.

6. *What changes in staffing, compensation, benefits or work rules do you believe will be required to assure Detroit's continued solvency?*

Detroit's fiscal solvency needs to be the new Mayor's and City Council's first priority, but city government and the people cannot afford to add more of us to the thousands of unemployed in the process. Eliminating our budget deficit and creating continued fiscal solvency will take tough choices, but with focus, innovation and collective sacrifice we can do it together.

While I will not lose a single city worker, we must analyze the compensation and function of Detroit's city government managers, merge jobs where possible and eliminate ineffective

positions. I believe we lead by example, so before anyone else takes a pay cut, I would ask that city council members take a 20 percent cut in pay and reduce their office budgets by 33 percent. Any further compensation reduction would be implemented in a top-down fashion, ensuring Detroiters who work on the frontlines of city government see no reduction in pay. If the situation requires more drastic measures, I am open to supporting a 4 day work week for city government. City workers will continue to keep their benefits and work at the same pay rate, but will only work for 4 days. The additional savings in energy, material and operational costs the city would save would be considerable.

However, these actions will only get us part of the way home. To assure Detroit's future solvency, we must hire new accountants and auditors so our finances are updated and accurate. We must bring a new level of efficiency to our accounting and budget processes, because missing out on our fair share of state funds because we can't turn in our audit on time is unacceptable. Secondly, the only way out of this whole is to grow our way out. City Council must work with the Mayor and the business community to create an economic environment that makes not investing in Detroit a bad choice.

7. *With money available to tear down only 3,000 – 5,000 a year, how would you speed up the demolition of the estimated 80,000 abandoned homes and buildings in Detroit?*

There are two courses of action we can take to speed up the demolition and/or the redevelopment of Detroit's abandoned properties. First, I believe we must focus on retention, not demolition, and create programs that sell or give abandoned homes to community development corporations, neighborhood organizations and other entities for redevelopment or private demolition. In addition, this program would provide neighborhoods with the desire and resources to redevelop these homes, the opportunity to collect revenue that can be used for further local development.

Second, we must work with the business community and potential investors to privately demolish abandoned homes and properties for reduced lease, sale or property tax rates. The city cannot afford to tear down every abandoned property, nor does it want to. I believe that a cooperative effort between city government, the business community and community organizations to focus on retention, development and demolition will speed the process up greatly.

8. *Detroit's dwindling population is distributed over a geographical area many times the size of other cities. Do you support efforts to concentrate residents in a smaller portion of the city? If so, how would facilitate this, and what short and long-term uses would envision for vacated neighborhoods?*

I do not believe the city needs to engage in an orchestrated consolidation process. I see Detroit's swaths of unused land and undeveloped property as a vital resource for Detroit. We have an opportunity to rebuild Detroit as one of America's first, true 21st century cities. If we create an economic environment that fosters new development and growth, residential consolidation will happen naturally. For larger scale projects, I am in support of working with private industry and Detroit residents to free up land for developments that require it. In any instance, we must first protect the individual rights of Detroit homeowners.

9. *Do you support the agreement the Cockrel Administration negotiated to transfer the ownership and operation of Cobo Hall to a regional authority? If not, how would you propose to finance the expansion and operation of a convention center that costs Detroit \$20 million to support?*

I support the expansion of Cobo Hall through a regional authority, but not with exact terms set by the former Mayor Cockrel. It has recently been suggested that Cobo Hall be leased, rather than sold to the regional authority. I support a lease back agreement that transfers the operation of Cobo to a regional authority, while Detroit maintains ownership and a stream of revenue from the lease agreement. I believe this is a fair compromise and in the best interest of the citizens of Detroit, the city and the state of Michigan.

10. *How important is it to you to improve relations between the city of Detroit and the rest of the metropolitan area?*

Highest Priority

11. *How can the city provide better bus service?*

The best way to provide better bus service in Detroit is to regionalize transportation to make more federal dollars available to upgrade equipment, improve efficiency and expand routes.

12. *Which if any of the city's assets should be put up for sale to raise revenues or reduce expenses? How would you evaluate proposals to sell any such asset?*

I don't believe we should *sell* any of our assets, but we should evaluate the leasing of our assets to secure ownership, create long-term revenue streams as opposed to one time infusions of cash. The lease of Cobo to a regional authority will save the city \$20 million annually, achieve the expansion the facility needs and create an ongoing stream of revenue for Detroit. These are the types of plans we should look at for all city assets.

13. *Is it a good idea for the city to raise money by selling for an up-front cash payment its revenue from such sources as public parking or Detroit-Windsor Tunnel tolls?*

The short answer is no. Like the Chicago Skyway, Detroit should look at leasing these assets to private companies for an upfront cash payment and a profit sharing program. The city of Chicago leased the skyway for 99 years, received an upfront payment and continues to collect revenue from the asset today,