

BATON ROUGE COALITION FOR GROWTH CANDIDATE SURVEY

October 12, 2016

- 1. At the present time, the permitting and inspection department is slow in issuing of permits and inspections. What would be your solution to this continuing problem?**

As a businessman and Realtor, I am a frequent visitor to the Permit Office. I fully understand the need for timely delivery of services. Offering Payment for expedited service is one possibility which should be examined. I for one would welcome that service when needed. I would also investigate the possibility of increasing staff as needed and/or outsourcing services as needed.

- 2. There have been proposals by some council members to allow for third-party review of plans in lieu of the Permit Office. Do you support third-party review? YES x**

I do not have a problem with the concept of third-party review, but it would certainly have to be created thoughtfully and monitored continuously and diligently to thwart abuses of the system.

Would you consider outsourcing of the Permit and Inspection Office to a commercial entity? YES x

- 3. Some council members have suggested a moratorium of new development along Highland Road. What is your position on governmental moratorium on development?**

As a general rule, I am not in favor of a moratorium. I am in favor of overall plans for development. I think that we are smart enough to implement smart growth policies that will allow us to continue to grow in a manner that does not over-tax the infrastructure we have in place or in the planning stage.

- 4. What is your position on the Highland Road moratorium?**

I am not a moratorium person. I want to work for overall plans to avoid the need for such a moratorium.

5. What plans do you have concerning policy and development within the city?

There is not much debate that the City Parish Planning Department is understaffed and underfunded. As Mayor-President, I would give careful considerations to the recommendations of the Center for Planning Excellence and other entities to enhance the capabilities of the department, including providing the center with a budget and staff consistent with other cities our size.

The Unified Development Code (UDC) is in desperate need of revision, and it is my understanding that it is now under review. The UDC need to comply with the requirements of the city's FutureBR Plan. As Mayor-President, I will support its passage and implementation of its requirements. Changes to our planning document should not be made on a political basis.

6. Do you support the concept of Smart Growth?

Certainly, the principles of Smart Growth include, among other things, creating a range of housing opportunities and choices; creating walkable neighborhoods; taking advantage of compact building design; fostering distinctive communities with a sense of place; mixing land uses; directing development toward existing communities; providing a variety of transportation choices; making development decisions predictable and fair and encouraging community and stakeholder collaboration.

These are all concepts I have embraced and fought for as a resident of Spanish Town for the past thirty years who has been involved in many battles to pull downtown Baton Rouge back from the edge of extinction.

7. The current pay plan for certain parish employees is not competitive with industry in our area. How do you plan to address this issue?

It's been far too long since the City-Parish had a comprehensive pay plan review. As Mayor-President, I would call for such a review immediately.

8. The city-parish is contractually obligated to maintain the Comite Diversion Canal, if and when it is completed. What is your position on the construction of the Canal and what actions would you take to complete the project?

It is estimated that up to one-fourth of the homes devastated in the flood could have been saved had the Comite River Diversion Canal been completed. Some residents of

East Baton Rouge and surrounding parishes have been paying an increased property tax to fund the project that has been tied up in political wrangling and deal-making.

I absolutely support completion of the canal and will work with all interests, including the Amite Basin Commission, our Congressional and legislative delegations, state and local officials from neighboring parishes.

9. The Mayor's office will have an appointment to the Planning and Zoning Commission. Please describe the type of person you would like to appoint.

I would appoint an individual with: 1) a working knowledge of local zoning ordinances in relation to the local history and the comprehensive plan; 2) experience with issues that affect the development and culture of our community; 3) a willingness to listen to the public without compromising local planning principles; and 3) the ability to be objective in making planning decisions.

10. The Flood of 2016 has caused major issues for the parish in a number of different areas. What do you see as the challenges that we will face and how do you plan to address those challenges?

The recovery effort will have been underway for almost five months when the new administration takes office in January. As Mayor-President, first and foremost I would work closely with Mayor Holden and his staff in the twenty-four days between Election Day and the inauguration to assure a smooth transition of the recovery efforts in place. I would work tirelessly with our Congressional and legislative delegations, and national, state and local leadership to assure that we have the resources we need to assure a complete recovery.

If not named prior to the inauguration, I would name a Local Disaster Recovery Manager (LDRM) in recognition of the guidelines of FEMA's new Natural Disaster Recovery Framework (NDRF). This person would serve as my point person on all facets of the recovery including federal and state funding, recovery planning and other issues. In addition, I would name a Recovery Board made up of a group of diverse and well-regarded community and business leaders. The board will act as community engagers for planning and community input. It will provide government with feedback on the recovery and function. The board will remain in place as issues of resilience are discovered and need to be addressed.

11. The school system has a major impact on the well-being of the economy of the Parish. What roles do you see for the Mayor as it relates to the school system?

As an active Realtor, I have a keen awareness of the crucial role that quality public schools play in the growth and sustainability of our community. I will offer my full assistance to the superintendent of our schools, the school board, the principals, faculty, parents and students in order to create excellence.

In my real estate business, I have worked closely with National Heritage Academies on site selection for their schools in Baton Rouge and Lafayette. This relationship has given me an insider's view of the role charter schools can play in providing services in inner city areas and newly developing communities experiencing rapid growth. Through this site selection process, I had the great fortune of observing the process of establishing these schools from the organization of the school's local governing body through the charter application process to the day when doors open for the first day of class.

As Mayor-President, I will push to expand the Early Head Start program which the Mayor's office does control. It has been shown that 43 percent of all students entering kindergarten in Baton Rouge are already behind the learning curve. Early Head Start is one of the key programs that can address this situation.

Finally, I would also work with groups like Boys and Girls Clubs and the Baton Rouge Youth Coalition to expand the services they offer to school-age children.

Will you support the creation of the St. George incorporation?

No. Unifying the parish is of critical importance to our future and is a cornerstone of my campaign. Any division impedes our ability to create a better city. It is critical that all our citizens sense that they have a say in our governance, its priorities and its vision of a better future.

Any additional comments:

Not at this time.



Candidate Name

Darryl Gissel