

TATE ANSWERS THE TOUGH QUESTIONS
Original Source: Metro Times Detroit Questionnaire

1. About 50 percent of the city’s \$1.8 billion general fund budget is spent on salaries and benefits. Is there a way to address an accumulated deficit of at least \$300 million and avoid the risk of insolvency without significantly reducing those worker costs? If not, by what percentage overall do you think they should be cut?

After reviewing the general fund budget (located on the City of Detroit’s website), it is clear that additional revenue generating ideas must be developed for Detroit or insolvency is inevitable. We simply need more money coming in. I believe that the reduction of salaries and benefits must be the last resort in addressing our budget deficit. There are other cost cutting and savings measures that should be identified before that takes place. I also believe that forensic audit is necessary for several city departments in order to fully understand where taxpayer dollars have and is being misappropriated and/or stolen.

With that said, I would be more in favor of right-sizing city staffing through the salary concessions and furlough days than disrupting workers benefits or layoffs. Any recommended cuts that I propose will be fair to the workers and have the least negative impact on our community.

2. Do you have any other ideas as to how the city can either significantly cuts costs or raise revenue?

Revenue generation will be one of my highest priorities while in office. I will execute this priority through: 1) better regulation of the contract process, 2) leasing naming rights of some of our public properties and 3) implementing an aggressive “Buy Detroit” campaign.

If elected to City Council, my office will immediately explore the feasibility of naming rights. This idea has been done successfully in other cities and will allow us to potentially generate millions of dollars by working with corporations to sponsor entities like Belle Isle or the People Mover. This process will also allow Detroit to retain ownership while generating dollars that can potentially improve city services. The dollars that the city receives in exchange for the naming rights provision will not be at the expense of worker’s jobs, benefits and will not have a disrupt city services. The city of Detroit would have the right to refuse any name that doesn’t reflect the proper image of Detroit.

One of my biggest strengths as a City Council member **will be** my innate understanding that “no man is an island.” Council members must follow best practices when approaching the issue of revenue generation and work with organizations that seek to

improve the quality of life through creating a culture of commerce for the city. Groups like the Independent Retailers Association, CEM Business Association on East Warren Avenue and the Jefferson East Business Association have aggressively opened businesses and mobilized citizens to improve the business climate within the city's borders. This improves the quality of life and convinces potential buyers/renters/businesses to take another look at their particular communities. This makes the neighborhoods more "livable" by making services and goods more accessible. It also encourages others to invest in the area via home purchase or business re-location, thus generating tax revenue for the city.

The city can also significantly reduce costs and raise revenue by strictly enforcing codes designed to reduce blight and abate environmental hazards. The City of Detroit has borne the costs of the demolition of abandoned structures for too long. This burden should rightfully be transferred to the owners of those dilapidated properties, a step that would create an immediate significant savings while eliminating unsafe and potentially hazardous buildings.

3. Would you support changing Detroit's city charter to allow district elections for some or all council members?

The Charter Commission will play a crucial role in making certain that the Detroit City Council is granted adequate and appropriate authority. If executed properly, council government by district introduces a level of accountability that the City Council has not experienced previously. City Council members elected by district will no longer have the luxury of ignoring any segment of the community as some council members have done in the past. I support City Council by Districts within the context of a revised City Charter that provides adequate and appropriate powers of accountability for City Council members. The City Charter now provides for the Mayor to have sole control over departments. While I do support an executive strong form of government, the current system makes the task of addressing city services too difficult for members of City Council.

I support amending the city charter to allow a hybrid system that provides governance by district for a determined number of council members and a determined number of council members to serve at large.

4. The Detroit International Bridge Co. is attempting to purchase a section of Riverside Park so that it can build a new span adjacent to the Ambassador Bridge. At the same time, a publicly owned bridge is being planned for the Delray area. Explain your support for or objection to each plan.

Both projects have their worth. However, I am more prone at this time to lend my support to the Delray project because it is publicly owned. Despite the several lawsuits involving the bridge situation, I believe that the final project must go forward in a manner that is inclusive of the citizen's concerns in the surrounding communities.

5. The City Council has twice voted to send the city's trash to landfills instead of the incinerator, and is exploring its legal options in an attempt to make that happen. The administration, meanwhile, is considering purchasing at least a share of the facility, and possibly all of it. As a council member, would you support or oppose continued use of the incinerator?

I take environmental stewardship very seriously, particularly as it has been neglected for so many years in Detroit. There have been several studies that suggest the health of those living near the incinerator have suffered as a result of their proximity. If the incinerator can't be made safe and useful, we must look at alternatives, including closure.

I do need additional detailed information to make a final decision to determine if closing the facility would create more of a financial burden for the city of Detroit as a result of a lawsuit. I would also like to see a feasibility study on the pros and cons of modifying the incinerator to make it energy producing and environmentally responsible. If this can be done, it will prove to be a superior alternative to landfills, which are known hazards. While utilizing landfills allows organic waste to decompose, they also bring about environmental issues. Landfills are responsible for about one-third of all methane emissions in the United States.

6. Given the city's fiscal crisis, what, if anything, would you do as a council member to help support the arts and culture in the city?

Michigan as a whole is facing a crisis in the Arts and Culture sector. The recent loss in funding majorly impacts the opportunity for performers and other members of the Creative Economy to make a living. It is vitally important to maintain a vibrant arts and culture sector because of the correlation between arts and culture and a cities' ability to attract young people and create vibrant communities. Detroit needs to be appealing to young people if we want to continue to grow. The best thing I can do is develop a Taskforce, in collaboration with the Mayor's Office and the State, which consists of mainstream cultural entities as well as the "underground" artist community. This task force will help us identify solutions that lead to alternative forms of funding and promotion. I think the most effective place to start is to work directly with those in the arts and culture sector.

7. What have you done personally or professionally to help advance civil rights, regional cooperation, race relations, poverty reduction, pro-environmental efforts, or any other similarly significant cause?

While working at the Detroit Police Department, I was in charge of law enforcement communications for several multi-jurisdictional operations, including 2006's Super Bowl. Despite all law enforcement agencies having the same goals; reducing crime, apprehending criminals and solving crime, many of them are very territorial in their operations. I worked hard to build bridges that had long been destroyed as a result of distrust and disrespect. I understood that the purpose of any initiative was that we maintain our common goals (mentioned above) but that we also work collectively so that all entities are able to report back to their respective communities how their tax dollars were being properly utilized

8. As a council member, what could you do to help Detroit capitalize on the burgeoning green economy?

I believe that the farmable areas in Detroit should become food producing cooperatives. Vast areas are virtual prairies that have had many years to establish a healthy soil ecosystem. The city proper is a food desert; we do not produce food to a degree necessary to sustain the population.

This would return the land to use, provide employment, and teach valuable skills to residents who need them most. I think that integrating farmlands into urban areas will be the wave of the future, and Detroit is poised to lead that movement.

9. What innovative ideas do you have in regard to dealing with the massive amounts of vacant and abandoned property in Detroit?

Bill, and collect, from the owners of the properties for their demolition. Convert the land into a variety of agribusinesses.

Even areas that have virtually reverted to their pre-industrial states can benefit from programs such as the USDA's Farmable Wetlands Programs. Open green space is needed for the health of the planet and its inhabitants, including us.

10. Name one of your favorite movies about politics? What is it about this movie that made an impression?

Tie “Wag the Dog” and “Last King of Scotland”.

Wag provided a comical yet very believable display of how far some people in power are willing to go to cover up their misdeeds.

Scotland really hit home the idea why it is important to maintain your personal dignity and integrity even when it seems that everyone around you appears to have fallen prey to the consumption and corruption of power.

11. What book dealing with politics or government — either fiction or nonfiction — would you recommend others read? Why?

I recommend Soul on Ice. It is a book of memoirs by Eldrige Cleaver, an imprisoned man who seems to be conflicted by his past transgressions while trying to discover his racial identity in America. He knows what his deeds were, but at times seems to justify his actions based on the negative influences that he absorbed in his past environment. Though it was published in the 1970’s, this kind of raw insight still rings true today as an example of how many of our nation’s young men fail to deal with their emotional pain and fear.

12. What piece of music (other than Marvin Gaye’s “What’s Going On,”) has affected you in a political, moral or social sense? Please explain why.

“These Three Words” by Stevie Wonder. There was a moment in the movie “Jungle Fever” when a character began walking into her home after a magnificent evening and one of the most beautiful melodies began playing in the foreground. The song was about love and making sure that the people you care about know that you care for them... today. As soon as the female character opened the door, her father (whom she absolutely adored) began to beat her.

That scene has always stuck in my mind. It made me understand that even though you may be on the proverbial “cloud nine”, you must be aware that there are others who will be more than happy to bring you down and harm you. But the most important thing is to not let the fear of someone else’s potential attack impede your pursuit of happiness and well being.

13. What question should have been included in this, but wasn't? And what would your answer to that question be?

Some people have questioned my role in the former administration. My role was communicator. I have a degree in Radio/TV/Film from Wayne State University. I earned an Emmy for my behind the scenes work at WXYZ-TV following graduation (I worked there for six years). I was offered my position with the city of Detroit based on my background and experience, not any "Friends and Family" plan. While at the Detroit Police Department (DPD), I was the commanding officer of the Office of Public Information. My job was to pass on the information that was provided to me. I would do all that I could to confirm the accuracy of that information and many times challenged details until I became comfortable with what I was presenting to the public. That was very important to me because while I served as the spokesperson for the DPD, it was my reputation on the line and unfortunately, I found out during my 5 years in that position that there were some who didn't necessarily have my best interest at heart when they provided me erroneous information. I have had some people ask why I didn't quit. I didn't quit my job because I love being a public servant. When I provided information regarding a crime, I was speaking on behalf of those who couldn't speak for themselves; the victims. I don't come from a family that leaves their challenges. We face them head on and I knew that with all the negative issues that were happening in the city with our public officials, I felt that it was important that the residents had someone who they could say represent them with professionalism, integrity and compassion.