

What the Atlanta Taxpayers Expect Of Their New Mayor

Atlanta's new Mayor is facing the massive challenge of turning-around a City that is on the verge of bankruptcy. Unfunded Pension Funds totaling \$1.2 billion; the Water & Sewer Infrastructure at \$4.1 billion; the City Bond Rating downgraded to a level next to "Junk Bonds"; property tax millage at one of the highest in the country, 10.12; water fees so costly that a growing number of residents and businesses can no longer afford water; a series of audits confirm the gross mismanagement of our City.

What do the Atlanta Taxpayers expect of their new Mayor?

1. A Professional Audit of the Entire City's Finances:

In fairness to the taxpayers and the new Mayor, there must be a professional audit of the entire City's finances, including the General Fund, Special Revenue Funds, Debt Service Fund, Capital Projects Fund, Enterprise Funds, Internal Service Fund, and Trust & Agency Funds. With the differing financial variations and internal transfer of massive funds from one department to another, a professional audit will highlight the true problems facing the taxpayers and the new Mayor.

2. The Appointment of the Best and the Brightest:

To turn-around a billion dollar operation will require the appointment of the best and the brightest professional team: Chief of Staff, Chief Operating Officer, Chief Financial Officer, Airport Director, Department Heads including the City Attorney, Police Chief, Human Resources, Intergovernmental Affairs, Procurement, Watershed Management, etc., all must be replaced with far more professional managers. This in itself is a massive undertaking and the new Mayor should have the advice of a Blue-Ribbon Business Council including Bernie Marcus (retired CEO of Home Depot), Neville Isdell (Chairman of the Board of Coca-Cola), Martin L. Flanagan (CEO, Invesco), David Ratcliffe (CEO, Southern Company), Michael Eskew (retired CEO, UPS), etc.

3. Outsourcing City Services:

During the past seven years, the Taxpayers Foundation has consistently urged the adoption of the City's Turn-around Plan "critical priority", outsourcing with the City employees competing with the private firms to achieve "significant savings." The Turnaround Plan listed 12 major City services, with the potential savings of each: Residential Waste Collection at a potential savings of 60%; Fleet Management & Maintenance, 38%; Airport Management & Operations, 40%; Recreational Facilities Management & Operations, 52%; Road Maintenance, 50%; Wastewater Treatment, 30%; Water, 25%. The potential savings to the taxpayers is calculated at \$189 million annually.

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4. Adopting Performance-Based Metrics For Every City Job:

The City of Atlanta employs 8,300. Too many are under-performing. By adopting Performance-Based Metrics, the new Mayor will be able to cull out the under-performing employees and award the over-performing. With the average City employee earning \$32,000 (plus 34% benefits), the potential savings to the taxpayers could be over \$50 million annually.

5. Rescinding the Retro-Active Pension Benefits:

When, in 2005, the City Council increased the Pension Benefits, it included retro-active benefits with the multiplier of three. Many attorneys feel that the retro-active portion of this legislation is illegal. With the shortfall of \$1.2 billion in the City's Pension Funds, the new Mayor should have this reviewed by a top-notch attorney firm specializing in Pension Fund laws.

The Taxpayers Foundation extends its fullest cooperation to the new Mayor. Many Atlanta taxpayers are retired and would be pleased to help the new Mayor. For example, several years ago, six Professional Engineers – members of the Fulton County Taxpayers Foundation – volunteered to do a value-engineering study of the Water & Sewer Infrastructure contracts – pro bono. Their offer was refused by Mayor Franklin, but the need for professional oversight is more important today than ever before. The professional oversight should also require accountants for oversight of the City's finances, airport experts for oversight of Hartsfield-Jackson, personnel executives for oversight of the City's Human Resources, etc.

The turn-around of the City of Atlanta is a daunting challenge. The Atlanta taxpayers wish the new Mayor every success

John S. Sherman



President, Fulton County Taxpayers Foundation

**Early Voting is November 23rd, 24th
and 25th. Absentee ballots are due, be-
cause of the Holiday, November 18th.**

Call our office for locations!

This is the most important vote
Atlanta has had in *decades!* Make
your voices heard on
December 1st!