



GREATER BALTIMORE COMMITTEE

GBC's 2020 Baltimore City Election Coverage
City Council President Candidate Questionnaire

CANDIDATE: SHANNON SNEED (D)

The Greater Baltimore Committee has identified key policy priorities to drive discussion in the 2020 Citywide Elections. The priorities are:

1. Prioritize enhanced coordination across criminal justice agencies and support evidence-based crime reduction strategies to improve public safety.
2. Implement strategic and inclusive economic development strategies to attract and retain businesses and residents.
3. Exert solid, steady leadership to stabilize Baltimore City government and create a culture of integrity, transparency, and efficiency.
4. Support education and workforce development programs that prepare Baltimore residents for family-supporting jobs in high-growth industries and create programs or initiatives to attract talent to Baltimore City.
5. Utilize policy, funding, and intergovernmental coordination strategies to enhance Baltimore City's transportation and mobility infrastructure and operations.

Disclaimer: As a 501(c)4 organization, the Greater Baltimore Committee does not endorse candidates for public office. The information contained on this page and all engagement activities surrounding the election are for educational purposes only.

- 1. Prioritize enhanced coordination across criminal justice agencies and support evidence-based crime reduction strategies to improve public safety.**
 - What legislative actions, if any, would you propose as City Council President to reduce crime and improve public safety in the City?**

Reducing crime is going to take a holistic approach that combines holding our Police Commissioner, Mayor, and State's Attorney accountable for results, along with rethinking how we deploy our resources. Immediately, the following comes to mind:

First, we need to de-escalate or interrupt crime and violence before it occurs, and bring the small number of violent criminals (of which we know who most of them are) to justice. That involves bringing in other public health professionals, social workers, and community leaders to assist police in their efforts to curb crime. I am proposing adding community service aids to be part of this effort. These individuals will be deployed after officers are called to a situation (e.g., domestic dispute), and an assessment is made that there is no threat of harm to people or property. The Community Service Aid would be a trained individual with a background in social work who can not only de-escalate the

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situation but start to solve the root cause of the problem. The police officer can then leave and return to his/her beat, prepared to deal with other criminal activity.

Second, I would propose expanding capacity for non-police violence intervention. That includes expanding successful programs like Safe Streets and Roca, along with expanding the mobile crisis response team. We also need to be aware of the mental health of the officers and first responders who often see and deal with the darkest sides of society. Seeing daily violence would take a toll on almost anyone. If we are to have safe streets, we need to make sure the officers are healthy, not just physically but also mentally.

- **How would you allocate City budget dollars to crime reduction and public safety efforts? Please be specific regarding funding levels and programs compared to the current budget.**

The 2020 budget allocates 44% towards all public safety components. However, the stats show that despite increasing money for public safety, violent crime has not decreased. Furthermore, I believe that Baltimore City should meet Kirwan's recommendations. Education is the key to a better workforce, and less crime as more people can be employed. Additionally, I would like to see our public safety dollars spent more efficiently and utilize civilians instead of trained officers in administrative roles.

Before making a firm commitment, I would like to have a serious conversation with the commissioner and others in the law enforcement community. We need to truly understand what reallocations are necessary, what the consequences are of that decision, and what resources we can shift to ensure law enforcement has what they need to stop the bleeding on the streets.

2. Implement strategic and inclusive economic development strategies to attract and retain businesses and residents.

- **Do you have ideas or suggestions to reform the property tax structure in the City?**

As you know, Baltimore City has a high property tax rate. I would suggest that the City to have a share of the gambling revenue that will come from sports betting. Another is allowing the City to implement taxes on legalized marijuana. Those revenues could then possibly be used to provide property tax relief, barring that other vital needs are being met.

I am also in favor of studying the impact of switching from a flat income tax rate to a progressive rate. The Baltimore Sun editorial board also proposed this idea in their December 10th issue of the Sun.

- **What are your top three priorities or programs to grow Baltimore's tax base?**

1) Investing in our schools. Most parents will move to and invest in any community that has excellent public schools. Bethesda for example, has seen continued population growth from high wage families, in part, due to the quality of Walt Whitman and Bethesda-Chevy Chase High Schools. While Baltimore City has other issues that make this task more challenging, for families who want to raise their children in an urban environment, Baltimore could attract those people with high quality schools.

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2) *Stopping Crime. If our streets and schools are not safe, families will not stay or move here.*

3) *A "Youth Opportunity Guarantee". Baltimore's young people need access to meaningful job experience. Without those opportunities, too many young people turn into "squeegee kids," or even worse, they may turn to crime. The Youth Opportunity Guarantee would be simple: any student under the age of 18 who wants a job will get one. This would mean an honest income, job experience, and breaking the cycle of crime for many of the young people in the family.*

3. Exert solid, steady leadership to stabilize Baltimore City government and create a culture of integrity, transparency, and efficiency.

- **Baltimore City is at a crossroads and in need of strong, ethical leadership. Why are you the best candidate to lead the City Council into a new decade and chapter?**

I have always been honest, open, and transparent, which is why I have such a great working relationship with the majority of members on City Council. Furthermore, I have always had an open door for anyone who has a concern regarding the city, and for those who may disagree with on policy, I am upfront and I am always willing to have conversations to hear both sides. I also believe that I should not be in this position for life. I believe in term limits, and will not spend the rest of my life in this position, as accumulating power is not my goal. Providing stability for Baltimore City and then turning over the reins to the next generation is what I want my legacy to be.

- **What are three actions that you would take to improve transparency and efficiency in the City Council operations and across City government as a whole?**

1) *Increasing audits of city agencies from biannual to annual.*

2) *Adequately funding the ethics board and give it teeth.*

3) *Expand City Council's oversight of critical agencies and performance measures such as 911 response time or how the City is dealing with our opioid problem and other public health issues.*

- **How would you structure the Council under your leadership to carry out the roles and responsibilities of the City Council most effectively and efficiently?**

Councilmembers are better legislatures when they have access to research that will help shape their bills. I would look to have a legislative reference similar to what is available to lawmakers in Annapolis. Council members would have access to the council lawyer as well as the fiscal analyst.

And I would look at combining committees, as many of the committees are redundant and overlap with each other.

- **Several charter amendments have been proposed and are pending legislative review and approval.**

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- **What is your position on the composition and function of the Board of Estimates?**

I don't believe that anyone thinks that the current structure of the Board of Estimates has served the people of Baltimore well recently. I would propose reducing the Board of Estimates to a three-person board. It would consist of one appointment each by the Mayor, City Council President, and Comptroller; all would have expertise or experience in dealing with contracts and finances and vote to recommend all actions. The Board of Estimates' recommendations on financial matters would then be given to City Council at-large for final approval via public vote. This will help remove potential conflicts with elected officials and increase transparency in the process.

- **What is your position on granting the City Council with the authority to increase or move appropriations in budget category?**

I believe this is appropriate. The councilmembers have a big picture scope of their districts and can collaborate as leaders on the best decision.

4. Support education and workforce development programs that prepare Baltimore residents for family-supporting jobs in high-growth industries and create programs or initiatives to attract talent to Baltimore City.

- **Under the recommendations of the Kirwan Commission, Baltimore City stands to receive an additional \$500 million annually in State education aid by Fiscal 2030. In order to receive this additional funding, Baltimore City must increase its investment as well, by \$330 million annually by Fiscal 2030. According to Maryland Department of Legislative Services figures, Baltimore City currently spends less than 15% of its budget on education compared to a statewide average of 36%. What do you propose the City should do to meet the increased funding obligations? Please be specific in identifying areas or agencies that will see reduced appropriations as well as revenues that may be increased.**

I am in favor of increasing revenue via sports betting revenue and legalized marijuana. Additionally, the City must take stock of our use of tax credits. We must also seriously consider shifting how we pay for solid waste pick up and disposal from our property taxes to a pay-as-you-throw utility. I am also in favor of modernizing our city agencies. However, another option can just start with an annual audit of our agencies to ensure we're reallocating resources responsibly and adequately. Paying for Kirwin will require hard choices, however, we need to make smart decisions, not just the easy ones.

- **Currently, 0.2% of the City's budget is dedicated to workforce development. What is your position on increased funding for workforce training and adult education programs to reduce unemployment and adequately prepare City residents for jobs in high-demand industries?**

I am in favor of increased funding; under the assumption our crime is under control and our schools are funded at the level Kirwan recommends. Once we tackle the above, the city needs one coordinated system by which citizens can access employment services, training, and programs. I think it would be helpful if EARN funds went through one central governmental entity before being distributed to non-

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profits. The Office of Employment Development (MOED) should be providing assistance with barriers to employment. Citizens needs better communication of the services, opportunities, and options available to them for employment assistance.

5. Utilize policy, funding, and intergovernmental coordination strategies to enhance Baltimore City's transportation and mobility infrastructure and operations.

- **What is your position on transportation policy and funding in the City? What, if any, policy priorities do you have regarding transportation and mobility?**

It is antiquated. Far too many of my constituents have to rely on a bus system that is not on time if the bus shows up at all. Many young professionals prefer cities that have robust transportation options that do not involve the use of a personal car, and many companies are looking to locate in regions that can support their employees' wishes.

I agree with the GBC's position that the MTA needs to reduce the backlog of repairs, having a regional transportation model, and most importantly finding ways to fund transit options to where jobs are so that any Baltimore City resident can get to work anywhere in the City.

- **Do you support enhanced investment in transportation infrastructure, including that for pedestrians, bicycles, and scooters?**

Yes.

- **Recently, the City Council created a Transportation Committee of the City Council. Do you support the continuation of this Committee?**

Yes.