

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

- Establish and maintain internal controls and best practices for city finances.
- Restore the city's reputation to attract more residents and businesses.
- Sponsor change to provide a more useful form of government for the city.

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

The mayor and the city council have two very separate and distinct jobs in the strong mayor-council form of government that we have in Bay St. Louis. Also, we have a new group coming in, so let's start on the right foot together.

The mayor is the administrator. She hires the department heads and supervisors, she makes sure that the laws and ordinances the council has passed are followed, she is responsible for the city's checkbook. Her fiduciary duty is to each citizen of the city.

The councilmen form the legislative branch of our government. They write the ordinances that establish how we live in our city; they write the budget and give it to the mayor. They should be very specific with that budget.

As I've said before, each should stay in their own lane. Do your own job and no one else's, just as with any other employer. There are times one will ask for help from the other. That's the cooperation we need and desperately lack. The mayor's job is enormous; you pay more than \$80,000 a year plus benefits for this work. I plan on doing it well. That will take all my time.

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

As an accountant, my first reaction will always be to reduce spending.

That's the largest piece the mayor can control. Do not waste money. That said, one person's waste is on the next person's must-have list. It's a delicate balance. Do you hire within or do you outsource? Do we want a swimming pool or a dog park, if we can choose only one? When an employee leaves, do we rehire, or can we live without that position? The list goes on and on. (cont. next page)

**Rachael Ramsey**  
***Mayoral Candidate***

2 of 7

We should have an inviting city to both business and residents. Our taxes and utilities should be as low as possible, while providing quality services. Our infrastructure should be serviced and maintained to get the longest life and provide the best possible services.

We must shift from the dependence on FEMA money, block grants, and fluctuating casino revenue to the stability of spending what we make from our tax base. Building tax base is the business of government.

There are other measures we can take. We collect the lowest per-machine fee from our casino of any city in the state, \$100 a year. Most get \$150 plus 3.2%. Why don't we? That's a lot of money left on the table. Almost all homeowner's insurance policies will pay the fire department \$500 when they are called out; we don't collect that money. Why not?

We should stay out of the way of business wherever possible. That's not always possible, so we must also be prepared to make the tough choices. The recently passed noise ordinance is an example.

We need to figure out what it is we need, insofar as businesses go. I doubt any of us feel we need another restaurant, bar, or nail salon, especially the owners of existing ones. After the storm, Mississippi State did a study of how to merge services with Waveland and Bay St. Louis. It cost us nothing, but could be worth a fortune if we decide to use it. We might need to go back and look at the help we got then. Of course, that study will need to be refreshed, but there are some fundamentals that stay in place.

Take the city out of the real estate business. Sell buildings and land we are not using or that is unnecessary and put them back on the tax rolls. Every time you pass a government building, remember: that is a tax-free parcel, be it City Hall, the Courthouse, the largely unused parking garage/party room, the Garden Center, the library, the hospital. Some are necessary, others not.

Finally, the job of business is largely that of business. When government is asked to step in and provide assistance, we can look at any proposal. And we will.

**4. As the city grows, what should be the mayor's role in managing the enforcement of current city ordinances (ex: zoning), codes (ex: building codes) and possible future ordinances (ex: noise, golf cart, and vacation rentals)?**

The mayor's role doesn't change as the city grows or shrinks. The council passes legislation, the mayor supervises the enforcement of those laws and ordinances. The number of people needed to keep the city safe and provide other services would naturally grow with the population. We have to watch trends and respond with budgeted actions.

The police department and the building department bear the burden of enforcement. We have a new Chief of Police getting settled in and doing a great job. He's having to do the job with 2-3 fewer patrol persons than we need to due to unfilled vacancies That may not sound like many, but we have a small force to begin with, so it's a decent percentage. They have the added responsibility of patrolling the harbor. I think the harbor should have its own security and pay for it. When festivals, parades, and other special events come in, they should have to pay for their own security.

The building department has been a sore subject for quite some time. We have had an interim Building Official for years. He has not passed his Building Official certification examination. And there was the unfortunate DUI incident that is still in litigation, though he does drive city vehicles under the city's insurance. Especially with the number of new homes going up, we need a fully qualified permanent Building Official. In my administration, you'll have one. Quickly.

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

That preservation is what is behind our zoning ordinances, our building department, our historic district, our planning and zoning commission.

A problem these days is bar creep, for lack of a better term. A friend of mine in Biloxi says they call us the Town of Barrooms. Ouch.

I have no issue with bars, restaurants serving alcohol, or temporary ABC permits for festivals. However, when licenses are granted in residential neighborhoods, no good will come to anyone involved. To the best of my knowledge, the only way to find out if

there's a beer or liquor license coming to your neighborhood is to read the legal notices in the Sea Coast Echo twice a week without fail. That's not right.

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

The City of Bay St. Louis was awarded a \$55,000 grant for canopy, trackside, and disability access improvements to be made in 2017 over a 24-month period from Southern Rail Commission. We are committed by this administration to match this grant. Since the Trump administration is planning to cancel several Amtrak routes, including ours, this should be put on the back burner for now.

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

Your examples are very different.

I have never been in favor of financially supporting dues-required, high salary-paying organizations like the Chamber of Commerce. While they may do good work, they are there for their membership, and their members should provide their support, not the government. If they choose to perform services in the city, it is their choice. It's interesting that most businesses want government to keep away, but the Chamber comes with their hands open every year. I would say the same for the Rotary, or any other private club or organization. Government is here to serve the public.

Hancock County Tourism is local, at the Depot and funded by the Silver Slipper, BSL, and Waveland. The Hancock County Tourism Development Bureau is a county group. The two percent room tax in Hancock County, approximately \$140,000 a year, has gone to the Development Bureau in the past. Beginning in October 2017, it will go to the MS Gulf Coast Regional Convention and Visitor's Bureau. The Convention Bureau handles Cruising, so have no worries there. We are a stamped city, and that costs \$20,000. I can't find that line item in our budget, but it should be there. This is the number one event for most of our downtown businesses, and great for the city as a whole. I know Hancock County Tourism was at a recent council meeting talking about their future and money, but

no decisions were made that I am aware of. Maybe we need a local commission and volunteers to man the phones. I don't see this as a place for salaried positions.

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

In order to attract families, we need to offer at least the recreation facilities other cities have.

When we had a Parks and Recreation Commission several years ago, I sat on it. Several ideas were discussed, but it became clear that two members from prominent families wanted a splash pad, and that was that. I wanted to use the \$250,000 for a pool, or towards one. There's nothing wrong with the splash pad; it does, however, serve a very limited group. We are a waterfront community with nowhere to teach swimming. Outside of the recreational and health benefits, I think swimming lessons here are a necessary part of life. Dog parks have been a hot issue lately; a great idea that a grant should be written for. Grants are available.

Think of all the "free" money that's come through this city since the storm. Why has it been used for the few, as it was with the marina, instead of the general public? When was the last time you used the harbor?

**9. What importance do you place on beautification in general and on the highway gateways coming into our city?**

Any city wants to put its best foot forward when company is coming. We always look good. I'd like to see us invest in lower maintenance ground covers, such as day lilies or wildflowers. Grass isn't the only way to cover a larger expanse, and there are choices that don't require the constant cost of mowing.

Blight continues in Bay St Louis. We have done two or three inventories of blighted properties, and have asked for another. These are expensive. Why can't we use the latest one? I'll appoint a committee with two members from each ward to report the blight in

their ward. No one knows better than the people living with it. I'll ask the council to act on these properties immediately. It's been too long already.

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

Safety is the issue, obviously. From what I've seen on our streets, fewer than half the carts have seat belts, lights, a licensed driver, and license plates. Some are driven by children. Some have sober drivers, some have not. Rented golf carts often have no license plates or seat belts. Some people install huge speakers that make a ton of noise. Imagine the lawsuit against the city when someone is hurt or worse in an uninsured golf cart on our city streets. It's just a matter of time.

Make the rules, share the rules, enforce the rules equally.

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

More than half the cities in the country use the council-manager form of government today. We need to be one of them.

Since the 1970s, we have used the strong mayor-council form; today, ten of the three hundred cities in Mississippi use it. The division of powers is addressed by giving the mayor administration and coordination duties, while the council is concerned with considering and writing laws and ordinances. That's a good thing. In reality, they tend to step on each others' toes. We've witnessed that for much too long. The mayor is elected. If that person is a strong politician, but not a strong administrator, there are problems like the ones we have now.

In the council-manager form, the manager is hired, as any other employee, to take on the administrative tasks. She is hired by the council and answers to the council. She does not have veto power. Likewise, she can be fired by the council. Finally, she is a professional.

**Rachael Ramsey**  
***Mayoral Candidate***

7 of 7

Resumes are submitted, interviews are held, and the best candidate gets the job. If she doesn't work out, she loses her job and another manager is hired. This is similar to a Chief Administrative Officer and the Board of Directors of a business. A member of the council is the "mayor" for ceremonial purposes, similar to the current way we name a president of council.

Think about it. Have you ever seen the mayor's resume, or the councilman-at-large's? Mine is on my website, [MayorRachael.com](http://MayorRachael.com). Does it make sense to run our city based on who has the most signs up? Or who has the right last name or brother? Or who buys newspaper ads, has expensive parties, has water bottles printed with their last name? If you own or run a business, is this how you hire? Of course not, yet every four years, we do this as a city. Let's grow, let's change, let's improve our business model.

Everyone thinks they understand budgets and financial statements. They don't. That's why every business larger than a mom and pop has at least one accountant. The rules for government accounting are much different than businesses. Fund accounting is required to be used by governments. Think of the issues we've had with funds.

I hope to win the Bay's last mayoral race as its first female mayor, then work my way out of a job in the next four years, help to straighten out the mess we have now, and gradually work our way to hiring our first city manager after changing our form of government.