

Michael “Mike” Weems
At-Large Council Candidate

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1. What are your top three goals for the city in the next four years (term of office)?

We are going to bring a new style of leadership and vision to our city and make it an even better place for everyone. What can you expect from me? I will: do my best, do what’s right, and do what I can to help others.

Our youth is our future and we need to make sure they understand their importance and value in our community. We will be actively involved in their educational and recreational development by being a strong voice for the teachers, parents, and most importantly our children. We will focus on improving and maintaining existing recreational facilities, as well as exploring the possibilities for new additions.

We are proud of the downtown area and the Depot District and would like to see them continue to grow and thrive. We would like to see development and growth in other areas of the city, such as Highways 90 and 603. Those areas are large and have great potential for development and growth, which will help increase tax revenue while serving the people.

The safety and security of our community is vital to our well-being and future growth and development. We will do all that we can to support and provide resources for our new police Chief Darren Freeman and fire Chief Monty Strong and the departments they serve.

2. How would you foster cooperation between the City Council and Mayor?

As a longtime educator, who has coached five different sports, I know how important teamwork and unity are to accomplishing common goals. The City Council and Mayor must have clear and concise expectations, open lines of communication, and full transparency are a must in order to succeed. Every discussion we have and every decision we make must be focused on one question, “What is in the best interest of ALL parties involved?”

3. What measures would you support to increase the city’s revenue?

We have to find creative ways to increase the city’s revenue through smart growth and development and by making sure all tax dollars are being spent wisely. We will continue to support the growth in the residential real estate market. We need to encourage variety in commercial development to help keep more of our tax dollars in our city rather than

flowing out to our neighboring cities and states. Another way to help generate revenue would be to increase activities and festivals that would bring in tourists and entertain our community.

4. List three ways you would foster support of and communication with the city's appointed commissions (Planning and Zoning, Harbor and Historic Preservation).

In order to foster and support communication between the City Council and its appointed Commissions, there should be clear and concise expectations between all parties involved. It is very important that copies of meeting agendas and minutes be shared with everyone. The City Council and these Commissions should work together and make sure the main focus remains on our city and serving the community.

5. What are your ideas for preserving our community's unique character while supporting residential and business growth?

We are one of the fastest growing cities in Mississippi and have been voted one of the coolest small towns in America. When you think of Bay St. Louis certain characteristics come to mind, such as peaceful, small home town feeling, diversity, safe, fun, and friendly. Every decision we make about residential and business growth must consider these qualities and what is best for everyone.

6. What actions can the city take now to maximize benefits when it becomes a stop on the future Amtrak route?

Minimal participation in Amtrak ridership in the past caused the Bay St. Louis stop to be cancelled. More research needs to be done to see if our stop would be viable and what actions can be taken to maximize the benefits.

7. Should the city provide financial support to economic development organizations like the Hancock Chamber and Hancock County Tourism? Support your answer.

We should continue to provide financial support, security and other resources, as needed, to the Hancock Chamber and Hancock County Tourism, especially during local events.

Bay St. Louis benefits from both of these organizations and therefore we must continue to work closely with them.

8. What importance do you place on proposed community amenities such as a swimming pool, additional bicycle paths and dog parks?

We would fully support the opportunities for additional amenities in our city, such as a swimming pool, additional bike paths, dog parks, etc. These types of facilities are important to the recreational development of our citizens. Everyone in our city should have the opportunity to be involved in different types of recreational activities. How many people are involved in community activities such as soccer, football, baseball, basketball, tennis, arts, music, dance, etc.? We must find a way to improve these opportunities and facilities by considering the possibility of a full-time parks and recreation department.

9. What is your position on the possibility of the Hancock County Sheriff's Department managing the BSL Police Department. State the advantages and/or disadvantages you foresee.

We are in full favor of the city of Bay St. Louis maintaining control of the police department. Our new Chief of Police, Darren Freeman, has the leadership ability and background to transform our department. We would like to see more visibility and a greater officer presence throughout all areas of the city.

10. The number of golf carts on city streets continues to grow. How should golf cart use be regulated?

Safety is of utmost importance, not just for golf carts, but for all parties involved. Our city has rules and regulations in place regarding the use of low speed vehicles or golf carts. Citizens need to be aware of these rules and need to be held responsible for following them. Our police department must be consistent in enforcing those rules.

11. As the city grows do you think it should consider changing its present form of government? Explain your answer. *Note: The page on our Serve BSL website contains information and resources that might be helpful in answering this question.*

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As our city grows we have to look closely at our present form of government. We need to evaluate the pros and cons of keeping our current form of government, or consider moving towards the council-city manager form of government. The current form of government could be successful if all parties involved work together as a TEAM. We need to improve lines of communication and make sure that every decision made is in the best interest of everyone.