

Candidate's Questionnaire – 8th District, Seat B, Knox County Commission

Candidate Name:

- 1.** If elected, will you seek re-election in 2010? Why or why not?

If I am fortunate to be elected to fill the unexpired term of Mr. Ballard, I do intend to seek re-election for a full-term in 2010. There are many issues that I would like to focus on in service to the 8th District, beginning with doing everything I can to insure that we are treated fairly in comparison to other districts, particularly the 4th and the 5th in West Knox County. I also want to investigate the feasibility of a new middle school in Gibbs, and am informed by school board members that there are currently no plans for a new school. I believe it will take a full term to plan and achieve many of these goals.

- 2.** What motivated you to seek this elected office?

I have long felt an obligation of public service. It is, to me, one of the more noble pursuits that a citizen can undertake for his community, his state, and his country. I have lived in Knox County for 41 years. About three years ago, I purchased some land in Gibbs and my family and I built a home there. We love this community, the friendliness of its people, and the beauty of the land. It is my hope to give something back by serving the community as a representative.

- 3.** What experience do you have to offer your district that you feel sets you apart from your opponents?

First, I am an American Government teacher at Bearden High School. Over the past twenty years, I have taught thousands of children about their national, state, and local governments and encouraged them to get involved in their communities. Second, education makes up more than 60% of Knox County's annual budget. Being an educator, and having served on two political action committees for teachers, I would bring that experience to Commission meetings and to budget reviews. Third, I have made an effort to get involved in every community where my family and I have resided. Although we haven't lived in the 8th District for 41 years, we have lived in this County that long and I have been active in a number of community projects, including Habitat for Humanity, Golden Gloves Charities, and being a coach and mentor to young boys through youth sports.

4. What do you feel are budget priorities in your district, and why do you feel they are priorities?

First, Gibbs needs a new middle school. No other group of kids in the county are bused 15 miles to school and back. That is a tremendous injustice to these children, and to their parents. It is appalling that the County would spearhead the passage of a wheel tax to build a \$50 million "academy" in West Knox County, leapfrogging pending capital projects in other districts, while forcing Gibbs children to be bused to Holston Middle School. Second, we need to stop the Midway Business Park in its tracks, sell the 380 acres of land, and bring that revenue back to the 8th District. The surrounding area is a quiet rural place, with extremely light traffic, and little artificial noise. The bottom line is that these residents simply do not want the drastic lifestyle change that would follow development of a business or industrial park, including the increased traffic and noise, not to mention upsetting the natural beauty of this area. I'm also not convinced that this is the best use of this land. It appears clear to me that the business park was poorly planned and even more poorly explained to the public. Residents are also rightly upset about the prospect of a water treatment facility on the French Broad River, fearing that such a facility would pollute the river and give way to more development. Finally, there has been no demonstration whatsoever that Knox County needs additional business/industrial space to serve the county's needs. Third, I travel from Majors Road to West Knox County everyday, and on that drive, I see the gross disparity between the roads and bridges in West Knox and East Knox. As your commissioner, I will not sit idly by and watch West Knox County grab all of the money for road improvements. I will demand that the 8th District be treated fairly.

5. Name three problems in your district and your plan for addressing them. Please be as detailed as possible.

The lack of a Gibbs Middle School, the plan to turn 380 acres of natural beauty into business or industrial park, and the disparity in the roads and bridges in the 8th District and West Knox County. I have discussed each of these above. I would do everything I could to bring Gibbs a new middle school and stop the busing of those children. It is unfair and it was not their fault the County and School Board made a horrible decision a few years ago and closed an existing school. Of course, the revenue must be available for such a plan, but the 8th District has been ignored for major capital projects long enough, while Hardin Valley Academy, Cedar Bluff Elementary, and Amherst Elementary were all given priority over a new Gibbs school. Some of that revenue could come from selling off the 380 acre site at Midway Road. Finally, we have to adopt a policy of fairness among all 9 districts in Knox County. For too long, that has not been the case. I will insist that the 8th District receive its fair share of funding and will oppose any effort by any Commissioner to thwart that goal.

6. Many citizens in Knox County feel their elected officials are too closely tied to those that contribute to their campaigns. If elected, would you pledge to recuse yourself from votes that involve contributors to your campaign? Why or why not?

I would absolutely remove myself from those matters. Even the appearance of impropriety can have a disastrous effect on the public's perception of their government and officeholders.

7. Do you feel that neighborhood associations should have a greater say in how land is developed in their area than developers? Why or why not?

This is one of my three top issues in this campaign. The Midway Road residents were completely shut out of the planning for the business park. Part of the blame for that was the county and part of it was the developers. Either way, I'm certain that county money was expended in planning for the site, when all it would have taken was one neighborhood meeting to learn that the residents were adamantly opposed to the business park. As a homeowner, I feel that if the County plans to change my neighborhood, scenically or otherwise, I have a right to participate in that discussion.

8. What is your opinion on the latest attempts to obtain Tax Increment Financing for projects that do not qualify per the guidelines established by the Industrial Development Board of Knox County?

I do not support such TIFs for those projects. While I am not anti-development – most progress is good – the county and developers must follow the laws and regulations that are in place. I will strictly adhere to the guidelines.

9. With the recent problems at the NRR Solway Greenwaste site, it was proposed by the previous Law Director that a Commissioner has a duty to Knox County that overrides the duty to the citizens that elected them.
Who do you feel that you should represent more?

One of my priorities is to put the 8th District first. If I am elected by voters in this district, I will represent their interests first and foremost because that is what I believe they expect when they vote. There may, however, be an occasion when my decision-making process would lead me to do the greater good, although I cannot readily name one at this time. In that event, it would be my duty to explain any deviation from the 8th District's interests, and I would do this by holding a public meeting.

10. 2008 saw a number of political scandals in Knox County government, including a number of financial scandals in the Mayor's office. If elected, would you support the continued investigation into these scandals?

I would support the continued investigation of those matters.

I verify these answers are my own, and are true and correct.

Signature:

Handwritten signature of Michael Sean Daybert in cursive script.

Date:

10-15-08