

## **Answers of Council President Brandon Scott**

*\*\*Note: Council President Scott submitted written answers prior to a change in the first question re: impact of COVID-19 on persons who are homeless\*\**

### **Housing, Transportation and Fair Development Mayoral Forum May 19 from 6:00pm to 8:00pm Questions**

**Candidates must respond in writing on or before May 15 to all 10 questions.** Please submit responses to Matt Hill, [hillm@publicjustice.org](mailto:hillm@publicjustice.org). Responses will be posted on the web the day of the forum on May 19. Candidates will be asked for a verbal response to at least the first 6 questions at the forum. Candidate surrogates are not allowed to substitute for the candidate at the forum. Details about participation in the virtual forum on the webex platform will be provided shortly.

## **QUESTIONS**

**1. The COVID-19 crisis threatens tens of thousands of Baltimore City households with eviction, foreclosure, and additional stress on our transportation network. What specific measures would you take to help City residents avoid *eviction, foreclosure* and additional deterioration of our *transportation infrastructure*?**

COVID-19 is an unprecedented public health threat that is unlike anything we have seen. This global pandemic will have devastating economic, transportation and housing impacts on all Baltimoreans.

To rapidly respond to the COVID-19 crisis, I took the following steps in March

- Created an asset map, viewed more than 10,000 times to connect residents to resources
- Held daily briefings
- Disseminated flyers via multiple platforms on relief programs and how to access them
- Released a statement on price gouging to Attorney General Frosh

To address the more near-term COVID-19 housing and transportation crisis, I proposed the following, among a comprehensive list of proposals, in [“Supporting Baltimore During and After Covid-19”](#)

- Expanding unemployment insurance - which would stabilize the income of thousands of Baltimoreans, thus staving off a tsunami of foreclosures
- Using rainy day funds to stabilize Baltimore, \$10mn to establish a loan fund for businesses, \$8mn for workforce development, \$4mn for non-profit and cultural institutions

- Address Homelessness and Housing Insecurity - extending our State's eviction moratorium until 90 days after the state of emergency, the same moratorium on rent payments
- Support Businesses - this would prevent layoffs, maintain our local economies, and stabilize incomes for Baltimoreans across the City

This pandemic is also why in recent weeks I have supported major pieces of legislation to provide the immediate relief Baltimoreans need and deserve:

- 20-0526 - legislation sitting on the mayor's desk which would ban rent increases, late fees, and require proper notifications to tenants,
- 20-0530 - which would disincentivize real estate foreclosures, and a resolution calling on the Mayor's Office and the Department of Finance to present a comprehensive report on how CDBG, rainy fund, and other federal resources can be used to stem the tide of evictions, foreclosures, and interruptions to our City's already deteriorating public transportation system.

**2. Fair Development centers our fundamental needs for housing, health care, work with dignity, education and a sustainable environment, in government housing and economic development policies, thereby advancing dignity for all Baltimore residents. *Will your administration advance fair development in environmental policies? If so, will those policies include ending the city's contract with the BRESKO incinerator and fully implementing a Zero Waste plan that will address toxic pollution and waste in the City and how?***

I am committed to fair, environmentally-oriented economic development. The amount of environmental pollution City government allows; pollution that has irrevocably harmed the health of black Baltimoreans. I was proud to support the Workers United Zero Waste report, that provides a practical roadmap to make Baltimore a Zero Waste city. As I've stated publicly, one of my top priorities as mayor will be to elevate the Office of Sustainability to a mayoral cabinet level position.

I am committed to circular environmentally friendly economic systems. As mayor, I commit to supporting policies and programs that mandate debris diversion for all construction projects throughout the city, not just a couple of hundred of small properties throughout the city. Humanim is an excellent example of this work. The Housing Department contracts for the annual deconstruction of at least 250 vacant structures across the City. This agreement uses city dollars to employ returning residents and pays family-supporting wages. I am committed to investing city funds in contracts like these, that provide livable wages and benefits and responsibly reuse building materials.

As mayor I will also support investments in zero-water infrastructure, while ensuring that we are still on track to comply with our consent decree from 2002 with the EPA. We do not need any more recycling or composting pilots, or demonstration projects. It is time for the City to invest its considerable public utility resources to expand our recycling and composting infrastructure. This will include redirecting some of the more than \$100 million set aside for a new landfill to

composting and materials recovery facilities. As we saw in a presentation from the United Workers Zero Waste plan at a council hearing, there are curbside recycling and composting collection businesses that can keep our city clean, while providing family supporting jobs.

Finally, to address of the specific health disparities mentioned in my term, I will:

1. Undertake a focused expansion of trauma-responsive practices that must start with our schools, and expand to all agencies and organizations that come in contact with our youth. Massachusetts provides a path forward, where all schools in the state were required to develop action plans for creating safe and supportive environments.
2. Increase fines for property owners who violate the City's lead laws. I will dedicate revenue generated from these violations to the Health Department's lead abatement and the Housing Department's Lead Remediation programs.
1. Direct the Health Department to make lead testing more available and inform residents, especially expectant mothers, on the hazards of lead.
2. Ask the City Solicitor to consider a lawsuit against the paint companies that manufactured and distributed lead paint, despite known hazards to public health at the time.
3. Work with the Baltimore City Health Department to maintain and expand access to their [Community Asthma Program](#).

**3. The official count of vacant properties in Baltimore is 16,000. If elected Mayor, will you commit to using the funding and policy tools at your disposal to (a) convert at least 500 more properties a year from vacancy to occupancy, while prioritizing the needs of community residents living in neighborhoods with vacant structures, and (b) support estate planning for elderly residents to reduce the number of properties becoming vacant?**

Everything I do as mayor will be through an equity lens. Particularly when it comes to financial investments in historically underinvested communities. That's why I wrote, and passed, City Council Bill 18-0223 Equity Assessment Program. We know that this legislation is necessary due to the historic inequities that were embedded in law with racist intent. As Mayor, I plan to oversee the implementation of this bill so it is done correctly and to measure its progress to ensure positive outcomes for disenfranchised Black and brown communities.

I am committed to finding a financially feasible path to convert at least 500 additional properties a year from vacancy to occupancy, under the guiding principle of "development without displacement."

As Mayor, I will go even further, by ensuring that operating and capital dollars, tax incentives, and tax credits are equitably spent and awarded. We know that for the past forty years, these funds have been spent in areas that do not need these public investments.

Some of the policies I plan to implement to create a more inclusive financial system for Black neighborhoods, businesses, and households:

- Preference points on city contracts for jobs that pay family supporting wages, SWMBE, and worker-owned cooperatives
- Meaningful financial and technical assistance to build the capacity of black, and other underrepresented groups, owned-businesses
- Additional funds to provide down payment and homebuyer assistance grants to encourage home ownership

**4. Baltimore City faces a wave of likely eviction actions due to COVID-19, and it is far from ready. Yet, evictions were already a crisis prior to COVID. Approximately 140,000 eviction cases are filed and almost 6,500 families are evicted each year with many becoming homeless. These evictions have a disparate impact on Black households and female-headed households and reinforce segregation. Baltimore Renters United is releasing a report stating that by investing \$5.7 million each year in a right to counsel in evictions, the City and State would realize \$35.6 million in benefits and costs avoided. *How will you address evictions and will your plan include a right to counsel in eviction cases?***

Yes, I absolutely support the creation of a tenant's right to counsel fund. All Baltimoreans deserve access to counsel to address the serious and widespread issues related to landlord misconduct. That's why, back in July 2017, I co-sponsored [legislation](#) that would create a tenant's assistance fund that would be used to exclusively assist low-income tenants. One policy option would be to enact legislation - at the state if needed - that increases the filing fee for landlords to evict tenants by \$50. This fee could provide an additional \$7mn in annual revenue that I would earmark for a tenant's counsel system, as well as landlord down payment assistance program to incentivize the use of vouchers in all neighborhoods across Baltimore.

We know that we will face a severe eviction crisis when the moratorium on eviction is lifted by the governor. Now more than ever, we must take advantage of this moment in our history, to establish systems and structures that will protect and empower our most vulnerable residents.

I am also committed to doing everything in my power to advocate for a more modern [rent court system](#), including the digitization of rent court, and a more transparent process that evens the power imbalance between landlords and their tenants.

Finally, I will support legislation that limits evictions to a "just cause" standard. I commit to working with our partners who have long advocated in this space, including the Public Justice Center. No family should be evicted from their home without every protection and attempt to intervene. We know the impact on families of evictions is not just physical but psychological. Evictions are traumatic events and we must as a city do better to ensure that this doesn't happen to our most vulnerable neighbors.

**5. In 2018, the City made a historic agreement with the Fair Development Roundtable and Community Development Network to fund the Affordable Housing Trust Fund at \$20 million/year. Yet, the revenue actually coming into the fund is far less than promised, and the proposed FY 2021 capital budget for DHCD is almost 40% lower than last year. *Would your administration meet the City's obligation to fund the Affordable Housing Trust Fund with at least \$20 million/year without cutting other affordable housing funds and how? What other policies would you promote to support the development of affordable housing as well as ending homelessness?***

As mayor, I commit to supporting this historic trust fund, legislation I co-sponsored as the Councilman for the Second District. I will make sure that we meet the obligations of the AHTF MOU. This will include consideration of any policies that could bolster funds, including the expansion of the transfer and recordation surtax to all real estate transfers not involving homeowners. It is unacceptable that real estate speculators and institutional investors are exempt from taxes simply because the property in question does not meet the million-dollar threshold.

**6. Light rail has emerged as the most robust generator of economic development across the nation over the last four decades. Seattle, Portland, Los Angeles, Denver, Charlotte, Dallas are excellent examples. *How would you direct and encourage Baltimore City and regional housing and development planners to support the completion of the Red Line light rail project in order to achieve improved transit equity, reduced commute times, preservation of affordable housing, and the transformative community economic growth that follows transportation systems anchored by light rail?***

We know that this City is in desperate need of a reliable, clean, and safe East/West public transportation connection. We also need public transit to reliably carry people in isolated neighborhoods to job centers like BWI, Sparrows Point, Columbia, White Marsh - places also not well served by transit. The Light Rail was an incredible opportunity to address that. If feasible, will build it, but we should not wait for the \$2bn in funding we would need to finish the Red Line. A viable alternative is a Bus Priority Network. If done correctly, and East/West Bus Priority Network could be, from the perspective of the rider, indistinguishable from a light rail, take less time to build, and be more cost effective.

**7. In the transportation industry, “Development Follows Rail” is a proven mantra. Accordingly, not one community economic development project is associated with the bus-focused Baltimore Link system. Banks don’t invest in bus stops. How would you re-direct or incentivize local and regional housing and development planners to pair transportation and land use in a long-needed, comprehensive development vision for Baltimore that includes emergency measures to provide permanently affordable housing?**

A necessary precondition for making Transit Oriented Development (TOD) work is a reliable transportation system. For the last two decades, we have not had a mayor who cares about this. I am committed to being that mayor, who actually cares about getting people to work and around the city, to work within the region and state. Although neighborhoods outside white L not well served by public transit, there are light rail stops that go through Upton and Park Heights. As Mayor, I will direct resources that focus the City’s development efforts in those neighborhoods that can both support long-disinvested neighborhoods and TOD. This investment is necessary on to not only equitably revitalize neighborhoods, but also mitigate the impacts of climate change, which disproportionately affect the health of low-income and people of color.

As Mayor, I will improve the current scheme of TOD, in addition to further financial incentivize to spur TOD in historically disinvested neighborhoods; “development without displacement.”

**8. Fair Development also demands that the City redress the harms of racism and predatory capitalism in the City’s non-participatory budgeting process, the lack of access to capital among Black households and businesses, and the long history of exploitation in the workplace. Will you advance *fair development in budgeting, banking, and the workplace*? If so, will those policies include A) implementing a participatory and/or legislative budgeting process, B) prioritizing worker co-ops in City contracts, and C) conducting a feasibility study of a public bank in Baltimore City?**

As Mayor I will make all decisions from an equity lens. I have led the Baltimore City Council in the fight for policies rooted in equity and have passed legislation (including a successful charter amendment) to enshrine equity as a key value in Baltimore City governance and policy. I introduced and passed a ground-breaking charter amendment to establish an Equity Assistance Fund. I also passed legislation requiring all City agencies to analyze all funding and policy decisions through a framework of equity and undergo equity training.

#### *Fair Development in the Workplace*

I commit to advancing policies that support workers, including: advancing a mandatory hiring benchmark of city residents for City contracts. A hiring benchmark of at least 25% Baltimore City residents needs to be done in a way that does not disadvantage small businesses trying to get a hold in their industry. We all know the current system has too many loopholes. I commit to

implementing more straightforward local hiring requirements, among other new regulations, for all City contracts.

The surest way to bring economic opportunity to more Baltimoreans is by supporting good, union careers that pay honest, family-supporting wages. That is why as Council President I have introduced legislation that would mandate Project Labor Agreements, also known as community workforce agreements, on some City contracts. These agreements would ensure that the City's valuable contracting dollars go to support good wages and benefits, opportunity for Baltimore residents, workforce training, and other community benefits.

Best value bidding is a promising alternative approach, which would allow the City to more thoroughly embed its policy priorities into the procurement process, rather than having elements like local hire and apprenticeships serve as an afterthought. I will support legislation that amends the City Charter to allow for this procurement process while also instructing all relevant agencies to begin piloting best value bidding wherever possible and permitted by law.

#### *Worker Cooperatives*

Worker co-operatives as a model hold a lot of potential for inclusive economic development, but have never been fully embraced by the City of Baltimore as part of a holistic economic development strategy. In addition to providing democratic working conditions and a living wage, worker co-ops can also provide opportunities for people with criminal records who experience discrimination in the job market. Core Staffing Cooperative is a great example of a local employee-owned business that provides second chances for residents who have returned to their communities for prison. These businesses are typically mission-driven and can yield positive impacts on our environment and our communities.

As Mayor, I would incentivize the creation of more worker co-ops by first officially recognizing employee-owned businesses as a component of my economic development strategy. Public awareness of worker co-ops in Baltimore is minimal. Business owners and entrepreneurs cannot take advantage of the potential benefits that employee-owned businesses bring if they don't know about the model. I will also focus on lessening the red tape and legal barriers these businesses face. I'll explore how city government can provide legal and technical assistance to those looking to establish these democratic and family-sustaining ventures, particularly in our economically-disadvantaged neighborhoods.

Additionally, a significant number of Baltimore's small businesses are owned by people who will be retiring. Rather than those businesses closing down, employees could be given the option to become worker-owners — helping keep that economic benefit in our local community. As Mayor, I will work with the Baltimore Development Corporation and other entities to ensure retiring businesses have information about how to transition into employee ownership.

#### *Public Banking*

I would absolutely support a feasibility study on a Baltimore City public bank. I am encouraged by public banking efforts like that of North Dakota, and those proposed by the democratic party



of the West Virginia legislature. As we've seen time and again, from the Great Recession of 2008, to how banks are currently distributing PPP funds, these large institutions are still - no matter what Mary Miller claims- "too big to fail." (This is the same woman who spent nearly three decades in the bond industry, one of the most extractive, and corrupt, financial sectors in this country.) These banks do not understand the needs of our City, nor are they significantly invested in the financial well-being of our City. I am tired of these institutions leveraging extractive fiscal requirements on our city's finances, in everything from bond issuances, to TIFs, to simple home mortgages.

**9. Baltimore renters are often forced to live in substandard rental housing with mold infestation being one of the more dangerous and unaddressed issues. Some cities like Washington D.C., are exploring comprehensive mold regulations. Other jurisdictions have more rigorous rental licensing laws that do not allow the landlord to choose and hire the inspector charged with inspecting the property before the landlord can get a license. *How would you address the serious threats to life, health and safety in Baltimore's rental housing?***

It is unacceptable that Baltimoreans are often forced to live in substandard rental housing that threatens their health and safety. That is why I supported Councilman Henry's rental inspection legislation. As Mayor, I will continue to support state legislation and local ordinances that keep households safe from mold. I am open to alternatives that keep Baltimoreans safe: be it stepped up inspection regimes, code enforcement fines for buildings with mold issues, and remediation programs to help renters and homeowners make their living spaces safe and healthy.

**10. Decades of racial segregation and disinvestment have produced neighborhood and housing conditions that have a negative impact on the physical and mental health of many Baltimore residents every day. The major health institutions in our city can play a more active role in addressing these issues, in partnership with City government and community-based organizations. Please describe how you as mayor will better align health institutions' support for making measurable improvements in City neighborhood and housing conditions?**

We all know that our current health institutions are working overtime to keep us safe during this pandemic. However, it is critical that we better align these institutions programs with demonstrable positive health improvements for Baltimoreans. Too often, these institutions focus on outputs, not outcomes. The surveys these institutions submit to maintain their non-profit status report on metrics that do not demonstrate any long-term positive health impacts for our neighbors.

As I mentioned in my crime plan, I am committed to trauma informed care that treats crime as a public health crisis. I will be calling on these institutions to create community response teams to



respond and follow up to individuals connected to crime and violence. I will also pursue legislation that strengthens reporting requirements that report on sustained positive physical and mental health outcomes in our communities. Finally, I will no longer accept community health needs assessments from institutions with metrics that track the interventions and comprehensive resources the same institutions plan to use to address the dramatic health disparities that are documented over and over again.

I will look to these institutions to invest in programs with demonstrable impacts like the UMMS + Fire Department pilot program to provide wrap around health and social service support to high volume utilizers of the ER department.

Finally, it is important that we include in the discussion an understanding and analysis of the historical impact these institutions have had on Baltimore communities, both positive and negative. For equity to be achieved, these institutions must be intentional about helping remedy past harm and promote future healing.