



GREATER BALTIMORE COMMITTEE

GBC's 2020 Baltimore City Election Coverage Mayoral Candidate Questionnaire

CANDIDATE: SHEILA DIXON (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 are three actions that you would take in your first year to improve public safety?

I believe that to address public safety in our communities, it must require a holistic approach.

First, we must go after the most violent offenders. Approximately one-third or less of homicides and other violent crimes go unsolved each year in the City of Baltimore. This sends a clear message to criminals that they will not be held accountable for their actions. For that reason, I will establish an analysis and apprehension program within the homicide unit that will be responsible for supporting investigators by tracking and correlating information on murder cases. This effort will be supported through a partnership with the Federal Bureau of

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Investigation to make sure that we have database connectivity to utilize their ViCAP program which provides real time information cases.

Secondly, we must reinstitute the Criminal Coordinating Council that was instrumental during my administration to convene all of the public safety entities to assess our effectiveness, strengths, and weakness. That cross-communication really outlined each person's buy-in to making sure that all of our citizens were safe. We were able to hold each other accountable and strategize together to devise a multi-agency approach to combating not only violent crime, but quality of life crimes as well.

My third action would be to work to implement stronger community policing practices within our neighborhoods. We have to have officers in our neighborhoods who know the neighborhoods that they are patrolling. This begins with our recruitment processes-- we must recruit young people in our schools who have an interest in serving their community through law enforcement. Having officers who are from the communities that they serve provide a contextual approach to policing which is invaluable to addressing the unique safety needs of our various neighborhoods.

- As Mayor, what steps would you take to improve coordination across federal, state, and local criminal justice agencies and with the Judiciary?

As Mayor, the first thing that I would do, as I mentioned previously, is reinstitute the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council that was disbanded after my administration. As Mayor, I helped coordinate the monthly meetings of the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, which is the nuts and bolts of Baltimore's criminal justice system. This consortium of political leaders, judges, law enforcement officials, as well as city and state agencies were tasked with reducing crime and managing the day-to-day operations to include, elements of our court system, surrounding detention facilities and diversion and treatment programs. It included representatives from the Department of Parole and Probation, the State's Attorneys' Office, the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice, the Department of Juvenile Services, the Department of Corrections, Dept. of Health and Mental Hygiene, the Public Defender's Office, the Circuit Court Clerk and other local leaders. While the CJCC was stripped of its funding in 2017 under the past administration, as Mayor, I will commit to reviving those efforts. This will be accomplished through coordination with the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice, ensuring that these members, along with community and business leaders, are brought together monthly to study the juvenile and criminal justice systems of Baltimore City to identify any deficiencies that may exist and formulate policies and procedures to help improve our system.

- What are your plans to address "squeegee kids" and panhandlers in City intersections?

It is important to assess the needs of these individuals to determine the root cause of why they are on the intersections in the first place. While most of them are youth, there are some that are adult age that may have needs that are slightly different. As a private citizen, I often have dialogue with individuals that I see on the corner and I simply ask them what it will take for them to get off the corner. As Mayor, I will take the same approach. We will assess their needs and plug them in to the services that they need to provide for themselves and/or their families. Community liaisons will be deployed and purposed with the tasks of talking to these individuals to see what resources that they

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need. We will be committed to providing the wrap-around services including mental health services, job training programs, shelter/affordable housing options, etc. in order to reintegrate them successfully into their community.

2. Implement strategic and inclusive economic development strategies to attract and retain businesses and residents.
 - What strategies or programs would you put into place to encourage businesses and residents to move to Baltimore City?

Over the past few years, our population has steadily declined from over 1 million residents to just over 600,000. We are losing residents to the surrounding counties due to the sharp rise in crime, and the decline in the quality of our schools. We have to stabilize our population by first providing the basic city services that every resident can appreciate such as safer and cleaner streets. We have to use tools such as TIFs and PLAs in responsible ways to replenish our communities in ways that work for the citizens as well as attracts businesses to our city.

- What strategies or programs would you put into place to encourage existing businesses and residents to stay and expand in Baltimore City?

We must support and retain businesses that reflect our communities. I will remove barriers for minority and small business development By first merging the Minority and Women's Business Opportunity Office and the Mayor's Office of Minority and Women business development to better support minority businesses and connect them to procurement opportunities. I would also expand access to city contracts – making city process and contracts more transparent and accessible. Included in this, I would establish an independent review of bids and greater due process. I would also Increase opportunities with the Housing Authority by bringing that bidding process under the Board of Estimates. I would also work to make the process equitable by require all firms with city contracts of \$5million or more to report on their M/WBE participation.

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

Given that our current property tax rate of \$2.248 per \$100 of assessed property is the highest in the state, and nearly double of surrounding jurisdictions, we have to be strategic and aggressive at offering our citizens some much needed financial relief while also remaining fiscally prudent and maintaining our AAA bond rating. Knowing that our property tax revenue accounts for nearly a 1/3 of our nearly \$3 billion annual budget, almost a billion dollars, we would need a significant amount of revenue if we offer up any kind of significant relief to the citizens by way of tax cuts. Now dependent on how existing tax credits are treated once entering office, I would lobby the Governor and the Maryland General Assembly to offer up a Property Tax Assistance Initiative that would call on the state to lend the city enough money to lower our rate for homeowners closer to the \$1.10 rate of Baltimore County, or roughly half of the current rate homeowners are paying for one adjustment period, giving us the necessary revenue to make up for this significant tax break but putting us more in line with surrounding counties, and thereby making us more attractive as a city overall to citizens looking to move into the city, as well as Fortune 500 companies that currently don't exist in Baltimore. However, the priority should be stabilizing and increasing our population, in turn, having a steady increase in revenue without raising taxes.

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

One would be to offer up a significant reduction in their property tax as previously proposed, while also offering small business owners and local entrepreneurs tax incentives and breaks the likes of what we have done for larger corporations with TIFs and PILOTs, to attract them to the city. We also know that we have to work on public safety in order to attract people to move into or stay in the city. Addressing issues with public safety and education will spill over into growing our tax base. Many prospective residents see this as a deterrent, so improvements in these key areas will likely attract and retain more residents, therefore growing the tax base over time.

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 into a new decade and chapter?

As former Mayor, I have a track record of accomplishments and a vision and detailed plan for Baltimore's future. The Mayor's number one job is to make Baltimore City safer for everyone. That was true in 2007, when I drove the murder rate down to the lowest level in 30 years, and it's more urgent today. By targeting our most violent offenders, holding our police and law enforcement community to the highest standards and accountability, involving all of our city and state agencies in a comprehensive approach to safer neighborhoods, and working with community partners, we will restore faith and confidence in Baltimore.

As Mayor, I reduced crime rate to a 30 year low, supported the right for hotel workers to organize; expanded investment in community schools, implemented a 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness, banned indoor smoking, started single stream recycling, launched the Charm City Circulator, created the Sustainability Commission, paved more streets and took on big banks that were peddling subprime loans.

I have proven to be an effective leader of the city. I plan to take my experience as well as my new ideas to City Hall to lead Baltimore through this complicated time, and to build systems that will help to build the city up for years to come.

- What are three actions that you would take to improve transparency and efficiency in City government?

Regular audits for city agencies are a great first step in identifying and rectifying inefficiencies. These audits will be used to first assess the functions of the agencies and get a good sense of what isn't working as well as those parts that are effective. I also would like feedback from the city employees who do the work every day to get first-hand knowledge of how these agencies function and what resources we could employ to make them better.

I will also lean into legislation that mandates and expands transparency in city government. I would also explore ways to increase transparency by assessing and increasing the information that we put on our online portals and the items that we open up for public comment. It is important that the citizens hold us accountable for the ways in which tax money is managed and distributed throughout the city. I

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also support using tools such as the Inspector General to investigate any evidence of misappropriation or abuse of any city-government related entity.

A culture of customer service must be a core part of City business operations and driven from the top down. There is no reason we should expect or accept anything less from city government. Baltimore City government is a service delivery business competing for residents and employers. Providing outstanding customer service along with increased transparency is as important as paving roads and picking up the trash.

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

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

I would certainly support a different approach to how business is done at the Board of Estimates. While I may not necessarily support the elimination of the two mayoral appointees without possibly replacing them with a member of the City Council or someone from the business community or a member of the GBC, I do support overhauling the current system where the Mayor, Comptroller, Council President, Head of DPW and City Solicitor sit on this board making financial decisions for the entire city.

- Do you think that the Baltimore City Charter should require a Chief Administrative Officer? Please explain your answer.

The duties and responsibilities of an effective Mayor are far reaching. I hired extremely smart and talented individuals to serve in these roles that helped move our city forward efficiently and effectively. In the presence of a well-run administration, I would like to more closely assess the necessity of a CAO. I would prioritize efficiency and effectiveness over added oversight and positions.

- How would you structure your Administration (ie, CAO, Deputy Mayors, Chief of Staff, etc.) to provide the most efficient delivery of City services?

I would utilize the system of the Mayor having a Chief of Staff and a limited amount of Deputy Mayors overseeing departments and agencies, responsible for the overall vision and direction of the agencies in which they oversee. We have to return to a system of government that works for the interests of the citizens, and as Mayor I made sure that those who served in these roles understood their reach, and that they all shared the vision that we had for the citizens of Baltimore.

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

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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 is your plan to meet the increased obligation of Baltimore City? Please be specific in identifying areas or agencies that will see reduced appropriations as well as revenues that may be increased.

In the current infrastructure, the \$300 million local cost of Kirwan is unaffordable. That is not acceptable. We must strategize and prioritize a means to invest in our education system by exploring other ways to fund Kirwan. I do favor an increase in local funding, which will require a corresponding strategy to reduce expenses and grow revenues, but not at the \$300 million by 2030. We will have to go a step further. Currently, our reality is that Baltimore City is the only jurisdiction in the state that spends more on public safety - \$400 million – than on education – \$230 million. As Mayor, we will bring down crime and public safety costs, by efficiently reducing overtime and recruiting full cadet classes.

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

Workforce training should start in schools. We have to restore programs that prepare our youth for the workforce as early as middle school. We will make historic investment in our City's human capital. We will double workforce funding to serve residents with and without high school degrees, providing grants on a competitive basis to workforce providers that have a proven track record of connecting underemployed adults, youth and returning citizens with the skills they need to get good-paying jobs. We will prepare our children for the workforce, equipping them with the skills to start strong.

- What role should the City play in attracting and retaining top talent to fill in-demand jobs in high-growth industry sectors?

The unique thing about the Greater Baltimore Area is that we are rich with colleges and universities. There are 17 colleges, universities and hospitals in Baltimore City – a source of purchasing power, employment, innovation, and investment unrivaled anywhere in Maryland. Like Johns Hopkins, which recently launched HopkinsLocal, many Baltimore anchor institutions are considering spending and identifying opportunities to increase local purchasing and hiring. We will:

o Support and leverage the investments that universities like Morgan, Coppin, Hopkins, and the others are making in the neighborhoods around their campuses, and hold them accountable to do so.

o Build on the entrepreneurship coming out of our universities by creating an innovation district with incentives to create business incubators.

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

- What are three things you would do to improve transportation and mobility in the City?

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As Mayor, I created the Charm City Circulator system. I would work to assess this system to find out ways to increase access to key places such as fresh food supermarkets to combat some of the food deserts that are in the city. I would also promote the use of energy efficient modes of transportation such as expanding bike lanes in some areas, and reinstitute "Operation Orange Cone" which helped to rebuild our roadways which yielded us a record number of miles of repaved roads during my administration.

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

I am a bicyclist myself, and I encourage anyone I meet to bike with me! I support alternative modes of transportation because it not only helps to provide lighter traffic patterns, but it leads to a greener and healthier city. Less cars on the roads decreases our carbon footprint which was a priority in my last administration, and will be in my next one. Efficient public transportation will also serve as a means of decreasing the number of cars on the street, and providing another viable mode of navigating the city. However, I am mindful that if we want to urge citizens to walk or cycle, we have to do our part to make the city safer. I am aware of the increased risks of walking and cycling through the city at night, and strongly believe that this topic should be assessed alongside conversations about alternative transportation options.

- What is your position on the creation of a regional transit authority to oversee the transit network?

As with any oversight in government, you would want to assess the parameters and level of the decision making granted to the authority. I see the value in having an entity working to create long-term infrastructure and goals for the transit network as we implement our plans to grow as a city. I would also like to empower the transit network to be effective in their given capacities, and work together with the relevant agencies to carry out all of its functions.