



Below is the unedited questionnaire response of:

Jonathan Whitfield
Atlanta City Council
District 4

2017 Candidate Pre-Interview Questionnaire

1. Describe briefly your qualifications for this office. In addition, please identify up to 5 organizations or individuals who are actively supporting your candidacy and why you believe their support is important.

I am a local minister, community organizer, counselor and youth mentor for this area, district 4 Atlanta. I have the generous support of Dean Harold H. Bennett PhD of the C.H.Mason Theological Seminary, his support is important because of his legacy and dedication to this community. Next I have the support of Dr. Edward L. Wheeler president of the Interdenominational Theological Center, his support is important for the reason that he is a trusted and respected figure within the Atlanta University Center community. Next, I have the support of Eddie Ellis, former band director of the Morris Brown College Marching Wolverines. His support is crucially important because of his tenure at Morris brown College and what he was able to do for the community and students worldwide. The forth support of an organization that I have is the National Pan-Hellenic Council of Greater Atlanta (NPHCATL). The NPHCATL's support is important because they are a trust organization within Atlanta that oversees the African-American Greek organizations. They have very strict and disciplined standards for their community and who they support. Lastly, I have the support of the Street Groomers Community Organization, their support is important because they are respect all throughout Westside Atlanta for their handwork and dedication to keeping the neighborhoods safe and decent.

2. What is your vision for the City of Atlanta and how would you implement it? Please be specific.

My vision for the City of Atlanta is to be the leading city in America for local economic growth, education, and healthcare. I would implement this by using what we already have in place and strengthening those organizations. First I would focus this same vision on my district, district 4. We have abundance of local gardens and urban farmers, entrepreneurs and educators, business owners and up and coming business owners. What we are missing is support from the city, Westside Atlanta is going to lead the way in this area in the coming years. Atlanta can be

that example for the world, we have all that we need, it only needs our investment. When you invest in the people you strengthen the local economy, which strengthens moral, which strengthens ideas, which creates jobs and opportunities for everyone.

3. Please identify the three greatest issues or problems facing the City of Atlanta and specifically how you would work to solve them.

The three greatest issues facing Atlanta are the wealth and poverty wage gap, gentrification, and mobility. First I would work to solve the wage gap, which is the largest in the nation, by investing in local businesses in the poorest areas of our city. It is crucial that we give these individuals a chance and a leg up, I would help them obtain housing that they can afford, job training, as well as jobs that are in the area that they live in so that transportation won't be too much on a problem. This leads into the next issue which is mobility, it is no secret that Atlanta is facing a major traffic and mobility crises, which the population of metro Atlanta expected to rise in the millions in the coming years, it is crucial that we figure out a plan to solve this and fast. I will work to make sure that we expand the Marta rail system to greater areas of metro Atlanta, fight to have light rail throughout all communities, and ensure that our biking commuters have safe and efficient passageways. Lastly, gentrification, this is a very touchy subject because it hits the African American community the hardest. I am already fighting to solve this by making sure my neighbors have the information they need to keep their homes. My main goals would be to fight rising property taxes in low income communities, set and enforce policies that would stop developers from build high-priced units in areas where the people cannot afford them, and set limits caps on how much a unit can be within a low-income area.

4. As a City Council member, how would you manage collaborating with your colleagues on difficult citywide issues versus representing your own constituents?

As a community organizer and ecumenical minister for many years, it was and is my duty to collaborate with my colleagues on various issues in the community. Many times, I have to sit at the table with individuals of different faiths, ideologies, and customs. The main goal is to first find common ground, second, respect my colleagues for his/her positions, and third approach each and every situation with delicacy.

5. How do you view the City of Atlanta's financial position? Should the City of Atlanta have additional tools in place to ensure financial management going forward?

The city of Atlanta's financial position is in a bad state simply because the monies are not being used as efficiently as they should be. I believe we are a bit too reliant on private and outside donors rather than local contributors. We should have additional tools in place for financial management however, we must be very careful of how we go about it.

6. Please describe your philosophy regarding property tax assessments and municipal taxation.

I firmly believe that property tax should reflect and respect the income level of the local community. There should be tax cap on communities that are historic and improvised.

7. What is your opinion of Atlanta's MOST, and what approach do you support to fund long-term water and sewer operations?

I support the MOST, I think it's a good system, I would like to see the money gained from MOST be reflective in each and every community, flooding is a big issue in Westside Atlanta.

8. Would you change the current procurement process to protect against “pay to play”? If so, what changes would you support?

9. If elected, describe your role in ensuring ethical and transparent management of City resources by City employees?

If elected, I would take the lead in ethical and transparent management of city resources by city employees, the people, the residents deserve to know what the city is doing with their money, these offices belong to the people.

10. What economic development strategies would you prioritize to ensure the City of Atlanta captures its fair share of future job growth?

The type of economic development that is needed in Atlanta is entrepreneurship. Atlanta is booming with local businesses; this is going to drive the economy of Atlanta as it has done before. People want to get off the sharecropping plantation and make a living for themselves, it was also create job for others, Atlanta can truly be the example to the world for job growth.

11. What strategies would you implement to ensure an adequate supply of affordable housing?

As stated before, I would make sure that we have policies in place that forces developers not to build overpriced housing within our city, we can do this. One, I would, as I'm doing now, make sure our communities are knowledgeable and organized on this topic. Second, I would make sure that our NPU's and community associations are on top of the happenings as it pertains to housing. Lastly, I would vigorously fight rising property taxes in low-income communities.

12. What workforce development strategies should the next administration prioritize? How will these strategies address and improve economic mobility among low-to-mid skill workers?

13. What are the three most important transportation/infrastructure projects that should occur in the City of Atlanta? Please rank them by importance and urgency and explain your reasoning.

The three most important transportation/infrastructure projects that Atlanta needs today: 1.) Major lite and hard rail expansion. (Marta). 2.) High tech web and free accessible Wi-Fi throughout the city. 3.) Safer/fluent roadways and sidewalks. With metro Atlanta expected to grow into the millions in the coming years, our city will be handicapped by a lack of efficient rail systems. This is the lifeline of any major city. There are too many cars on the roads in Atlanta, rail will change that. In order to make Atlanta a "global city" we need to come into the 21 century and have free high-speed Wi-Fi access city wide. In today's word access to high speed internet is a must, the connectivity of Atlanta will show us where we are heading in the coming years. Lastly, our roadways and sidewalks are not up to par for a city that wants to host the World Cup and Super bowl. Atlanta could lead the way but currently the conditions of our roadways citywide are costing the taxpayers millions.

14. What strategies would you pursue to improve the safety – both real and perceived – of all residents, visitors, and workers in Atlanta? What partnerships are needed to realize these strategies?

Community policing is the number one strategy that I would like to implement. It creates a report with the community. I believe that police should live in the communities that they serve, it makes the police human rather than enforcers of the state. Also, local organizations need to link with law enforcement to help serve and protect the community, similar to neighborhood watch.

15. Georgia ranks 49th among states for per-capita arts funding. What actions would you take to ensure our arts and culture organizations have the funding they need to thrive and enrich our city?

The arts saved my life, I've been in performing arts since I was a young child and it gave me a reason to live, from acting in church to performing becoming hundreds of thousands musically, it taught me how to live, gave me a purpose. Atlanta would not be the city it is today without the arts, it owes everything to it. I would make sure that each and every community had public funded art programs that boosts creativity, it goes without saying that when people are creating, the community is growing. My background in museum studies and culture has taught me the importance of preserving one's history. Art and culture is life and every community should reflect that.