

Cincinnati City Council Candidate Survey 2011

Name: Charlie Winburn

1. In your view, what is the role of Cincinnati City Council?

Properly using public policy in order to manage necessary public services, insure public safety, and create an atmosphere where the free market economy can flourish through private industry.

2. Please list 3-5 specific qualifications you possess that make you the best candidate for Cincinnati City Council.

- 1. Progressive career reflecting comprehensive experience in public service policy-making; tenure encompasses Ohio Civil Rights Commission, several years as an elected City Council Member and nineteen years in various consulting, administrative/management positions in public and non-profit organizations.*
- 2. Goal directed innovative thinker with proven success initiating long/short term strategic planning and policy direction. Excellent creative facilitator exhibiting visionary leadership and effective problem solving abilities, interpersonal, analytical, communication, motivation, team building, liaison and authentic leadership qualifications.*
- 3. Recently completed the Authentic Leadership Development Program at Harvard Business School.*

3. What do you consider the top three issues on which Council needs to focus in the coming term and into the future?

- 1. Job creation*
- 2. Business retention/recruitment*
- 3. Small business development*

4. As a result of the economic downturn, the City of Cincinnati has experienced significant declines in tax revenues for the last several years. Additionally, proposed cuts from state government and the prospect of spending reductions in Washington, D.C. mean projections are likely to continue to show lower revenues. What will you do as a City Councilmember to bring City expenses and City revenues into balance?

- 1. As Chair of the Job Creation Committee, I am aggressively working to bring more business to and keep more businesses in the City. Additionally, I am working to streamline the residential and commercial construction and development processes. Both of these will lead to and increase personal and corporate earnings income taxes.*

2. *I am leading an effort on Council to have the Auditor of State conduct Performance Audits on various city departments where efficiencies and savings are most likely to be found.*
3. *Due the significant loss in population, there are naturally fewer citizens who need public services. Therefore, I have proposed that the City Manager strategically monitor every staff vacancy with a view towards eliminating positions altogether that are contributing to a bloated city government.*

5. What role should Cincinnati City Council play in driving future business growth? Specifically, how would you propose the City retain and expand its existing businesses? Please detail any suggestions you might have on how this growth can be achieved.

City Council first needs to determine which are the biggest barriers to businesses staying in the city or relocating here. It should then work to remove those barriers and create incentives to stay or move to Cincinnati. Many of those incentives currently exist and the City should aggressively use these tools such as:

1. *Job Creation Tax Credits*
2. *Community Reinvestment Area property tax abatements*
3. *Property investment Reimbursements*
4. *Tax Increment Financing*
5. *New Market Tax Credits*

During my 20-month tenure on Council I have put together numerous meetings with business owners and city development departments in order to find every available opportunity and offer any incentive for businesses to relocate to Cincinnati. We should also be more creative and aggressive in acquisition, brownfield reclamation, redevelopment and preparation of sites where corporate campuses can quickly be built.

6. The casino project is expected to generate millions of dollars a year for the City of Cincinnati. How do you plan to use these funds?

Earlier this year, I joined 4 of my colleagues in passing a motion that directs the City Manager to enter into a long-term contract with the Port Authority for economic development in the region. The motion specified that 50% of the city's portion of the revenue from the casino would be directed for the Port's use in paying for a director and his/her economic development projects.

7. What do you believe is the role of the Port Authority?

Being part of an effort by Council to provide a significant increase in funding for the Port Authority from casino revenues, I believe the City of Cincinnati should rely more heavily on the Port for major oversight of economic development throughout the region.

8. **Cincinnati has long served as a regional hub for inland commerce. As a member of Council, what can you do to ensure Cincinnati remains a critical gateway for many of the nation's goods and commodities?**

The most significant thing the Council can do is to minimize the regulations and costly fees/taxes that would encourage businesses to look for another gateway for their goods and commodities.

9. **What role, if any, should Cincinnati City Council play in the development of Cincinnati public transportation? Do you support expanding the current transit system?**

Public transportation plays a significant role in getting people to work throughout the region. Care must be taken to insure that it is accessible and cost efficient for riders. I have opposed the Cincinnati streetcar project from the beginning because I don't believe that it is a good use of funds at a very high cost per mile. Nor do I believe that it will have the economic impact that supporters say it will, particularly along the scheduled route.

Instead, I have proposed a trolley system modeled after that being utilized in Cleveland. It is a much more economical means of public transportation that could be used along the same routes of the streetcar but would have the flexibility to be adjusted to meet rider demands. It would be expanded to reach many of the other major job centers across the region and have the ability to relieve some of the congestion being experienced by automobiles.

10. **New funding methods for major transportation projects are under consideration as the state and federal governments have slowly begun to remove themselves as the primary funding source. What will you do as a member of City Council to champion your transportation priorities? What transportation/infrastructure project is your top priority?**

See Q9

11. **In 2007, the City and Hamilton County began work on the Government Collaboration and Efficiency Project (GCEP), setting a path toward increased sharing of governmental services between local political jurisdictions within Hamilton County. With this initial work as a foundation, what do you propose as next steps or opportunities to collaborate or share governmental services?**

Any more commissions or studies only continue to delay the progress that can be made with consolidations. City Council and the City Administration should immediately identify those services which have the greatest overlap and redundancy with the County and then begin the work to combine them. I believe we have made this process far more difficult than it actually is.

- 12. The City's spending on contracts for minority and women owned business has been historically low. As a member of Council, what would you do to promote the utilization of minority and women owned businesses on city contracts?**

As the Chair of the Job Creation Committee, this particular issue is one of our top priorities. For the past 20 months, I have worked with what I believe are some of the brightest and best in the City to develop a small business job creation agenda that will provide a development center to assist MBEs, WBEs, and SBEs. The plan also provides for a team of consultants who will help small businesses secure more City contracts. I recently presented this proposal to Council and it will be discussed in committee once we return from recess.

- 13. The City of Cincinnati's budget gap is forcing City leaders to consider significant cuts or tax increases. What is your position on increasing the income tax, property tax rate, the utility franchise fee, and the taxation of stock options?**

Generally speaking, I believe that high taxes in Cincinnati is one of the reasons why people choose to not live or work in the city and why businesses choose to locate in other places. For the past 20 months, I have opposed every income and property tax increase that has come before Council and will continue to do so. I have also opposed the utility franchise fee though I voted in favor of putting aggregation on the ballot before the voters this November. I will also continue to oppose the taxation of stock options.

- 14. The City of Cincinnati's Environmental Justice (EJ) Ordinance was passed in 2009. However, the ordinance has yet to be implemented due to funding concerns. What is your position on the future of the EJ Ordinance?**

I think there are several reasons that Cincinnati is the only city in Ohio (and maybe in America) with its own environmental protection ordinance. It's certainly duplicative of our state and federal EPAs. As well, it creates a disincentive for businesses to locate in the city if they are going to have another layer of costly bureaucratic nonsense with which they will have to be burdened. I believe that the EJO should be defunded and all levels and repealed immediately.

- 15. Do you support competitive bidding for City services? If so, which City services?**

Some departmental services should be considered for competitive bidding. At this point, I am not sure which ones would be most cost efficient. To that end, I have led an effort for the Auditor of State to do performance audits on all city departments in order to find the efficiencies cost savings we need to help balance the general fund budget. Some of the recommendations will no doubt include competitive bidding or consolidation with other government entities and I am willing to look at all of them.

16. In your view, what has been the greatest success of the City Council in the past two years? What has been Council's greatest failure and how would you have done things differently?

Council's greatest success has been keeping police officers and fire fighters on the street in order to protect the safety and security of its citizens.

Council's greatest failure has been in its failure to make it easier for companies to stay in Cincinnati or move here. We have not simplified the costs and processes for residential and commercial developers to bring homeowners and businesses into the city. Finally, we have not fixed the small business enterprise program to grow jobs and create a level playing field for those who want to secure contracts with the City of Cincinnati.