

# SHIRLEY WASHINGTON

**1. Why are you running for mayor? Seven years ago, I was faced with a decision. As someone who has faith, worked in education and has spent most of my adult life in Pine Bluff, I noticed that our community was heading in the wrong direction. Because of my deep belief in our city, I made a choice that was completely new to me - I decided to run for public office.**

**Thanks to the support, and resilience of our community, as the Mayor of Pine Bluff, I have been able to lay a strong foundation for progress. While our city is still far from perfect, it is undeniably in a better state than when I first took office.**

**Once there were vacant and deteriorating buildings on Main Street, we now have a modern library and learning center that fits well into the 21st century, with a new elementary school next door. The Arts and Science Center has been expanded to include two newly renovated areas, the Arts Space and the Art Works. We have also established the best aquatic center in the state and renovated the Pine Bluff Community Center (Merrill Center).**

**In addition, we have secured \$32 million in federal funding for drainage improvements in our neighborhoods. Notably, new businesses like Underwater Seafood and Chick-fil-A have chosen to open their door here.**



**We have developed a home buyers assistance program and raised salaries for our first responders, helped teachers get Master's Degrees to improve education, as well as expanded after-school and summer youth work programs, and invested in new evidence-based strategies to keep people safe through the Group Violence Intervention Program (GVI).**

**There is so much that still needs to be done to build on this momentum. I believe I have the experience and vision to finish the job strong and build a Pine Bluff we can all be proud to call home.**

**2. What is your previous political experience? Prior to becoming the City's first Female African American Mayor, I dedicated 38 years of my life to working as a teacher and school leader within the Pine Bluff Schools. During this time, I served as President of the Pine Bluff Education Association, the Jefferson County Library Board, Arts & Science Board of Directors, and held many leadership positions within my church and other community organizations.**

**These invaluable experiences allowed me to witness the incredible potential and aspirations of the young individuals and their families in our city. It was a privilege to collaborate with a dedicated group of educators and community members who were committed to supporting our students in achieving their dreams.**

**I consistently encouraged my students to aim high and strive for greatness. I firmly believed that with hard work and teamwork, they had the ability to accomplish anything their future held.**

**My time in Pine Bluff schools served as a catalyst for my decision to run for Mayor. I am deeply passionate about ensuring that every young person and their families in our community have access to the necessary resources for success.**

**Just as I encouraged my students to think big, I strongly believe that the City of Pine Bluff should adopt this mindset as well. By working together, as we did within the walls of my classroom and school, we can tackle even the most challenging obstacles that lie ahead of us.**

**3. In what areas do you see the most problems and what is your suggestion to solve them? I firmly believe that the most effective approach to overcoming the challenges faced by Pine Bluff and fostering a safer and more prosperous city is by investing in our people and cultivating a community that instills pride in all its residents. We need to prioritize our youth and quality of life. To do this, we should continue investing in the Group Violence Intervention Program. The purpose of this program is to connect youth with jobs, mentors, and other social services that exist in the community, which can help them overcome situations that lead to violence. This is an evidence-based initiative that has reduced violence in other communities. The city has invested \$500,000 into the initiative, and we must continue to support it.**

**The city must also continue working with developers to bring more housing to Pine Bluff, as a lot of people need affordable homes to have a good quality of life. Right now, we are working with a developer who plans to build an affordable housing development on the Southeast School property, which the City acquired and cleared. We should continue to support this project with the incentives needed to complete the development. Additionally, we should continue to develop relationships with investors who will bring affordable housing throughout the community.**

**We are renovating the old First Ward School building to create a shelter for people who are homeless called the Opportunity House. There are a lot of people in Pine Bluff who don't have a place to live, and the purpose of this facility is to shelter them while also connecting them to opportunities they need to live stable, independent lives. We have secured an operator, and we should continue to support this shelter once it opens later this year. We should continue contacting businesses to recruit commercial and retail opportunities to Pine Bluff. Additionally, we should invest in upgrading our parks and road conditions.**

**Building our community means keeping up our momentum. Progress does not always come in a straight line. It can be messy. It can be contentious. It can create challenges that tempt us to lose hope. However, we must remain steadfast, Pine Bluff. Let us never lose faith in one another or in the potential of our community. We cannot afford to regress now, not after how far we have come and with so many important objectives on the horizon.**

**4. Accessing the recent performance of Go Forward Pine Bluff and the 2017 sales tax, would you support the return of the Go-Forward sponsored tax, support a different tax, or feel no new tax is needed for the progression of the city? Could you explain your answer?**

The voters have chosen not to renew Go Forward, and that should be respected. After witnessing the outcomes of both GFPB elections, I have come to realize the importance of unity in Pine Bluff. We must collaborate as a single entity to devise a comprehensive strategy that promotes the most promising ideas for enhancing and investing in our city. Once the election concludes, I will gather representatives of all ages and backgrounds to participate in a planning process to determine the investments they want to see in their neighborhoods. If it is determined that future revenue initiatives are needed, they should be managed exclusively by the mayor and city council.

5. What do you plan to accomplish in your first 30 days? One of my main priorities will be to identify a diverse group of stakeholders from throughout the community to identify key projects and investments that need to be made in our neighborhoods and infrastructure and develop the best path to funding those major projects.

6. What downward trend in your city's last five years are you most proud of? What trend is most worrisome? I take great pride in the progress we have achieved together in Pine Bluff. Our community has become stronger over the past seven years, evident in the completion of the Main Street Streetscape and the establishment of key facilities such as the Pine Bluff Aquatics Center, Community Center, library, and community garden. The opening of the casino has not only created hundreds of job opportunities but has also paved the way for the arrival of new businesses like Chick-fil-A.

However, amidst these positive developments, I am deeply concerned about the persisting violence within our community, particularly among our young population. As both a parent and an educator, this issue holds a personal significance for me. I am committed to taking any necessary measures to ensure the safety of our community. It is imperative that we increase our investments in programs that provide the people of Pine Bluff with opportunities for growth and success.

7. Given the existing budget constraints and the financial situation that the city is in, how would you stretch taxpayer's dollars and still execute the basic needs of the city? In my role as Mayor, I have dedicated myself to maximizing the potential of our city's resources. Collaborating with the casino, I successfully established a new source of revenue that benefits our community. Additionally, I have spearheaded the creation and expansion of a city grant writing department, which has been instrumental in securing millions of dollars in funding from philanthropic organizations, state programs, and federal initiatives and will continue to generate funds by seeking matching grant opportunities. We will continue to apply for state funding such as the ARDOT State Street Aid Funding where we recently received \$300,000 to fund the street overlay project.

Moving forward, I am committed to identifying further opportunities for accessing resources that will serve the needs of our citizens. My goal is to build partnerships with organizations that will embrace our vision and make financial contributions to our projects much like the \$1 million donations to the completion of the 601 Main Project and continue leveraging these resources to benefit our community and enhance the quality of life for all residents.

8. What plans do you have in place for effective policing and crime prevention? How do you plan to secure funding for the needs of public safety? In my role as Mayor, I have prioritized the improvement of our police and fire departments by implementing salary increases for our first responders. This measure is aimed at enhancing our departments' competitiveness, ultimately leading to a stronger capacity to combat crime and protect our residents.

Additionally, we have taken the necessary steps to secure funding for the implementation of the Group Violence Intervention (GVI) program. To ensure its successful execution, I intend to foster collaboration among various entities, including the police department, juvenile court, county sheriff's office, prosecuting attorney, local schools, state law enforcement, and other vital community partners.

**By working hand in hand, we can effectively implement the GVI program and make significant strides in addressing the issue of violence. We will continue to collaborate with other communities across the country to explore crime-fighting initiatives such as in Pennsylvania, where the four our team visited in 2023.**

**Moving forward, my commitment to making Pine Bluff a safer city remains unwavering. I will continuously explore innovative approaches to invest in public safety, ensuring that our community thrives under secure conditions.**

**9. How do you plan to achieve community policing goals in a city with an understaffed police department? I am working closely with our police department to enhance their recruitment efforts, ensuring a steady influx of new police officers. We are dedicated to equipping these officers with comprehensive training, ample support, and competitive salaries to encourage their commitment to serving and safeguarding our community.**

**In partnership with Enterprise, we have made substantial progress in expanding our police fleet. This expansion has enabled all patrol officers to have take-home police vehicles, resulting in increased law enforcement presence within our neighborhoods. This heightened visibility serves as a deterrent to criminal activity and further enhances public safety.**

**Furthermore, we have undertaken the remodeling of the Detective Kevin D. Collins Center, transforming it into a state-of-the-art training facility for our police department. This facility will provide our officers with an optimal environment to enhance their skills and knowledge, further improving the effectiveness of our law enforcement efforts.**

**At the same time, we know that law enforcement can not create a safe community by themselves. They need residents, businesses, educators, faith-based leaders, and many more to get involved. We have been building on this through initiatives like the Group Violence Intervention Program which has a range of community partners. We have also worked with a variety of youth organizations, substance abuse programs, health organizations, and school leaders to meet social needs in the community that law enforcement is unable to provide.**

**By prioritizing these initiatives, we are demonstrating our steadfast commitment to ensuring the safety and well-being of our community, while also providing a supportive and conducive environment for our dedicated police officers.**

**10. How will you address the growing concerns about affordable housing? We are doing it now and we need to finish the job. We are working with a developer who plans to build an affordable housing development on the Southeast School property which the city acquired and cleared. We should continue to support this project with the incentives needed to complete the development. This will offer housing options for families and seniors. We also need to ensure the completion of the Flats on Sixth as well as initiate other affordable housing initiatives throughout the city. We are committed to seeing our goals through to completion, especially when it comes to providing affordable housing and safe neighborhoods for our families. This is why I am dedicated to ensuring the successful development and completion of projects like the Flats on Sixth, as well as initiating other affordable housing initiatives throughout our city.**

**11. What is your plan to attract new businesses and jobs to our city? I am working relentlessly to reach out to potential employers, recruit them to Pine Bluff, and secure the incentives they need to come here. We have even created a dedicated staff position in the Economic and Community Development Department to oversee this effort.**

**This is how we secured Chick-fil-A, for example. We also plan to collaborate with more workforce training programs in Pine Bluff so we can connect those services to residents who can benefit from them. We have to be as focused on retaining the businesses that we have as we are on attracting new ones. That means strengthening our workforce.**

**12. How will you address homelessness, and what long-term solutions are you advocating for? I firmly believe it is the city's responsibility to care for the most vulnerable members of our community. Toward this effort, the city is now remodeling the old First Ward School building and turning the facility into a transitional center, the Opportunity House. It will have programs to put them on a path to independence and stability. We have identified an operator, and the center is expected to open in 2024. I'm running to make sure this project is successful and to support other projects that embrace people who are homeless in Pine Bluff. In the most recent winter storm, I rallied with community members to open a warming center and provide necessary resources for our most vulnerable citizens during difficult times.**

**13. What measures will you take to ensure that the city's infrastructure can support new developments? I am collaborating closely with my team at city hall to enhance the infrastructure processes for new developments in Pine Bluff. This includes installing new sewer lines in areas like Olive Street and University Drive where new developments are either happening or should be incentivized. Additionally, we have secured \$30 million in federal funding to upgrade our drainage system which will transform the city's infrastructure and its capacity to support new developments.**

**14. How do you plan to repair and maintain the aging roadways and bridges in our city? I intend to foster strong collaboration with our street department to optimize the utilization of our current resources.**

**Additionally, I will actively seek out opportunities to apply for state and Federal grants, including those provided by the Bipartisan Infrastructure law, to make substantial investments in the improvement of Pine Bluff's roads and bridges. By doing so, we can enhance the infrastructure of our city and ensure safer and more efficient transportation for our residents and visitors. We must also make strategic investments to upgrade and replace equipment in the department to make operations more effective.**

**15. What are the most pressing issues in the office you are seeking to address? I firmly believe that one of the most crucial responsibilities of the Office of the Mayor is to envision the future of Pine Bluff and unite our community toward a common goal. My primary focus is on addressing key priorities, such as ensuring accessible and affordable housing for all residents, fostering opportunities for our youth, and driving economic development.**

**By prioritizing affordable housing initiatives, we aim to create a community where every individual has a safe and affordable place to call home. Additionally, by investing in programs and resources tailored to empower our youth, we can provide them with the tools and opportunities necessary to thrive and succeed. Furthermore, through targeted economic development strategies, we can stimulate growth, attract new investments, and create job opportunities, ultimately bolstering the overall prosperity of Pine Bluff.**

**By diligently working towards these goals, we can shape a vibrant and inclusive future for Pine Bluff while fostering a sense of unity and collaboration among all members of our community.**

**16. What is your strategy for improving the quality of life for all residents? As Mayor, I am steadfast in my commitment to invest in our Parks and Recreation department, ensuring that more neighborhoods have accessible and enjoyable gathering spaces.**

**This includes working with the city council to develop a new park in the 3rd Ward. It is important that we replace and upgrade outdated equipment, revitalize park facilities, and enhance the overall recreational experiences for our residents.**

**Furthermore, I recognize the importance of maintaining well-functioning streets within our city. To achieve this, I will work closely with the street department and engineers to spearhead innovative approaches to fix and maintain our roads, ensuring safer and more efficient transportation systems for our community.**

**Our young people deserve a nurturing environment that offers abundant opportunities for growth and success. This is why, I will continue to prioritize the development of programs and the provision of resources that cater to our youth. My aim is to establish a year-round Youth Employment Program, designed to equip young individuals with the skills and experiences necessary for future career success.**

**Additionally, I am committed to fostering economic growth by attracting new employers and commercial developments to Pine Bluff. Building on our recent success with Chick-fil-A, I will continue the City's recruitment efforts to secure investments that provide residents with expanded shopping options, diverse entertainment opportunities, and a variety of sit-down restaurants for families to enjoy.**

**Through these initiatives, I aim to create a vibrant and prosperous community that offers abundant opportunities for residents of all ages to thrive and enjoy a high quality of life.**

**17. How would you describe your management style?**

**Throughout my journey, from the classroom as a teacher to holding the position of Mayor in City Hall, I have consistently embraced a transformational management style.**

**This transformational mindset of excellence is expressed through my vision as we unite and collaborate on effective measures for organizational progress. My goals are to motivate as well as inspire others to achieve remarkable things in our beloved city. The potential for greatness in our community is limitless, and with our collective effort, anything is achievable.**

**18. What is your long-term vision for the city's infrastructure development? One of our biggest projects is implementing city-wide drainage improvements that will be funded by the \$32 million we received for flood prevention. This will be a ten-year project with multiple phases that will have a long-term effect on drains. I also believe the city should continue seeking additional funding opportunities from federal initiatives like the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to upgrade roads and bridges. We have been making incremental upgrades through partnerships with ARDOT and the Corp of Engineers.**

**Under my administration, we have witnessed tremendous advancements in the development of Pine Bluff's infrastructure. Where vacant and deteriorating buildings once stood, we have successfully transformed the landscape with the establishment of a state-of-the-art library and learning center that caters to the needs of the 21st century. Additionally, we take pride in the construction of an outstanding aquatic center, which stands as a benchmark for excellence in the state. Furthermore, we have proudly opened a new elementary school that excels in providing a high-quality education to our students. These achievements serve as a testament to our commitment to progress and investment in the future of Pine Bluff.**

In Pine Bluff's central neighborhoods, we have undertaken a project to revitalize the Pine Bluff Community Center, providing the youth with a facility they truly deserve. Additionally, on Cherry Street, we have established a community garden that follows the seed-to-table concept. Moreover, we have made improvements to various parks by enhancing seating, lighting, and fencing. It is essential to maintain this positive momentum to create a Pine Bluff that we can all take pride in calling home.

**19. What do you see as your primary role as mayor?**  
My primary role is to work with city departments to provide services to residents and visitors and act as an advocate for the city to attract investors, spur economic development, and forge community partnerships that benefit the community. I consider it my responsibility to transform our vision for Pine Bluff into a reality. I am fully committed to unifying my team within the city and collaborating with community partners to develop a Pine Bluff that fills us all with pride as our cherished home. I am willing to go above and beyond to accomplish this goal.

**20. How will you ensure that the voices of all city residents are represented in your administration?** As mayor, I work intentionally to listen to the voices of all of our citizens. I hold frequent town halls and forums to hear from community members. I also created the Mayor's Youth Council to hear specifically from our young people. Our website also offers opportunities to connect with city staff and share feedback.

**21. How would you enhance transparency and openness in government proceedings?** Under my administration, significant efforts have been made to renovate our city council chambers, ensuring a suitable and updated space for conducting local governance. All meetings are publicized and open to the public. Furthermore, we have effectively utilized our city's social media platforms to provide regular updates on the activities and initiatives led by the city council.

Through these channels, we actively encourage citizen engagement by sharing information about public projects and inviting their participation.

**22. What specific approach will you take to handle citizen feedback and complaints?** Upon assuming office, one of the initial systems we implemented was the establishment of a citizen call log. This log enables us to effectively keep track of feedback and complaints received from citizens. Collaborating closely with various city departments, we work diligently to address these concerns and ensure their resolution. Additionally, by analyzing the trends and patterns within the call log, we gain valuable insights into the common challenges faced by our constituents, allowing us to develop targeted solutions and improvements.

**23. How will you combat corruption and promote ethical conduct within city government?** A number of local and state measures are in effect to ensure accountability. The City Clerk's Office has independent oversight over city procurements. The City Attorney's Office provides independent and expert analysis to personnel on conducting city operations. For several months each year, Arkansas Legislative Auditors establish work sites at city hall to review all city finances. City Council members, as well as the general public, also have the right to scrutinize city transactions, budget line items, procurements, and financial documents at any time. If any impropriety is detected by my office, it is reported to the appropriate authorities immediately for investigation and subsequently, further action is taken based on the findings. Within my office, I wholeheartedly embrace a culture of excellence and integrity, upholding the highest standards to faithfully represent the citizens of Pine Bluff. I expect nothing less from my team, as we collectively strive to serve our community with utmost dedication and professionalism.

**24. Which measures will you implement to ensure that your administration's decisions are data-driven and evidence-based? To address the significant challenges faced by Pine Bluff, my administration has diligently studied and researched national best practices. For instance, we have embarked on extensive travels across the country to gain valuable insights on implementing effective programs such as the Group Violence Intervention Program and the My Brother's Keeper program. In Collaboration with our community partners like the Juvenile Court, Southeast Arkansas Behavioral Center, the Pine Bluff Police Department, the Jefferson County Sheriff's Department, and the Jefferson County Prosecuting Attorney, we are partnering with academic professionals to not only evaluate the program but to build a database that can create more informed decision-making. intentional exploration has allowed us to gather the necessary knowledge and resources to create tailored solutions that cater to the specific needs of our young people, ensuring their well-being and success.**

**Our police department will utilize Map Line Software along with ADSI GEO information to track and analyze data in Project Neighborhood to put people and resources in areas where they are needed most.**

**25. What are your strategies to audit and improve government efficiency throughout the city's departments? Each department sets out its goals and objectives for the year. My office works with the departments to track the progress of these objectives. We also participate in regular department head meetings to collaborate and troubleshoot problems to ensure major projects are completed. We have also invested in IT ticketing systems and identified software systems that allow employees to process information and manage their workflow as efficiently as possible. Some of these systems are internal processes that may not be noticeable to residents, but they make a difference in modernizing city operations and enhancing our ability to meet public needs.**

**26. What systems will you put in place to monitor the performance and success of your initiatives? I actively monitor the progress and success of my initiatives in close collaboration with my office team. With a focus on long-term sustainability, I strive to embed these initiatives within city departments. By fostering integration at this level, we ensure that these initiatives become ingrained within the fabric of our city's operations. This strategic approach allows us to sustain and build upon these efforts, creating lasting positive change for our community. For example, for law enforcement initiatives, we maintain records such as how many stops are made, weapons collected, and illegal substances confiscated, among other information. For parks and recreation events or programs, we analyze information such as attendance data, revenue intake, and operational expenses to determine performance and success. I believe we should continually evaluate our methods and enhance them as needed.**

**27. How do you plan to make your policy decisions and the reasons behind them more accessible to city residents? In my administration, we have fully embraced a range of diverse communication channels to effectively engage with the community. Through platforms such as social media, radio, and in-person forums, we strive to transparently communicate policy decisions and provide opportunities for citizens to get involved. We also utilize the city's website to share information. I plan to be more conscious of engaging these mediums even more to increase accessibility. Utilizing these various channels, we aim to reach a wide audience and ensure that every community member has access to information and avenues for active participation in shaping policies and initiatives.**

**28. How do you plan to foster partnerships between local schools and businesses or universities? I firmly believe that the success of our students is reliant on the collective support of our entire community. To reinforce this collaborative approach, I have taken the initiative to establish an education alliance.**

Through this alliance, we aim to support Pine Bluff teachers by facilitating their certification and providing opportunities for them to pursue Master's Degrees. By fostering this network of educators, we create an environment where teachers can continuously enhance their skills and knowledge, ultimately benefiting our students and their educational journey.

Furthermore, the city can extend its support beyond the confines of the classroom by allocating funds for summer and after-school programs. In our commitment to empowering the youth, we have already made substantial progress by expanding the Summer Youth Employment Program, offering hundreds of job opportunities to young individuals from various backgrounds within our community. As part of my re-election plans, I aim to expand this program further, transforming it into a year-round opportunity for our young people. By doing so, we can provide continuous support and valuable experiences that will positively shape their futures.

We will continue working with the Group Violence Intervention Program to connect students with social and mental health services in our schools. Additionally, through Economic and Community Development, we intend to work with workforce training programs in the community to increase the skills and education of our labor force. That includes working with our college and university. We also intend to work with local schools to beautify the areas around their campuses.

29. What distinguishes you from other candidates? I have served as mayor for seven years. Pine Bluff is better today than it was when I took office. Seven years ago, we didn't have a top-quality Community Center, now we do. We didn't have \$32 million in federal funding for flood prevention, now we do. We didn't have a Chick-fil-A, but now we do. We didn't have an aquatic center, but now we do. We didn't have an evidence-based Violence Prevention Program. Now we do.

People couldn't drive down Main Street, now there is a library, school, and art facilities that serve people of all ages and backgrounds from throughout Southeast Arkansas. Our successes are the result of hard work and collaboration with residents and community partners. I haven't done everything right, but I have the experience and vision to finish the job I started of building a stronger, and safer community. With the experience and vision, I possess; I am fully equipped to complete the task I initially embarked upon.

My dedication to this cause remains unwavering, and I am determined to see it through to the end. By leveraging my experience and utilizing my foresight, we will create a community that thrives, ensuring the well-being and unity of our beloved Pine Bluff.

30. What legacy do you hope to leave behind at the end of your term? I aspire to establish a lasting legacy, one that accentuates the unity of Pine Bluff and emphasizes the strength derived from working together. Undeniably, the path ahead may present its share of difficulties. Yet, with your unwavering faith and ongoing support, I am confident that we can confront our toughest challenges collectively, thus ensuring persistent success. For generations to come people will remember that, We are One Pine Bluff Stronger Together!

As the March 5th primary approaches in 2024, I humbly request your valuable vote. Furthermore, I implore you to sustain your support for our shared endeavor to transform Pine Bluff into a place that fills us all with immense pride and a profound sense of belonging.

# JONI ALEXANDER ROBINSON

**1. Why are you running for mayor? I'm not satisfied with the current administration, having worked with them I know the deficiencies firsthand and the knowledge and experience to address them.**

**2. What is your previous political experience? I've been in Municipal Government for nearly a decade, worked for two elected officials in the City Clerk's office, and as Chief of Staff to Mayor Hollingsworth. I also served on the Pine Bluff City Council.**

**3. In what areas do you see the most problems and what is your suggestion to solve them? The day-to-day operations at City Hall. City Hall and its departments need a positive change set in motion by real data and a perspective that regards Pine Bluff as a system of interrelated parts.**

**4. Accessing the recent performance of Go Forward Pine Bluff and the 2017 sales tax, would you support the return of the Go-Forward sponsored tax, support a different tax, or feel no new tax is needed for the progression of the city? Could you explain your answer? I no longer have confidence or trust in GFPB. With the loss of population, increase in revenues, and the inefficiency of the services that citizens are currently paying taxes for; To burden the citizens with an additional tax, when the taxes that they are currently paying are not properly utilized is not necessary.**

**5. What do you plan to accomplish in your first 30 days? Fix the pay scale for Public Safety, identify and address the lack of internal controls, meet with all departments, evaluate all departments and audit all departments.**



**6. What downward trend in your city's last five years are you most proud of? What trend is most worrisome? It speaks volumes that I can't honestly answer the first part of this one. The trend that is the most worrisome is that we've gotten away from addressing the needs and operations of the City Departments and employees. With the increase in revenue our city services and operations are lacking more than with previous administrations that had less revenue and more population.**

**7. Given the existing budget constraints and the financial situation that the city is in, how would you stretch taxpayer's dollars and still execute the basic needs of the city? Make our departments more efficient. Even with a population decrease, we've had more revenue in the past 7 years than in decades. How is it that we have more revenue, fewer people, and worse performance?**

**8. What plans do you have in place for effective policing and crime prevention? How do you plan to secure funding for the needs of public safety? Effective Policing: Fixing their pay scale, addressing internal issues, increasing patrol and part-time pay, and putting a measurable plan in place.**

**Crime prevention: Bringing back initiatives like weed and seed and safe team.**

**Funding: With a safer city, revenue will increase.**

**9. How do you plan to achieve community policing goals in a city with an understaffed police department? The responsibility of community policing isn't just on officers. It will be a plan that focuses on partnerships, problem-solving, support, communication, and education with all major stakeholders.**

**10. How will you address the growing concerns about affordable housing? By utilizing the Economic and Community Development Department. They have many resources and funding that if restructured could address a lot more of the social issues in Pine Bluff.**

**11. What is your plan to attract new businesses and jobs to our city? Making sure that the businesses that we already have are attracted to our city.**

**12. How will you address homelessness, and what long-term solutions are you advocating for? Allocate the underutilized positions in the Economic and Community Development Department to focus specifically on homelessness. Implement long-term and short-term solutions in collaboration with shelters, social services, and community organizations, and a strategic plan that implements programs for housing, job assistance, support, etc.**

**13. What measures will you take to ensure that the city's infrastructure can support new developments? Better planning. Currently, we're either piece-milling projects or relying on gut feelings and hope rather than evidence, reasoning, economics, statistical analysis, and shared goals.**

**14. How do you plan to repair and maintain the aging roadways and bridges in our city? Organizing our street department with measurable goals, long-term planning, better resource allocation, and maintenance of capital assets.**

**15. What are the most pressing issues in the office you are seeking to address? Day-to-day operations. Despite the city having 12 departments that directly serve its citizens, many residents can only name a fraction of them, hindering their ability to fully engage with and benefit from municipal services.**

**16. What is your strategy for improving the quality of life for all residents? A healthy government has four main purposes: planning and directing society; meeting social needs; maintaining law and order; and managing relations. I have a framework and multiple plans to address those responsibilities as the Mayor.**

**17. How would you describe your management style? Policy-driven, direct, evidence and data-based planning, measurable goals, fair, and ethical.**

**18. What is your long-term vision for the city's infrastructure development? Better maintenance of our infrastructure so we can be less reactive and more preventative with our planning. This will lead to more sustainability.**

**19. What do you see as your primary role as mayor? As Chief Executive Officer of the city, the Mayor has a statutory duty to oversee the enforcement of city policies, ordinances, administrative rules, and State laws, as well as direct city offices and employees to discharge their duties. The role of a mayor is multi-faceted and we must consider the full scope when running for this position.**

**20. How will you ensure that the voices of all city residents are represented in your administration? Give support to the city council, improve city hall customer service, provide opportunities for multiple forms of communication, and accessibility, and identify and build on current deficiencies in communications.**

**21. How would you enhance transparency and openness in government proceedings? Follow the rules and statutory obligations set in place.**

**22. What specific approach will you take to handle citizen feedback and complaints? Make sure that each complaint/feedback is documented and resolved. After following up with citizens, analyze patterns for continuous improvement in day-to-day operations.**

**23. How will you combat corruption and promote ethical conduct within city government? I will make sure my administration operates ethically and holds everyone to the same standard.**

**24. Which measures will you implement to ensure that your administration's decisions are data-driven and evidence-based? Leverage technology, identify trends, pinpoint areas for improvement, and ensure data integrity and accuracy.**

**25. What are your strategies to audit and improve government efficiency throughout the city's departments? Currently, the city's internal auditor works under the director who also works under the mayor. Making this position autonomous will empower the internal auditor to fulfill their mandate effectively, serving as a critical safeguard against fraud, waste, and abuse in government, and promoting the efficient and responsible use of taxpayer dollars.**

**26. What systems will you put in place to monitor the performance and success of your initiatives? No comment. Be more involved and hold employees accountable.**

**27. How do you plan to make your policy decisions and the reasons behind them more accessible to city residents? I could include a narrative that is readily accessible online or by request.**

**28. How do you plan to foster partnerships between local schools and businesses or universities? Asking them what they need and being of assistance.**

**29. What distinguishes you from other candidates? My background is in city government. I am the only candidate so far with a plan presented to the public. I also have a 90-day, 1-year, and 2-year plan and I answer the questions!**

**30. What legacy do you hope to leave behind at the end of your term? Create a solid foundation in our government upon which future administrations can continue to build.**

# VIVIAN FLOWERS

**1. Why are you running for mayor? I am running for mayor to ensure that Pine Bluff citizens have a winning choice for change to systemic progress. I'm running to put my over 30 years of public service/policy/political experience to ensure that we prioritize our Youth, Economy, and Safety in a way that ensures measurable and significant progress.**

**2. What is your previous political experience? I have served as Arkansas State Representative for District 65 since 2015. Prior to that, I was appointed by three governors to serve on the Arkansas Minority Health Commission for a decade (Chair for three years during my tenure on the commission). I worked as Committee Secretary for the Arkansas Bureau of Legislative Research and staffed the House Rules, Public Health, Agriculture & Economic Development Committees, and the Arkansas Legislative Black Caucus. Upon returning to school and securing employment with the Arkansas Division of Agriculture, I was also contracted by the Arkansas Legislative Black Caucus to serve as its staff and later the Executive Director. I also served on the Arkansas Service Commission as well as the Pine Bluff Historic District Commission. My internship experience includes the Pulaski/Perry County Prosecutor and the 92' Clinton Presidential Campaign. Finally, I have worked on numerous political campaigns as paid staff and as a volunteer for presidential, congressional, state legislative, judicial, and local races.**



**3. In what areas do you see the most problems and what is your suggestion to solve them? There is little to no effort being paid to addressing our homicide/violent crime epidemic, our infrastructure, or uplifting our youth. All three of these priorities directly impact our ability to reverse the tide of population and job loss. Further, the lack of communication, transparency and accountability have caused a loss of public trust that has impacted the city's ability to operate in unity and partnership.**

- **PUBLIC TRUST** - To restore the city, we must first restore the public trust. Utilizing and expanding transparency and accountability, along with the way we communicate with the public will be one of my day-one priorities.
- **VIOLENT CRIME/PUBLIC SAFETY** - What is a clear problem is the violent crime that has pervaded Pine Bluff for decades. Short-term solutions include reinstating the violent crimes task force and PBPD youth camp, investing in the vast improvement of Pine Bluff's public lighting, and upgrading public safety department software systems.

Long-term solutions include establishing a Real-time Crime Center, expanding community and neighborhood policing beats/programs, and strengthening first responders' incentives, benefits and compensation packages.

· **INFRASTRUCTURE** - Our physical and administrative foundation must be sound for the city to run effectively for the people, for neighborhoods, for the business community, and community institutions in the non-profit sector. The Street Department, our airport/ports/interstate/rail infrastructure and partnerships, broadband and water/electric/gas utility infrastructure all undergird the foundation for our families, schools, and businesses. We must shore up our infrastructure in a way that creates businesses, protects property values and attracts home-buying families. I will prioritize our infrastructure by seeking out state and federal funding, public-private partnerships and public funding that creates a win-win for the city, our citizens and the business community.

· **YOUTH UPLIFT & ENGAGEMENT** - There must be a much more robust relationship with Pine Bluff youth if the city is to restore its population of middle and upper-middle-income workers and entrepreneurs. Among numerous programs and activities that don't solely center on sports, Pine Bluff must create meaningful partnerships with its public school districts as well as SEARK, our 2-year college and especially UAPB, our 4-year university.

4. Accessing the recent performance of Go Forward Pine Bluff and the 2017 sales tax, would you support the return of the Go-Forward sponsored tax, support a different tax, or feel no new tax is needed for the progression of the city? Could you explain your answer? I WILL ONLY support a sales and use tax that provides for ALL of the following in the language of the ballot measure: (1) transparency and accountability standards that ensure consistent, public reporting of tax revenue, expenditures, and contracts; (2) targeted funding categories that promote economic development, infrastructure repair/development, and public safety;

(3) specific standards for private projects proposed for funding that require feasibility, budget, timeline and impact data.

The previous tax model was rife with omissions and challenges that led voters to end the current tax in May AND November 2023, which will take effect in September. The perceptions and reality that grew from these issues rest squarely with city leadership, which turned over some of its authority along with public dollars to one private partner. To restore the public trust, city leadership must never give away its authority vested by the people, but instead engage as many vetted and committed private partners as possible. This is why I would NOT support a Go Forward-sponsored tax.

5. What do you plan to accomplish in your first 30 days?

- Planning meetings with citizens in every ward.
- Assessment meetings with city department directors to determine the status of departmental funding/budget, capacity and leadership
- Begins process toward securing forensic auditor.
- Planning meetings with city council members
- Reach out to Pine Bluff business, community, education, faith, and youth leaders to begin work toward establishing a Pine Bluff Action Committee
- Complete and disseminate a code of transparency and accountability, including a legislative packet to be introduced
- Establish a citizen communication system to document and process all communications to the mayor's office to ensure messages, requests, complaints, and ideas are received and responded to, whether transmitted via phone, postal mail, email, or in-person
- Appoint a Whistleblower Ordinance Task Force, that will research and recommend a municipal whistleblowers ordinance designed to prevent corruption as well as protect city employees and citizens from retaliation for blowing the whistle on fraud, waste and abuse and other areas of corruption in the City of Pine Bluff

**6. What downward trend in your city's last five years are you most proud of? What trend is most worrisome? DOWNWARD TREND PROUD OF: The Pine Bluff Police Department's rate of unsolved crimes has decreased. MOST WORRISOME TREND: Population Decline. Pine Bluff has lost over 10,000 people (and over 10,000 jobs) since the 2010 population census. This directly impacts the city's ability to grow, and attract industry/jobs/entrepreneurial investment. Population decline leads to decay. Population decline assures the "brain drain" effect that ultimately impacts all institutions and resources within a city. Even with some business expansions and development, people are not only moving to other cities like Redfield and White Hall, they are taking Pine Bluff dollars with them. This is why we MUST focus on our youth, economy and safety!**

**7. Given the existing budget constraints and the financial situation that the city is in, how would you stretch taxpayer's dollars and still execute the basic needs of the city?**

- Departmental efficiency by consolidating positions where employees are already performing the jobs
- Technology that might require an initial investment but save money in the long run (upgraded software or GIS system)
- Outsourcing jobs that local businesses can perform well while saving money on overhead (for example - street overlay paving and grass mowing)

**8. What plans do you have in place for effective policing and crime prevention? How do you plan to secure funding for the needs of public safety? ·**

**Develop a comprehensive, data-driven Crime Prevention Unit**

- Establish Real-time Crime Center
- Improve public lighting
- Upgrade PBPB software systems, tools and equipment
- Expand community and neighborhood policing beats/programs
- Reinstate the PBPB Violent Crimes Task Force as well as the PBPB Youth Camp

- Strengthen and stabilize first responders' incentives, benefits and compensation
  - Implement the Victims of Violent Crime Support program (previously passed by the City Council)
- More efficient use of existing dollars as well as federal Department of Justice grants could easily fund most of the aforementioned plans. If the voters approved a targeted and transparent sales and use tax, I would dedicate a portion of those dollars to stabilizing police officers' compensation packages to improve retention.

**9. How do you plan to achieve community policing goals in a city with an understaffed police department? In the short term, enhance benefits for PBPB officers, like uniform allowance, overtime, and bonuses. Long-term solutions would include expansion of housing programs/partnerships, grow-your-own initiatives, and development of a scholarship incentive program in partnership with the private sector.**

**10. How will you address the growing concerns about affordable housing? Pine Bluff's housing stock once accommodated a population of nearly 60,000 people. Today, our population is around 38,000. While our owner-occupied housing rate is 53%, 13% below the state average, our median owner costs with a mortgage is \$1103 and median gross rent is \$819, 11% and 6% lower than the state average. The most important census statistic is Pine Bluff's median income: \$39,411, 30% lower than the state average.**

The bottom line is that Pine Bluff has an aging housing stock much larger than our population, which is why there are so many abandoned homes. The issue is not enough housing or even the cost of that housing. The issue here is the low wages/incomes coupled with the declining population. People will buy homes, develop multi-family housing and build homes in Pine Bluff when we restore the city by investing in our YOUTH and education, grow our ECONOMY to increase jobs and entrepreneurship and improve the SAFETY of our neighborhoods throughout the city.

**11. What is your plan to attract new businesses and jobs to our city?**

- First address violent crime/homicide (previously detailed)
- Better partner with the Chamber, UAPB, SEARK and other prospective small business engines to engage, prepare and support high school and college students in their efforts to start small businesses.
- Restore economic vitality to targeted corridors, beginning with Harding Avenue - expansion of Pine Bluff Regional Airport Grider Field and repurposing of the Pines Mall
- Infrastructure Initiative focused on Pine Bluff Regional Airport Grider Field, Port of Pine Bluff, and Downtown Pine Bluff

**12. How will you address homelessness, and what long-term solutions are you advocating for?**

- Homelessness must be addressed first and foremost by preventive measures - access to affordable housing, provision of wrap-around services in partnership with local shelters, aggressive partnering with anti-poverty organizations
- Better utilize the Economic and Community Development Department to secure and maintain grant funding to expand existing shelters to adopt the "Our House" model.

**13. What measures will you take to ensure that the city's infrastructure can support new developments?**

First, establish city infrastructure as its top economic development priority. Second, identify and pursue more state and federal funding resources, particularly through existing programs (Example: TAP-Transportation Alternatives Program administered by the Arkansas Department of Transportation). Finally, I will examine and support other funding measures that support investment in citywide public works projects and ensure future sustainable infrastructural stability.

**14. How do you plan to repair and maintain the aging roadways and bridges in our city?**

- Provide Street Department leadership and staff with vision and resources to develop a strategic plan and communication framework to better and more fairly.
- prioritize overlay and other projects
- communicate with city council representatives and citizens
- advertise and announce competitive bids and department projects
- Conduct a comprehensive needs assessment of city roadways, bridges and drainage system
- Advance an open and city-wide process to determine the funding mechanism(s) the city will use to repair and restore city streets and drainage systems.

**15. What are the most pressing issues in the office you are seeking to address?**

- Restoring the public trust through immediate, comprehensive, and consistent transparency/accountability/communication
- Youth engagement, education and training
- Economic development with emphasis on city infrastructure and heritage tourism
- Safety with the greatest emphasis on violent crime/homicide and public lighting

**16. What is your strategy for improving the quality of life for all residents?**

- Communicating with all residents, including listening to people's concerns and community-driven solutions
- Applying tax dollars and solutions to problems across all wards and neighborhoods, versus a lion-share of the resources going toward downtown and other already well-maintained and resourced areas.
- Utilize funding, partnerships and policies to invest in preventive solutions and attack problems at their root (For example - investment in crime prevention versus solely fighting after crimes have occurred).
- Partner with the Chamber, A&P Commission and city communications to launch retail/entertainment initiatives to better recruit and promote activities, entertainment and businesses to Pine Bluff.

**17. How would you describe your management style? My management style is collaborative, transparent, communicative, fair, respectful and professional as well as tough when necessary.**

**18. What is your long-term vision for the city's infrastructure development? My long-term vision for Pine Bluff's infrastructure includes:**

- fully funded and staffed street department operating a prioritized and public system that meets all maintenance needs of the city's roads and drainage system
- airport expansion that not only serves as a commercial distribution hub through partnerships with companies like UPS (which already has an industrial park presence in Pine Bluff), but offers commercial flights to at least one national airport like Memphis or New Orleans.
- port expansion that leverages Pine Bluff's rail system to add an intermodal yard
- fiber internet build-out downtown

**19. What do you see as your primary role as mayor? I see my primary role as mayor as an elected CEO-chief executive officer, which requires many hats for sure. The mayor oversees the departmental operations of the city; delegating department directors to advance the executive vision while implementing city ordinances and resolutions. However, presiding over city council meetings, and representing the entire city before state and national audiences as well as funding partners are equally important roles. Finally, communicating and connecting with citizens and perhaps the most important role as we work together to repair the public trust and chart a new course for the city's restoration.**

**20. How will you ensure that the voices of all city residents are represented in your administration?**

- Amend the public comment portion of public city council meetings to better engage public comments.
- Structure city government transparency standards to include full utilization of internet, social media and SMS technologies.

- Propose a position that provides the city council a constituency services coordinator to document and facilitate constituent requests in conjunction with communications between city council members, constituents as well as the mayor's office and city departments.

**21. How would you enhance transparency and openness in government proceedings? The mayor's office will work with the City Council to establish a public comments process that promotes and recognizes written as well as in-person public comments. This process would be enhanced to better interact with citizens offering comments in a more timely and interactive but still orderly manner.**

**22. What specific approach will you take to handle citizen feedback and complaints? In our first 30 days, the mayor's office will establish a citizen communication system to document and process all communications to the mayor's office to ensure messages, requests, complaints, and suggestions are received and responded to, whether transmitted via phone, postal mail, email, or in person.**

**23. How will you combat corruption and promote ethical conduct within city government?**

- Instituting a transparency standard that provides optimal "sunshine," fiscal safeguards, and reporting on the front end.
- Appointing a Whistleblower Ordinance Task Force, that will research and recommend a municipal whistleblowers ordinance designed to prevent corruption as well as protect city employees and citizens from retaliation for blowing the whistle on fraud, waste and abuse and other areas of corruption in the City of Pine Bluff.

**24. Which measures will you implement to ensure that your administration's decisions are data-driven and evidence-based? Rather than a measure to implement, data and evidence will be a standard set by the mayor's office, which I will commit to apply as a cultural shift and way of doing business throughout city government.**

**25. What are your strategies to audit and improve government efficiency throughout the city's departments? In the first 100 days, the mayor's office will include in its assessment of city government, how each department documents and records financial and HR activity, uses software and other technology, interfaces with citizens to communicate and provide services, and complies with city transparency ordinances. This assessment will be used to determine possible areas of improvement, centralization, savings, training, needs and effectiveness.**

**26. What systems will you put in place to monitor the performance and success of your initiatives? Collaboration, transparency and outreach will be at the root of how the city sets, documents, works toward and reports on city-wide and departmental goals and objectives.**

**27. How do you plan to make your policy decisions and the reasons behind them more accessible to city residents? Transparency is at the forefront of how I have served and led as a state legislator, and how I will serve and lead as mayor. While private discussions, working papers, non-disclosure agreements and confidentiality can often be a part of formulating policy, there must be balance as well as a high bar set for the level of transparency the city and its officials exercise regarding city dollars, public meetings, introduced legislation and elections. Ultimately, the city will share as much information as possible on the front end, following F.O.I.A laws, and adhere to our ordinances, and establish a professional communications team and processes to share with the public and press accordingly.**

**28. How do you plan to foster partnerships between local schools and businesses or universities? Pine Bluff will serve as a connecting force between all of our K-16 academic institutions to cultivate synergy between academic curricula/programs/performance and workforce/entrepreneurial as well as the corporate/foundation/non-profit sectors.**

**29. What distinguishes you from other candidates? I am the only candidate with the following:**

- 30+ years of public service, policy and political experience with proven leadership, relationships and results at the state, local and national levels of government**
- nearly a decade of executive professional/leadership experience, encompassing organizational management, policy, delegation, budget, program, HR and procurement skills and experience**
- who opposed Go Forward for sound policy reasons, but has always and remains supportive of a transparent, targeted economic development sales and use tax to address youth, economic growth, and safety priorities.**
- Among the candidates with any elected experience, I'm the only one you didn't already give four to twelve years and \$32 million extra tax dollars to make the difference you're still seeking from city leadership.**

**30. What legacy do you hope to leave behind at the end of your term?**

- An open, efficient, responsive, transparent, and accountable city government.**
- A safe, unified, prosperous, fully restored and growing Pine Bluff.**
- A city in which #TogetherPineBluffWins.**

# SAMUEL GLOVER



**1. Why are you running for mayor? To fight for the future of our city, our culture, and our children. I must become a bridge, connecting our generations, and finding a common unity for a prosperous future. My "Priority Pine Bluff Plan" can blaze a path for a prosperous future by creating hope and stability for the development of our community and the generations to come. If we build the capacity and capabilities of the people, the people will in turn build the city. Finally, I truly want to amplify the goodness of God, in that he can take a young man from west central Pine Bluff, the Central Park neighborhood, and empower him, to use his power, influence, resources and abilities on behalf of others to impact the world.**

**2. What is your previous political experience? This is my first turn in the political field from a sense of running a campaign and the nuance of politics. However, years in executive management at the municipal level as a department head and in the education field have afforded me the opportunity to directly manage over 75 employees/contractors yearly, create and implement dozens of community programs, oversee 20 million dollars in capital improvement projects, manage a budget of approximately 5 million annually. As director of the nationally renowned event, the King Cotton Holiday Classic, I was able to be a visible and vocal ambassador for the city of Pine Bluff on a local, state, and national stage.**

**3. In what areas do you see the most problems and what is your suggestion to solve them? Like a well-balanced nutritional plan, there must be a healthy balance that will incorporate the needs of all our**

**residents and infrastructure in planning our future while taking innovative action today.**

- The Image and Culture of Pine Bluff- Create a Marketing and Communications department to facilitate the communication of the latest news and events through multiple avenues for national brand awareness for the city. Collaborating with the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff and SEARK College to re-brand Pine Bluff as a college town. We will celebrate the greatness of Pine Bluff at every opportunity.**
- Meaningful impact in the lives of our youth- my plan involves a three-pronged approach to address the needs of our youth at each developmental level they progress through. Pre-K to 5th-grade children by elevating our free Sports and Discovery Camp facilitated by the Parks and Recreation Department. Sixth-grade to 8th-grade children will be enriched by collaborative programming through local nonprofits such as the Generator, the library, as well as the school districts undergirded by city resources. Capitalizing on the youth job programs by expanding and allocating more resources, dedicated to providing effective jobs and training in a safe environment.**

- **Public Works and Safety-Creation of a Public Works Department to improve our city's infrastructure, drainage and beautification while modernizing our police and fire to be up to date with 21st century standards.**
- **Communication Barriers between municipal government and citizens- Create a Marketing and Communications Department disseminating information accurately and consistently to citizens. We must invest in our current and future citizens through consistent engagement to equip them in a knowledge-based economy.**
- **Quality Affordable Housing- Fostering the creation, affordability and diversity of Pine Bluff's housing supply will be a focus of development as we create centers of neighborhood success through our community anchors such as Central, J.C Jeffries, Bryant Street parks and our schools. New housing policies will promote balanced development and equal prosperity for Pine Bluff.**

**4. Accessing the recent performance of Go Forward Pine Bluff and the 2017 sales tax, would you support the return of the Go-Forward sponsored tax, support a different tax, or feel no new tax is needed for the progression of the city? Could you explain your answer? Having been involved firsthand with the implementation of the 2017 sales tax through capital improvements to parks infrastructure, such as the Aquatic Center, Pine Bluff Community Center and Regional Park Softball Complex; Cultural attractions like the King Cotton Classic as well as outdoor recreational events such as The Big Bass/Catfish Extravaganza. I believe the GFPB tax added value to the city. However, after two tax renewal efforts, the people seem to be requesting a moratorium on the subject or simply exhausted with the idea. In lieu of this fact, we must maximize our efforts to be proactive in prioritizing our fiscal spending toward projects, programs, and partnerships that best serve our community. However, after a 9-18-month period of monitoring and analyzing the situation, a conversation about the necessity or viability of a new city tax must be discussed with the citizens and city leaders.**

**5. What do you plan to accomplish in your first 30 days? I approve of a strategically aggressive approach to address complex issues attacking municipal issues on multi-dimensional fronts.**

- **Identify funding for a state-of-the-art command center for Pine Bluff police, Pine Bluff fire/emergency services and MECA.**
- **Legislation to align services to our citizens through restructuring city departments for efficiency and efficacy. In addition, evaluation and analysis of each city department and its function.**
- **Introduce legislation to ensure the facilitation and operation of the King Cotton Holiday Classic for the next 4 years.**
- **Institute a night patrol in the animal control department to address stray dog nuisances accompanied by stricter aggressive animal ordinances.**
- **Immediately begin the process of becoming a more professional government by starting the process for national accreditation of all city departments, especially police and fire.**
- **Establish a Public Works Department and Marketing Communications Department. Followed by submission of job titles to the Administration Committee for approval of positions. Hire directors/coordinators for each.**
- **Introduce legislation to address the menace of drag racing in the city by developing a city wrecker service with the depot, maximum fines for offenders, and speed humps for park areas.**
- **Submit a plan for high-quality wayfinding signs to match our new city entry signs to regional planning for approval. Wayfinding signs will have an immediate impact on the brand and value of our community.**
- **Mobilize the city leaders to seek new business and investment from across the country.**
- **Start a citywide fundraising campaign for MLK Unity Playscape, Townsend Park Splash Park Addition and Saracen Landing Wharf and Event Center.**

**6. What downward trend in your city's last five years are you most proud of? As a proponent of silver linings, I am proud to see the saturation of negative press toward our city taking a turn for the better. I am proud of the work that has been done to promote Pine Bluff as a point of destination. Events such as King Cotton and the Black rodeo as well as the diverse offerings of the Arts and Science Center, the success of local high school sports, and the Aquatic Center are blocks of success we can build upon. The decline of our urban centers surrounding our schools, parks, and major thoroughfares is troublesome. The change in both the property values and housing inventory has created a void in home ownership. Research shows that the tenants who rent are less likely to maintain an acceptable level of quality and maintenance to a property causing a hike in dilapidated or abandoned structures. These areas become havens for crime and degradation. Safety and development will equal prosperity in these areas.**

**7. Given the existing budget constraints and the financial situation that the city is in, how would you stretch taxpayer's dollars and still execute the basic needs of the city? It is worth noting that there is both an upward trend in our city resources and currently enough in current city budgets to conduct a baseline of city business, with responsible spending. We will implement austerity measures to cut back on inessential spending to bolster our surplus. In addition, adding staffing and resources to the city grant writer will create alternative revenue streams through support grants for program development, matching grants, in-kind donations and sponsorship deals for naming rights of places like the convention center, library and new community/multipurpose centers. As parks director from 2018-2023, our department garnered over 3 million dollars in grants to the city for infrastructure and programs.**

**8. What plans do you have in place for effective policing and crime prevention? Safer communities start with prevention and intervention, end with rehabilitation and are fueled with effective action. We will elevate the stance on prevention by investing in a state-of-the-art command center, upgrading the equipment and renovating fire station facilities, evaluating funding to revolutionize training methods and investing in school-based programs such as the Junior Cadet Program. Collaborating with non-profits and state programs for rehabilitation will plummet the unacceptably high recidivism rates in Jefferson County. Investing in the recruitment, development and retention of officers will fortify our department. I believe that enough time will have passed to determine, through data and research, the viability and/or necessity of an exclusive public safety tax used to specifically address 4 targeted areas of resource deficiency.**

**9. How do you plan to achieve community policing goals in a city with an understaffed police department? We must use compassion in our decision-making and our approach to Public Safety. Modernizing our public safety division will make our goals more attainable and realistic. Technology is a great neutralizer. More traffic cameras with automatic ticketing capabilities, new lighting and crime-stopping methods such as infrared drone patrol centers throughout the city will increase our crime-fighting capacity and capability.**

**10. How will you address the growing concerns about affordable housing? I will be committed to encouraging housing preservation and creation for all income levels and household sizes citywide through policy initiatives, public/ private partnerships and public/non-profit partnerships like Habitat for Humanity and Homes for Our Troops. Engaging investors willing to build new contemporary, mid-sized subdivisions, is a high priority to address the new construction inventory shortage. My administration will be mindful of the need to consistently encourage quality, sustainable design and appearance for all new developments.**

**There will be a standard for appearance. Fostering the creation, affordability and diversity of the Pine Bluff housing supply would be a central project for the tenure of my time in office.**

**11. What is your plan to attract new businesses and jobs to our city? Having a strong Marketing and Communications Department will expand our opportunities to attract businesses that align with our community needs as well as explore options that will add to the vitality of the local business base. Building upon the brand and narrative of Pine Bluff will increase the chances of attracting and retaining investors. Simultaneously, introducing updated, progressive legislation that accommodates incentive zoning, and some levels of contextual form-based city codes and we will strategically align the city's interests with industries that focus on air/railway transportation, research/development of STEM, technology/software creation and distribution such as Amazon and Walmart. This will create opportunities for infrastructure grants, tourism and development incentives, and income tax credits which can be a selling point for new businesses and investors.**

**12. How will you address homelessness, and what long-term solutions are you advocating for? Development and collaboration equal prosperity for Pine Bluff. We must act immediately to prevent a rise in vagrancy we are not equipped to handle. While attending the National Parks and Recreation Conference in Phoenix, AZ in 2022, I was alerted to the impending homeless surge by my colleagues on the West Coast. The overcrowded homeless population was headed our way. We must communicate with our national counterparts for best approaches and practices while collaborating with local partners to provide social services and skills training.**

- Form a task force to address 4 major areas homeless patrons face: mental health, lack of resources, drug and alcohol abuse, and shelter. SEARK Behavioral, United Way of SE Ark, ADC, Jefferson County Extension Services, JRMC and the nonprofit sector are our essential partners in this front.**
- Seek federal funding for treatment and housing.**
- Legislation for tiny home communities for temporary housing quarters.**
- Advocate for a low-cost and/or in-kind Rehabilitation Counseling services program collaborating with health providers, workforce development, and job training.**

**13. What measures will you take to ensure that the city's infrastructure can support new developments? Culturally we must decide whether we are ready to launch into the future or remain the same. Being forward-thinking in identifying areas for redevelopment will keep us on the cutting edge of renewal and restoration in Pine Bluff. After accessing environmental and utility considerations we must initiate a process to consolidate, eliminate and strengthen any area within the community that fits the guidelines for the protocol set through newly adopted city ordinances which will create a landscape for opportunity. Holding absentee property owners accountable for the blight they have left in our city is a top priority. Establishing legislation to streamline the abatement process will aid in our mission to clean our neighborhoods of abandoned properties and burnouts.**

**14. How do you plan to repair and maintain the aging roadways and bridges in our city? Currently, Economic Development and the Street Department have an active comprehensive plan to address both issues. State turnback funds provide a measure of resources the city uses to accomplish repair and maintenance. However, combined these departments are understaffed and over-obligated.**

**15. What are the most pressing issues in the office you are seeking to address?**

- Departmental efficiency models and customer service
- Public trust and Perception
- The public/private partnership model universally accepted
- Internal controls
- Re-branding of Pine Bluff

**16. What is your strategy for improving the quality of life for all residents? Parks, schools, and safety. We will have to be mindful that every citizen requires different to cater to their needs. It is our job to create and sustain family fun in the city of Pine Bluff.**

**17. How would you describe your management style? I identify closely with a mixture of Laissez-faire and transformational leadership. Accountability is high on my priority list, but I have found that a more relaxed work environment gets the best out of your people and they feel valued. Especially when you are working with highly skilled individuals who know their job. The goal of how I lead is to create a lasting positive impact while uplifting my team to achieve their full potential and drive success and innovation while fostering creativity. Having worked closely with most of the current department heads in city government, I find my leadership style very appropriate for the task ahead as we seek to usher in a fresh wind and a new vision for our city.**

**18. What is your long-term vision for the city's infrastructure development? We must realize that renewal is not a quick fix but a series of consistent actions that produce the desired result. The vision requires solutions that are formulated from interconnected concepts that will provide us with cultural, social and physical resiliency in our infrastructure. The goal is to revitalize and synergize areas of urban development to create strong safe neighborhoods. Creating small units of success mixed with infills of new construction, rebuilds, greenspaces, parks and schools.**

**By connecting each of these restored community anchors we will have created a network of stabilized neighborhoods that will become the resurrected Pine Bluff we all desire. Wayfinding signs, adequate lighting, strategic surveillance, landscaping and code-enforced neighborhoods will undergird the cultural aspect of our community. Frequent city events, festivals, activities, sports and targeted marketing will galvanize our community pride and strengthen us socially. This is the community I want my children's children to thrive in.**

**19. What do you see as your primary role as mayor? To be the lead ambassador of the city, to oversee and manage people, projects, programs, and partnerships while driving innovation, development and investment to create hope and stability of our culture and community for generations to come.**

**20. How will you ensure that the voices of all city residents are represented in your administration? Our success will be tied to our connections to each other, the Delta and the state of Arkansas. Creating the Communications and Marketing Department is vital to our success. 90% of all failures or success comes from effective communication. Launching a 411-style program will accommodate citizens who have pressing issues. Similarly, we will be more intentional with our citizens by regularly organizing city-wide listening sessions, ward-specific town halls, and engagement events at our schools and churches. Expanding the training duties of our city employees will aid in customer service. Additionally, I intend to work diligently with the city council to increase engagement with their constituents.**

**21. How would you enhance transparency and openness in government proceedings? Providing accurate, consistent and updated information is vital to our success. Educating our citizens on processes and procedures will illuminate controls that are currently in place. Continuing taping and videos all public meetings and making them readily available through a QR code, mailed out to every citizen, placed on the website distributed through social**

media and promoted accordingly through the new Communications and Marketing Department.

**22. What specific approach will you take to handle citizen feedback and complaints? Three forms of technology will provide our citizen with diverse methods to conveniently and consistently communicate with their city government.**

- 411
- AI-based platform
- QR Codes/ Digital Complaint Forms
- Quarterly listening tour for executive leaders

**23. How will you combat corruption and promote ethical conduct within city government? By resolution, make it mandatory for departments to conduct a self-audit of budget spending, mandatory semi-annual training for departmental administration staff in procurement, municipal procedures, employee handbook refreshers, New World which is the financial software currently used by the city for all financial matters.**

**24. Which measures will you implement to ensure that your administration's decisions are data-driven and evidence-based? One way to be consistent is to adopt measurable objectives like tracking economic indicators and collecting performance reports to keep apprised of the work. Collaborations with cities across the country will offer us considerations for best practices to potentially adopt.**

**25. What are your strategies to audit and improve government efficiency throughout the city's departments? Recent allegations of mismanagement, concerning a former city department head, caused deep mistrust in the community. The city has an internal auditor on staff and is audited by the State of Arkansas each year. The software system used to mitigate the financial business of the city has 3 layers of security in place requiring 3 signatures of electronic approval from different departments plus signatures from the mayor and city clerk's office.**

**A responsible leader has the responsibility to educate our citizens on the systems of checks and balances currently in place. I would add additional duties to the internal auditor and implement a rubric for auditing practices and reporting to our department heads and require quarterly reports from each department on finances.**

**26. What systems will you put in place to monitor the performance and success of your initiatives? Annual departmental reports, Monthly department head and council committee meetings, and bi-monthly city council meetings are currently municipal norms. Making sure our goals are attainable and measurable are standard best practices. Municipal employees are held in high regard and will be held equally accountable.**

**27. How do you plan to make your policy decisions and the reasons behind them more accessible to city residents? Marketing and Communications personnel will ensure citizens are equipped with the most accurate updated information that is easily accessible. I believe it to be equally important to educate our community on a foundational level on policy, procedure and protocol of municipal government.**

**28. How do you plan to foster partnerships between local schools and businesses or universities? Collaborations equal prosperity for Pine Bluff. Expounding on the current educational alliance, the office of the mayor should be the number one advocate for quality education, job training and entrepreneurship in a safe productive environment. I intend to use my platform to facilitate an upwardly mobile feeder system for academia, skill trades, sports, the arts and business galvanizing the next generation.**

**29. What distinguishes you from other candidates?**

**The record of my experience directly translates to the job and purpose of the office. The mayor of Pine Bluff must manage people, projects, programs and partnerships but most of all, be the lead ambassador for the city. Uniquely, my diverse experience qualifies that statement. I have 9 years of executive management experience, four years directing K-8 school culture, 5 years directing one of the largest city departments that annually oversaw a budget of 5 million dollars, 100 employees/contractors, 34 parks and facilities, federal and state liaison to FEMA/ADEM, processed 4200 invoices, contracts and agreements yearly, project manager over 20 million in capital projects, 2.5 million in departmental grants, \$500,000 in departmental revenue each year and managing 25 events/festivals for the city. Directing King Cotton has allowed me to champion the brand of Pine Bluff as a destination city with safe, family-fun events that impact our quality of life. Being the lead ambassador of an event that landed Pine Bluff in the pages of the Washington Post and at a viewership of 38 million Americans. As former board president of the United Way of SEARK, the public/private partnership collaborations from the non-profit sector have impacted the everyday lives of Pine Bluff citizens. I embody a bridge in our community, connecting our generations. I resonate with our seniors; I am relevant to my generation and I am relatable to our youth. Having made a positive impact in public, private, non-profit and educational sectors, I align with the heartbeat of the people of Pine Bluff.**

**30. What legacy do you hope to leave behind at the end of your term? For it to be known that Sam Glover was an agent of positive change who cared about the people of Pine Bluff and created hope and stability for the next generation.**

# STEVEN MAYS

**1. Why are you running for mayor? Campaigning for Public Office (Mayor) has always been my goal while being in Pine Bluff, Arkansas.**

**2. What is your previous political experience? Pine Bluff Arkansas City Council Member.**

**3. In what areas do you see the most problems and what is your suggestion to solve them? Working together and lots of prayers, real prayers.**

**4. Accessing the recent performance of Go Forward Pine Bluff and the 2017 sales tax, would you support the return of the Go-Forward sponsored tax, support a different tax, or feel no new tax is needed for the progression of the city? Could you explain your answer? No comment.**

**5. What do you plan to accomplish in your first 30 days? Community reaching goals.**

**6. What downward trend in your city's last five years are you most proud of? What trend is most worrisome? Explain. No comment.**

**7. Given the existing budget constraints and the financial situation that the city is in, how would you stretch taxpayer's dollars and still execute the basic needs of the city? Praying without ceasing.**

**8. What plans do you have in place for effective policing and crime prevention? How do you plan to secure funding for the needs of public safety? Pine Bluff, Arkansas is a great place to live and raise a family.**



**9. How do you plan to achieve community policing goals in a city with an understaffed police department? No comment.**

**10. How will you address the growing concerns about affordable housing? Working together for a better Pine Bluff.**

**11. What is your plan to attract new businesses and jobs to our city? Clean up all areas that need special attention and fix it now. Today!**

**12. How will you address homelessness, and what long-term solutions are you advocating for? Helping to solve real everyday issues together by including all citizens.**

**13. What measures will you take to ensure that the city's infrastructure can support new developments? Rebuild and restore our great communities in Pine Bluff, Arkansas.**

**14. How do you plan to repair and maintain the aging roadways and bridges in our city? No comment.**

**15. What are the most pressing issues in the office you are seeking to address? Working together.**

**16. What is your strategy for improving the quality of life for all residents? Praying without ceasing and working together.**

**17. How would you describe your management style? Awesome.**

**18. What is your long-term vision for the city's infrastructure development? No comment.**

**19. What do you see as your primary role as mayor? Doing the best job I can do as the mayor of Pine Bluff, Arkansas.**

**20. How will you ensure that the voices of all city residents are represented in your administration? No comment.**

**21. How would you enhance transparency and openness in government proceedings? Listening to all citizens.**

**22. What specific approach will you take to handle citizen feedback and complaints? Just listen to everyone.**

**23. How will you combat corruption and promote ethical conduct within city government? No comment.**

**24. Which measures will you implement to ensure that your administration's decisions are data-driven and evidence-based? No comment.**

**25. What are your strategies to audit and improve government efficiency throughout the city's departments? No comment.**

**26. What systems will you put in place to monitor the performance and success of your initiatives? No comment.**

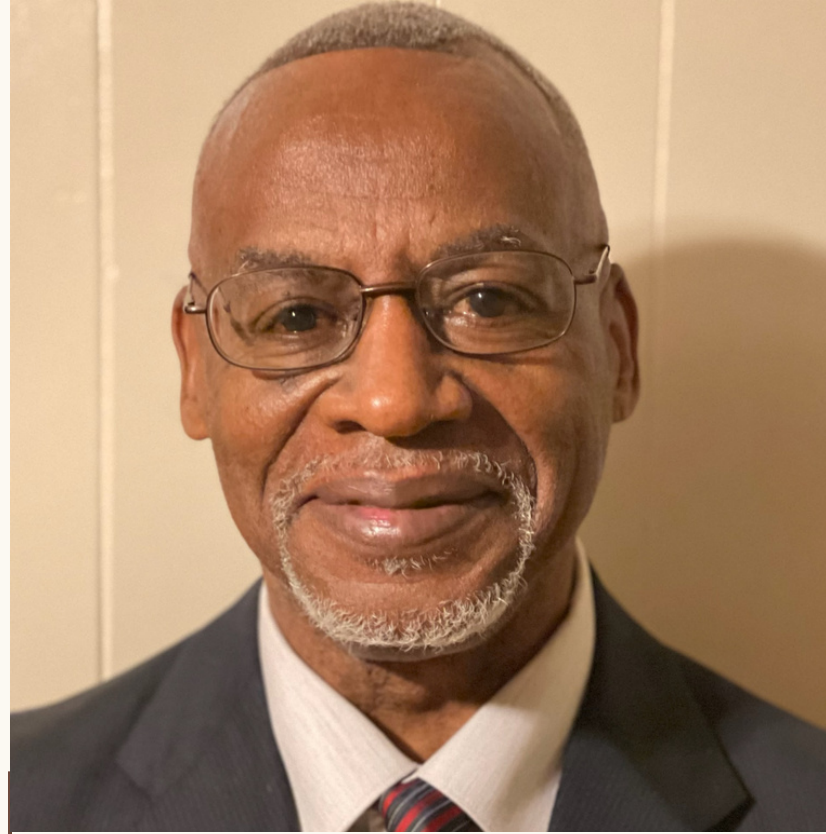
**27. How do you plan to make your policy decisions and the reasons behind them more accessible to city residents? Listen to all citizens.**

**28. How do you plan to foster partnerships between local schools and businesses or universities? No comment.**

**29. What distinguishes you from other candidates? I'm a true man of God. I work for all citizens.**

**30. What legacy do you hope to leave behind at the end of your term? No comment.**

# CHARLES WASHINGTON



**1. Why are you running for mayor? I am running for mayor, first and foremost, because I know that I am qualified to hold the position, I have lived in Pine Bluff since 2000. In that time I have gotten to know the good people of this city, I served the city as an exemplary police officer for over 10 years and I have developed a rapport with the citizens, the government, the police department and the business community, as a result of that service. Pine Bluff is in dire need of a strong, accomplished, forward-thinking and progressive leader to chart a course into the next decade and far beyond. I am the candidate who can deliver.**

**2. What is your previous political experience? I have very little experience in the political arena, but I do know that government exists at the will of the people, with the sole purpose of serving the people. The Constitution of the United States is the guiding document and the cornerstone of government on the federal, state and local level. My actions as mayor will be by the constitution and the laws of this city. I will not deviate from those laws, neither through deceit, ignorance nor dereliction. As the mayor and a novice, I would be remiss (derelict) in my duty if I did not quickly educate myself, to be able to expeditiously carry out the duties I have been elected to perform as mayor.**

**3. In what areas do you see the most problems and what is your suggestion to solve them? I see citizen apathy, lack of a cohesive community identity and cultural segregation as some of the problems. I will not have any citizens feel as if they are excluded from the protections and services provided by this city. At the same time, I would beg the public to either talk to their representative or to me to resolve any issue they may have**

**4. Accessing the recent performance of Go Forward Pine Bluff and the 2017 sales tax, would you support the return of the Go-Forward sponsored tax, support a different tax, or feel no new tax is needed for the progression of the city? Could you explain your answer? Go Forward Pine Bluff was voted down by what I hope was an informed set of voters. I would not try to revive it, as the people have already spoken. As the mayor, I would not attempt to institute any new taxes unless it can be shown that the city will not progress without some form of additional tax. Any proposed tax would have to be time-specific, meaning it would have a start and end date and it would have to be geared toward the betterment of the entire city and not just to a select or privileged group or concern.**

**5. What do you plan to accomplish in your first 30 days? During the first 30 days of my term, I plan to look at the projects, plans and initiatives of the present administration and get status reports on all of them I will request an audit of the present budget and an evaluation of the present accounting procedures. I will meet collectively and individually with all the heads of entities that fall under the authority of the mayor. I will discuss budgets, equipment and infrastructure status, personnel shortages, procedures and adherence to same, employee morale and efficiency of effort. I will seek funds for a telescope to be placed in or near the library complex so that the citizens of Pine Bluff can see the universe from a closer perspective.**

**6. What downward trend in your city's last five years are you most proud of? What trend is most worrisome? Explain. When I became a Pine Bluff police officer, crack cocaine and opiate use were the driving forces behind high property crime rates. There has been a downward trend in the use of those drugs, which has led to a reduction in property crimes. That is a statistic we can all be proud of. I now worry about the uptick in the use of designer and other street drugs by our youth and young adults. Most of the drugs are not produced in a laboratory under controlled conditions. They are more likely produced in someone's basement and then cut with other unknown substances to produce an enhanced effect. The buyer/user has no idea what is contained in the drug and that should be worrisome to us all.**

**7. Given the existing budget constraints and the financial situation that the city is in, how would you stretch taxpayer's dollars and still execute the basic needs of the city? To be an effective fiscal manager, a leader must be able to look at processes, procedures and products and analyze how to get the most for the city's dollar.**

**As mayor, I will closely monitor the spending within each section and search for ways to stretch the budget by utilizing emerging technologies that offer the same services at a reduced cost and I will look at streamlining some of the procedures to remove redundancies that unnecessarily consume City funds.**

**8. What plans do you have in place for effective policing and crime prevention? How do you plan to secure funding for the needs of public safety? The police department of Pine Bluff has a great relationship with the citizens, but there is always room for improvement. One avenue of improvement is the area of training. I will insist all officers are properly trained in de-escalation, use of force, cultural diversity and verbal combat. I will meet with the police chief to examine the present plan and offer the benefit of my 15 years in policing to further enhance the policies and procedures already in place. I will address any funding shortages by requesting assistance from state and federal agencies. To ensure a safe city I will obtain funds through tax initiatives, if necessary.**

**9. How do you plan to achieve community policing goals in a city with an understaffed police department? If the required number of officer are budgeted for, then I will talk with the chief and develop a hiring plan that is designed to recruit, train and retain qualified officers. If the funds are lacking, then I will use what manpower assets are available and look at making changes to the community policing model, while searching for funding sources.**

**10. How will you address the growing concerns about affordable housing? If there are plans and initiatives on the drawing board that have begun to address the issue of affordable housing. The housing market and affordable housing are driven by many factors that are not addressed by a rising or falling economy in Pine Bluff.**

**As mayor, I will search for developers willing to invest in the local housing market at below-competitive rates and I will also look to state and federal agencies for grants or other forms of assistance.**

**11. What is your plan to attract new businesses and jobs to our city? Businesses looking for opportunities in Pine Bluff must be assured that there is an available workforce. We, as a city, must get our young people off the street and trained in trades and other aspects of the business world. Not every company that wants to locate here is looking for a CEO or Executive Assistant. They are looking for a trained and educated workforce. To attract new business, the city has to reduce the crime rate through effective policing, thus demonstrating that Pine Bluff has a safe and nurturing work environment. As the chief ambassador for the city, I will represent that the city has the infrastructure to support its manpower, logistical and transportation needs, with plans in the works to strengthen and expand both infrastructure, shipping and transportation.**

**12. How will you address homelessness, and what long-term solutions are you advocating for? I would first have to know the circumstances that led to the situation. Can the individual, with effort on their part, remedy the situation themselves? Is the homeless person in need of mental health services, domestic abuse intervention and counseling, temporary or permanent shelter, etc? I know there are programs within the city government to assist in homeless cases. If the needed services are not available, then it is my job as mayor to ensure the city implements some program that provides services to that person. This is the growing and prospering city of Pine Bluff where no one should have to live on the streets.**

**13. What measures will you take to ensure that the city's infrastructure can support new developments? The majority of the city's present infrastructure was designed with progress in mind, As new industries express an interest in coming to Pine Bluff, I will consult with engineers to submit ideas on how to best expand our outlying areas to better serve both established and new businesses.**

**14. How do you plan to repair and maintain the aging roadways and bridges in our city? I will work closely with the street department and other entities to inspect, repair and maintain those structures. All repairs will be done on a priority basis, with the most neglected or most utilized being first in line. I will also direct the applicable departments to institute an inspection, and maintenance schedule.**

**15. What are the most pressing issues in the office you are seeking to address? The most pressing issue I see with the mayor's office is the lack of trust from the public. I want the trust of the people, so I will implement multimedia platforms.**

**16. What is your strategy for improving the quality of life for all residents? Quality of life comes when a person can feel safe and secure in their own home or en route to the homes of others or wherever life might take them. Quality of life is a by-product of good government. I will epitomize good government, thus ensuring a higher quality of life.**

**17. How would you describe your management style? I would describe my management style as team-oriented. I must know what is going on in every section of the city's government. It is not my job to be the duty expert. I depend on the members of my team to keep me informed and I will be in frequent contact with them so that I am prepared to speak to the public on any issue at a moment's notice.**

**18. What is your long-term vision for the city's infrastructure development? The long-term plans for infrastructure are at present a fluid situation. As the city grows, I will look at and adjust the plan accordingly.**

**19. What do you see as your primary role as mayor? My role as the mayor is to be a good steward of the public's monies, ensure that the citizens live in safe, secure neighborhoods with clean and drivable streets, make sure the students are provided quality education in an environment that is conducive to learning and to be transparent in all my actions.**

**20. How will you ensure that the voices of all city residents are represented in your administration? To demonstrate my commitment to transparency, I will utilize a variety of technologies and communications platforms to speak to the public in real time to personally dispel any rumors, innuendo, or accusations of malfeasance by me or any of my staff. I will have proof on hand to either exonerate or condemn any individual accused of corruption. I am not corrupt and I will not stand for it in my administration. I will restore confidence in the government of Pine Bluff by making sure that every citizen has access to all aspects of the city's business through recorded media that will be available online or a designated line that they can call to talk to either me or my representative during normal working hours. I plan to be more proactive and meet and inform more and more citizens, as I go about the daily activities that take me away from my office.**

**21. How would you enhance transparency and openness in government proceedings? See #20**

**22. What specific approach will you take to handle citizen feedback and complaints? See #20**

**23. How will you combat corruption and promote ethical conduct within city government? See #20**

**24. Which measures will you implement to ensure that your administration's decisions are data-driven and evidence-based? Project research and data analysis are key drivers in decision-making. As the mayor. I will not only look at the research, data, and public opinion polls, but I will also have someone verify or dispute my interpretation of the numbers.**

**25. What are your strategies to audit and improve government efficiency throughout the city's departments? Part of my first 30 days in office consists of an audit of my office and the offices of my staff. I will also order an inventory of certain real properties under each section.**

**26. What systems will you put in place to monitor the performance and success of your initiatives? I will poll the people and ask them how they feel our initiative is progressing.**

**27. How do you plan to make your policy decisions and the reasons behind them more accessible to city residents? I have addressed that when I spoke of transparency in government.**

**28. How do you plan to foster partnerships between local schools and businesses or universities? I will be proactive and take the schools to the businesses. The students get to learn in a real-time environment and the business gets to meet its future employees**

**29. What distinguishes you from other candidates? I have Department of Defense and Department of State level experience.**

**30. What legacy do you hope to leave behind at the end of your term? He made a change when change was needed.**