



# GREATER BALTIMORE COMMITTEE

## GBC's 2020 Baltimore City Election Coverage Mayoral Candidate Questionnaire

### **CANDIDATE: RIKKI VAUGHN (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?

*1.) Invest in education spending and maximize our resources to engage the youth of the City in a positive and proactive manner.*

*2.) Bolster economic development initiatives, in the most deprived communities, to provide credible opportunities to not just work, but for people to invest in a lifestyle of promise.*

*3.) We want law enforcement to be accountable, but we also want community members to be engaged with tackling crime and creating safer neighborhoods across the City. We will encourage every*

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*resident, business, and church to install security cameras on their property with reimbursement from the City.*

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

*We currently have a Criminal Justice Coordinating Council that includes all the stakeholders mentioned above. We need to continue to engage with them, on a routine and consistent basis, to ensure coordination, policies, and operations are being carried out in the most successful and productive manner - not just for the agencies but for the City as well.*

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

*In a capitalist society, we should encourage entrepreneurship. However, entrepreneurship shouldn't be prioritized over education. The squeegee kids need to be actively engaged in the classroom. Also, we will partner with local businesses to help provide sustainable job opportunities that keeps all citizens safe. Investing in greater economic initiatives is absolutely imperative to give all Citizens an opportunity to thrive and be successful.*

### 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?

*We need to provide tax incentives to businesses and residents. Greater invest in home-ownership and property buying programs already in place within the City. Businesses already in the City should be encouraged to expand throughout the City, and not cluster development opportunities in select districts. We need equity in all of our communities.*

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

*We need to cut regulations to halt expansion. Provide greater support to the private sector through tax credits and incentives. Also, we need to ensure businesses that the City will partner with them to protect their property and businesses as they expand. Rather than policing the City, we need improved security measures that keep the citizen and the business in mind - to protect both.*

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

*We need to be competitive. Baltimore City has the highest property tax rate in the State of Maryland, and is currently seeing an exodus in City population. We need to lower the rates to encourage homeownership, and provide more credits to communities that build neighborhood associations to oversee their communities.*

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

1.) Encourage expansion of businesses currently in the City.

2.) Court businesses to come back into the City with lower rates and greater tax incentives.

3.) Partner with private sector and BCPS and Baltimore City Community College to provide sustainable job opportunities to our youth and those entering society.

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?

*Before becoming a successful businessman, I struggled financially and got in trouble a couple of times with the law. I believe my story resonates with City. Where we are now does not dictate where we are going. As I pulled my life together, I want to encourage Baltimore that the resources and tools are here and available.*

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

*The federal government has the Federal Register, which essentially details daily actions within the government. I will seek to establish something similar that keeps the citizens informed of daily operations and decisions. Furthermore, the Mayor should have routine town halls in all districts to ensure effective transparency and communication.*

- 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?

*The Board of Estimates needs to include a community member and business leader in the community. We need to ensure politics do not define our policy.*

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

*I think the City simply needs real leadership. A Chief Administrative Officer can be an asset, but also adds to an already politically cloudy environment in City Hall.*

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

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*Before structuring my administration, it is important for me to see exactly how City Hall operates internally. Once I am in the position of Mayor, I will take a very deliberate approach to building my administration that best ensures efficiency, and does not disrupt crucial services being delivered to the citizens.*

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 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.

*We invest greatly in public safety. In fact, it is our greatest investment. In my opinion, this tactic puts the horse behind the wagon. Cutting public safety spending and increasing education investment is a true win for the City. Public safety is important, but should not take precedent over education. As we invest more into the citizens, crime will go down.*

- 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?

*We need greater spending, but also greater partnership with our infrastructure. Baltimore City Community College can be an asset in workforce development initiatives, as well as working with schools to partner with businesses for internships and apprenticeships. Lastly, we need to take re-entry programs more seriously in the City to truly combat crime, poverty, and unemployment.*

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

*we need to make sure the City is clean, safe, accommodating, and has equal representation among businesses in those communities across the City. Also, we need to reduce the property tax to encourage more homeowners. Lastly, my administration will help pay the student loans for students going to college in the City, if they live and work in Baltimore for at least 6 years after graduating.*

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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?

*1.) DC has completely updated its public transportation system with extending light rail services, increased population access to communities, and incentives for citizens to use public transportation. I want to mirror a system as such.*

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

*Yes*

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

*We do not need more political bodies in Baltimore. We have the resources already. Lets allocate and distribute in a more efficient manner, with what we already have.*