

Ranking the Mount Vernon Candidates for City Council and City Comptroller Spring 2021

	3/31/2021		5/1/2021		6/1/2021	
City Council Candidate Rankings	Raw Score	Percent Favorable	Raw Score	Percent Favorable	Raw Score	Percent Favorable
Lucio, Nicole	38	84%				
Browne, Danielle	37	82%				
Poteat, Edward	35	78%				
Cannata, Gregory	31	69%				
Wallace, Andre	29	64%				
Carter, Lauren	27	60%				
Gleason, Cathlin	27	60%				
Marable, Hope	26	58%				
Farquharson, Delia	25	56%				
Duarte, Janice	23	51%				
Harper, Kim	0	0%				
Lenci, Marc	0	0%				
	3/31/2021		5/1/2021		6/1/2021	
Comptroller Candidate Rankings	Raw Score	Percent Favorable	Raw Score	Percent Favorable	Raw Score	Percent Favorable
Lawrence, Derickson	39	87%				
Morton, Darren	27	60%				
Griffith, Marcus A.	25	56%				
Thomas, Richard	23	51%				
Percent Favorable: The maximum score including bonus points is 45. A raw score of 45 yields a 100% favorable rating.						

City of Mount Vernon Candidate Scorecard

Candidate Name & Position Seeking	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
	1	2	3	4	5
Temperament					0
Leadership Skills					0
Honesty & Ethics					0
Adheres to Principles over Politics					0
Relevant Financial Experience					0
Communication Skills					0
Endorsements					0
Electability					0
Point Deductions					
Democratic Party Endorsement	-2			Most Favorable score in Relevant Financial Experience	3
Current Mt. Vernon Elected Official	-3			Relevant advanced education	2
Uses Campaign Distortion/Misinformation Tactics	-4			Total Deductions + Bonus Points	
Relevant Criminal Convictions	-8			Candidate's Final Score:	0

City of Mount Vernon

Candidate Scorecard

Definitions

Temperament- Emotionality interferes with analytical thinking and reasonable judgement. Emotional displays of anger, annoyance, and impatience, for example, are not favorable leadership qualities. Emotions *that are favorable* include a positive affect even during times of stress, light-heartedness even when tasks and interactions are difficult, compassion, and empathy. When public speaking, displays of positive emotions such as passion for a cause, a principle, a position, or to generate motivation is a favorable characteristic. If there is no evidence for higher/lower scores, the candidate will receive a score of 3.

Leadership Skills- a demonstrated ability to solve problems should inspire and motivate those around the candidate to achieve at a high level. Effective leaders "step up and step in" when problems arise. In fact, this is when outstanding leaders thrive. In the absence of compelling evidence of leadership skills, candidates will receive an initial score of 3 in Leadership Skills.

Honesty & Ethics- candidates for elected office should be models of honesty and ethical behavior. Candidates receive a score of 5 in this category unless there is clear evidence showing dishonesty or unethical behavior.

Adheres to Principles over Politics- this means that the candidate is not likely to change their principles for political reasons. For example, if a candidate changes a position in exchange for a union or party endorsement, that should generate an unfavorable score in this category. If there is no evidence to support higher/lower scores, the candidate will receive a score of 3.

Relevant Financial Experience- this may include 1) a business owner or corporate employee with direct responsibility for some or all aspects of financial operations, 2) a financial consultant, 3) a CPA, 4) a fraud investigator, or 5) a government employee with financial oversight functions. If there is no evidence to support higher/lower scores, the candidate will receive a score of 3. **Note:** candidates scoring a 5 in Relevant Financial Experience ("most favorable") will receive an additional 3 point bonus to recognize the relative importance of this skill set to the City of Mount Vernon at this time.

Communication Skills- this is a measure of the candidate's ability to speak and write clearly and persuasively. Examples include: public speaking, one-one interviews with journalists, one-one interactions with citizens, debates with other candidates, panel discussions, invited talks/presentations, and published writings such as periodical opinion pieces, journal articles, books. **Note:** a candidate *might* receive a favorable score in Communication Skills even if the voter does not agree with the candidate's position, if the candidate articulates their position clearly and supports it with evidence (even if that evidence does not persuade the voter).

Endorsements- A candidate with no endorsements receives a score of 3. Endorsements from current/former elected officials, unions, or political parties can increase or decrease a candidate's favorability score. Endorsements from political parties and unions are largely transactional. If a voter's interests are not in alignment with the political interests of the union or the party giving the endorsement, the candidate's favorability score for Endorsements will go down. **NOTE:** candidates endorsed by the local Democratic Party receive a 2 point deduction from their final score.

City of Mount Vernon
Candidate Scorecard
Definitions

Electability- Current and past elected officials, candidates who have demonstrated electability in other ways (e.g., selected to leadership roles in public commissions and committees), and candidates with party or union endorsements are likely to receive more favorable Electability scores than candidates who have run for elected office in the past but have lost, or candidates about whom there is relatively little public information available.

Point Deductions

Democratic Party Endorsement (-2 points). a candidate who accepts an endorsement from the local Democratic Party will receive a 2 point deduction from their final score. This is done to reflect my view that the Democratic Party serves the narrow interests of it's leadership above the interests of the voting public.

Current Elected Official (-3 points). Given the extreme dysfunction in our current City Government, across multiple election cycles, current elected officials running for re-election will receive a 3 point deduction from their final score.

Uses Campaign Distortion/Misinformation Tactics (-4). if a candidate does not denounce and discourage his/her supporters from waging proxy social media campaigns using unsubstantiated rumors and false claims against political rivals, the candidate will receive a 4 point deduction from their final score.

Relevant Criminal Convictions (-8). Relevant crimes would include (but are not limited to) financial crimes, violent crimes, fraud, and crimes committed while acting in the capacity of an elected official.

Bonus Points

Most Favorable Score in Relevant Financial Experience (3 point bonus). Given the complexity of our current fiscal situation, and the fact that significant new public monies will flow into the city from the federal government (e.g., Economic Recovery funds and increases in funding to the US Dept. Housing & Urban Development that will increase funding to the City's Urban Renewal Agency), a heavy premium is placed on candidates with the most favorable financial experience. Therefore, a 3 point bonus will be added to their final scores of these candidates.

Relevant Advanced Education (2 point bonus). Advanced education would include post Bachelor's Degree academic training (e.g, Master's Degree, Doctoral Degree), or trade certifications (e.g., in finance, in fraud investigation). Relevance is determined on a case by case basis. For example, a Master's Degree in Art History would not be deemed relevant, but a Law Degree might if the candidate has relevant experience to go along with the advanced degree.

City of Mount Vernon Candidate Scorecard

Danielle Browne City Council	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
	1	2	3	4	5
Temperament				4	
Leadership Skills				4	
Honesty & Ethics					5
Adheres to Principles over Politics				4	
Relevant Financial Experience					5
Communication Skills				4	
Endorsements			3		
Electability			3		
Point Deductions		Bonus Points			
Democratic Party Endorsement		Most Favorable score in Relevant Financial Experience			3
Current Mt. Vernon Elected Official		Relevant advanced education			2
Uses Campaign Distortion/Misinformation Tactics		Total Deductions + Bonus Points			5
Relevant Criminal Convictions		Candidate's Final Score:			37

March 31, 2021: Ms. Browne is a strong candidate with great credentials and highly relevant experience including co-chair of the police reform commission. Ms. Browne presented the police reform commission's report (along w/a panel of guests) on Mayor Patterson-Howard's weekly FB Live show "Sundays with Shawyn" on March 14, 2021. Her presentation style was compelling; she presented the information clearly, concisely, and with a sense of urgency. I look forward to learning more about Ms. Browne.

City of Mount Vernon Candidate Scorecard

Gregory Cannata City Council	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
	1	2	3	4	5
Temperament				4	
Leadership Skills			3		
Honesty & Ethics					5
Adheres to Principles over Politics				4	
Relevant Financial Experience			3		
Communication Skills			3		
Endorsements				4	
Electability			3		
Point Deductions		Bonus Points			
Democratic Party Endorsement		Most Favorable score in Relevant Financial Experience			
Current Mt. Vernon Elected Official		Relevant advanced education			2
Uses Campaign Distortion/Misinformation Tactics		Total Deductions + Bonus Points			2
Relevant Criminal Convictions		Candidate's Final Score:			31

April 1, 2021: Mr. Cannata is personal injury lawyer and a former Bronx assistant district attorney. He serves on the Mount Vernon Board of Ethics. I have not seen him speak or interact in a public forum and I have not read anything that he has published. He did reach out to me (via a comment on a Nextdoor post I made) to say that he would sign my “Candidate Commitment” during petitioning. I bumped his score for "Adheres to Principles over Politics" up to “favorable” to acknowledge that commitment.

City of Mount Vernon Candidate Scorecard

Lauren Carter City Council	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
	1	2	3	4	5
Temperament				4	
Leadership Skills			3		
Honesty & Ethics					5
Adheres to Principles over Politics			3		
Relevant Financial Experience			3		
Communication Skills				4	
Endorsements	1				
Electability				4	
Point Deductions		Bonus Points			
Democratic Party Endorsement	-2	Most Favorable score in Relevant Financial Experience			
Current Mt. Vernon Elected Official		Relevant advanced education			2
Uses Campaign Distortion/Misinformation Tactics		Total Deductions + Bonus Points			0
Relevant Criminal Convictions		Candidate's Final Score:			27

April 1, 2021: Ms. Carter is a former Mount Vernon Deputy City Clerk. She is endorsed by the local Democratic Party which results in a 2 point deduction on my scorecard. Former City Clerk George Brown has endorsed her as well, but that endorsement does not increase her final score on my card. Ms. Carter worked as Deputy Clerk for 9yrs before being terminated in January 2020 for what appears to be political reasons.

City of Mount Vernon Candidate Scorecard

Janice Duarte City Council	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
	1	2	3	4	5
Temperament					5
Leadership Skills		2			
Honesty & Ethics					5
Adheres to Principles over Politics			3		
Relevant Financial Experience		2			
Communication Skills					5
Endorsements	1				
Electability					5
Point Deductions		Bonus Points			
Democratic Party Endorsement	-2	Most Favorable score in Relevant Financial Experience			
Current Mt. Vernon Elected Official	-3	Relevant advanced education			
Uses Campaign Distortion/Misinformation Tactics		Total Deductions + Bonus Points			-5
Relevant Criminal Convictions		Candidate's Final Score:			23

April 1, 2021: Ms. Duarte is articulate about her views and has a great temperament. This is particularly relevant when you consider the interpersonal drama and conflict that exists around her at City Hall. However, she is an incumbent and she is endorsed by the local Democratic Party, both of which result in deductions on my scorecard.

City of Mount Vernon Candidate Scorecard

Delia Farquharson City Council	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
	1	2	3	4	5
Temperament			3		
Leadership Skills		2			
Honesty & Ethics					5
Adheres to Principles over Politics					5
Relevant Financial Experience		2			
Communication Skills				4	
Endorsements	1				
Electability			3		
Point Deductions		Bonus Points			
Democratic Party Endorsement		Most Favorable score in Relevant Financial Experience			
Current Mt. Vernon Elected Official	-2	Relevant advanced education		2	
Uses Campaign Distortion/Misinformation Tactics		Total Deductions + Bonus Points		0	
Relevant Criminal Convictions		Candidate's Final Score:		25	

April 1, 2021: Ms. Farquharson is an incumbent, which results in a 2-point deduction on my scorecard. I like that Ms. Farquharson often acts independently and stands on principle even when this puts her out of synch with other members of the council. I think this can be a good counterbalance when there is pressure to "go along to get along". Her advanced degree in social work is relevant and increases her final score by 2 points on my scorecard.

City of Mount Vernon Candidate Scorecard

Cathlin Gleason City Council	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
	1	2	3	4	5
Temperament			3		
Leadership Skills				4	
Honesty & Ethics					5
Adheres to Principles over Politics				4	
Relevant Financial Experience			3		
Communication Skills			3		
Endorsements		2			
Electability			3		
Point Deductions		Bonus Points			
Democratic Party Endorsement		Most Favorable score in Relevant Financial Experience			
Current Mt. Vernon Elected Official		Relevant advanced education			
Uses Campaign Distortion/Misinformation Tactics		Total Deductions + Bonus Points			0
Relevant Criminal Convictions		Candidate's Final Score:			27

April 1, 2021: Ms. Gleason serves as a trustee of the Mount Vernon Public library and she is active in a variety of social and charitable causes in the community. These are good things. It appears she should have received the backing of the local Democratic Party, but the endorsement went to Lauren Carter instead. In my view, Ms. Gleason is better off without the local Democratic Party endorsement. It saves her from a 2-point deduction on my scorecard. I do have concerns about Ms. Gleason's temperament and her close relationship with former Mount Vernon Mayor Ernie Davis. In a video from 2015, Ms. Gleason describes Mr. Davis as a "second father" to her and for a few moments she becomes apoplectic in her support for him. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eoeu_X5Exk I assume Mr. Davis endorses Ms. Gleason and for this reason, on my scorecard, her "Endorsements" score drops to "unfavorable", but her "Adheres to Principles over Politics" increases to "favorable".

City of Mount Vernon Candidate Scorecard

Nicole Lucio City Council	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
	1	2	3	4	5
Temperament				4	
Leadership Skills				4	
Honesty & Ethics					5
Adheres to Principles over Politics					5
Relevant Financial Experience					5
Communication Skills				4	
Endorsements			3		
Electability			3		
Point Deductions			Bonus Points		
Democratic Party Endorsement			Most Favorable score in Relevant Financial Experience		3
Current Mt. Vernon Elected Official			Relevant advanced education		2
Uses Campaign Distortion/Misinformation Tactics			Total Deductions + Bonus Points		5
Relevant Criminal Convictions			Candidate's Final Score:		38

April 1, 2021: Ms. Lucio is an impressive candidate with excellent credentials. She serves on the Mount Vernon Board of Ethics. She is a financial consultant with a Master's Degree in Public Administration. I had the opportunity to speak with Ms. Lucio during the petitioning phase of the campaign. She called me regarding the "Candidate Commitment" document I made. In the end, she did not sign the Candidate Commitment. Her reasons for not signing have to do with the 3rd principle of the Candidate Commitment, which reads as follows:

"I commit to fiscal transparency. I will work to ensure that detailed actual City expenditures are made available to the public at least quarterly. By 'detailed' I mean line by line actual expenses for each department and each budget line code in the approved City budget."

As I recall and discussed with my wife immediately after the call, Ms. Lucio had 2 concerns with fiscal transparency principle. First, Ms. Lucio was concerned that I'd hold her accountable for something she doesn't necessarily control. Second, she wasn't entirely comfortable with the idea of releasing to the public actual spending on a quarterly basis for each department and each budget line code. Regarding Ms. Lucio's first concern, which is understandable, I suggested that my use of the phrase, "*will work to ensure*", was used so as not to "box in" a councilperson making a good faith effort to be fiscally transparent. Regarding Ms. Lucio's second concern, she suggested that it might be better to have taxpayers who want the level of detailed financial information I am seeking to file a Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) request to get the information. I noted that having to submit a FOIL request for the information has the potential to set up an adversarial relationship between a taxpayer and the government.

I admire and respect the fact that Ms. Lucio took the time to call me and that she did not sign a document she has reservations about. This indicates to me that she "Adheres to Principles over Politics", which on my scorecard is "Most Favorable". I believe Ms. Lucio is committed to the principle of fiscal transparency. I disagree that a taxpayer should have to file a FOIL request to access detailed financial information from the government, particularly given the nearly complete lack of fiscal transparency that exists in our City.

City of Mount Vernon Candidate Scorecard

Hope Marable City Council	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
	1	2	3	4	5
Temperament			3		
Leadership Skills			3		
Honesty & Ethics					5
Adheres to Principles over Politics				4	
Relevant Financial Experience			3		
Communication Skills			3		
Endorsements			3		
Electability		2			
Point Deductions		Bonus Points			
Democratic Party Endorsement		Most Favorable score in Relevant Financial Experience			
Current Mt. Vernon Elected Official		Relevant advanced education			
Uses Campaign Distortion/Misinformation Tactics		Total Deductions + Bonus Points			0
Relevant Criminal Convictions		Candidate's Final Score:			26

April 1, 2021: Ms. Marable ran for City Council in 2017. I saw her speak along with a panel of candidates at the Wartburg. On my scorecard, the fact that Ms. Marable was not elected to the City Council in 2017 means she won't receive any point deduction for being an incumbent. On the other hand, not being elected is not favorable in terms of her electability.

Ms. Marable strikes me as a candidate who speaks her mind without reservation, which is in itself a good thing. It suggests that she Adheres to Principles over Politics, which I view as favorable.

City of Mount Vernon Candidate Scorecard

Edward Poteat City Council	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
	1	2	3	4	5
Temperament			3		
Leadership Skills				4	
Honesty & Ethics					5
Adheres to Principles over Politics			3		
Relevant Financial Experience					5
Communication Skills					5
Endorsements			3		
Electability		2			
Point Deductions		Bonus Points			
Democratic Party Endorsement		Most Favorable score in Relevant Financial Experience			3
Current Mt. Vernon Elected Official		Relevant advanced education			2
Uses Campaign Distortion/Misinformation Tactics		Total Deductions + Bonus Points			5
Relevant Criminal Convictions		Candidate's Final Score:			35

April 1, 2021: There is a substantial amount of information about Mr. Poteat available to the public: he wrote a book, gave a Tedx talk, and appears on zoom panels discussing how commercial and residential development in Mount Vernon impact upon the community (e.g., revitalization? gentrification? a bit of both?). Mr. Poteat has degree's in economics and urban planning and works in real estate development and investment, with a focus on affordable housing.

The title of his 2016 book, *The Fiscal Cliff: How the Trump Presidency can Save America's Declining Cities* may cause some concern that Mr. Poteat's ideas or policy prescriptions are aligned with Trump's. However, I read the book and it has nothing at all to do with Trump, so assertions that Mr. Poteat is somehow aligned with Trump are false. In fact, aside from the subtitle and the blurb on the back of the book, Trump is only mentioned once in the book (page 5), and it's in the spirit of "let's take this opportunity to re-think how we approach the problem of urban decline". My guess is that Trump's name was added to the book to sell more books- the so called "Trump bump".

My early assessment is that Mr. Poteat is a clear and open communicator, and an analytical thinker with ideas worthy of thoughtful consideration. In 2017 Mr. Poteat made an unsuccessful bid for a seat on the board of trustees of the City of Mount Vernon Public Schools, which raises questions about his electability.

City of Mount Vernon Candidate Scorecard

Andre Wallace Council	City	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
		1	2	3	4	5
Temperament					4	
Leadership Skills					4	
Honesty & Ethics						5
Adheres to Principles over Politics			2			
Relevant Financial Experience						5
Communication Skills					4	
Endorsements		1				
Electability				3		
Point Deductions		Bonus Points				
Democratic Party Endorsement		-2	Most Favorable score in Relevant Financial Experience			3
Current Mt. Vernon Elected Official			Relevant advanced education			
Uses Campaign Distortion/Misinformation Tactics			Total Deductions + Bonus Points			1
Relevant Criminal Convictions			Candidate's Final Score:			29

April 1, 2021: Mr. Wallace is a well-known former politician in Mount Vernon. He recently served as president of the City Council and then as Acting Mayor, completing the term left by Richard Thomas, who was forced out of office due to legal troubles. Mr. Wallace lost his mayoral bid to Shawyn Patterson-Howard. He is now running to be re-elected to the City Council and he carries the endorsement of the local Democratic Party, resulting in a 2-point deduction on my scorecard.

There is no shortage of information regarding Mr. Wallace. He writes a newsletter and appears in dozens of youtube videos. This makes it relatively easy to evaluate his temperament, his communication skills, and his policy ideas.

City of Mount Vernon Candidate Scorecard

Derickson Lawrence Comptroller	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
	1	2	3	4	5
Temperament					5
Leadership Skills					5
Honesty & Ethics					5
Adheres to Principles over Politics				4	
Relevant Financial Experience					5
Communication Skills				4	
Endorsements			3		
Electability			3		
Point Deductions		Bonus Points			
Democratic Party Endorsement		Most Favorable score in Relevant Financial Experience			3
Current Mt. Vernon Elected Official		Relevant advanced education			2
Uses Campaign Distortion/Misinformation Tactics		Total Deductions + Bonus Points			5
Relevant Criminal Convictions		Candidate's Final Score:			39

April 1, 2021: Derickson Lawrence was Chair of the Mount Vernon Charter Revision Commission in 2019-2020. The commission researched and drafted several successful ballot initiatives that (should) result in greater fiscal transparency, fiscal management, and long-term planning for the city. Mr. Lawrence was also a Vice Chair of the Westchester County Charter Revision Commission from 2011-2013.

Mr. Lawrence was a candidate for the US House of Representatives (16th District) in 2016, losing to incumbent Eliot Engel. However, this doesn't necessarily reflect poorly on his electability given the steep odds against unseating Mr. Engel at that time (Engel was subsequently unseated by Jaamal Bowman in 2020).

Mr. Lawrence has excellent academic and professional credentials. In addition, he signed my "Candidate Commitment" when he was out collecting petition signatures.

City of Mount Vernon Candidate Scorecard

Darren Morton Comptroller	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
	1	2	3	4	5
Temperament				4	
Leadership Skills			3		
Honesty & Ethics					5
Adheres to Principles over Politics			3		
Relevant Financial Experience		2			
Communication Skills			3		
Endorsements			3		
Electability				4	
Point Deductions			Bonus Points		
Democratic Party Endorsement	-2	Most Favorable score in Relevant Financial Experience			
Current Mt. Vernon Elected Official		Relevant advanced education			2
Uses Campaign Distortion/Misinformation Tactics		Total Deductions + Bonus Points			0
Relevant Criminal Convictions		Candidate's Final Score:			27

April 1, 2021: Darren Morton is currently Chief of Staff to Mayor Patterson Howard. He also serves as Treasurer of both the Urban Renewal Agency (a position he has held since 2013) and the Industrial Development Agency. His prior positions within Mount Vernon City government include Commissioner of the Department of Recreation and Commissioner of Planning & Community Development. Dr. Morton is a pastor in a local Baptist Church and he holds a Doctorate in Executive Leadership. Dr. Morton is endorsed by the local Democratic Party, which results in a 2-point deduction from his final score on my scorecard.

Dr. Morton's long-term involvement with the Urban Renewal Agency (URA) bears scrutiny. The URA receives millions of dollars in funding from the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) each year. According to the 2020 Audit conducted by the NYS Office of the State Comptroller, the URA has not filed required financial reports with NYS since 2014 and the lack of URA financial reports has hindered City-wide audits. This raises serious questions about Dr. Morton's competency with respect financial management and reporting, which are essential skills for a City Comptroller. These concerns are reflected in my initial score of "unfavorable" in the area of Relevant Financial Experience.

<https://www.osc.state.ny.us/press/releases/2020/09/dinapoli-mount-vernon-officials-failed-establish-basic-and-routine-financial-policies>

City of Mount Vernon Candidate Scorecard

Richard Thomas Comptroller	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
	1	2	3	4	5
Temperament				4	
Leadership Skills		2			
Honesty & Ethics	1				
Adheres to Principles over Politics			3		
Relevant Financial Experience					5
Communication Skills					5
Endorsements			3		
Electability			3		
Point Deductions		Bonus Points			
Democratic Party Endorsement		Most Favorable score in Relevant Financial Experience			3
Current Mt. Vernon Elected Official		Relevant advanced education			2
Uses Campaign Distortion/Misinformation Tactics		Total Deductions + Bonus Points			-3
Relevant Criminal Convictions	-8	Candidate's Final Score:			23

April 1, 2021: Richard Thomas is a former member of the Mount Vernon City Council and a former Mayor of Mount Vernon. While serving as Mayor, Mr. Thomas was indicted on corruption charges and subsequently plead guilty to several misdemeanors resulting in his resignation.

City of Mount Vernon Candidate Scorecard

Marcus A. Griffith Comptroller	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
Temperament					5
Leadership Skills		2			
Honesty & Ethics					5
Adheres to Principles over Politics		2			
Relevant Financial Experience				4	
Communication Skills				4	
Endorsements			3		
Electability			3		
Point Deductions		Bonus Points			
Democratic Party Endorsement		Most Favorable score in Relevant Financial Experience			
Current Mt. Vernon Elected Official	-3	Relevant advanced education			
Uses Campaign Distortion/Misinformation Tactics		Total Deductions + Bonus Points			-3
Relevant Criminal Convictions		Candidate's Final Score:			25

April 1, 2021: Marcus Griffith is currently president of the Mount Vernon City Council. He sought, but did not receive the endorsement of the local Democratic Party.

City of Mount Vernon Candidate Scorecard

Marc Lenci City Council	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
	1	2	3	4	5
Temperament					
Leadership Skills					
Honesty & Ethics					
Adheres to Principles over Politics					
Relevant Financial Experience					
Communication Skills					
Endorsements					
Electability					
Point Deductions					
Democratic Party Endorsement					
Current Mt. Vernon Elected Official					
Uses Campaign Distortion/Misinformation Tactics					
Relevant Criminal Convictions					
Bonus Points					
Most Favorable score in Relevant Financial Experience					
Relevant advanced education					
Total Deductions + Bonus Points					
Candidate's Final Score: 0					

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April 1, 2021: I do not have enough information to give a score.

Candidate Favorability Ratings

Candidate Zoom Forum

Hosted by

The Greater Centennial A.M.E. Zion Church

Moderated by Rev. Dr. Stephen Pogue Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Wheeler

April 27, 2021

Candidate Name	Percent Favorable
Carter, Lauren	82.50%
Browne, Danielle	80.00%
Lucio, Nicole	75.00%
Duarte, Janice	70.00%
Gleason, Cathlin	70.00%
Poteat, Ed	70.00%
Wallace, Andre	70.00%
Farquharson, Delia	65.00%

<p>Rating Candidate Responses given during the Candidate Zoom Forum Hosted by The Greater Centennial A.M.E. Zion Church on April 27, 2021 (Moderated by Rev. Dr. Stephen Pogue & Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Wheeler)</p>				
<p>Candidate: Lauren Carter</p>				
<p>Introductory Remarks</p>				
<p>Quote from the Candidate (minute 26:54)</p>	<p>"I want you to think about something quickly. God forbid you or someone you love had a terminal illness. Now, you would seek the best medical care, wouldn't you? You wouldn't just say, 'well, Dr. So And So is my friend" or "Dr. So And So grew up with my mom so I'm going to see her", No: you would choose the very best physician that you can. So the same idea applies to us here in Mount Vernon. <i>We don't have time</i> for people who need a learning curve. The issues are too important. We need experience to help Mount Vernon move in the right direction."</p>			
<p>My Comment:</p>	<p>Wow! This is an excellent example using emotion effectively to generate motivation around an idea.</p>			
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>
<p>Question 1: If elected, how will you improve the image of our city?</p>				
<p>Quotes from the Candidate (begin at minute 44:23)</p>	<p>"The way I would help change the image of the city is to work with all the stakeholders, work with everyone in the city. I would be one of 5 council people so it's important to know that I can only control my own actions. I know some people say, 'Stop the in-fighting'that's ideal, but we can't control what other people do and what other people say. So I can only control myself and my actions, and that's what I will do. In addition, a lot of the negative press that Mount Vernon gets is because Mount Vernon alerts the press about the events. You know, what we face occurs in so many other communities. We just don't know about it because they don't publicize it. So we need to make sure that we stop publicizing every event here as well."</p>			
<p>My Comment:</p>	<p>As a member of the public, I don't think the solution to the image problems we have is to "stop publicizing" our problems.</p>			
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>
<p>2</p>				
<p>Most Favorable</p>				

Question 2: If elected, how would you support or fix our crumbling infrastructure and the YMCA?				
Quotes from the Candidate (begin at minute 1:01:35)	"It's a comprehensive issue and it needs to have a comprehensive approach in order to solve it. So we have to get our credit rating back in order to be able to bond." "What we can do is what some candidates have already mentioned - we can call on our partners at the state level, the county level, even our neighboring municipalities like Yonkers and New Rochelle to help us with equipment that we need. In addition, what we can do, there is money that we can get from HUD. Although we do not have a credit rating, HUD will not penalize us for that. They will be able to let us borrow low interest loans or maybe even grants."			
My Comment:	I thought this was a strong response that demonstrates inovative thinking.			
	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable
My Rating:				Most Favorable
	5			
Question 3: Legislation was just passed by the City Council recently to create a pass through account to receive those funds coming in from the American Rescue Plan. Would you have voted to create the pass-through account, if so why, and if not why not? and what would you have done differntly?				
Quotes from the Candidate (begin at minute 1:16:18)	"What I would have done is voted no on that legislation because that is not the way our city operates." "I will always abide by the charter, the rules of the city", " What we could have done is, when our section 8 program was removed from Mount Vernon (because of abuse, of some waste, fraud), because those are Federal monies, the Federal Government sent that money to the state, and then the state contracted those funds to the county to be able to run our section 8 program. We could have done the same thing here."			
My Comment:	A definitive answer to the question plus Ms. Carter offered an innovative potential solution.			
	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable
My Rating:				Most Favorable
	5			

<p>Question 4: With Montefiore/Mount Vernon Hospital providing very limited service... What can be done to stop our great physicians and all of the medical field- the dentists [for example]...from leaving our city in a great wave to go to other hospitals that can offer them more? [NOTE: I lightly edited this question for clarity]</p>					
<p>Quotes from the Candidate (begin at minute 1:33:03)</p>	<p>"One of the things that we know is that we cannot force Montefiore to stay here if they don't want to stay here." "But then they should keep the license here in Mount Vernon so that another facility can come here and operate." "I have been in contact with staff at the Governor's office about this matter." "Absolutely, we do need Governor Cuomo." "Former Mayor Wallace, he did send an e-mail out saying he had contacted a group that does this, this work- they turn around hospitals" "certainly that's something that the community really needed to know more about" "If this company couldn't help us, we could have gone to another company, another hospital."</p>				
<p>My Comment:</p>	<p>This was another good answer from Ms. Carter. It is focused on ideas to solve the problem, not just a restatement of the problem.</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
				<p>4</p>	
<p>Question 5: Seniors and youth activities have always been a popular topic in Mount Vernon. What activities would you look to establish or enhance in the City if you are elected?</p>					
<p>Quotes from the Candidate (begin at minute 1:47:25)</p>	<p>"We need to improve the services and the programs we currently offer, like programs at the Doles Center and at the Armory." "We can bring in more partners. I'm in favor of faith-based partners and not-for-profit partners, even private partners coming in to join with the city."</p>				
<p>My Comment:</p>	<p>Good.</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
				<p>4</p>	
<p>Question 6: If elected, how will you work as a City Council member to facilitate the staffing of [Memorial Field], what kind of events do you see coming to Memorial Field, and how would you achieve bringing events and large artists to our city?</p>					

Quotes from the Candidate (begin at minute 1:57:25)	"What I would like to see would be events at Memorial Field- sporting events, recreational events" "We can have the New York State Olympics hosted here at Memorial Field" We can also have para-olympics." "We can host large scale events. Partner with the state to bring some of those events here and even partner with the city as well to bring some events here." "We also need to make sure our local residents are able to benefit from this field as well."			
My Comment:	A good vision.			
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable
				4
Question 7: What do you want us to know about you and why should this community vote for you for City Council?				
Quotes from the Candidate (begin at minute 2:10:23)	"You will vote for Lauren Carter because a vote for me is a vote for experience." "We have too many problems, too many issues for people to have to get in and learn how the city operates." "It's not about me. I've always served the community in an unassuming way, with humility."			
My Comment:	Good closing remarks.			
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable
				4
Average Rating Lauren Carter: 4.125				

Rating Candidate Responses given during the Candidate Zoom Forum Hosted by The Greater Centennial A.M.E. Zion Church on April 27, 2021 (Moderated by Rev. Dr. Stephen Pogue & Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Wheeler)				
Candidate: Danielle Browne				
Introductory Remarks				
Quote from the Candidate (Minute 8:13)	"As a co-chair of the police reform commission, I learned how to work collaboratively with different stakeholders in this very community, <i>even when we didn't agree on things</i> . This is what we need in the city council: we need people who can work with the mayor and the comptroller to move Mount Vernon forward. We cannot keep recycling the same politicians that keep Mount Vernon stagnant. I want to bring unity to the city, and I plan on doing that by utilizing the skills that I've acquired on the teams that I've been a part of.			
My Comment:	Confident and energetic. Ms. Browne's staccato delivery fills her words with a sense of urgency. It also looks like Ms. Browne has a wall of sticky notes posted on the wall behind her, which indicates a commitment to "getting it right". I love that.			
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable
Most Favorable				
5				
Question 1: If elected, how will you improve the image of our city?				
Quotes from the Candidate (begin at minute 32:55)	"First and foremost, immediately stopping the in-fighting", "develop a youth forum", "maybe we create our own internal news site", "City Council meetings currently, it's hard to find minutes, it's hard to find the agenda, it's hard to find all these things that are vital to keeping the public involved", "we also need to start bringing in some diverse businesses"			
My Comment:	Ok. Sounds good.			
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable
Most Favorable				
4				
Question 2: If elected, how will you improve the image of our city? Rev. Dr. Wheeler added this additional question (a community question): How would you approach a more 'green' environment?				

<p>Quotes from the Candidate (begin at minute 1:05:38)</p>	<p>"We have to invest in completing the comprehensive plan. With the comprehensive plan we are able to identify what goes where and why it goes where." "We need City Council Member who understand the legislation they're passing [The Federal Government] and how to utilize those funds" "We have to fix our sewer system so that we can actually pave our streets" "We need to pave our streets from 'curb to 'curb'" "That's why we need Council members who are business minded"</p>				
<p>My Comment:</p>	<p>Good response.</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
<p>Question 3: Legislation was just passed by the City Council recently to create a pass through account to receive those funds coming in from the American Rescue Plan. Would you have voted to create the pass-through account, if so why, and if not why not? and what would you have done differently? Rev. Dr. Pogue added the additional question- what would you do to make sure the public gets to see the legislation that is passed?</p>					
<p>Quotes from the Candidate (begin at minute 1:20:22)</p>	<p>"There should be meeting agendas, there should be meeting minutes so people should know what was passed, people should know what's up for a vote." "Unfortunately, the comptroller can't be trusted in this situation and she's held the city hostage for far too long and the residents are really tired of hearing about the power struggles" "I think the council came up with an innovative solution" "There is an opportunity for the Comptroller to participate in the use of the funds through the Board of Estimates" "yes I would have voted for this legislation because it's a unique solution to a unique situation."</p>				
<p>My Comment:</p>	<p>I disagree but I appreciate the straightforward response.</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
<p>Question 4: With Montefiore/Mount Vernon Hospital providing very limited service... What can be done to stop our great physicians and all of the medical field- the dentists [for example]...from leaving our city in a great wave to go to other hospitals that can offer them more? [NOTE: I lightly edited this question for clarity]</p>					

<p>Quotes from the Candidate (begin at minute 1:38:12)</p>	<p>"Covid gave us opportunities to go back to federal and state officials, elected officials, and give them an opportunity to reconsider what's happening with our hospital. If it's not Montefiore maybe there's another hospital who can come in and take it over."</p>				
<p>My Comment:</p>	<p>Ms. Browne offers the solution of leveraging the current situation (i.e., the healthcare inequities more fully exposed by the pandemic), to persuade elected state and federal officials to partner with the city on an investment in the health and well-being of our community.</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
<p>4</p>					
<p>Question 5: Seniors and youth activities have always been a popular topic in Mount Vernon. What activities would you look to establish or enhance in the City if you are elected?</p>					
<p>Quotes from the Candidate (begin at minute 1:49:40)</p>	<p>"I think the police athletic league is something that would be beneficial. I think we need to invest in our Boys & Girls Club so that they can provide programs. " I also think we need to support the current programs that we have for seniors." "We need to have mental health services readily available." "We need to have financial literacy programs." "Frequent youth forums" "Entrepreneurship courses for youth."</p>				
<p>My Comment:</p>	<p>Ms. Browne packed a lot of good ideas into a minute.</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
<p>5</p>					
<p>Question 6: If elected, how will you work as a City Council member to facilitate the staffing of [Memorial Field], what kind of events do you see coming to Memorial Field, and how would you achieve bringing events and large artists to our city? [Note: Rev. Dr. Wheeler added detail to the question How would we handle paying for police, fire, EMS, DPW for Memorial Field events?</p>					

<p>Quotes from the Candidate (begin at minute 2:00:44)</p>	<p>"I agree with Ed, that there has to be a complex mix of access to the community for the field, and also revenue generating events. So how do we attract those events? Well we have to have a government that's running efficiently, we have to have a permit process that runs efficiently so that people aren't turned off. Because that's typically what happens- people try to work in Mount Vernon or work with Mount Vernon and they're turned off by the complexity of it all." "We also need to complete that comprehensive plan because that'll speak to where we put a parking lot, where we put a hotel, if we have a hospitality district."</p>				
<p>My Comment:</p>	<p>Another fine response. Most notably is that Ms. Browne mentioned the importance of streamlining the bureaucracy around granting permits for using Memorial Field. This is important.</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
<p>Question 7: What do you want us to know about you and why should this community vote for you for City Council?</p>					
<p>Quotes from the Candidate (begin at minute 2:15:12)</p>	<p>"I'm a team player. That's evidenced by my leadership in every organization I've been in." "I bring emotional intelligence and an ability to work with other people and that's really what Mount Vernon needs." "Also, professionalism to this campaign. I think we can disagree and do it respectfully."</p>				
<p>My Comment:</p>	<p>Great closing remarks. I'd score this "Most Favorable" except that I don't view running as part of a coalition of candidates as favorable. (Ms. Browne is running along w/Ms. Gleason and Mr. Poteat as party of the "Mount Vernon Forward" ticket. While I understand that this might be politically expedient for the these candidates, political expediency has little to do with the interests of the voters.</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
<p>Average Rating for Danielle Brown</p> <p style="font-size: 24pt; font-weight: bold;">4</p>					

Rating Candidate Responses given during the Candidate Zoom Forum Hosted by The Greater Centennial A.M.E. Zion Church on April 27, 2021 (Moderated by Rev. Dr. Stephen Pogue & Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Wheeler)				
Candidate: Nicole Lucio				
Introductory Remarks				
Quote from the Candidate (minute 14:34)	"I'm just determined; I'm determined to bring new ideas; I'm determined to bring fresh ideas, and I always think about, you know, how can I contribute in ways that go beyond the job description of City Council? And that's why I'm running to be accountable to the residents of this community."			
My Comment:	This was a good clear statement of Ms. Lucio's relevant credentials, and her motivation for running.			
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable
4				
Question 1: If elected, how will you improve the image of our city?				
Quotes from the Candidate (begin at minute 38:03)	"I will do my very best to represent the City with integrity and with professionalism. That will be my personal contribution to improve the City's image.			
My Comment:	Good.			
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable
4				
Question 2: If elected, how would you support or fix our crumbling infrastructure?				
Quotes from the Candidate (begin at minute 52:49)	"So fixing our crumbling infrastructure, including our sewers, and our public buildings.. these are heavy lifts; these are big ticket items. They require a lot of funding, that is true. Generally, a loan. As a City Council Member, I would approve a reasonable plan as determined by the Capital Projects Board."			
My Comment:	Fine. Ms. Lucio also said she'd be willing to serve on the Capital Projects Board.			
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable
Most Favorable				

My Rating:	4			
<p>Question 3: Legislation was just passed by the City Council recently to create a pass through account to receive those funds coming in from the American Rescue Plan. Would you have voted to create the pass-through account, if so why, and if not why not? and what would you have done differently?</p>				
Quotes from the Candidate (begin at minute 1:08:34)	<p>"That's a tough question." "I'd honestly have to ask myself, 'what is the alternative?'" " And this is a hypothetical question, right? Because I'm not a sitting Council Member and I did not have a vote." "In this case, I believe I would have routed those funds" "Sometimes you have to set a precedent" "You have to make sure the legislation doesn't have any gaps" "So I would have voted 'yes'"</p>			
My Comment:	<p>So, that's a highly qualified very cautious, very reluctant, hypothetical "yes". Kind of a hedge.</p>			
My Rating:	2			
<p>Question 4: With Montefiore/Mount Vernon Hospital providing very limited service... What can be done to stop our great physicians and all of the medical field- the dentists [for example]...from leaving our city in a great wave to go to other hospitals that can offer them more? [NOTE: I lightly edited this question for clarity]</p>				
Quotes from the Candidate (begin at minute 1:42:23)	<p>"We may have to rethink this a little bit." "I did a little research into it" [the question] "there is something called a 'medical mall model'" "The purpose is to bring medical services closer to residential neighborhoods, rather than requiring people to travel a greater distance to hospitals." "I think the establishment of a 'medical mall' could possibly be a solution."</p>			
My Comment:	<p>Solution-oriented; thinking "outside the box". I don't know viable the "medical mall" idea is but I think this was a good answer.</p>			
My Rating:	4			
<p>Question 5: Seniors and youth activities have always been a popular topic in Mount Vernon. What activities would you look to establish or enhance in the City if you are elected?</p>				

<p>Quotes from the Candidate (begin at minute 1:52:27)</p>	<p>"I definitely have some ideas along the lines of mentorship programs- lacrosse, soccer, financial literacy." "But there's one thing that I want to mention is that, as City Council, I really want to stay within my purview and scope of office according to the Charter. So policy development, senior youth activities...fall under the purview of the administration, and the Commissioners that are in charge of that department." "I'm committed to working with these officials to provide the best quality and range of services for our seniors and our youth and I will work with other Council Members to provide adequate funding."</p>				
<p>My Comment:</p>	<p>Fair enough.</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
<p>Question 6: If elected, how will you work as a City Council member to facilitate the staffing of [Memorial Field], what kind of events do you see coming to Memorial Field, and how would you achieve bringing events and large artists to our city? [Note: Rev. Dr. Wheeler added detail to the question for Ms. Duarte: How do you see City Council and the Administration working together to make Memorial Field the iconic venue that it once was?</p>					
<p>Quotes from the Candidate (begin at minute 2:04:35)</p>	<p>"Those revenues that we generate can offset expenses if we organize field events." "I personally think that funds generated or allocated for the field should not be commingled with the rest of the City's maintenance and management monies."</p>				
<p>My Comment:</p>	<p>Ms. Lucio seemed confident that Memorial Field will be able to generate sufficient revenues to cover operating costs. Her concern is that we safeguard the finances to ensure the welfare of the facility in perpetuity.</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
<p>Question 7: What do you want us to know about you and why should this community vote for you for City Council?</p>					

<p>Quotes from the Candidate (begin at minute 2:19:20)</p>	<p>"The public should know that I have conducted myself and my work with the utmost integrity and responsibility." "I am certified as an anti-money laundering specialist and I simply want to use my skills to improve the community." "I am determined to bring fresh ideas and accountability to the residents of our city." "I want the people of Mount Vernon to know that you can trust me."</p>				
<p>My Comment:</p>	<p>Good solid statement.</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
		<p>4</p>			

Average Rating for Nicole Lucio: 3.75

Rating Candidate Responses given during the Candidate Zoom Forum Hosted by The Greater Centennial A.M.E. Zion Church on April 27, 2021 (Moderated by Rev. Dr. Stephen Pogue & Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Wheeler)					
Candidate: Janice Duarte (incumbent seeking re-election)					
Introductory Remarks					
Quote from the Candidate (minute 11:17)	"The last 3 years I know have been incredibly challenging on so many levels. I believe I have brought a professional temperament, stability, and a solution-oriented approach to the City Council, and I offer my commitment to all of you to integrity, transparency, and completeness, which I believe sets me apart, and I humbly ask you for your support and your vote to continue serving all residents in the City of Mount Vernon as your City Councilwoman."				
My Comment:	It seemed like Ms. Duarte was reading from prepared remarks, which made the delivery a little bland. I liked what she said about making the legislative process and results more accessible to the public through the City website. Ms. Duarte has been a stabilizing presence in a Council that, at times, seems to be overly emotional. I'm still disinclined to return an incumbent to office, but her opening statement was ok.				
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
3					
Question 1: If elected, how will you improve the image of our city?					
Quotes from the Candidate (begin at minute 34:55)	"In light of recent news, I would like to see a Board of Ethics that is focused primarily on building a compliance and ethics framework that would underpin a cultural shift in our city government, and we have to consistently push back against corruption and unethical behavior which has sidetracked us for far too long", "I believe that openness in government is the sign of a healthy and vibrant democracy, and it encourages civic participation and promotes public trust. So to that end I'm currently working with the city clerk on evaluating 3 'open government systems' to leverage technology to track and manage the legislative process from beginning to end"				

My Comment:	The "recent news" is most likely a reference to the alleged attempt at coercion made by Mr. Cannata (who co-chaired the Board of Ethics). The question I have is this: if weaknesses in the compliance and ethics framework have sidetracked us "for far too long", why hasn't Ms. Duarte addressed these weaknesses sooner? Why did it take Mr. Cannata's behavior - which was addressed directly to Ms. Duarte- to cause her to take this stance? Ms. Duarte has lived within the culture -with it's weak compliance and ethical framework- for years as a member of the City Council. That's problematic.				
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
My Rating:	2				
Question 2: If elected, how would you support or fix our crumbling infrastructure?					
Quotes from the Candidate (begin at minute 49:34)	"Due to the scale of our needs, we can only effectively address our crumbling infrastructure once we get our credit rating back so we can finance it." "I understand what it takes to restore our credit rating" "We are now prepared with 3 lines of defense for a sewer emergency" "Having a complete map of our sewer network and its conditions will provide critical information to inform an updated comprehensive plan."				
My Comment:	Ms. Duarte offered some practical things she has done to prepare the city to deal with sewer problems that might occur before we are able to apply a permanent fix (e.g., securing sewer pumps for neighboring cities). This highlights something tangible and important things Ms. Duarte has done as an incumbent member of the City Council.				
	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
My Rating:					
	4				
Question 3: Legislation was just passed by the City Council recently to create a pass through account to receive those funds coming in from the American Rescue Plan. Would you have voted to create the pass-through account, if so why, and if not why not? and what would you have done differently? Rev. Dr. Pogue added the additional question- what would you do to make sure the public gets to see the legislation that is passed?					

<p>Quotes from the Candidate (begin at minute 1:22:53)</p>	<p>"We can't change the Charter based on an individual." "But in this case I would not want to change the Charter based on an individual" "we understand that the city has not effectively been able to provide access to this information to the public. We have technological challenges." "This City Comptroller has intentionally returned Federal Funds; she has not provided financial reports; there are court decisions and judgements ordering her or directing her to follow the ordinances of the City Council, which she still has yet to comply with." "We needed to find a different solution. So we modeled it after what we did back in August and September with regards to the HUD funding for the funds to be received by the clerk office and that's important because the clerk can establish a bank account."</p>				
<p>My Comment:</p>	<p>I'd like to know what other solutions were considered by the City Council and why they were rejected. Given the historical lack of accounting, to the public, of public funds in our city across multiple cost centers - the Library, the Urban Renewal Agency, the Water Department, The Industrial Development Agency- a more complete explanation of the decision making process is needed.</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
<p>Question 4: With Montefiore/Mount Vernon Hospital providing very limited service... What can be done to stop our great physicians and all of the medical field- the dentists [for example]...from leaving our city in a great wave to go to other hospitals that can offer them more? [NOTE: I lightly edited this question for clarity]</p>					
<p>Quotes from the Candidate (begin at minute 1:40:00)</p>	<p>"We need to bring the right partners together, who are interested in investing in our hospital." "If it's not Montefiore that's fine, we can find others that are interested in investing in our hospital." "We have to reimagine the healthcare experience so that Mount Vernon can become an anchor for a cutting-edge hospital." "The census data, once it becomes available, I think will provide some added insight to help identify the specialties that should be here so our top health risks are addressed sustainable." "I would be open to considering providing proper incentives and the support needed to attract the medical investment that our community needs."</p>				
<p>My Comment:</p>	<p>This was a very good response, very detailed, very focused, solution-oriented.</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
					<p>5</p>

Question 5: Seniors and youth activities have always been a popular topic in Mount Vernon. What activities would you look to establish or enhance in the City if you are elected?				
Quotes from the Candidate (begin at minute 1:50:58)	"We need to review the facilities, and either upgrade the current facilities, or locate new facilities for our seniors and our youth" "One major area I would like to focus on is closing the middle skills gap and making sure that our youth have employment options" "I'd like to take a survey of the seniors to see to what extent programming should include different training opportunities for them to remain active and productive, and to what extent we can have joint or inter-generational programs between our seniors and our youth."			
My Comment:	This was a very good response. Inter-generational programs can have a profoundly positive impact on both youth and seniors and targeting "middle skills" development is a great idea.			
	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable
My Rating:				Most Favorable
	5			
Question 6: If elected, how will you work as a City Council member to facilitate the staffing of [Memorial Field], what kind of events do you see coming to Memorial Field, and how would you achieve bringing events and large artists to our city? [Note: Rev. Dr. Wheeler added detail to the question for Ms. Duarte: How do you see City Council and the Administration working together to make Memorial Field the iconic venue that it once was? What does the rebirth of Memorial Field look like to Janice?				
Quotes from the Candidate (begin at minute 2:02:31)	"In thinking about this question and looking at other public spaces that have had tough times and then were revitalized, we can look at Central Park." "The model they used to revitalize and manage the park was the creation of the Central Park Conservancy" "Memorial Field will not be exactly like the central park experience but I use this as a model and as a model we can consider." "We would be able to rely on the transparency of Conservancy to 'depoliticize' Memorial Field which I think is very important, while also being able to lean on private donations and diverse revenue sources so it does not burden tax payers."			
My Comment:	This is an interesting idea. My only worry is that rather than "depoliticizing" the situation a new entity would just become another moving part we must manage. But it's an idea worth exploring.			
	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable
My Rating:				Most Favorable
	4			

Question 7: What do you want us to know about you and why should this community vote for you for City Council?				
Quotes from the Candidate (begin at minute 2:17:00)	"I am the only candidate who has experience at a credit rating agency, and the common theme throughout this entire evening is that for the city to effectively address all the challenges we have we need to restore our credit rating." "I know what it will take to restore our credit rating." "It's not about me; it's about finding a solution together so that we can really address the City's needs."			
My Comment:	This sounds ok. It's just not clear to me that Ms. Duarte's prior experience working at a credit rating agency has helped us. Is the experience used as a talking point, or is there something tangible in Ms. Duarte's past experience that can inform current actions? At this point the answer is not clear to me.			
	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable
My Rating:			3	Most Favorable
Average Rating for Janice Duarte:			3.5	

Rating Candidate Responses given during the Candidate Zoom Forum Hosted by The Greater Centennial A.M.E. Zion Church on April 27, 2021 (Moderated by Rev. Dr. Stephen Pogue & Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Wheeler)					
Candidate: Cathlin Gleason					
Introductory Remarks					
Quote from the Candidate (minute 16:40)	"I've spent most of my adult life dedicated to service here in this city. I am here and involved; I'm a life-long Democrat, and I've fought for many of you already as a Democratic District Leader. I Promise you- anything I do not know I will learn, and you can count on me to always speak for my community on what <i>you</i> as the resident wants, not what Cathlin Gleason wants. My service to the people of the city goes before self <i>always</i> ."				
My Comment:	It appears that Ms. Gleason was reading from prepared remarks. Ms. Gleason highlighted her work on the Board of Trustees of the MV Public Library and her role as Democratic District Leader. I've written about the inarguably poor financial oversight provided to the Public Library by the Library Board of Trustees, and my view of the Local Democratic Party is less than sanguine. However, as far as opening remarks go, Ms. Gleason's were fine. There is no question about her devotion to the well-being of Mount Vernon.				
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
			3		
Question 1: If elected, how will you improve the image of our city?					
Quotes from the Candidate (begin at minute 39:27)	"I think first and foremost, I would absolutely engage a marketing professional, I would definitely try and create a news site for the City of Mount Vernon, I would also meet with all the Commissioners, sit down with all the Commissioners, and find out what they need from our City Council to make this a positive, <i>a positive</i> approach to City government."				
My Comment:	Fine.				
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
			4		
Question 2: If elected, how would you support or fix our crumbling infrastructure?					
Quotes from the Candidate (begin at minute 55:26)	"We definitely have to restore our bond rating because we can't go out for different funding and we have to earmark the American Recovery funds to those items." [earlier in the response, Ms. Gleason noted sewer and building repairs as priorities, and she noted the need to improve the habitability of MV firehouses]				

My Comment:	Fine.			
	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable
My Rating:	4			
Question 3: Legislation was just passed by the City Council recently to create a pass through account to receive those funds coming in from the American Rescue Plan. Would you have voted to create the pass-through account, if so why, and if not why not? and what would you have done differently?				
Quotes from the Candidate (begin at minute 1:11:05)	"So I have not seen the legislation even though I was aware of it." "Can the city open up a new account and have the money go to the comptroller's office?" "I would like to see the legislation first to see what the checks and balances were before I would render my decision." "If there were checks and balances in place? "I just don't think that that was the right avenue."			
My Comment:	For most of the answer it sounded like a hedge but in the end I think it was a "no".			
	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable
My Rating:	4			
Question 4: With Montefiore/Mount Vernon Hospital providing very limited service... What can be done to stop our great physicians and all of the medical field- the dentists [for example]...from leaving our city in a great wave to go to other hospitals that can offer them more? [NOTE: I lightly edited this question for clarity]				
Quotes from the Candidate (begin at minute 1:27:19)	"We need to invest in that hospital" "And if Montefiore does not want to come to the table, then guess what? They've got to give the license back" "We have to come up with a plan of sustainability for it" "How do you prevent the doctors and nurses from leaving, and the dentists, and everybody who would utilize that hospital? Well then you have a state of the art facility in that hospital. That's how you prevent them from leaving."			
My Comment:	I don't think the question of "what can be done?" was really addressed in this answer. Yes, having a state of the art facility will help keep doctors and nurses. The question is how do you get that? The most tangible response given by Ms. Gleason was to take Montefiore's license to operate the hospital if they won't "come to the table", but I'm not sure how that in itself would stop doctors from leaving.			
	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable
My Rating:	2			

Question 5: Seniors and youth activities have always been a popular topic in Mount Vernon. What activities would you look to establish or enhance in the City if you are elected?				
Quotes from the Candidate (begin at minute 1:53:35)	"We need to have what Danielle said: frequent forums- we need to listen to the youth and find out what they need." "Create partnerships between the school district the library and the city- see where we can open buildings so that the youth can come in and actually have a safe environment for them to congregate." "Nutritional programs for the youth and seniors, we already have that- make them operational and functional."			
My Comment:	Good.			
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable
				4
Question 6: If elected, how will you work as a City Council member to facilitate the staffing of [Memorial Field], what kind of events do you see coming to Memorial Field, and how would you achieve bringing events and large artists to our city? [Note: Rev. Dr. Wheeler added detail to the question for Ms. Duarte: How do you see City Council and the Administration working together to make Memorial Field the iconic venue that it once was?				
Quotes from the Candidate (begin at minute 2:06:17)	"I think the City of Mount Vernon should look into a Public Benefit Corporation such as a "sports authority". This way we could hire somebody with a degree in facilities management to properly run the facility. An additional benefit would be that a Sports Authority would not impact the City budget." "I also believe that we should be going out for sponsorships."			
My Comment:	This is an interesting idea worth serious consideration.			
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable
				4
Question 7: What do you want us to know about you and why should this community vote for you for City Council?				

<p>Quotes from the Candidate (begin at minute 2:21:02)</p>	<p>"I would like to bring respectability back to city government." "I am a worker; I'm not going to just sit in the seat. I will work with the Commissioners to find out what they need, advocate for them. I will also work together with other factions of government- the comptroller's office, the mayor's office, and again, let's stop the in-fighting."</p>				
<p>My Comment:</p>	<p>Rather than advocating for the Commissioners, I would have rather heard Ms. Gleason say she'd advocate for the residents. At the very end of this statement Ms. Gleason mentioned that she is running along with Danielle Browe and Ed Poteat and said "We are running for City Council" . I don't view this favorably and if forced to choose either all 3 of these candidates or none, on principle I'd chose none. While I understand that this might be politically expedient for the these candidates, political expediency has little to do with the interests of the voters.</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
		<p>3</p>			
<p>Average Rating Cathlin Gleason:</p>		<p>3.5</p>			

Rating Candidate Responses given during the Candidate Zoom Forum Hosted by The Greater Centennial A.M.E. Zion Church on April 27, 2021 (Moderated by Rev. Dr. Stephen Pogue & Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Wheeler)				
Candidate: Ed Poteat				
Introductory Remarks				
Quote from the Candidate (minute 21:28)	"Quite frankly, I'm running for City Council simply because I believe that Mount Vernon is the Jewel of Westchester. I've lived in Mount Vernon for 15 years and I've chosen to be here because it's a great city. We have great people we have a diverse population, we're known as the "city of homes". But our reputation tells us something different. I, like you, am tired of all the negative stories that keep coming out about our city, and I am running to make sure that we bring back the shine and luster that we know that Mount Vernon deserves."			
My Comment:	A concise, well articulated statement.			
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable
				4
Question 1: If elected, how will you improve the image of our city?				
Quotes from the Candidate (begin at minute 43:05)	"There's a lot of good things happening here in Mount Vernon; there's a lot of good people doing great things. However, they are being failed (I would argue) by our City Government. The in-fighting... to change the image of the city...the in-fighting must stop, it must stop. The media is focusing on those issues verses focusing on all these great stories."			
My Comment:	I like this. Highlight all the good stuff that's happening in the community and at the same time end all the disharmony in our City government.			
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable
				4
Question 2: If elected, how would you support or fix our crumbling infrastructure? Note: Rev. Dr. Wheeler also asked Mr. Poteat to give his take on the YMCA.				

Quotes from the Candidate (begin at minute 59:27)	"When it comes to the Y, a lot of cities, for example, when they have city-owned property, they joint-venture; they keep an equity stake and then they joint-venture with any developer that they work with. There's no reason why we can't do that here so that we get maximum from the Y, from it being redeveloped to our city."			
My Comment:	Mr. Poteat also noted that we got lucky having a Democrat in the White House because of the significant federal monies that will flow to the city from the federal government that can be allocated for infrastructure. Regarding the Y, the current City Council has been in discussions with a developer interested in purchasing the Y and renovating it into a mixed use residential/retail facility.			
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Most Favorable
				4
Question 3: Legislation was just passed by the City Council recently to create a pass through account to receive those funds coming in from the American Rescue Plan. Would you have voted to create the pass-through account, if so why, and if not why not? and what would you have done differently?				
Quotes from the Candidate (begin at minute 1:15:00)	"I agree that there needs to be strict checks and balances" "I have not seen the legislation" "But I would have voted yes because if we can't fund gas for our police cars, why would we allow forty-two million dollars to go to the comptroller to be further mismanaged?" "So with the right checks and balances, I would have voted 'yes'"			
My Comment:	Although I'm not sure I disagree, I give Mr. Poteat a "neutral" rating because he was pretty straight forward with his reasoning and his response.			
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Most Favorable
				3
Question 4: With Montefiore/Mount Vernon Hospital providing very limited service... What can be done to stop our great physicians and all of the medical field- the dentists [for example]...from leaving our city in a great wave to go to other hospitals that can offer them more? [NOTE: I lightly edited this question for clarity]				

Quotes from the Candidate (begin at minute 1:31:46)	"It's crucial that we keep the hospital here in Mount Vernon" "The pandemic just shined a light on disparities that we always knew were in our communities. We have to fix that, we have to change that, we have to switch that and make sure that the hospital stays here in Mount Vernon."			
My Comment:	The question was "What can be done?". What solutions can a City Council member offer to bringing about the change that is needed. All Mr. Poteat did was acknowledge the problem.			
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Most Favorable
		2		
Question 5: Seniors and youth activities have always been a popular topic in Mount Vernon. What activities would you look to establish or enhance in the City if you are elected?				
Quotes from the Candidate (begin at minute 1:46:30)	"I am the general manager of the Mount Vernon Bangers, a semi-pro football team." "With our seniors, we need to let them know where the resources are." "We have to step up and not just legislate but lead." "Help our seniors find resources and help our youth be mentored by other people living here in the city."			
My Comment:	Fine.			
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Most Favorable
				4
Question 6: If elected, how will you work as a City Council member to facilitate the staffing of [Memorial Field], what kind of events do you see coming to Memorial Field, and how would you achieve bringing events and large artists to our city?				
Quotes from the Candidate (begin at minute 1:55:42)	"Let's not think small; versus thinking about how can we operate it with limited staff, let's go big." "We can have semi-pro soccer teams come here" "We can have large events at Memorial Field and at the same time create space for local residents to use that field, but we have to generate revenue and we don't do that by going small we do that by going big." "Make it a regional hub for the entire community."			
My Comment:	A good vision.			
	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Most Favorable

My Rating:	4			
Question 7: What do you want us to know about you and why should this community vote for you for City Council?				
Quotes from the Candidate (begin at minute 2:25:04)	<p>"The definition of insanity is doing the same thing and expecting different results" "Mount Vernon is ripe for a change; it's ripe for a renaissance." "If you believe that the comprehensive plan is important, then I would humbly ask for your vote, as someone that has spent 20 plus years working in communities, coming up with plans, developing properties." "I can bring that experience to City Council to make sure that we plan properly for the future." "I fully believe that the Mount Vernon Forward slate of myself, Danielle Browne, and Cathlin Gleason are <i>the</i> most qualified candidates."</p>			
My Comment:	<p>This was good. Just as a technical point, doing the same thing and expecting different results is NOT the definition of insanity, it's just an expression people use to make the point that if you do something and get a bad result, if you don't do something different the next time, you shouldn't be surprised if you get the same bad result. Regarding the Mount Vernon Forward ticket, I view coalitions like this as more in the interests of the candidates than the voters. In other words, it's politically expedient.</p>			
	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Most Favorable
My Rating:	3			
Average Rating Ed Poteat:				3.5

<p>Rating Candidate Responses given during the Candidate Zoom Forum Hosted by The Greater Centennial A.M.E. Zion Church on April 27, 2021 (Moderated by Rev. Dr. Stephen Pogue & Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Wheeler)</p>					
<p>Candidate: Andre Wallace</p>					
<p>Introductory Remarks</p>					
<p>Quote from the Candidate (minute 29:29)</p>	<p>"A lot of people ask us why am I coming back-it's because I think there's a lot I can offer the city, there's so much more work to be done. I'm looking at how the city is moving and I think that there's a lot of things I can contribute into the finances of the city, how we create proper budgets, working on budgets with the current administration. I know when I was there I remember we never had a budget over 2% the 4 years I'd been there. I know we had higher taxes before that and it looks like it's heading and trending in the wrong direction so before that happens I definitely want to be able to contribute my experience into making sure that we can change some of these things."</p>				
<p>My Comment:</p>	<p>Mr. Wallace was hosting a campaign fundraising event at the time this Zoom forum was held. This may have been why he didn't seem fully focused and his introductory remarks rambled a bit.</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
<p>Question 1: If elected, how will you improve the image of our city?</p>					
<p>Quotes from the Candidate (begin at minute 46:26)</p>	<p>"If we want to change the city, we have to change within. We have to change ourselves we have to change our behavior as elected officials, because the way we project ourselves out there is how people are going to perceive us. And in order to change the way other people are feeling about us, it starts within ourselves and without this in-fighting. I look back at times when I was a Councilperson, I spent a lot of my time battling against the mayor and others, which I wish I didn't have to do, you know? It was something that was done, and I really didn't want to do that, but it had to be done. Moving forward this time I've learned a lot of different ways to go about things and how to change the actual context because I understand that the context dictates the content in which it [not sure what he said]. So what we have to do is change our context and how we are doing things in city hall."</p>				
<p>My Comment:</p>	<p>Again, a bit rambling. I would have liked to hear, specifically, what Mr. Wallace has learned - the "different ways to go about things"- that will help him avoid what transpired last time he was a member of the Mount Vernon City Council.</p>				

	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
My Rating:		2			
Question 2: If elected, how would you support or fix our crumbling infrastructure and the YMCA?					
Quotes from the Candidate (begin at minute 1:03:32)	"I know we need revenue to fix a lot of these different things but what we need to do is start turning over a lot of these city properties. We could take these city properties and start giving them to other folks that live in Mount Vernon, work in Mount Vernon, poice officers, fire fighters, as an incentive because they're already underpaid, and some of our DPW folks" "take them off of our hands and put them back on the tax roll" "As far as the YMCA, I've been talking about that for a while. The building is too old, too outdated, and it has too many problems to even fix. The building has to be knocked down."				
My Comment:	This was a good answer, more focused than Mr. Wallace's first 2 answers. I'd like to see an analysis of the carrying cost of the "Zombie" homes, the cost to get them back on the tax roll and how much tax revenue we might expect to realize form them over 10 years.				
My Rating:					4
Question 3: Legislation was just passed by the City Council recently to create a pass through account to receive those funds coming in from the American Rescue Plan. Would you have voted to create the pass-through account, if so why, and if not why not? and what would you have done differntly?					
Quotes from the Candidate (begin at minute 1:17:49)	"I would have voted no against it." "Whenever you're circumventing another elected officials power that is illegal and that is exactly what this is doing" "What I would have done is create the legislation that you need to put that money into an escrow, into the comptrollers office not to be touched with stiff penalties and only to be used by or drawn out by legislation, proper legislation, and the passing of the Board of Estimates and Contracts " NOTE: Mr. Wallace could not find the words but I'm confident he meant "Estimates and Contracts".				
My Comment:	A clear, well-focused answered with a well articulated alternative solution.				
My Rating:					5

<p>Question 4: With Montefiore/Mount Vernon Hospital providing very limited service... What can be done to stop our great physicians and all of the medical field- the dentists [for example]...from leaving our city in a great wave to go to other hospitals that can offer them more? [NOTE: I lightly edited this question for clarity]</p>					
<p>Quotes from the Candidate (begin at minute 1:35:37)</p>	<p>"When I heard the hospital was closing (I was Mayor at the time), I started working on a plan, I reached out to some of my folks in Washington D.C." "We did put together - and it's still together- a team....that wanted to contribute....and these guys are the best at what they do" "We went hard to try to get this done and get this accomplished." "We were ready" "What I didn't get was the elected officials here in Mount Vernon that were pushing for the same thing."</p>				
<p>My Comment:</p>	<p>Another clear, detailed answer from Mr. Wallace. He has a proposal for turning the hospital around. It merits our attention.</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
<p>5</p>					
<p>Question 5: Seniors and youth activities have always been a popular topic in Mount Vernon. What activities would you look to establish or enhance in the City if you are elected?</p>					
<p>Quotes from the Candidate (begin at minute 1:48:25)</p>	<p>"I agree with Lauren [Carter]. Basically, what we need to do is expand and work on the services that we already have, and then bring in other partners." "Also what we need to do is start to do mentor programs."</p>				
<p>My Comment:</p>	<p>Ok.</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
<p>4</p>					
<p>Question 6: If elected, how will you work as a City Council member to facilitate the staffing of [Memorial Field], what kind of events do you see coming to Memorial Field, and how would you achieve bringing events and large artists to our city? [Note: Rev. Dr. Wheeler added detail to the question How would we handle paying for police, fire, EMS, DPW for Memorial Field events?]</p>					

<p>Quotes from the Candidate (begin at minute 1:59:22)</p>	<p>"I think we should set up some kind of foundation with different leagues that can play in there. You could do an international soccer league, which is the biggest sport in the world, which will attract people from all over the place, which will give us a lot of revenue." "I wanted to do a 'battle of the bands' and a 'battle of the choirs', getting a lot of churches all over to do those kind of things." "Maybe have our own 'Gospel Fest'" "I still say we need to put up a big trinitron on a pole all the way up to make some money from all of those cars that drive by on the Hutch."</p>				
<p>My Comment:</p>	<p>All good ideas. No answer regarding paying for police, fire, etc., but none of the other candidates addressed personnel costs directly either.</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
<p>4</p>					
<p>Question 7: What do you want us to know about you and why should this community vote for you for City Council?</p>					
<p>Quotes from the Candidate (begin at minute 2:12:38)</p>	<p>"One thing I want you guys to know is that I'm a life long Democrat." "I'm always reachable, I always show up, and I always get the job done."</p>				
<p>My Comment:</p>	<p>Mr. Wallace did not receive the Democratic Party nomination for Mayor in 2019. The nomination went to Shawyn Patterson-Howard. Rather than endorsing Ms. Patterson-Howard, Mr. Wallace instead crossed party lines and ran against Ms. Patterson-Howard on the Republican Party line. So Mr. Wallace's claim to be a "life long Democrat" seems disingenuous.</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
<p>2</p>					
<p>Average Rating Andre Wallace:</p>			<p>3.5</p>		

Rating Candidate Responses given during the Candidate Zoom Forum Hosted by The Greater Centennial A.M.E. Zion Church on April 27, 2021 (Moderated by Rev. Dr. Stephen Pogue & Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Wheeler)			
Candidate: Delia Farquharson (incumbent seeking re-election)			
Introductory Remarks			
Quote from the Candidate (minute 19:57)	"I have proudly served as your City Council Member. With every question I have asked, with every issue I've raised, with every vote that I've taken, I've done so with the best interest of this community in mind. I've worked hard to maintain the integrity of the office, and to disagree with respectfully, ensuring that debate is forged on all the important matters that effect the lives of the residents of Mount Vernon."		
My Comment:	A well impassioned, statement of the beliefs Ms. Farquharson has represented in her time in the City Council.		
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral
			Favorable
			Most Favorable
			4
Question 1: If elected, how will you improve the image of our city?			
Quotes from the Candidate (begin at minute 40:12)	"If re-elected, I'll continue to do what I've done, which is to lead by example." "So how I carry myself, how I speak, how I conduct, how I vote...represents the people who voted for me."		
My Comment:	I'm not sure leading by example is enough.		
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral
			Favorable
			Most Favorable
			3
Question 2: If elected, how would you support or fix our crumbling infrastructure?			
Quotes from the Candidate (begin at minute 56:34)	"I start with 1) a moratorium on development- because we cannot continue to stress a system that's already stressed" "I was the one who made the suggestion of borrowing a pump from the county rather than purchasing a pump, as we would get that immediately."		
My Comment:	Ms. Farquhason also discussed partnering with organizations such as "save the sound", the need for a comprehensive plan, and the need for a maintenance plan. But the most direct answer was her call for a moratorium on development, which, in my view is neither realistic nor desirable.		

	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
My Rating:		2			
Question 3: Legislation was just passed by the City Council recently to create a pass through account to receive those funds coming in from the American Rescue Plan. Would you have voted to create the pass-through account, if so why, and if not why not? and what would you have done differently?					
Quotes from the Candidate (begin at minute 1:12:19)	"So I had the opportunity to vote on that legislation and my vote was 'no'" "This is about the dictates of the Charter, and we don't get to throw out bits of the charter that we don't like, or change it on a whim." "The water department, we know, has operated as a slush fund for multiple administrations in this city. Most recently, a former corporation counsel was convicted of using or misusing money from the water department" "I voted no and I would do it again, every time."				
My Comment:	A decisive answer.				
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
					5
Question 4: With Montefiore/Mount Vernon Hospital providing very limited service... What can be done to stop our great physicians and all of the medical field- the dentists [for example]...from leaving our city in a great wave to go to other hospitals that can offer them more? [NOTE: I lightly edited this question for clarity]					
Quotes from the Candidate (begin at minute 1:29:15)	"If they take healthcare then folks are not going to feel safe being here. And this is the disinvestment that is preceding the displacement, that's going to precede the gentrification of our community. " "What we need is the wider community to raise their collective voices to demand the governor and Montefiore re-invest in this hospital to upgrade the services" "People's lives were lost because of Montefiore's neglect"				
My Comment:	I found this response conspiratorial in its tone. Who are the "they" plotting to take healthcare away from Mount Vernon as part of a grand scheme to gentrify the city? Certainly, healthcare injustice is a significant and complex problem that needs to be addressed comprehensively and quickly. But it's the result of misguided system financial incentives, not a grand conspiracy to gentrify Mount Vernon.				
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
		1			

Question 5: Seniors and youth activities have always been a popular topic in Mount Vernon. What activities would you look to establish or enhance in the City if you are elected?				
Quotes from the Candidate (begin at minute 1:44:55)	"In 2016 Francis Wynne and I implemented My Brother's Keeper here in Mount Vernon. It is a President Obama initiative to provide second chances and other opportunities, career enhancing opportunities, for young people up until the age of 24." "For seniors, it's really important that seniors have access to the resources they need to help them navigate. Housing is a big issue for seniors."			
My Comment:	Solid response.			
	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable
My Rating:				4
Question 6: If elected, how will you work as a City Council member to facilitate the staffing of [Memorial Field], what kind of events do you see coming to Memorial Field, and how would you achieve bringing events and large artists to our city? [Note: Rev. Dr. Wheeler added detail to the question for Ms. Duarte: How do you see City Council and the Administration working together to make Memorial Field the iconic venue that it once was?				
Quotes from the Candidate (begin at minute 2:07:56)	"That's why the completion of the comprehensive plan is so crucial." "I think we have the opportunity to create a world class venue. A destination, with a hometown feel."			
My Comment:	That's a great line. Memorial Field: A world class venue with a hometown feel."			
	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable
My Rating:				4
Question 7: What do you want us to know about you and why should this community vote for you for City Council?				
Quotes from the Candidate (begin at minute 2:22:30)	"Let me just say that I am submitting to the community to the voters of this community the record of service that I have conducted for the past 3 plus years. I am putting that in front of the voters and saying, 'assess me on that' assess me on what I've done, on the legislations that I've passed that protect tenant's rights, that protects the environment, that challenges land use decisions." "I have conducted myself with the utmost integrity, and for me, this is about helping my community." "I am a servant leader."			

My Comment:	<p>This is fine. At this moment I'm at the City Website looking at the City Council's page. And that's all it is- a page with pictures of each City Council member. It is not a source of information about the work done by the Council. This makes it very difficult for a citizen to assess each candidate based on their body of work in the City Council. Broadcasting meetings on the internet has helped but it doesn't allow for a careful analysis of a Council Member's performance over time.</p>				
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
Average Rating Delia Farquharson:					
		3		3.25	

Candidate Favorability Ratings
Candidate Zoom Forum
Hosted by
The Greater Centennial A.M.E. Zion Church
Moderated by Louis Romain Jesiah Osbourne
May 4, 2021

Candidate Name	Percent Favorable
Woodson-Samuels Tyrae	90.00%
Copeland, Lisa A.	56.00%
Brown, George W.	46.00%

Rating Candidate Responses given during the Candidate Zoom Forum Hosted by The Greater Centennial A.M.E. Zion Church on May 4, 2021 (Moderated by Louis Romain & Jesiah Osbourne)			
Candidate: Lisa A. Copeland			
Introductory Remarks			
Quotes from the Candidate	<p>Minute 2:28 "As Mount Vernon goes the rest of the county goes. Let me say that again: As Mount Vernon goes the rest of the county goes. And when Mount Vernon is successful, that filters up versus filters down." Minute 3:57 "So I'm excited about this opportunity to use my experience to work in this county....since 1998 working in different capacities and I'm excited to bring that experience forward as we take Mount Vernon to the next level."</p>		
My Comment:	This was ok. I'm not entirely sure what "filters up versus filters down" means but ok. Ms. Copeland lists her long tenure of service in and around local government in this opening remark. So for voters who are happy with the way things are in the City this opening might be reassuring.		
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral
			3
Question 1: In your opinion, how do you see the role of County Legislator assisting the City of Mount Vernon?			
Quotes from the Candidate	<p>Minute 12:58 "The role of a County Legislator is to advocate on behalf of the city. To pass legislation that benefits the city and to secure finding for the city."</p>		
My Comment:	Concise. Ms. Copeland scores an extra point for keeping it brief.		
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral
			5
Question 2: Can the County in any way assist in saving or transforming The Montefiore Mount Vernon Hospital into a modern health center?			

<p>Quotes from the Candidate</p>	<p>Minute 23:01 "To get the kind of hospital that we deserve we need to think a little bit outside the box. We need to have something similar to what they did at Westchester Medical Center: a public/private partnership, to keep our hospital and to get the kind of hospital we deserve." Minute 23:29 "To get an influx of money I think we are going to need to develop a public/private partnership, and that will make our hospital what it should be." Minute 23:56 "With the economy the way it is it's going to be hard to get government money, not impossible but hard, so we need some influx of private funds too and I think that'll go a long way to making it the type of hospital and facility that we all deserve."</p>				
<p>My Comment:</p>	<p>Private hospital systems dominate the healthcare landscape so, yes, partnering with a private hospital system is necessary. That's not really "outside of the box" thinking. And how, specifically, do we make it happen? How, as a county legislator, would the candidate bring about this private/public healthcare partnership?</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
<p>Question 3: What are some of the highlights of the 2021 county budget that you feel impact Mount Vernon?</p>					
<p>Quotes from the Candidate</p>	<p>Minute 27:03 "In terms of the the regular budget, the city gets funding through the county budget for our senior programs for our youth programs, funds are allocated for non-for-profits, as was stated already, and certainly funding that was provided for Memorial Field, over 25 - I don't know what the number is but it's over 25 million dollars" Minute 27:38 "Both of our legislators have made sure to earmark for our non-for-profit organizations which is important, especially during these times when other funding may be cut, I think it's important, as well as funding to [coughs] I lost my train of thought. I said Youth Programs, through our youth bureau, as well as our senior programs. Minute 28:27 "Infrastructure is something that we hope to look for going forward in our capital budget because we know throughout the county and specifically in Mount Vernon our sewers are in serious need of work and there's no way we are going to be able to fund it by ourselves"</p>				

My Comment:	Ms. Copeland is at a disadvantage since she is not an incumbent county legislator. However, The Westchester County 2021 budget is easily available, in detail (https://www.westchestergov.com/county-budget). I would have preferred it if the candidate pulled highlights from the actual budget that impact Mount Vernon.			
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable Most Favorable
Question 4: Homeless and mental health issues are becoming a huge issue in our city. What plans and services would you suggest if elected that the county can provide?				
Quotes from the Candidate	Minute 34:27 "The mental health community is a difficult community. First, you have to earn the trust of the people you're trying to provide the service for. So even with all the services that we would have available until you can earn the trust of the population that you're serving it's not going to work." Minute 35:00 "Certainly, I would look to have people who would go out and meet these people where they are to earn their trust to try to get them to come in to where the services are." Minute 35:29 "I know even with the city there's a recent grant that encourages this. With some more help from the county we certainly can touch more people."			
My Comment:	Getting out and building trust is important and I'd like to hear more about that plan. As far as this answer goes, from the perspective of a listener, Ms. Copeland spoke for almost 2 minutes in order to say what she could have said in about 30 seconds. I'm also not a fan of referring to individuals dealing with mental health issues as "these people".			
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable Most Favorable
Question 5: Do you see the county relocating services back to Mount Vernon, an example being IT training, job training, office of probation, family court, and additional health services?				
Quotes from the Candidate	Minute 41:21 "Mount Vernon - I don't know if everyone knows- is one of the busiest courts that we have in the county. So perhaps we could start with 1 day a week of family court and that could help and you could schedule the Mount Vernon cases for that time, but I don't know about making the entire court for family court."			

My Comment:	This was fine. Yes, she agrees that it would be good to have more services in Mount Vernon. She did address one of the examples raised in the question so that was good.			
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable
	4			
<p>Question 6: Mount Venon's commercial tax base has eroded over the last decades and put an increased burdon on our residential taxpayers. How and what kind of light industries and economic development would you propose and how would you achieve it?</p> <p>Quotes from the Candidate</p>	<p>Minute 43:07 "One of the biggest industries that will be coming down certainly and with President Biden's infrastructure plan that's coming down is going to be the green industry and since that is something that you certainly can train people starting in high school and carry that on at Westchester Community College for those who don't go away and that's a skill that we can do immediate jobs and they're good paying jobs as I understand and that would be one of the main things that I would do." Minute 44:50 "And also, I know it may not be popular it's, I don't know how I feel about it. I'm still ambivalent about it in terms of the marijuana bill that was passed it's an industry that I don't know how I feel about it, I'm kind of torn about it, but it, I mean. The state is looking to use it to raise tax revenue so. I'm conflicted but I'm sure if run the right way I guess some person's you know it could be a help in terms of business in Mount Vernon, not one of my favorites, but the state has passed the legislation and eventually at some point it's going to cross through Westchester County and moving forward that's another industry."</p>			
My Comment:	Ms. Copeland talked about the "green industry" broadly, but offered no details about what that means or how she proposes to bring that industry to the city. Second, regarding the burgeoning marijuana industry, Ms. Copeland hedged.			
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable
	2			
	<p>Question 7: Seniors have both the Doles Center and the Armory are there any plans to make these facilities more up to date where a senior could go and spend some time?</p>			

<p>Quotes from the Candidate</p>	<p>Minute 53:34 "there are plans to renovate it certainly the HVAC system is something that has been done at the Doles Center since I've been on the Council as well as the windows I believe at the armory but there's more work to be done because our seniors we say they are a priceless asset as well as our young people and we certainly need to invest in it and that again that's going to take support from both the county and the state because it is a significant investment that's needed and we'll all have to work together to get that done."</p>				
<p>My Comment:</p>	<p>So after listening to this it does not appear there are actual "plans" to update the facility, more just a general affirmation that "yes we have to do it".</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
<p>Question 8: In what way can you as county legislators, working with the county, assist us with Memorial Field after it's been completed. Are there any innovative plans that you have or visions that you have for Memorial Field?</p>					
<p>Quotes from the Candidate</p>	<p>Minute 1:02:44 "I think it would be good to have...a sporting goods store there or some additional retail there since it's right in the retail corridor. I think that would be excellent as an addition to Memorial Field and certainly we would welcome back Iona or Fordham, they're very close to where the facility is located. We have to make sure we have the necessary parking so that we don't disrupt the neighborhood, which had been an issue in the past." Minute 1:03:45 "Donating a brick with maybe your name you could even do your high school class name or something to make the people invested in it at a nominal fee and make a brick paver, we had talked about making a brick paver coming into the field so that would be a way to get people to contribute, as well as businesses advertising there."</p>				
<p>My Comment:</p>	<p>I think the idea of beefing up the retail around Memorial Field has merit. But how will Ms. Copeland, as our county legislator, involve the county in bringing this about?</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
<p>Question 9: Mr. Osbourne prefaced this question by noting this question was for the "seasoned" politicians: What have you done in the decades of your service for the city, especially for the South Side, besides taking credit for Memorial Field?"</p>					

<p>Quotes from the Candidate</p>	<p>Minute 1:09:14 "If you look at senior housing on Sanford Boulevard and Ruth Hassle Thompson Building certainly in my role as a member of the board of directors of the Ujamaa Housing Development Corporation I was helpful and voted on supporting that. My volunteer work spans so much stuff I can't even remember everything right now but I will say that the current board the federated, we want to talk about the South Side. So we certainly work to secure funding for repaving of streets. Now I know it doesn't look like it right now and I don't want to make it into a fight but certainly through working with our state representative there is substantial millions of dollars that are available for the city for repaving of our streets. In terms of grants, through the library, the youth bureau, or all of those things and certainly work with our state elected people to make sure that young people are hired. Hundreds of people as through our youth bureau, and I'm drawing a blank, but we certainly have made sure that there is comparison there is comparative spaces for our community our park over there on North High Street, I guess that doesn't really count. The revitalization of Hartley Park all these things are things that we've voted on accepting grants and getting funds through our state and federal partners and certainly congressman Engle was a great partner for us."</p>										
<p>My Comment:</p>	<p>This is extraordinary in that there are a lot of words but very little achievement. 5 years in the City Council and Mr. Copeland holds up "repaving of our streets" as a highlight. That says a lot.</p>										
<p>My Rating:</p>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Most Unfavorable</td> <td>Unfavorable</td> <td>Neutral</td> <td>Favorable</td> <td>Most Favorable</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="5" style="text-align: center;">1</td> </tr> </table>	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable	1				
Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable							
1											
<p>Question 10 (and closing remarks): If we were to poll some of those that are closest to you, what would be the attribute that they would use to describe you?</p>											

<p>Quotes from the Candidate</p>	<p>Minute 1:18:10 "Knowledgeable about local, state, county government. That is something that I know. Sometimes in Mount Vernon we become our worst enemy and we speak things into existence like when we talk about our city. I don't...let me say this: in other cities you always hear things go on in other cities that is not good but you don't see the people running to the cameras to talk about it. We're our own defeatists selfs. So we need to talk positively about our city and speak that into existence and know there's no group - I work for the state senate- there's no group that agreed on everything but they always got to consensus and people may say there's infighting- there may be some infighting, but there's also lots and lots of legislation that has been passed for the benefit of our city, and that's important. It's not always rosy, it's not always rocky, and as Mr. Brown knows, y'all don't know all the things that go on behind the scenes and what has been different - you have no idea."</p>				
<p>My Comment:</p>	<p>I have serious problems with this statement. First, this idea that our problems exist just because they are exposed openly is nonsense. f we just "talk positive" will the potholes go away? Second, Ms. Copeland had plenty of opportunity to give us specifics about her legislative accomplishments, but she gave us very little. Third, it's incredibly frustrating for Ms. Copeland to say to taxpayers, "you have no idea" what goes on behind the scenes while having a chuckle with Mr. Brown another long term inside operator in a city government that is widely and correctly regarded as dysfunctional. Mount Vernon needs more transparency, not less.</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Average Rating Lisa A. Copeland: 2.8</p>					

<p>Rating Candidate Responses given during the Candidate Zoom Forum Hosted by The Greater Centennial A.M.E. Zion Church on May 4, 2021 (Moderated by Louis Romain & Jesiah Osbourne)</p>					
<p>Candidate: Tyrae Woodson-Samuels, Incumbent County Legislator (since November 2020)</p>					
<p>Introductory Remarks</p>					
Quote from the Candidate	<p>Minute 9:39 "Our city has been plagued by recycling the same people for leadership positions, recycling the same old (inaudible) tricks of corruption, in-fighting, and outright dysfunction. It's no secret that we have been the laughingstock of the county, and New York State for some time now. My question to you all here tonight is when is enough enough?" Minute 10:45 "We can put an end to all of this. We can rebrand and rebuild our city. We just need a new approach. We need a fresh perspective. We need a new voice for progress."</p>				
My Comment:	<p>Confident, polished, and well-articulated. There was a good narrative arch to this opening. Mr. Woodson-Samuels listed a host of positive achievements he has made since taking office in November.</p>				
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
					5
<p>Question 1: In your opinion, how do you see the role of County Legislator assisting the City of Mount Vernon?</p>					
Quotes from the Candidate	<p>Minute 15:38 "I'm happy the word 'negotiations' was brought up because just 2 or 3 weeks ago, when we faced the fuel crisis in the City of Mount Vernon, where fire trucks didn't have fuel, where police cars didn't have fuel, where our DPW vehicles didn't have fuel, I worked with County Executive Lattimer, Deputy County Executive Ken Jenkins, Mayor Shawyn Patterson-Howard and all of her Commissioners to secure fuel for all of our vehicles, as far as working with people to get results." Minute 16:50 "As far as what else a County Legislator is supposed to do, we're supposed to bring back resources."</p>				
My Comment:	<p>Mr. Woodson-Samuels response was brimming with examples of his actions in office as a new County Legislator. Well communicated and engaging.</p>				
	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable

My Rating:	5				
Question 2: Can the County in any way assist in saving or transforming The Montefiore Mount Vernon Hospital into a modern health center?					
Quotes from the Candidate	<p>Minute 21:13 "One of the issues that I've fought for working with my colleagues on the board is to make sure that any municipality that has less than 250 thousand residents would have to go to a mandatory vote to close that hospital. So that's on the record. That's on the way to becoming legislation, on the way to becoming a real law in the State of New York." Minute 22:05 "Two, the nurses have led the fight to keep our hospital open. And like I said before, we don't just want to keep it open, we want to transform the hospital. We need those essential services back, and so I'm out there fighting with them for two whole years before I even got the position."</p>				
My Comment:	I love this response. He is clearly "dialed in" to a) what this hospital means to our community, and b) his legislative role in the process of not only keeping it here but "transforming" it into a 21st century health center.				
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
5					
Question 3: What are some of the highlights of the 2021 county budget that you feel impact Mount Vernon?					
Quotes from the Candidate	<p>Minute 24:45 "The count buget has three parts: the capital budget, the operating budget, and the miscellaneous budget. The operating budget is just for the day to day activities of the county, that obviously helps us out when we deal with supplementing our DPW during snowstorms or during other emergency situations, and also for securing more money for our social services buildings like right here on first and first. The capital budget- one thing I can say specifically that impacts the City of Mount Vernon in a positive way is the 2 million dollars for Fourth Street Park- tha'ts in the capital budget, the money is there, that process is starting very very soon." Minute 26:00 "Also, which is the 3rd part of the capital budget, is the money that we can earmark for community-based organizations, AKA non-profit organizations. So as I stated in my opening statement, I secured over 800,000 dollars for wycop, for the neighborhood health center to keep being able to give out COVID-19 testing and vaccinations and high quality healthcare. We gave back to the NSSA STEM Academy where my good friend Gerald Dennis is teaching kids coding and technology."</p>				

My Comment:	Good concrete examples highlighting the county budget impact on Mount Vernon.				
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
					5
Question 4: Homeless and mental health issues are becoming a huge issue in our city. What plans and services would you suggest if elected that the county can provide?					
Quotes from the Candidate	<p>Minute 32:12 "What I have been working with on the county is working with Commissioner Towns, a brand new commissioner who was promoted from within, to address these issues. The homelessness issue is tied to the mental health pandemic that we're seeing and so we need (and I've spoken to him about this) to increase funding for mental health services, and we also need more money for our shelters. And so instead of complaining about that, what I did was I worked with my colleagues on the board to pass legislation and we passed over 150,000 dollars I believe to refurbish and expand onto homeless shelters in the City of Mount Vernon."</p>				
My Comment:	This was a good answer. Mr. Woodson-Samuels talked about his work with colleagues in county government on this issue and his plan to press for increased funding in these areas.				
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
					4
Question 5: Do you see the county relocating services back to Mount Vernon, an example being IT training, job training, office of probation, family court, and additional health services?					
Quotes from the Candidate	<p>Minute 39:38 "Yes, 100% I think the county has plans to bring some of these services back but much like former clerk Brown mentioned, we don't have exactly the best reputation for certain things. There's cronyism, there's nepotism. Now, I haven't been a part of that, I just got here but I've been in conversations with county executive Latimer and my colleagues on the Board as well as the commissioners to bring some of these services back." Minute 40:49 "I'm looking forward to bringing the social security office to Mount Vernon because New Rochelle has one, Yonkers has one, we need one in our city."</p>				

My Comment:	This was good. Mr. Woodson-Samuels was a little more direct than Mr. Brown regarding the structural issues that might give the county pause when considering Mount Vernon as a place to situate county services (i.e., cronyism, nepotism). I liked what he said about bringing a social security office into our community.			
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable Most Favorable
	4			
Question 6: Mount Venon's commercial tax base has eroded over the last decades and put an increased burdon on our residential taxpayers. How and what kind of light industries and economic development would you propose and how would you achieve it?				
Quotes from the Candidate	<p>Minute 48:10 "My answer to this question is there's so many investors out there, business owners, that want to come to Mount Vernon and make an investment here, but we just have a bad rap. Our brand is not pro business. They can't come here and be successful and be affluent because of all of the infighting, all of the dysfunction. I think we need a new generation of entrepreneurs inside the government and outside the government. Minute 49:10 "I'm pro legalization decriminalization when it comes to cannabis. We know that the Office of Cannabis Regulation will be set up in the next 12 to 18 months so we have to watch that closely and I absolutely will continue to watch that closely, but I do think that those dollars, right, no matter how we feel about it we've got to handle the business of governing and that means that we need to look closely at those millions of dollars that can help black and brown communities that were disproportionately impacted by the war on drugs. We need that dollar back, we need that investment back and so I'm 100% onboard for investing those dollars. Also, I voted in the state legislative package to support the expansion of Downstate casino licenses. We have MG that bought out Empire Casino right there in Yonkers. That's a major economic engine right next door that we can tap into. That's more revenue, that's jobs, that's real real value added to the area."</p>			
My Comment:	This was a good, detailed answer. I like that Mr. Woodson-Samuels position on cannabis, but I don't like his position on Casinos. However, I like that he is forward thinking and focused on jobs, skills development for our citizens (e.g., the Westchester Barber Academy), and revenue creation for the city.			
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable Most Favorable
	5			

Question 7: Seniors have both the Doles Center and the Armory are there any plans to make these facilities more up to date where a senior could go and spend some time?									
Quotes from the Candidate	Minute 51:45 "I know for a fact for the Doles Center there have been conversations to refurbish that location. That will take a 'P3' because that is a publicly owned property so we're going to need that investment and this kind of piggybacks to my answer from before. We have people who want to come in and invest into our city like invest into our future, invest into our seniors, our youth. But we just can't seem to get out of our own way sometimes. So I think having a brand new state of the art facility across the street with 4th Street Park with that 2 million dollar investment, that'll actually attract new money and new investors so that we can give our seniors a location that they so duly deserve."								
My Comment:	I would have liked to have had more details about the conversations held to refurbish the Doles Center and it's not entirely clear to me how the investment in the park will germinate investement in the senior center, so I would have liked more detail about that, but all in all this was good.								
My Rating:	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Most Unfavorable</td> <td>Unfavorable</td> <td>Favorable</td> <td>Most Favorable</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td>4</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Favorable	Most Favorable			4	
Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Favorable	Most Favorable						
		4							
Question 8: In what way can you as county legislators, working with the county, assist us with Memorial Field after it's been completed. Are there any innovative plans that you have or visions that you have for Memorial Field?									
Quotes from the Candidate	Minute 1:01:27 "I know one of the discussions throughout the process was to make sure we had an eight lane track so we can host semi-pro events, collegiate events, high school events; this generates money for the city and obviously it would be a sharing agreement as far as the calendar between the county and the City of Mount Vernon, but the City of Mount Vernon would have and I would work closely with Sylvia Gadson, who is the commissioner for Recreation, she has oversight of this facility. We would bring all different types of events - expos, concerts, everything we can think about under the sun we can have at that state-of-the-art 30 million dollar facility. And we can also bring in technology, have a digital billboard and charge businesses and entities that want to advertise right off of that highway right there. We can charge them and make money for that and therefore ease the burden on our taxpayers by being creative and creating revenue streams versus raising taxes."								

<p>My Comment:</p>	<p>A couple of points. First, it sounds like Mount Vernon might not have exclusive control of the facility. It sounds like there will be some sort of "sharing agreement" between the city and the county and that the county Commissioner of Recreation will have some oversight of the facility. This is a potentially important detail that citizens should keep in mind. Second, I like Mr. Woodson-Samuels thinking with respect to revenue generation (and city council candidate Andre Wallace had a similar suggestion about advertising to drivers on the Hutch). One thing I'd like to hear is more detail on revenue projections. For example, what's the revenue range we might expect to receive annually from advertising to people driving on the Hutch? In other words, I'm looking for analytics, expense and revenue models given a range of assumptions. Bring the numbers. Finally, the question was about Mr. Woodson-Samuels role in development of the field and the area around it as a Westchester County Legislator in the future. I didn't really hear an answer to that question.</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
<p>3</p>					
<p>Question 9: Mr. Osbourne prefaced this question by noting this question was for the "seasoned" politicians: What have you done in the decades of your service for the city, especially for the South Side, besides taking credit for Memorial Field?"</p>					
<p>Quotes from the Candidate</p>	<p>Minute 1:07:14 "I just got elected in November so I wouldn't necessarily call myself 'seasoned' but I'm not new to public service. Before I was in this position I had the honor to work for our former congressman Elliot L Engle who I think served with great honor and zeal for numerous years delivered major legislation and money. I started at his office 5 years ago as a staff assistant and I rose to the level of Deputy Director of constituent services, and in that role I worked on a whole host of issues- medicare, medicaid, social security, immigration issues..." Minute 1:08:12 "And outside of that I was also a member of the Shamoya McKenzie Foundation, I was the former Vice President for the NAACP here, I've been a district leader. I'm a son of Mount Vernon and I just love my community. So regardless of the title I'm going to be here, I'm going to serve, but I hope that you would keep me here as your county legislator so I can become a seasoned politician one day and look back and have this conversation about how we move the city forward."</p>				

My Comment:	Mr. Woodson-Samuels did the best he can with this since he is very newly elected to office. He highlighted his communitcy service and his work for Elliot Engle. I hope Mr. Woodson-Samuels never becomes a "seasoned politician", because that's not in anybody's best interest.			
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Most Favorable
			3	
Question 10 (and closing remarks): If we were to poll some of those that are closest to you, what would be the attribute that they would use to describe you?				
Quotes from the Candidate	Minute 1:12:46 "The word that I think most people would attribute to me is committed. I'm committed to rebranding our city. I'm committed to moving forward." Minute 1:13:28 "I'm committed to leading by example. I may not have all the answers. I may not have the most experience. But what I am is I'm committed, and I'm dedicated to doing the work to showing up." Minute 1:13:50 "It's about the work. And I've been committed to that work, and I think that's how I got here in the first place. And so I want to continue that work, and I hope and pray that you will continue that work side by side with me to change our city for the better, to move forward to a brighter future."			
My Comment:	Mr. Woodson-Samuels took the attribute "commitment" and ran with it: committed to moving forward, leading by example, doing the work. A motivating and uplifting closing remark.			
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Most Favorable
				5
Average Rating Tyrae Woodson-Samuels:			4.5	

<p>Rating Candidate Responses given during the Candidate Zoom Forum Hosted by The Greater Centennial A.M.E. Zion Church on May 4, 2021 (Moderated by Louis Romain & Jesiah Osbourne)</p>				
<p style="text-align: center;">Candidate: George W. Brown</p>				
<p>Introductory Remarks</p>				
Quote from the Candidate	<p>Minute 6:43 "I heard a preacher say one day that anything you love you make a sacrifice for. Well I don't feel running for office is a sacrifice. It's a service, and I love serving my city. As a matter of fact I get happy when I talk about serving my city." Minute 8:00: "If you like serving the public then the job is a piece of cake."</p>			
My Comment:	<p>Mr. Brown seemed genuinely thrilled to have this opportunity.</p>			
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable
				4
<p>Question 1: In your opinion, how do you see the role of County Legislator assisting the City of Mount Vernon?</p>				
Quotes from the Candidate	<p>Minute 13:29: "The role of the County Legislator, who represents Mount Vernon, in not a role that you should take lightly. I agree that some of us have been fortunate to represent the city, but when you want to, when you sold out to something, which means that there's no room for anything else, when you've made up your mind that you're not there just because you get a paycheck, you're not there just because it sounds good to be an elected official. I would be there for results." Minute 15:00 "If you negotiate with your coworkers and your counterparts, you scratch my back, I scratch yours. The bottom line is to bring the money to Mount Vernon."</p>			
My Comment:	<p>Ok I'm a bit uncomfortable with "you scratch my back, I scratch yours." This is the kind of backroom dealing that, in my view, would represent a step backwards.</p>			
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable
				1
<p>Question 2: Can the County in any way assist in saving or transforming The Montefiore Mount Vernon Hospital into a modern health center?</p>				

<p>Quotes from the Candidate</p>	<p>Minute 18:35: "Certainly they can. The County can assist. The County has already shown you what they can do in reference to Memorial Field. Timing is everything- we have to be able to take advantage of the timing. Now why do I say 'timing'? Ok, here's the deal: The reason why I say timing is everything is that, guess what? The person that runs the County is from Mount Vernon. Guess What? The second person that runs the County is from Mount Vernon. Well that's not hurting us. But we need to learn how to take advantage of the now." Minute 19:54: "No politics. We always say 'no politics' but there's always some politics, let's be real. There's always some politics involved. We can get this job done but it takes committed people. I don't have to have my name on the building. I don't have to have my name as the one that has gotten it done, as long as I know it's done and our children's children will benefit like somebody did it for me."</p>				
<p>My Comment:</p>	<p>I like Mr. Brown's sentiment, but his old school approach to politics is something I'm not in favor of. I am thankful that Mr. Brown doesn't need to have a building named after him.</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
<p>Question 3: What are some of the highlights of the 2021 county budget that you feel impact Mount Vernon?</p>					
<p>Quotes from the Candidate</p>	<p>Minute 29:08 "I have to concur with both of them that the city benefits from the county budget in several ways in our youth, seniors programs. These are moneys that have been previously allocated. I'm not totally [inaudible] I want to be bold, I want to raise the stakes because there's always some other avenues." Minute 30:03 "I do thank our legislator for acquiring the monies that he did I believe he's doing a fine job."</p>				
<p>My Comment:</p>	<p>This answer was largely nonresponsive to the question. As with Ms. Copeland, I would have liked to have heard evidence that Mr. Brown read the Westchester County 2021 budget and can draw examples of positive impact from the budget.</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>

Question 4: Homeless and mental health issues are becoming a huge issue in our city. What plans and services would you suggest if elected that the county can provide?					
Quotes from the Candidate	Minute 36:06 "First of all the county- part of the problem is they sent a lot people from all over the county to Mount Vernon, but they don't send the money to secure programs, they don't send the additional money for outreach services, clinics, etcetera etcetera, treatment day programs- they don't send the money they send the people. We need to get the county to open up that wallet and then if you want to send people to Mount Vernon. That's why I say you negotiate. I'm not going to be sitting at the table saying, 'Oh, woe it's us. No, if you're going to send the people send us the money so Mount Veron can have the people to take care of the people."				
My Comment:	I don't think this is a very productive response to the question. Mr. Brown offered very little in terms of a concrete plan about how he'd address the issues if elected. Asserting that we have to get the county to "open up that wallet" isn't a plan.				
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
	1				
Question 5: Do you see the county relocating services back to Mount Vernon, an example being IT training, job training, office of probation, family court, and additional health services?					
Quotes from the Candidate	Minute 38:23 "I think what's imporant is this: that any time you want to acquire something there's something you have to do to get it. The county is not just going to throw services, throw money out just because they're supposed to do it. It's important that we make ourselves ready and available. We have a responsibility. Before I can go ask them for something there's somethings that we have to do. There's some things that we have to do at home. We have to clean our own house up." Minute 39:17 "The bottom line is this: yes I believe services can come back to us but we have to be prepared, we have to have the staffing we have to have the housing and we can't make sure these things go to our friends who have apartments or building spaces or office spaces have to go back to the city maybe the building on first street because it's a county building and that way we can secure the service is not done by favors."				

My Comment:	Much of Mr. Brown's response was rambling. At the end he did mention using a county owned building on first street as a space in which county services could be provided, but we have to "clean our own house up", before we can do that. In that case, Mr. Brown spell out what that house cleaning entails.			
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable
3				
Question 6: Mount Venon's commercial tax base has eroded over the last decades and put an increased burden on our residential taxpayers. How and what kind of light industries and economic development would you propose and how would you achieve it?				
Quotes from the Candidate	Minute 46:07 "I think that we're trying to create something and looking for something that we've already done. We need to emulate Sanford Boulevard again. Targets, Best Buys. We need to do that again. We've got a mall corridor there on Sanford Boulevard and we're not really utilizing it to it's fullest capacity. We've already learned it's been a big blessing to us. That's commerial, the question was commercial tax base and that's what we have to do we have to duplicate what we've already done there. Minute 47:05 "Let's get another strip mall."			
My Comment:	You can see here that Mr. Brown's whole approach to politics, government, and industrial development comes from a different era. Another "strip mall"? No thanks.			
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable
1				
Question 7: Seniors have both the Doles Center and the Armory are there any plans to make these facilities more up to date where a senior could go and spend some time?				
Quotes from the Candidate	Minute 56:27 "First of all, we do have resources. My understanding is that the Doles Center as Lisa mentioned the air-conditioning was supposed to have been fixed but I don't know. Seniors have problems with that building for quite a few years. I just don't know I'm not going to try to fake the funk. I know what to do but we need to be able to have politicians leave the politics at the door to get the problems fixed."			

<p>My Comment:</p>	<p>The problem is Mr. Brown did "fake the funk" for 90 seconds before he said we wasn't going to "fake the funk". In other words, he is wasting my time. I want a legislator who is prepared to answer questions about important issues.</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>1</p>				
<p>Question 8: In what way can you as county legislators, working with the county, assist us with Memorial Field after it's been completed. Are there any innovative plans that you have or visions that you have for Memorial Field?</p>					
<p>Quotes from the Candidate</p>	<p>Minute 59:06 "I think the people and the business would come maybe we can sell shares and if people want to invest the shares will get maybe their name on a flag or on a brick or something to that nature. But I'd like it to be a state-of-the-art used for everything for hockey for football, not just high school but for college and pro so, but it all depends on the image that we present to people who let them know that Mount Veron is open for business.</p>				
<p>My Comment:</p>	<p>Mr. Brown started his answer by saying that the county is handing control of the facility back to Mount Venron. So, I think Mr. Brown is saying that the county will have no role once Memorial Field is operational.</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>3</p>				
<p>Question 9: Mr. Osbourne preficed this question by noting this question was for the "seasoned" politicians: What have you done in the decades of your service for the city, especially for the South Side, besides taking credit for Memorial Field?"</p>					
<p>Quotes from the Candidate</p>	<p>Minute 1:05:50 "I've had the pleasure of having young people work for me in the summer from some of the funds that come down from the city, come down from the county, who support the youth program [inaudible]. I created a scenario where they had to all do something that they wouldn't do now. They're millennials. I created a scenario where they had to read the newspaper every day, and pick out an article of their choice, and we would discuss it before they went home." Minute 1:06:59 "So I think I helped make them realize that everything is not on the internet."</p>				
<p>My Comment:</p>	<p>This was a nice story but it didn't answer the question.</p>				

	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
My Rating:			3		
Question 10 (and closing remarks): If we were to poll some of those that are closest to you, what would be the attribute that they would use to describe you?					
Quotes from the Candidate	<p>Minute 1:15:25 "My family calls me 'Deacon Brown's son'. That's what they say and 'Deacon Brown's son' should tell you a lot about who I am. It means that I grew up in Deacon Brown's house and in Deacon Brown's house there is a god. So I'm led by God, my spirit is by god and everything I do I try to do it with a spiritual forward thinking. That being said, I'm a very aggressive guy when it comes to things that I care about. I care about my family, I care about my church, I care about my city, I care about people, and I try to make what god's given me, I don't take it for granted." Minute 1:16:28 "Your voice is my voice. My vote is your vote. The victory that we have together is ours. I'm the real deal. It is what it is. Those of you that know me I don't have to convince you those of you who don't know me all I say is if you give this old South 7th Avenue boy a shot I will not make you ashamed, I will not be satisfied when it comes to negotiating on your behalf."</p>				
My Comment:	<p>Phrases like "I'm the real deal", and "It is what it is", aren't inspiring, and while I'm glad Mr. Brown won't make me "ashamed", I think we should set our expectations higher than that.</p>				
My Rating:		2			
Average Rating George W. Brown: 2.3					

Introduction

Can we identify, define, and rate qualities and characteristics that make for more effective elected officials? If you answer "yes", filling out a Candidate Scorecard might be of use to you as you try to decide how to cast your vote in the June 2021 Democratic Primary.

What is a "Candidate Scorecard?"

The Candidate Scorecard is an orienting device- it is designed to help voters engage their observational, analytical, and critical thinking skills so they can better evaluate a group of candidates competing to secure their votes. It can help you make more informed voting decisions. The hope, of course, is that by making better voting decisions we as a community will select more effective elected officials. To read more about my thinking, to go mountvernoncitizen.org and read the (awkwardly named) file, "*The merits of using a candidate scorecard to inform voter decision-making (in response to the April 16 candidate forum)*".

Variables Measured

I selected the variables for measurement (e.g., candidate temperament, leadership skills, etc.) by reflecting upon those qualities and characteristics I believe make an effective elected official. It's not an exhaustive list by any means, but these variables seemed like a reasonable place for me to start. Other people might consider some other set qualities and characteristics a more reasonable place to start.

Why a Rating Scale?

Rating scales are common across virtually every area of our lives. Companies are constantly badgering us to take a few minutes to rate their products; physicians ask us to rate our pain; psychologists ask us to rate our happiness. A rating scale is just a way to organize and quantify information so it's easier to make comparisons. As with deciding on what variables to measure, a 1-5 favorability rating scale seemed like a reasonable place to start.

"Deductions" and "Bonuses"

The variables that I assigned to "deductions" and "bonuses" represent things that *I think are important* and that I want to measure but do not fit into a 1-5 rating scale. For example, the candidate either did accept the endorsement of the local democratic party or they did not; the candidate either has relevant advanced education or they don't. These are "yes" or "no" variables. Please note that anyone wishing to try this system can discard or change the deductions/bonuses section (or any of the other variables on the form for that matter).

Determining the point value of each "Deduction" or "Bonus"

With the exception of "relevant criminal convictions", I worked within the 5 point rating system to assign deductions/bonuses. In other words, no deduction or bonus is more than 5 points. This was done to limit the impact of any single bonus/deduction to no more than roughly 10% of the maximum score a candidate could get across the 9 variables measured in the 1-5 scale. *Please note that I re-assessed deductions/bonuses since preliminary scores were assigned on 3/31/21. This re-assessment was the result of feedback I recieved directly from candidates on April 16, 2021 during a Zoom Forum held to discuss the Candidate Scorecard. Changes made are described in the "Definitions" section (see below).*

Data Collection

In order to rate each candidate from "least favorable" to "most favorable", across each variable on the scorecard, I look for evidence as follows:

1. Things written by the candidates- this includes opinion or position pieces, newsletters, journal articles, legislation drafted, books, etc.

2. Things written about the candidates- this includes newspaper articles written by professional journalists that are (in theory) "fact based", as well as published candidate interviews. When multiple journalists report the same set of facts it lends credibility to reports and is, therefore, more persuasive.

3. Video footage- video of candidates discussing issues, debating issues, presenting issues, responding to concerns presented by citizens (e.g., during city council meetins), board of trustee meetings (for those candidates who serve on boards), etc.

4. Candidate Websites- websites that describe the candidates's beliefs and outline their positions on a variety of voter concerns are a good source of information. The greater the detail the more valuable the source.

5. Personal interactions- personal interactions I've had with candidates can shape my perspective, although I don't generally find political rhetoric made to me personally very persuasive.

Definitions

Temperament- Emotionality interferes with analytical thinking and reasonable judgement. Emotional displays of anger, annoyance, and impatience, for example, are not favorable leadership qualities. Emotions *that are favorable* include a positive affect even during times of stress, light-heartedness even when tasks and interactions are difficult, compassion, and empathy. When public speaking, displays of positive emotions such as passion for a cause, a principle, a position, or to generate motivation, is a favorable characteristic. A baseline score of 3 ("neutral") is given in the absence of compelling evidence of less/more favorable temperament.

Leadership Skills- a demonstrated ability to solve problems should inspire and motivate those around the candidate to achieve at a high level. Effective leaders "step up and step in" when problems arise. In fact, this is when outstanding leaders thrive. In the absence of compelling evidence of leadership skills, candidates will receive a baseline score of 3 in Leadership Skills.

Honesty & Ethics- candidates for elected office should be models of honesty and ethical behavior. Candidates receive a score of 5 in this category unless there is clear evidence showing dishonesty or

Adheres to Principles over Politics- when a candidate does or says things simply because they think it might help them get elected, they are acting out of political self-interest or "political expediency". When candidates "flip flop" on issues, it is often due to political expediency. When a candidate adopts a position simply to secure a vote or group of votes (called "political pandering") they are doing what is politically expedient. Or, when a candidate changes a party affiliation in an attempt to secure election to public office, they are doing what is politically expedient. Political expediency is viewed unfavorably. On the other hand, acting on principle when it is politically *inconvenient* is viewed favorably. A baseline score of 3 ("neutral") is given in the absence of evidence affirming a candidate's principles when it is inconvenient or political expediency.

Relevant Financial Experience- this may include 1) a business owner or corporate employee with direct responsibility for some or all aspects of financial operations, 2) a financial consultant, 3) a CPA, 4) a fraud investigator, or 5) a government employee with financial oversight functions. If there is no evidence to support higher/lower scores, the candidate will receive a score of 3.

Communication Skills- this is a measure of the candidate's ability to speak and write clearly and persuasively. Examples include: public speaking, one-one interviews with journalists, one-one interactions with citizens, debates with other candidates, panel discussions, invited talks/presentations, and published writings such as periodical opinion pieces, journal articles, books. **Note:** a candidate *might* receive a favorable score in Communication Skills even if the voter does not agree with the candidates position, if the candidate articulates their position clearly and supports it with evidence (even if that evidence does not persuade the voter). A baseline score of 3 ("neutral") is given in the absence of compelling evidence of less/more favorable communication skills.

Endorsements- A candidate with no endorsements receives a score of 3. Endorsements from current/former elected officials, unions, or political parties can increase or decrease a candidate's favorability score. Endorsements from political parties and unions are largely transactional. If a voter's interests are not in alignment with the political interests of the union or the party giving the endorsement, the candidate's favorability score for Endorsements will go down. The baseline score of 3 ("neutral") is given in the absence of compelling evidence of less/more favorable endorsements.

Electability- Current and past elected officials, candidates who have demonstrated electability in other ways (e.g., selected to leadership roles in public commissions and committees), and candidates with party or union endorsements are likely to receive more favorable Electability scores than candidates who have run for elected office in the past but have lost, or candidates about whom there is relatively little public information available. A baseline score of 3 ("neutral") is given in the absence of compelling evidence of less/more favorable endorsements.

Public Policy Goals & Beliefs- a measure of how favorably the voter views the candidate's public policy beliefs and legislative agenda. For example, if the voter is against the use of corporate Payments In Lieu Of Taxes (PILOTS), but the candidate is in favor of the use of PILOTS for industrial development, the voter would likely view this policy belief as "unfavorable". Potentially, there are many policy beliefs and goals in addition to PILOTS that will go be considered in scoring this variable (e.g., social policy, infrastructure, environmental issues, taxes, etc.). The voter should evaluate and weight policies that are important to them. A baseline score of 3 ("neutral") is given in the absence of compelling evidence of less/more favorable Public Policy Goals & Beliefs.

Personnel Management Philosophy (Comptroller Candidates only)- The Comptroller is tasked with managing a Finance Dept team of approximately 15 people so that they can effectively and efficiently account for the City's \$125m in budget appropriations. Among many other responsibilities (e.g., tax collection, cash management, etc.), the Comptroller must ensure that 1) finance dept staff have the communication skills necessary to interface with personnel from 20+ City Departments, and 2) personnel in each department of the City tasked with interfacing with the finance dept are trained in common financial policies (such as standards for requesting, documenting, and monitoring within dept expenditures), and that these policies are implemented on a consistent basis.

The Comptroller's approach must ensure that employees get the job done well, while also looking out for employee well-being by setting a collegial tone that builds employee morale rather than eroding it. A baseline score of 3 ("neutral") is given in the absence of compelling evidence of a less/more favorable Personnel Management Philosophy

Average Favorability Rating of Responses (Greater Centennial A.M.E. Zion Church Zoom Forum 4.27.21)
This was an event with candidates running for City Council. Please see the results posted at mountvernoncitizen.org for details. There were 8 questions rated. To get the average, I added the 8 scores together and divided by 8.

Point Deductions

Democratic Party Endorsement (-1 points). A candidate who accepts an endorsement from the local Democratic Party will receive a 1 point deduction from their final score. This is done to reflect my view that the Democratic Party serves the narrow interests of it's leadership above the interests of the voting public. NOTE: in my first round of scoring this endorsement resulted in a 2 point deduction. However, after meeting with candidates and hearing their concerns, I changed this to a 1 point deduction. While I still view the acceptance of this endorsement negatively, there are worse endorsements a candidate could accept.

Current Elected Official (-2 points). Given the extreme dysfunction in our current City Government, across multiple election cycles, current elected officials running for re-election will receive a 2 point deduction from their final score. NOTE: after meeting with candidates and hearing their concerns, I changed this from a 3 point deduction to a 2 point deduction.

Uses Campaign Distortion/Misinformation Tactics (-4). If a candidate does not *publicly* denounce and discourage his/her supporters from waging proxy social media campaigns using unsubstantiated rumors, unattributed "sources", and false claims against political rivals, the candidate will receive a 4 point deduction from their final score.

Relevant Criminal Convictions. Relevant crimes would include (but are not limited to) financial crimes, violent crimes, fraud, and crimes committed while acting in the capacity of an elected official. NOTE: after meeting with candidates and hearing their concerns, I changed this from an 8 point deduction to an immediate disqualification

Bonus Points

Most Favorable Score in Relevant Financial Experience (3 point bonus). Given the complexity of our current fiscal situation, and the fact that significant new public monies will flow into the city from the federal government (e.g., Economic Recovery funds and increases in funding to the US Dept. Housing & Urban Development that will increase funding to the City's Urban Renewal Agency), a heavy premium is placed on candidates with the most favorable financial experience. Therefore, a 3 point bonus will be added to their final scores of these candidates.

Relevant Advanced Education (2 point bonus). Advanced education would include post Bachelor's Degree academic training (e.g, Master's Degree, Doctoral Degree), or trade certifications (e.g., in finance, in fraud investigation). Relevance is determined on a case by case basis. For example, a Master's Degree in Art History would not be deemed relevant, but a Law Degree might if the candidate has relevant experience to go along with the advanced degree.

City Council Candidate Scorecard

Candidate Name:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
	1	2	3	4	5
Temperament					
Leadership Skills					
Honesty & Ethics					
Adheres to Principles over Politics					
Relevant Financial Experience					
Communication Skills					
Endorsements					
Electability					
Public Policy Goals & Beliefs					
A.M.E. Zion Church Zoom Forum 4.27.21					
Point Deductions		Bonus Points			
Democratic Party Endorsement		Most Favorable score in Relevant Financial Experience			
Current Mt. Vernon Elected Official		Relevant advanced education			
Uses Campaign Distortion/Misinformation Tactics		Total Deductions + Bonus Points			
Relevant Criminal Convictions	Disqualified	Candidate's Final Score:			
Public Policy Goals & Beliefs					
Do you support Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOTS) for			yes	no	maybe
Industrial Development (Commercial Use)					
Housing Development (Residential Use)					
Do you support hiring a full-time Certified Public Accountant (CPA) to manage the finances of the Urban Renewal Agency ?			yes	no	maybe
Candidate Comments:					
Do you support hiring a full-time Certified Public Accountant (CPA) to manage the finances of the Industrial Development Agency?			yes	no	maybe
Candidate Comments:					

Do you support hiring a full-time Certified Public Accountant (CPA) to manage the finances of the Industrial Development Agency?	yes	no	maybe
Candidate Comments:			
Do you support Assemblyman Pretlow's Bill A1571 to have the Trustees of MV Public Library appointed by the Mayor and Confirmed by the City Council?	yes	no	maybe
Candidate Comments:			
Do you support annual outside financial audits of the URA, IDA, and Public Library and will you work to ensure that these audits are completed and released to the public within 6 months of the end of each trusts' fiscal year?	yes	no	maybe
Candidate Comments:			
Do you believe that financial oversight of public trusts, (e.g., the URA, the IDA, and the Public Library) is an essential function of a Board of Trustees and that Board Members should be held accountable when an entity's finances are not managed appropriately?	yes	no	maybe
Candidate Comments:			
Additional Candidate Comments:			

Ranking the Mount Vernon Candidates
for
City Council
Spring 2021

City Council Candidate Rankings	5/4/2021		6/15/2021	
	Raw Score	Percent Favorable	Raw Score	Percent Favorable
Lucio, Nicole	48.3	88%		
Browne, Danielle	46.5	85%		
Carter, Lauren	45.1	82%		
Poteat, Edward	45.0	82%		
Wallace, Andre	43.0	78%		
Gleason, Cathlin	35.5	65%		
Duarte, Janice	34.5	63%		
Farquharson, Delia	33.3	60%		

City of Mount Vernon Candidate Scorecard

Nicole Lucio City Council	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
	1	2	3	4	5
Temperament					5
Leadership Skills				4	
Honesty & Ethics					5
Adheres to Principles over Politics					5
Relevant Financial Experience					5
Communication Skills					5
Endorsements			3		
Electability				4	
Public Policy Goals & Beliefs				3.5	
A.M.E. Zion Church Zoom Forum 4.27.21				3.75	
Point Deductions		Bonus Points			
Democratic Party Endorsement		Most Favorable score in Relevant Financial Experience			3
Current Mt. Vernon Elected Official		Relevant advanced education			2
Uses Campaign Distortion/Misinformation Tactics		Total Deductions + Bonus Points			5
Relevant Criminal Convictions		Candidate's Final Score:			48.25
May 4 2021 Scoring adjustments					
<u>Temperament</u> - Increase to "Most Favorable"					
<u>Electability</u> - Increase to "favorable" based on reduction in number of candidates in the field.					
<u>Public Policy Goals & Beliefs</u> - overall "Favorable" (3.5), although I disagree w/the candidate regarding creating a pass through mechanism to route ARRA Funds around the Comptroller and to the Water Dept.					
<u>A.M.E. Zion Church Zoom Forum 4.27.21</u> - see full report at mountvernoncitizen.org					
Candidate Lucio Responses to Policy Questions					
I believe that Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOTS) should be used for...	yes	no	maybe		
Industrial Development (Commercial Use)?	X				
Housing Development (Residential Use)?		X			

City of Mount Vernon Candidate Scorecard

<p>Candidate Comment: Yes, I believe that payments in lieu of taxes (PILOTS) should be used for Industrial Development (Commercial Use). The benefits of these projects are profit-generating which include jobs and sales tax revenue. The city should want to incentivize this type of development, especially since commercial use property is not burdensome on the city's services or school system. PILOTS and exemptions or incentives, should be properly negotiated and it is my understanding that there is a formula for the calculation. I can follow up when I locate it. No, I do not believe that payments in lieu of taxes (PILOTS) should be used for Housing Development (Residential use). Merely because these properties house residents that will use city services (police, fire, ambulance, schools). I do not see a win-win in offering PILOTS for housing development.</p>			
<p>I believe it is necessary to hire an accountant (preferably a CPA) to manage the finances of the Urban Renewal Agency ?</p>	yes		
<p>Candidate Comments: Yes, I believe it is necessary to hire an accountant to manage the finances of the URA due to the large amounts of funding received through grants and HUD. An accountant would serve to proactively safeguard against any loss from unauthorized use. Additionally, an accountant would prepare and maintain the accuracy of financial documents, evaluate internal controls and safeguards for recording transactions.</p>			
<p>I believe it is necessary to hire an accountant (preferably a CPA) to manage the finances of the Industrial Development Agency ?</p>	yes		
<p>I believe it is necessary to hire an accountant (preferably a CPA) to manage the finances of the Public Library?</p>	yes		
<p>I believe it is essential to have annual, outside financial audits, of the URA, IDA, and the Public Library, and that it's reasonable for the public to have audit reports available within six months of the end of each public trusts' fiscal year?</p>	yes		
<p>Candidate Comments: Yes, I believe it is essential to have annual outside financial audits of the URA, IDA, and Public Library... An audit provides independent verification that the financial statements are a true and fair representation of the entity's current situation by analyzing and scrutinizing its financial transactions. An audit can be an effective tool for identifying fraud and</p>			
<p>I believe that fiscal oversight of the URA, the IDA, and the Public Library is an essential function of a Board of Trustees, and that Board Members should be held accountable when an entity's finances are not managed appropriately?</p>	yes		
<p>Candidate Comments: Yes, I believe that fiscal oversight of the URA, IDA, and the Public Library is an essential function of a Board of Trustees, and that Board Members should be held accountable when an entity's financing are not managed appropriately.</p>			

City of Mount Vernon Candidate Scorecard

I support Assemblyman Pretlow's Bill A1571 to have the Trustees of MV Public Library appointed by the Mayor and Confirmed by the City Council?

no

Candidate Comments: *No, I do not support Pretlow's Bill A1571 because I believe Trustees of the MV Public Library should be elected, giving qualified candidates an opportunity to campaign.*

City of Mount Vernon Candidate Scorecard

Danielle Browne City Council	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
	1	2	3	4	5
Temperament					5
Leadership Skills					4.5
Honesty & Ethics					5
Adheres to Principles over Politics		2			
Relevant Financial Experience					5
Communication Skills					5
Endorsements			3		
Electability				4	
Public Policy Goals & Beliefs			3		
A.M.E. Zion Church Zoom Forum 4.27.21				4	
Point Deductions		Bonus Points			
Democratic Party Endorsement		Most Favorable score in Relevant Financial Experience			3
Current Mt. Vernon Elected Official		Relevant advanced education			2
Uses Campaign Distortion/Misinformation Tactics		Total Deductions + Bonus Points			5
Relevant Criminal Convictions		Candidate's Final Score:			46.5

May 4 2021 Scoring adjustments

Leadership Skills-Increase to "Most Favorable" (4.5)

Adhere to Principles over Politics- Decrease to "unfavorable" based on repeated plugs made during the A.M.E. Zion Church Zoom Forum 4.27.21 for voters to vote for the "MVForward" slate of candidates.

Communication Skills- Increase to "Most Favorable" (4.5) based upon performance at A.M.E. Zion Church Zoom Forum 4.27.21.

Electability- Increase to "favorable" based upon reduction in number of candidates in the field.

Public Policy Goals & Beliefs- Set at "neutral". Did not receive answers to Policy Questions and disagree w/Candidate regarding creating a pass through mechanism to route \$42m in ARRA around the Comptroller and to the Water Dept

A.M.E. Zion Church Zoom Forum 4.27.21- see full report at mountvernoncitizen.org

Candidate Danielle Browne Responses to Policy Questions

The Candidate did not respond.

City of Mount Vernon Candidate Scorecard

Lauren Carter City Council	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
	1	2	3	4	5
Temperament					5
Leadership Skills				4	
Honesty & Ethics					5
Adheres to Principles over Politics				4	
Relevant Financial Experience			3		
Communication Skills					5
Endorsements					4.5
Electability					4.5
Public Policy Goals & Beliefs					5
A.M.E. Zion Church Zoom Forum 4.27.21				4.13	
Point Deductions			Bonus Points		
Democratic Party Endorsement	-1	Most Favorable score in Relevant Financial Experience			
Current Mt. Vernon Elected Official		Relevant advanced education			2
Uses Campaign Distortion/Misinformation Tactics		Total Deductions + Bonus Points			1
Relevant Criminal Convictions		Candidate's Final Score:			45.1
<u>May 4 2021 Scoring adjustments</u>					
<u>Temperament</u> - Increase to "Most Favorable".					
<u>Leadership Skills</u> -Increase to "Favorable".					
<u>Adhere to Principles over Politics</u> - Increase to "Favorable".					
<u>Communication Skills</u> - Increase to "Most Favorable" based upon factors including performance at A.M.E. Zion Church Zoom Forum 4.27.21, nad answers to Policy Questions.					
<u>Endorsements</u> - Increase to "Most Favorable" (4.5) based upon a) re-assessment of Democratic Party Endorsement, and b) Candidate receiving endorsement from Working Families Party					
<u>Electability</u> - Increase to "Most Favorable" (4.5 score) based upon reduction in number of candidates in the field.					
<u>Public Policy Goals & Beliefs</u> - notably, does not agree w/current City Council decision to direct \$42m in ARRA funds through the City Clerk to the Water Dept (bypassing the Comptroller).					
<u>A.M.E. Zion Church Zoom Forum 4.27.21</u> - see full report at mountvernoncitizen.org					

City of Mount Vernon Candidate Scorecard

Candidate Lauren Carter Responses to Policy Questions			
believe that Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOTS) should be used for.	yes	no	maybe
Industrial Development (Commercial Use)?	✓		
Housing Development (Residential Use)?		✓	
Candidate Comments: PILOTS should be used to promote economic development and to attract, expand, and improve businesses. This is the purpose per NYS law.			
I believe it is necessary to hire an accountant (preferably a CPA) to manage the finances of the Urban Renewal Agency ?	yes	no	maybe
Candidate Comments: The comptroller is elected. Per the City Charter, the comptroller must appoint a 1st deputy who is an accountant with a minimum of 3 years experience.			
I believe it is necessary to hire an accountant (preferably a CPA) to manage the finances of the Industrial Development Agency ?	yes	no	maybe
Candidate Comments: However, the comptroller should serve as the treasurer of the IDA and			
I believe it is necessary to hire an accountant (preferably a CPA) to manage the finances of the Public Library?	yes	no	maybe
I believe it is essential to have annual, outside financial audits, of the URA, IDA, and the Public Library, and that it's reasonable for the public to have audit reports available within six months of the end of each public trusts' fiscal year?	yes	no	maybe
Candidate Comments: In fact, this question is in line with best practices. Hence, it should be required			
I believe that fiscal oversight of the URA, the IDA, and the Public Library is an essential function of a Board of Trustees, and that Board Members should be held accountable when an entity's finances are not managed appropriately?	yes	no	maybe
I support Assemblyman Pretlow's Bill A1571 to have the Trustees of MV Public Library appointed by the Mayor and Confirmed by the City Council?	yes	no	maybe
Candidate Comments: It is something I will have to conduct further research about. If the city council adopts legislation setting forth the qualifications of trustees, I would lean toward approval. I do not want the case to be that the mayor is appointing political friends to this important body.			

City of Mount Vernon Candidate Scorecard

Edward Poteat City Council	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
	1	2	3	4	5
Temperament					5
Leadership Skills				4	
Honesty & Ethics					5
Adheres to Principles over Politics		2			
Relevant Financial Experience					5
Communication Skills					5
Endorsements			3		
Electability				4	
Public Policy Goals & Beliefs				3.5	
A.M.E. Zion Church Zoom Forum 4.27.21				3.5	
Point Deductions			Bonus Points		
Democratic Party Endorsement		Most Favorable score in Relevant Financial Experience			3
Current Mt. Vernon Elected Official		Relevant advanced education			2
Uses Campaign Distortion/Misinformation Tactics		Total Deductions + Bonus Points			5
Relevant Criminal Convictions		Candidate's Final Score:			45
May 4 2021 Scoring adjustments					
Temperament - Increase to "Most Favorable"					
Adhere to Principles over Politics - Decrease to "unfavorable" based on repeated plugs made during the A.M.E. Zion Church Zoom Forum 4.27.21 for voters to vote for the "MVForward" slate of candidates.					
Electability - Increase to "Favorable" based upon reduction in number of candidates in the field.					
Public Policy Goals & Beliefs - overall "Favorable" (3.5), although I disagree w/the candidate regarding creating a pass through mechanism to route \$42m in ARRA funds around the Comptroller to the Water Dept and I'm currently a "no" on using PILOTS for Residential Development (although I'm open to changing my opinion if we it can demonstrated that per pupil spending will not be impacted or school taxes increases as a result of the PILOT.					
A.M.E. Zion Church Zoom Forum 4.27.21 - see full report at mountvernoncitizen.org					
Candidate Poteat Responses to Policy Questions					

City of Mount Vernon Candidate Scorecard

I believe that Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOTS) should be used for...	yes	no		maybe
Industrial Development (Commercial Use)?	x			
Housing Development (Residential Use)?				x
<p>Candidate Comments: PILOTS or payments in Lieu of taxes can be used for a variety of reasons. Developers sometimes request PILOTS not to lower their taxes but to have a stable tax bill for a long period of time. Moreover, all new developments should be judged by their net economic benefit to the City. In other words, we need to have a quantitative understanding the cost of any development to the city and ensure that those costs are paid for by the developer. Moreover, all developers should be subject hiring local businesses and hiring local residents. If a developer receives a PILOT and commits to local hiring, they should face the risk of losing their PILOT if they do not meet their job goals .</p>				
I believe it is necessary to hire an accountant (preferably a CPA) to manage the finances of the Urban Renewal Agency ?	yes	no		maybe
<p>Candidate Comments: Not only should the finances be managed by a CPA, they should also be audited by a recognized accounting firm. Finally, checks and balances should be implemented to ensure proper controls on all financial transactions at the firm.</p>				
I believe it is necessary to hire an accountant (preferably a CPA) to manage the finances of the Industrial Development Agency ?	yes	no		maybe
<p>Candidate Comments: Not only should the finances be managed by a CPA, they should also be audited by a recognized accounting firm. Finally, checks and balances should be implemented to ensure proper controls on all financial transactions at the firm.</p>				
I believe it is necessary to hire an accountant (preferably a CPA) to manage the finances of the Public Library?	yes	no		maybe
<p>Candidate Comments: Not only should the finances be managed by a CPA, they should also be audited by a recognized accounting firm. Finally, checks and balances should be implemented to ensure proper controls on all financial transactions at the firm.</p>				
I believe it is essential to have annual, outside financial audits, of the URA, IDA, and the Public Library, and that it's reasonable for the public to have audit reports available within six months of the end of each public trusts' fiscal year?	yes	no		maybe

Candidate Comments: Yes

City of Mount Vernon Candidate Scorecard

<p>I believe that fiscal oversight of the URA, the IDA, and the Public Library is an essential function of a Board of Trustees, and that Board Members should be held accountable when an entity's finances are not managed appropriately?</p>	yes	no	maybe
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<u>Candidate Comments:</u>			
<p>I support Assemblyman Pretlow's Bill A1571 to have the Trustees of MV Public Library appointed by the Mayor and Confirmed by the City Council?</p>	yes	no	maybe

Candidate Comments: The MV Public Library has a rich history as an independent organization. As long as the financials are audited annually and a systems of checks and balances are in place, The MV Library should remain an independent organization.

Other Candidate Comments: It is crucial that the next city council promotes transparency and engagement. This can be done by advertising the agenda and minutes of the city council by social media. It can also be done by encouraging local residents to attend meetings through social media and radio. Finally, the end of this political campaign should not mark the end of engagement between councilmembers and residents. City council members should continues to outreach and listen to local residents throughout their term in office.

City of Mount Vernon Candidate Scorecard

Andre Wallace City Council	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
	1	2	3	4	5
Temperament					5
Leadership Skills				4	
Honesty & Ethics					5
Adheres to Principles over Politics		2			
Relevant Financial Experience					5
Communication Skills					4.5
Endorsements			3		
Electability				4	
Public Policy Goals & Beliefs					5
A.M.E. Zion Church Zoom Forum 4.27.21				3.5	
Point Deductions		Bonus Points			
Democratic Party Endorsement	-1	Most Favorable score in Relevant Financial Experience			3
Current Mt. Vernon Elected Official		Relevant advanced education			
Uses Campaign Distortion/Misinformation Tactics		Total Deductions + Bonus Points			2
Relevant Criminal Convictions		Candidate's Final Score:			43
May 4 2021 Scoring adjustments					
Temperament- Increased to "most favorable".					
Communication - Increase to "most favorable", based upon reviewing videos and reading Mr. Wallace's Newsletters. (4.5)					
Endorsements- Increase to "Neutral" based upon a re-assessment of Democratic Party Endorsement.					
Electability- Increase to "Favorable" based on reduction in number of candidates in the field.					
Public Policy Goals & Beliefs- Notably, does not agree w/current City Council decision to direct \$42m in ARRA funds through the City Clerk to the Water Dept (bypassing the Comptroller).					
A.M.E. Zion Church Zoom Forum 4.27.21- see full report at mountvernoncitizen.org					
Candidate Wallace Responses to Policy Questions					
I believe that Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOTS) should be used for...	yes	no	maybe		

City of Mount Vernon Candidate Scorecard

Industrial Development (Commercial Use)?	x		
Housing Development (Residential Use)?		x	
<p>Candidate Comment: <i>The most recent trend with regard to PILOTs has undermined this city's long-term stability in favor of short-term development. As I have written previously, Mount Vernon needs to stop letting its skyline kill its bottom line. These PILOTs invariably take more from the city than they contribute, serve non-residents over current residents, and stick taxpayers with the bill while developers make huge profits. Developers have their hooks into elected officials and will turn Mount Vernon into the South Bronx before anyone realizes it.</i></p>			
I believe it is necessary to hire an accountant (preferably a CPA) to manage the finances of the Urban Renewal Agency ?	yes		
<p>Candidate Comments: <i>It is imperative that Mount Vernon implement sound financial controls over all of its agencies. Failure to complete an annual audit should result in automatic termination from the agency. Mount Vernon is being left behind other cities because of self-inflicted economic wounds, chief among them our inability to create, stick to, and monitor budgets across all departments. I would also support citizen oversight commissions to bring transparency to these "black box" agencies which have been filled with fraud, waste, and abuse.</i></p>			
I believe it is necessary to hire an accountant (preferably a CPA) to manage the finances of the Industrial Development Agency ?	yes		
<p>Candidate Comments: <i>same answer as above</i></p>			
I believe it is necessary to hire an accountant (preferably a CPA) to manage the finances of the Public Library?	yes		
<p>Candidate Comments: <i>same answer as above</i></p>			
I believe it is essential to have annual, outside financial audits, of the URA, IDA, and the Public Library, and that it's reasonable for the public to have audit reports available within six months of the end of each public trusts' fiscal year?	yes		
<p>Candidate Comments: <i>Totally agree with each of these recommendations.</i></p>			
I believe that fiscal oversight of the URA, the IDA, and the Public Library is an essential function of a Board of Trustees, and that Board Members should be held accountable when an entity's finances are not managed appropriately?	yes		
<p>Candidate Comments: <i>Completely agree.</i></p>			
I support Assemblyman Pretlow's Bill A1571 to have the Trustees of MV Public Library appointed by the Mayor and Confirmed by the City Council?		no	

City of Mount Vernon Candidate Scorecard

Candidate Comments: *I am not in favor of creating another "black box" agency and would prefer to keep the Trustees responsive to the community directly via the electoral process.*

Other Candidate Comments: *I have published many of my ideas and recommendations in the Westchester County Press and on my website (www.andrewallace.com). Lohud has even run some of my news letters.*

City of Mount Vernon Candidate Scorecard

Cathlin Gleason City Council	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
	1	2	3	4	5
Temperament				4	
Leadership Skills				4	
Honesty & Ethics					5
Adheres to Principles over Politics		2			
Relevant Financial Experience			3		
Communication Skills				4	
Endorsements			3		
Electability				4	
Public Policy Goals & Beliefs			3		
A.M.E. Zion Church Zoom Forum 4.27.21				3.5	
Point Deductions			Bonus Points		
Democratic Party Endorsement			Most Favorable score in Relevant Financial Experience		
Current Mt. Vernon Elected Official			Relevant advanced education		
Uses Campaign Distortion/Misinformation Tactics			Total Deductions + Bonus Points		0
Relevant Criminal Convictions			Candidate's Final Score:		35.5
<u>May 3 2021 Scoring adjustments</u>					
<u>Temperament</u> - Increase to "favorable".					
<u>Adhere to Principles over Politics</u> - Decrease to "unfavorable" based on repeated plugs made during the A.M.E. Zion Church Zoom Forum 4.27.21 for voters to vote for the "MVForward" slate of candidates.					
<u>Endorsements</u> - Increase to "Neutral" based upon overall re-assessment of this variable for all candidates.					
<u>Electability</u> - Increase to "Favorable" based on reduction in number of candidates in the field.					
<u>Public Policy Goals & Beliefs</u> - Set at "neutral". Did not receive answers to Policy Questions and unclear as to whether or not Candidate agreed with creating a pass through mechanism to route \$42m in ARRA around the Comptroller and to the Water Dept					
<u>A.M.E. Zion Church Zoom Forum 4.27.21</u> - see full report at mountvernoncitizen.org					
<p>Candidate Cathlin Gleason Responses to Policy Questions</p> <p>The Candidate did not respond.</p>					

City of Mount Vernon Candidate Scorecard

Janice Duarte City Council	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
	1	2	3	4	5
Temperament					5
Leadership Skills		2			
Honesty & Ethics					5
Adheres to Principles over Politics			3		
Relevant Financial Experience			3		
Communication Skills					5
Endorsements			3		
Electability					5
Public Policy Goals & Beliefs			3		
A.M.E. Zion Church Zoom Forum 4.27.21				3.5	
Point Deductions			Bonus Points		
Democratic Party Endorsement	-1	Most Favorable score in Relevant Financial Experience			
Current Mt. Vernon Elected Official	-2	Relevant advanced education			
Uses Campaign Distortion/Misinformation Tactics		Total Deductions + Bonus Points			-3
Relevant Criminal Convictions		Candidate's Final Score:			34.5
<u>May 4 2021 Scoring adjustments</u>					
<u>Adhere to Principles over Politics</u> - Decrease to "Neutral".					
<u>Relevant Financial Experience</u> - Increase to "Neutral". On the candidate's LinkedIn page, work experience includes 4yrs as a Marketing Manager (Structured Finance) at Standard & Poor's (2000-2004).					
<u>Endorsements</u> - Increase to "Neutral" based upon a re-assessment of Democratic Party Endorsement.					
<u>Public Policy Goals & Beliefs</u> - Set at "neutral". Did not receive answers to Policy Questions and disagree w/Candidate regarding creating a pass through mechanism to route \$42m in ARRA funds around the Comptroller and to the Water Dept					
<u>A.M.E. Zion Church Zoom Forum 4.27.21</u> - see full report at mountvernoncitizen.org					
Candidate Janice Duarte Responses to Policy Questions					
The Candidate did not respond.					

City of Mount Vernon Candidate Scorecard

D Farquharson

1

Delia Farquharson City Council	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
	1	2	3	4	5
Temperament			3		
Leadership Skills		2			
Honesty & Ethics					5
Adheres to Principles over Politics					5
Relevant Financial Experience		2			
Communication Skills				4	
Endorsements			3		
Electability				4	
Public Policy Goals & Beliefs		2			
A.M.E. Zion Church Zoom Forum 4.27.21			3.25		
Point Deductions			Bonus Points		
Democratic Party Endorsement		Most Favorable score in Relevant Financial Experience			
Current Mt. Vernon Elected Official	-2	Relevant advanced education		2	
Uses Campaign Distortion/Misinformation Tactics		Total Deductions + Bonus Points		0	
Relevant Criminal Convictions		Candidate's Final Score:		33.25	
May 4 2021 Scoring adjustments					
<u>Endorsements</u> - Increase to "Neutral".					
<u>Electability</u> - Increase to "Favorable" based upon reduction in number of candidates in the field.					
<u>Public Policy Goals & Beliefs</u> - "Unfavorable" based upon multiple criteria including responses given during A.M.E. Zion Church Zoom Forum 4.27.21, and answers to Policy Questions (see below). The candidate did "abstain" during the recent City Council vote to direct \$42m in ARRA funds through the Clerk to the Water Dept (bypassing the Comptroller), and I find this to be favorable.					
<u>A.M.E. Zion Church Zoom Forum 4.27.21</u> - see full report at mountvernoncitizen.org					
Candidate Farquharson Responses to Policy Questions					
believe that Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOTS) should be used for..	yes	no	maybe		
Industrial Development (Commercial Use)?	NO RESONSE FROM CANDIDATE				

City of Mount Vernon Candidate Scorecard

Housing Development (Residential Use)?	NO RESONSE FROM CANDIDATE		
I believe it is necessary to hire an accountant (preferably a CPA) to manage the finances of the Urban Renewal Agency ?	NO RESONSE FROM CANDIDATE		
I believe it is necessary to hire an accountant (preferably a CPA) to manage the finances of the Industrial Development Agency ?	NO RESONSE FROM CANDIDATE		
I believe it is necessary to hire an accountant (preferably a CPA) to manage the finances of the Public Library?	NO RESONSE FROM CANDIDATE		
I believe it is essential to have annual, outside financial audits, of the URA, IDA, and the Public Library, and that it's reasonable for the public to have audit reports available within six months of the end of each public trusts' fiscal year?	NO RESONSE FROM CANDIDATE		
I believe that fiscal oversight of the URA, the IDA, and the Public Library is an essential function of a Board of Trustees, and that Board Members should be held accountable when an entity's finances are not managed appropriately?	yes	no	See Comment
<u>Candidate Comments:</u> The URA and IDA structure gives responsibility to the Mayor. The City Council does not have control.			
I support Assemblyman Pretlow's Bill A1571 to have the Trustees of MV Public Library appointed by the Mayor and Confirmed by the City Council?	yes	no	See Comment
<u>Candidate Comments:</u> I need more information. The trustees were previously appointed by the School Board. It changed to an elective process about 5 years ago.			

Introduction

Can we identify, define, and rate qualities and characteristics that make for more effective elected officials? If you answer "yes", filling out a Candidate Scorecard might be of use to you as you try to decide how to cast your vote in the June 2021 Democratic Primary.

What is a "Candidate Scorecard?"

The Candidate Scorecard is an orienting device- it is designed to help voters engage their observational, analytical, and critical thinking skills so they can better evaluate a group of candidates competing to secure their votes. It can help you make more informed voting decisions. The hope, of course, is that by making better voting decisions we as a community will select more effective elected officials. To read more about my thinking, to go mountvernoncitizen.org and read the (awkwardly named) file, "*The merits of using a candidate scorecard to inform voter decision-making (in response to the April 16 candidate forum)*".

Variables Measured

I selected the variables for measurement (e.g., candidate temperament, leadership skills, etc.) by reflecting upon those qualities and characteristics I believe make an effective elected official. It's not an exhaustive list by any means, but these variables seemed like a reasonable place for me to start. Other people might consider some other set qualities and characteristics a more reasonable place to start.

Why a Rating Scale?

Rating scales are common across virtually every area of our lives. Companies are constantly badgering us to take a few minutes to rate their products; physicians ask us to rate our pain; psychologists ask us to rate our happiness. A rating scale is just a way to organize and quantify information so it's easier to make comparisons. As with deciding on what variables to measure, a 1-5 favorability rating scale seemed like a reasonable place to start.

"Deductions" and "Bonuses"

The variables that I assigned to "deductions" and "bonuses" represent things that *I think are important* and that I want to measure but do not fit into a 1-5 rating scale. For example, the candidate either did accept the endorsement of the local democratic party or they did not; the candidate either has relevant advanced education or they don't. These are "yes" or "no" variables. Please note that anyone wishing to try this system can discard or change the deductions/bonuses section (or any of the other variables on the form for that matter).

Determining the point value of each "Deduction" or "Bonus"

With the exception of "relevant criminal convictions", I worked within the 5 point rating system to assign deductions/bonuses. In other words, no deduction or bonus is more than 5 points. This was done to limit the impact of any single bonus/deduction to no more than roughly 10% of the maximum score a candidate could get across the 9 variables measured in the 1-5 scale. *Please note that I re-assessed deductions/bonuses since preliminary scores were assigned on 3/31/21. This re-assessment was the result of feedback I recieved directly from candidates on April 16, 2021 during a Zoom Forum held to discuss the Candidate Scorecard. Changes made are described in the "Definitions" section (see below).*

Data Collection

In order to rate each candidate from "least favorable" to "most favorable", across each variable on the scorecard, I look for evidence as follows:

1. Things written by the candidates- this includes opinion or position pieces, newsletters, journal articles, legislation drafted, books, etc.

2. Things written about the candidates- this includes newspaper articles written by professional journalists that are (in theory) "fact based", as well as published candidate interviews. When multiple journalists report the same set of facts it lends credibility to reports and is, therefore, more persuasive.

3. Video footage- video of candidates discussing issues, debating issues, presenting issues, responding to concerns presented by citizens (e.g., during city council meetins), board of trustee meetings (for those candidates who serve on boards), etc.

4. Candidate Websites- websites that describe the candidates's beliefs and outline their positions on a variety of voter concerns are a good source of information. The greater the detail the more valuable the source.

5. Personal interactions- personal interactions I've had with candidates can shape my perspective, although I don't generally find political rhetoric made to me personally very persuasive.

Definitions

Temperament- Emotionality interferes with analytical thinking and reasonable judgement. Emotional displays of anger, annoyance, and impatience, for example, are not favorable leadership qualities. Emotions *that are favorable* include a positive affect even during times of stress, light-heartedness even when tasks and interactions are difficult, compassion, and empathy. When public speaking, displays of positive emotions such as passion for a cause, a principle, a position, or to generate motivation, is a favorable characteristic. A baseline score of 3 ("neutral") is given in the absence of compelling evidence of less/more favorable temperament.

Leadership Skills- a demonstrated ability to solve problems should inspire and motivate those around the candidate to achieve at a high level. Effective leaders "step up and step in" when problems arise. In fact, this is when outstanding leaders thrive. In the absence of compelling evidence of leadership skills, candidates will receive a baseline score of 3 in Leadership Skills.

Honesty & Ethics- candidates for elected office should be models of honesty and ethical behavior. Candidates receive a score of 5 in this category unless there is clear evidence showing dishonesty or

Adheres to Principles over Politics- when a candidate does or says things simply because they think it might help them get elected, they are acting out of political self-interest or "political expediency". When candidates "flip flop" on issues, it is often due to political expediency. When a candidate adopts a position simply to secure a vote or group of votes (called "political pandering") they are doing what is politically expedient. Or, when a candidate changes a party affiliation in an attempt to secure election to public office, they are doing what is politically expedient. Political expediency is viewed unfavorably. On the other hand, acting on principle when it is politically *inconvenient* is viewed favorably. A baseline score of 3 ("neutral") is given in the absence of evidence affirming a candidate's principles when it is inconvenient or political expediency.

Relevant Financial Experience- this may include 1) a business owner or corporate employee with direct responsibility for some or all aspects of financial operations, 2) a financial consultant, 3) a CPA, 4) a fraud investigator, or 5) a government employee with financial oversight functions. If there is no evidence to support higher/lower scores, the candidate will receive a score of 3.

Communication Skills- this is a measure of the candidate's ability to speak and write clearly and persuasively. Examples include: public speaking, one-one interviews with journalists, one-one interactions with citizens, debates with other candidates, panel discussions, invited talks/presentations, and published writings such as periodical opinion pieces, journal articles, books. **Note:** a candidate *might* receive a favorable score in Communication Skills even if the voter does not agree with the candidates position, if the candidate articulates their position clearly and supports it with evidence (even if that evidence does not persuade the voter). A baseline score of 3 ("neutral") is given in the absence of compelling evidence of less/more favorable communication skills.

Endorsements- A candidate with no endorsements receives a score of 3. Endorsements from current/former elected officials, unions, or political parties can increase or decrease a candidate's favorability score. Endorsements from political parties and unions are largely transactional. If a voter's interests are not in alignment with the political interests of the union or the party giving the endorsement, the candidate's favorability score for Endorsements will go down. The baseline score of 3 ("neutral") is given in the absence of compelling evidence of less/more favorable endorsements.

Electability- Current and past elected officials, candidates who have demonstrated electability in other ways (e.g., selected to leadership roles in public commissions and committees), and candidates with party or union endorsements are likely to receive more favorable Electability scores than candidates who have run for elected office in the past but have lost, or candidates about whom there is relatively little public information available. A baseline score of 3 ("neutral") is given in the absence of compelling evidence of less/more favorable endorsements.

Public Policy Goals & Beliefs- a measure of how favorably the voter views the candidate's public policy beliefs and legislative agenda. For example, if the voter is against the use of corporate Payments In Lieu Of Taxes (PILOTS), but the candidate is in favor of the use of PILOTS for industrial development, the voter would likely view this policy belief as "unfavorable". Potentially, there are many policy beliefs and goals in addition to PILOTS that will go be considered in scoring this variable (e.g., social policy, infrastructure, environmental issues, taxes, etc.). The voter should evaluate and weight policies that are important to them. A baseline score of 3 ("neutral") is given in the absence of compelling evidence of less/more favorable Public Policy Goals & Beliefs.

Personnel Management Philosophy (Comptroller Candidates only)- The Comptroller is tasked with managing a Finance Dept team of approximately 15 people so that they can effectively and efficiently account for the City's \$125m in budget appropriations. Among many other responsibilities (e.g., tax collection, cash management, etc.), the Comptroller must ensure that 1) finance dept staff have the communication skills necessary to interface with personnel from 20+ City Departments, and 2) personnel in each department of the City tasked with interfacing with the finance dept are trained in common financial policies (such as standards for requesting, documenting, and monitoring within dept expenditures), and that these policies are implemented on a consistent basis.

The Comptroller's approach must ensure that employees get the job done well, while also looking out for employee well-being by setting a collegial tone that builds employee morale rather than eroding it. A baseline score of 3 ("neutral") is given in the absence of compelling evidence of a less/more favorable Personnel Management Philosophy

Average Favorability Rating of Responses (Greater Centennial A.M.E. Zion Church Zoom Forum 4.27.21)
This was an event with candidates running for City Council. Please see the results posted at mountvernoncitizen.org for details. There were 8 questions rated. To get the average, I added the 8 scores together and divided by 8.

Point Deductions

Democratic Party Endorsement (-1 points). A candidate who accepts an endorsement from the local Democratic Party will receive a 1 point deduction from their final score. This is done to reflect my view that the Democratic Party serves the narrow interests of it's leadership above the interests of the voting public. NOTE: in my first round of scoring this endorsement resulted in a 2 point deduction. However, after meeting with candidates and hearing their concerns, I changed this to a 1 point deduction. While I still view the acceptance of this endorsement negatively, there are worse endorsements a candidate could accept.

Current Elected Official (-2 points). Given the extreme dysfunction in our current City Government, across multiple election cycles, current elected officials running for re-election will receive a 2 point deduction from their final score. NOTE: after meeting with candidates and hearing their concerns, I changed this from a 3 point deduction to a 2 point deduction.

Uses Campaign Distortion/Misinformation Tactics (-4). If a candidate does not *publicly* denounce and discourage his/her supporters from waging proxy social media campaigns using unsubstantiated rumors, unattributed "sources", and false claims against political rivals, the candidate will receive a 4 point deduction from their final score.

Relevant Criminal Convictions. Relevant crimes would include (but are not limited to) financial crimes, violent crimes, fraud, and crimes committed while acting in the capacity of an elected official. NOTE: after meeting with candidates and hearing their concerns, I changed this from an 8 point deduction to an immediate disqualification

Bonus Points

Most Favorable Score in Relevant Financial Experience (3 point bonus). Given the complexity of our current fiscal situation, and the fact that significant new public monies will flow into the city from the federal government (e.g., Economic Recovery funds and increases in funding to the US Dept. Housing & Urban Development that will increase funding to the City's Urban Renewal Agency), a heavy premium is placed on candidates with the most favorable financial experience. Therefore, a 3 point bonus will be added to their final scores of these candidates.

Relevant Advanced Education (2 point bonus). Advanced education would include post Bachelor's Degree academic training (e.g, Master's Degree, Doctoral Degree), or trade certifications (e.g., in finance, in fraud investigation). Relevance is determined on a case by case basis. For example, a Master's Degree in Art History would not be deemed relevant, but a Law Degree might if the candidate has relevant experience to go along with the advanced degree.

Ranking the Mount Vernon Candidates for City Comptroller Spring 2021

	5/4/2021		6/15/2021	
Comptroller Candidate Rankings	Raw Score	Percent Favorable	Raw Score	Percent Favorable
Lawrence, Derickson	52	95%		
Morton, Darren	45	82%		
Griffith, Marcus A.	27	49%		
<u>Percent Favorable:</u> The maximum score including bonus points is 55. A raw score of 55 yields a 100% favorable rating.				

City of Mount Vernon Candidate Scorecard

Derickson Lawrence Comptroller	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
	1	2	3	4	5
Temperament					5
Leadership Skills					5
Honesty & Ethics					5
Adheres to Principles over Politics					5
Relevant Financial Experience					5
Communication Skills					5
Endorsements			3		
Electability				4	
Public Policy Goals & Beliefs					5
Personnel Management Philosophy					5
Point Deductions		Bonus Points			
Democratic Party Endorsement		Most Favorable score in Relevant Financial Experience			3
Current Mt. Vernon Elected Official		Relevant advanced education			2
Uses Campaign Distortion/Misinformation Tactics		Total Deductions + Bonus Points			5
Relevant Criminal Convictions		Candidate's Final Score:			52
<u>May 5 2021 Scoring adjustments</u>					
<u>Adheres to Principles over Politics</u> - Increase to "Most Favorable" based upon stance against routing \$42m in ARRA funds around the comptrollers office to the Water Dept.					
<u>Communication</u> - Increase to "Most Favorable"					
<u>Electability</u> - Increase to "Favorable" based on reduction in number of candidates in the field.					
<u>Public Policy Goals & Beliefs</u> -"Most Favorable" based upon multiple factors (e.g., Op-Eds written by Mr. Lawrence; video statements, candidate Website, etc.), answers to the Policy Questions below.					
<u>Personnel Management Philosophy</u> -"Most Favorable"					

Candidate Derickson Lawrence Responses to Policy Questions

City of Mount Vernon Candidate Scorecard

believe that Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOTS) should be used for.	yes	no	maybe
Industrial Development (Commercial Use)?	X		
Housing Development (Residential Use)?		X	
<p><u>Candidate Comments:</u> Since property taxes as a category is a major source of our municipal revenues, PILOTS - which are tax breaks used as an incentive to lure developers and development projects to Mount Vernon - ultimately shift that cost to a shrinking tax base of residents. Commercial space provides an opportunity to recoup some of those costs. Residential space does not. For those reasons there is a higher chance for consideration for commercial use.</p>			
I believe it is necessary to hire an accountant (preferably a CPA) to manage the finances of the Urban Renewal Agency ?	yes	no	maybe
<p><u>Candidate Comments:</u> It is clear to the public that the URA has not functioned with effective management oversight based on the results of the most recently completed 2016 audits published in 2020 - O'Connor Davies. There were Gaps in internal controls and missing financial data were reported. As such, personnel with accounting skills, or personnel with a CPA should be strongly considered to make up the deficit in skill set. Equally important is the need for an outside source (comptroller) to layout internal control measures as well as compliance requirements.</p>			
I believe it is necessary to hire an accountant (preferably a CPA) to manage the finances of the Industrial Development Agency ?	yes	no	maybe
<p><u>Candidate Comments:</u> To the extent that the same financial deficiencies exist in the IDA the same commentary (URA) above applies. So the function and skill set is what's required across all three.</p>			
I believe it is necessary to hire an accountant (preferably a CPA) to manage the finances of the Public Library?	yes	no	maybe
<p><u>Candidate Comments:</u>To the extent that the same financial deficiencies exist in the MVPL the same commentary (URA) above applies. Given this is an independent entity, the function and financial skill set is what's required to deliver the end results: audit ready financial statements or books.</p>			
I believe it is essential to have annual, outside financial audits, of the URA, IDA, and the Public Library, and that it's reasonable for the public to have audit reports available within six months of the end of each public trusts' fiscal year?	YES	no	maybe

City of Mount Vernon Candidate Scorecard

Candidate Comments: As the former chair of the City of Mount Vernon Charter Revision Commission, the commission put the following language/text (as part of the proposition) to the voters: “annual independent audit of the URA, IDA and the Board of Water Supply.” It passed with 95% of the vote. The same principle should apply to Mount Vernon Public Library. I believe the public should be informed within a much shorter window than six months, especially where it involves federal dollars. Taxpayers have a right to know how effectively, or how poorly, their institutions are being run so that they can make timely, and informed decisions.

<p>I believe that fiscal oversight of the URA, the IDA, and the Public Library is an essential function of a Board of Trustees, and that Board Members should be held accountable when an entity's finances are not managed appropriately?</p>	yes	no	maybe
<p>I support Assemblyman Pretlow's Bill A1571 to have the Trustees of MV Public Library appointed by the Mayor and Confirmed by the City Council?</p>	yes	no	maybe

Candidate Comments: While there isn't enough data and history to determine what model of governance would work best, we need to continually ask the question where is the accountability to drive performance. The model Assemblyman Pretlow support would answer that question. I am concerned that there is a four-year gap of operations at the MVPLibrary with no auditable financial records. This is a reflection of the personnel who were charged with the financial stewardship of the MVPLibrary. However, I would wait for the results of the independent audit to make a final determination as to whether to change the model.

Candidate Derickson Lawrence Management Philosophy

Question: There are different approaches to training and managing people in complex organizations. Industrial and Organizational Psychology (IO), and Organizational Behavior Management (OMB) are two examples. What informs your approach to training and managing people?

Candidate Response: As multi-macro events and technology change and evolve the world, it is important that methods and techniques of training, managing and leading, also evolve to ensure consistent productivity gains. Accordingly, management by objectives as a philosophy is one of many options that allows for maximum flexibility of how tasks are accomplished, when objectives, guidelines, and performance indicators are clearly communicated. If we choose the Office of Comptroller as a test case, there are at least three determinants to assess what combination of management beliefs can be effective: The first is the operating environment: government. The practice must be geared to the setting. The second and third must be assessed, i.e., the skill level and experience of the team and staff; and the time-line to achieve short- and long-term objectives.

City of Mount Vernon Candidate Scorecard

Darren Morton Comptroller	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
	1	2	3	4	5
Temperament					5
Leadership Skills					5
Honesty & Ethics					5
Adheres to Principles over Politics				4	
Relevant Financial Experience				4	
Communication Skills				4	
Endorsements			3		
Electability					4.5
Public Policy Goals & Beliefs					4.5
Personnel Management Philosophy					5
Point Deductions		Bonus Points			
Democratic Party Endorsement	-1	Most Favorable score in Relevant Financial Experience			
Current Mt. Vernon Elected Official		Relevant advanced education			2
Uses Campaign Distortion/Misinformation Tactics		Total Deductions + Bonus Points			1
Relevant Criminal Convictions		Candidate's Final Score:			45
May 5 2021 Scoring adjustments					
<u>Temperament-</u> Increase to "Most Favorable"					
<u>Leadership Skills-</u> Increase to "Most Favorable"					
<u>Adheres to Principles over Politics-</u> Increase to "Favorable". The rating would have gone higher on my card but the candidate did not come out against the legislation passed by the City Council to route the \$42m in ARRA funds coming to the City from the Federal Government around the Comptroller to the Clerk and ultimately to the Water Dept, legislation with which I do not agree. However, given that the Candidate works for the Mayor and the Mayor supports the legislation, his decision to hedge the response is understandable.					
<u>Relevant Financial Experience-</u> Increase to "Favorable" based upon Candidates participation in the financial oversight of multiple City Cost Centers (e.g., URA, IDA).					

City of Mount Vernon Candidate Scorecard

Communication - In general, the candidate's written and verbal communication skills are excellent. However, when it comes to communicating financial information (a critical skill set for a Comptroller, particularly given the need to re-establish our bond rating), I have serious concerns. For example, as Treasurer of the IDA, the Candidate is required to present financial information to the IDA Board. At a recent IDA Board meeting (4.8.21), the Candidate's ability to present financial information was questionable (minutes 2:50 - 19:20).
<https://www.facebook.com/mountvernonny/videos/747783582602801>

Electability- Increase to "Most Favorable" (4.5) based on reduction in number of candidates in the field.

Public Policy Goals & Beliefs- "Most Favorable" (4.5). The only significant point of disagreement I have is that I'm a hard "no" on the use of PILOTS for Residential Development.

Personnel Management Philosophy- "Most Favorable"

Candidate Darren Morton Responses to Policy Questions

believe that Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOTS) should be used for.	yes	no	maybe
Industrial Development (Commercial Use)?	yes		
Housing Development (Residential Use)?	yes		

Candidate Comments: PILOTS have their benefits when executed appropriately and the public benefit is warranted. So, my answer could be a yes/maybe for both commercial and residential...Here's why. Since the PILOTS collected by the City are only a portion of the revenue of the assessed tax rate, then distributed to the taxing jurisdictions such as the School, County and the City at a lower rate, there is a loss in revenue. The City in turn use their portion of the proceeds as form of reduced revenue. Over the years, the PILOT Program has cause financial stress on Mount Vernon and needs reevaluation to ensure the maximum benefit for the resident of the City (based on the proposed project), inclusive of a cost benefit analysis to determine the rate of return, impact on school district and city services. For example, the unified tax rate (agreement with other tax jurisdictions) and number of years for each PILOT agreements should be careful reviewed to provide the greatest benefit to the City, and to adequately support the services rendered by the City to these properties. After the revaluation, it should be decided whether we continue to offer PILOTS for Commercial and/or Residential Use.

I believe it is necessary to hire an accountant (preferably a CPA) to manage the finances of the Urban Renewal Agency ?	yes	no	maybe
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City of Mount Vernon

Candidate Scorecard

Candidate Comments: It is imperative for URA to have a full-time accountant responsible for the day-to-day financial operation, reporting to the Executive Director (who is responsible for the administration of the agency). The accountant should provide periodic reports (at least quarterly) to the Treasurer, who is especially since the Treasurer is not a full-time employee of the agency. Otherwise, the bylaws of the agency should be changed to give the Board the authority to hire a full-time treasurer (who must be an accountant) rather than serve as an elected Board member. Currently, the treasurer position is volunteer with fiduciary duties, but not responsible for the day-to-day financial functions. Without a full-time accountant, there are significant gaps in the financial operation. Prior to 2018, URA relied on a part-time or consultant relationship to handle the financial functions, with the assistance of account clerk/bookkeeping staff. This lean financial structure contributed to gaps, delays and inconsistency in accounting functions and record keeping. Given the complexity of the financial operation for the URA, including HUD regulations, State ABO filing requirements etc., a full-time accountant with comprehensive knowledge of federal funding regulations is necessary to maintain financial integrity and transparency.

I believe it is necessary to hire an accountant (preferably a CPA) to manage the finances of the Industrial Development Agency ?	yes	no	maybe
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Candidate Comments: Similar to URA, the IDA requires the appropriate staffing, including an accountant to manage the day-to-day financial operation. My rationale given in the above URA question applies for IDA, including the need for possible restructuring of the Treasurer position. The accountant must be able to manage PILOT payments and distribution to impacted jurisdictions (i.e., city, county and school district), project escrow account management, payroll, audit preparation, etc. Unlike the URA, the IDA may not require a full-time accountant, but an accountant with shared responsibility for other municipal financial operations may be sufficient. This depends on the level of financial activities and staffing responsibilities. Nevertheless, the incumbent should be a City staffer and not a third-party consultant or part-time volunteer.

I believe it is necessary to hire an accountant (preferably a CPA) to manage the finances of the Public Library?	yes	no	maybe
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Candidate Comments: Unlike the URA and IDA, the Library is required by law to hire a full-time treasurer, who is a civil service staffer responsible for the day-to-day fiscal operation of the agency. This position must be a full-time accountant with supervision experience to manage the finance staff, coordinate with the Library Director on budget development (operational and capital), and report regularly to the Board of Trustees. It should be noted that the Library has had a full-time accountant on staff, first through Robert Half, and then by appointment of the Board in 2017-2018 fiscal year.

I believe it is essential to have annual, outside financial audits, of the URA, IDA, and the Public Library, and that it's reasonable for the public to have audit reports available within six months of the end of each public trusts' fiscal year?	yes	no	maybe
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City of Mount Vernon

Candidate Scorecard

Candidate Comments: I agree that it is essential to have independent annual audits prepared each year and completed as close to six months after the close of the fiscal year, but definitely before the end of the next fiscal year. Since these agencies are functioning by accrual or modified accrual-based accounting, the official closing of the book may be 30 -45 days into the next fiscal year. Achieving the six-month deadline may present challenge for publication of the audit report. However, I believe the audit report should be completed and available to close to six months as possible, and prior to the end of the subsequent fiscal year. Alternatively, the agency should provide the public with an unaudited financial report by the six-month mark, if the audited reports are not ready for publication.

I believe that fiscal oversight of the URA, the IDA, and the Public Library is an essential function of a Board of Trustees, and that Board Members should be held accountable when an entity's finances are not managed appropriately?	yes	no	maybe
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Candidate Comments: The Board Members of these agencies are fiduciary leaders and responsible for fiscal oversight. The Board is ultimately responsible to the public who entrusts them to serve. It should be noted that the Board Members/Trustees are not responsible for the daily management of the agency and justifiably depend on the Executive Director and finance staff to accurately report to the Board. The Board has a duty to hold the Executive Director /Director of the respective agency accountable and develop a corrective action plan for the Executive Director. These Boards only have one or two employees. For example, the Library Trustee Handbook warns the Trustees not to engage in day-to-day operation, but their responsibility is to hire a competent Director and Treasurer to manage the general and financial operation, respectively. I will reiterate, it is my position that the Board Trustees/Members are collectively accountable for due diligence in their fiduciary and oversight responsibilities to the public. They should come to agreement on the vision of the agency, expectations for the Executive Director, and should hold Executive Director (and in the case of the Library, the Treasurer as well) equally accountable for any expectations not achieved.

I support Assemblyman Pretlow's Bill A1571 to have the Trustees of MV Public Library appointed by the Mayor and Confirmed by the City Council?	yes	no	maybe
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Candidate Comments:
 The Mount Vernon Public Library is a School District Library, established by referendum, and is an independent agency, accountable to the voters with the school district. The Trustees and the budget for the Public Librry should remain under the control of the public. Allowing the Mayor and the City Council to appoint trustees may lead to adverse political affects on an literacy and educational institution. The Library Trustees should remain accountable to the New York State Public Library.

City of Mount Vernon Candidate Scorecard

Other Candidate Comments: Having served on the Board for all these agencies, I acknowledge there is opportunity for improvement in operation, both at the administrative and Board (fiduciary) levels. It should be noted, all these organizations have experienced operational and fiscal challenges for decades that are more complex than what may be evident through review of documents and reports. Transparency and accountability are essential. Providing regular reports (at least quarterly), timely and comprehensive minutes, access to video/audio recording, and action items demonstrate transparency and accountability. It should be noted, meeting minutes must sufficiently represent proceedings, including important discussion, rather than general summary and the collective actions and outcomes. The latter does not provide details or background of the decision-making process. As a result, there is the potential for broad assumptions or conclusion regarding whether member upheld their individual fiduciary duty. Additionally, fiscal accountability must ensure these agencies are properly staffed. Much of the organizational challenges and financial distress are results of inadequate organizational design, lean organizational staffing level, high staff turnover, insufficient outsources and (sometimes) a failure to act in a timely manner. It should not be assumed that any shortcomings of past or present Board Members are universal failures to act in a fiduciary manner. One of the challenges of being a Board Members is accepting responsibility and being held accountable for collective board decisions, whether you individually agree or dissent. The fiduciary duty is for each Board Member to act with prudence, in the best interest of the agency and the public. As a former and current Board Member of these agencies, I acknowledge the complexity of board management and fiscal challenges these agencies face (which have long history). Similarly, I submit that individually and collectively Board members are accountable to the public, and subject to criticism, which we must embrace if we accept the position. Equally, I recognize the opportunity that are before us if we embrace healthy discourse, learn from our experience, and work collectively for improvement.

Initial Recommendations:

(1) consider restructuring of the role and status of the Treasurer for URA and IDA to include more active and hands-on responsibilities; (2) clearly establish the relationship, role and responsibility for resources these agencies (specifically the relationship between the City and the URA/IDA to ensure proper administration of related finances; (3) appropriately resource these agencies with full-time finance staff and auditing resources review and (4) update the accounting policies and procedure for all agencies to ensure greater accountability for the staff and Board.

Candidate Darren Morton Management Philosophy

Question: There are different approaches to training and managing people in complex organizations. Industrial and Organizational Psychology (IO), and Organizational Behavior Management (OMB) are two examples. What informs your approach to training and managing people?

City of Mount Vernon

Candidate Scorecard

Candidate Response: The following is a high-level response to a question that can yield a more comprehensive response. As a former leadership development trainer, I learned a variety of behavioral science/ leadership techniques. My approach to performance enhancement, training and managing people is informed by a variety of organizational psychology and behavioral management theory, in addition to the variety of leadership theory practice. Organizational Behavioral Management (OBM) theory provides a general bases for my managerial approach. It generally provides concepts on a macro level for achieving personal and organizational objectives through the observation and coach of behavior. Given my variety of formal and informal education and training in business, not-for-profit and the public sector, I have developed an eclectic performance enhancement, managerial and leadership approach that is adaptable to the specific work environment and staffing needs. My main goal has been to build competent and efficient teams, address organizational challenges, cultural performance and achieve organizational vision, especially given complexity of public management.

As a transformational leader, I have based my approach to organizational development on balancing individual value and performance gaps of the individual with achieving organizational growth and achievement. I have more effectively managed staff by first seeking to understanding the level of skills, passion and challenges of my staff members. I have adapted the concept of ‘Support and Challenge’, originally developed by Nevitt Sanford, for motivating students to achieve personal and professional goals, to guide my management style. I have used the drivers associated with ‘Support and Challenge’ to help employees and organizations to achieve their respective goals. To that end, I have managed staff using Sanford’s ‘Support and Challenge’ theory, which allows me to assess each employee in his/her current abilities, provide feedback and reinforcement to identify new opportunities that challenges the employee to achieve greater individual and organizational success.

City of Mount Vernon Candidate Scorecard

Marcus A. Griffith Comptroller	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
	1	2	3	4	5
Temperament			3		
Leadership Skills		2			
Honesty & Ethics					5
Adheres to Principles over Politics				4	
Relevant Financial Experience				4	
Communication Skills				4	
Endorsements			3		
Electability				4	
Public Policy Goals & Beliefs		2			
Personnel Management Philosophy			3		
Point Deductions		Bonus Points			
Democratic Party Endorsement		Most Favorable score in Relevant Financial Experience			
Current Mt. Vernon Elected Official	-2	Relevant advanced education			
Uses Campaign Distortion/Misinformation Tactics		Total Deductions + Bonus Points			-2
Relevant Criminal Convictions		Candidate's Final Score:			27
May 5 2021 Scoring adjustments					
<p><u>Temperament</u>- Decrease to "Neutral" based upon the manner in which the Candidate spoke to Councilwoman Farquharson during the City Council Meeting on 4.14.21 (minute 3:50:15 to 3:51:10). https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=803574773698468&ref=search</p>					
<p><u>Adheres to Principles over Politics</u>- Increase to "Favorable" based on voting for legislation that will route \$42m in ARRA funds around the Comptroller, and to the Water Dept. Since the legislation undermines the elected position that Mr. Griffith is seeking, it suggests his vote is principled even if I don't think it is correct. That's admirable.</p>					
<p><u>Electability</u>- Increase to "Favorable" based on reduction in number of candidates in the field.</p>					

City of Mount Vernon Candidate Scorecard

M Griffith

2

Public Policy Goals & Beliefs-"Neutral"

Personnel Management Philosophy-"Neutral"

Candidate Marcus A. Griffith did not respond to Policy & Personnel Management Questions

City Comptroller Candidate Scorecard

Candidate Name:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
	1	2	3	4	5
Temperament					
Leadership Skills					
Honesty & Ethics					
Adheres to Principles over Politics					
Relevant Financial Experience					
Communication Skills					
Endorsements					
Electability					
Personnel Management Philosophy					
Point Deductions		Bonus Points			
Democratic Party Endorsement	-1	Most Favorable score in Relevant Financial Experience			3
Current Mt. Vernon Elected Official	-2	Relevant advanced education			2
Uses Campaign Distortion/Misinformation Tactics	-4	Total Deductions + Bonus Points			
Relevant Criminal Convictions	Disqualified	Candidate's Final Score:			
Public Policy Goals & Beliefs					
Do you support Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOTS) for			yes	no	maybe
Industrial Development (Commercial Use)					
Housing Development (Residential Use)					
Do you support hiring a full-time Certified Public Accountant (CPA) to manage the finances of the Urban Renewal Agency ?			yes	no	maybe
Candidate Comments:					
Do you support hiring a full-time Certified Public Accountant (CPA) to manage the finances of the Industrial Development Agency?			yes	no	maybe
Candidate Comments:					
Do you support hiring a full-time Certified Public Accountant (CPA) to manage the finances of the Industrial Development Agency?			yes	no	maybe
Candidate Comments:					

Do you support Assemblyman Pretlow's Bill A1571 to have the Trustees of MV Public Library appointed by the Mayor and Confirmed by the City Council?	yes	no	maybe
Candidate Comments:			
Do you support annual outside financial audits of the URA, IDA, and Public Library and will you work to ensure that these audits are completed and released to the public within 6 months of the end of each trusts' fiscal year?	yes	no	maybe
Candidate Comments:			
Do you believe that financial oversight of public trusts, (e.g., the URA, the IDA, and the Public Library) is an essential function of a Board of Trustees and that Board Members should be held accountable when an entity's finances are not managed appropriately?	yes	no	maybe
Candidate Comments:			
Additional Candidate Comments:			
<u>Comptroller Candidate Management Philosophy</u>			
There are different approaches to training and managing people in complex organizations. Industrial and Organizational Psychology (IO), and Organizational Behavior Management (OMB) are two examples. What informs your approach to training and managing people?			
Candidate Response:			

Candidate Favorability Ratings

Candidate Zoom Forum

Hosted by

The Greater Centennial A.M.E. Zion Church

Moderated by Rev. Dr. Stephen Pogue Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Wheeler

May 11, 2021

Candidate Name	Percent Favorable
Derickson Lawrence	89.23%
Darren Morton	61.54%
Marcus A. Griffith	50.77%

<p>Rating Candidate Responses given during the Candidate Zoom Forum Hosted by The Greater Centennial A.M.E. Zion Church on May 11, 2021 (Moderated by Rev. Dr. Stephen Pogue & Rev. Jeffrey Wheeler)</p>				
<p>Candidate: Derickson Lawrence</p>				
<p>Introductory Remarks</p>				
Quote from the Candidate	<p>Minute 9:58 "I'm running for city comptroller to bring a sense of urgency and context to the challenges that we face as a community." Minute 11:58 "The longer term issue we've got to deal with is what I call "TCMT"- we've got to go for Transparency, we have to work with Compliance, we certainly have to do Multi-year budgets, and we have to bring the Technology. I believe I'm the best candidate."</p>			
My Comment:	<p>Good. I'm glad he noted the "sense of urgency". Mr. Lawrence also highlighted his education credentials and involvement with the Charter Revision Commission.</p>			
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable
				4
<p>Question 1: What process and procedure would you take to make Mount Vernon finances more transparent?</p>				
Quotes from the Candidate	<p>Minute 17:41 "The process has already been voted on by the public. I'm pleased to have had a hand in bringing forth individuals who saw it necessary 2 years ago to highlight that and make that a public issue and get the consent of the citizens to change the mandate of the city comptroller through referendum, and bringing that to the fore. Now that it is in fact the law in terms of what are the responsibilities of the comptroller, now it's about compliance." Minute 18:44 "I would also go further. I think getting this stuff electronically is one thing but I believe we need to get out into the public and hold public sessions to bring in the public into this on a quarterly basis so that they have an understanding of what the numbers look like- what's the year to date, what have we spent based on what has been budgeted. I don't think we have access to that information today but it's not our practice either. Those are the kinds of changes I would make to ensure we have full transparency."</p>			
My Comment:	<p>Neither of the other candidates mentioned the fact that fiscal transparency is mandated by <i>City Charter</i>, based on a vote by the citizens of the city.</p>			
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable
				5

Question 2: What does your first 90 days as the comptroller look like?					
Quotes from the Candidate	<p>Minute 21:55 "Number one we start with what I call a 'discovery process', by first assessment - assessment with the financials, and assessment with the human capital (who we have in the office), essentially the strengths and weaknesses and understanding the responsibilities of what has gone before." Minute 22:23 "And then you begin the process of prioritizing what the major objectives need to be. Once you have a sense of what it is you need to accomplish and you know what your resources are in terms of personal capital, and in terms of financials, then you can put together an execution plan to provide to the public: here's what we've found today, here's what we are going to try to accomplish in the next 30 days, and we will have an extensive report for the public that gives us a sense of where we are in terms of numbers. One of my major concerns is understanding our debt structure; no one has talked about debt structure so far, and we have had a cumulative debt that is probably beyond the pale and we need to reconcile that. These are the things that the auditors made very clear- ought to be some of the first things we do and in the first 90 days, you will now exactly where we stand in terms of our finances, with our city."</p>				
My Comment:	Good clear plan. I notice Mr. Lawrence is thinking about our debt structure, an understanding of which will be important when it comes to regaining a credit rating for City debt.				
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
					5
Question 3: The City of Mount Vernon has a reputation now of being "late payers". What procedure would you as the chief financial officer...establish in order to repair the image of our fine city from being "late payers", knowing that most bills should be paid within 15 to 30 or 45 days?					
Quotes from the Candidate	<p>Minute 26:37 "The way in which you repair that is demonstrating that we have a plan in place to take both long term and short term billing, if you will. It certainly begins with understanding the inventory of all the vendors that we have, clearly bringing the backlog forward and then prioritizing payments. Minute 27:32 "The key here is building trust; building trust back into the system, letting them know that this is a new day. We have better planning in place. We have better organization in place. We have better systems in place, and we're going to execute in a way where they become the priority because those vendors are the ones that are supporting our efforts in serving the public."</p>				
My Comment:	Fine.				

	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
My Rating:				4	
Question 4: How do you propose to help get the city get their credit rating back?					
Quotes from the Candidate	<p>Minute 36:36 "Essentially, I would execute on the process that's already been laid out by the Charter Revision Commission and that the voters have voted for overwhelmingly. So there is a clear blueprint of how to do so and it's essentially compliance." Minute 37:25 "Putting forward these audits is something that I know a lot about as a former auditor for the KPMG." Minute 38:13 "So much of the work has to be already done by the agencies that's actually being audited, and so it does take someone who has that experience to come in and provide that roadmap in all of the areas to ensure that the external auditors can come in and do their work."</p>				
My Comment:	<p>I would have given this answer a "Most Favorable" on content had the question been specifically about auditing process and procedure, but the question was about getting our credit rating so I would have liked to have heard more specifics about the steps involved in regaining our credit rating (of which auditing is a critical step), estimates of a timeline, and what type of initial rating we might expect to get once we are rated (e.g., Moody's Baa3, Baa2, Baa1). Certainly, the process described by Mr. Lawrence is essential, and I think the fact that he has experience as an auditor at KPMG (one of the "Big Four" accounting organizations) will work in our favor - if he is elected Comptroller- with respect to giving rating agencies a general sense of confidence that we are on more solid fiscal footing.</p>				
My Rating:				4	
Question 5: Our city is mandated to have annual audits, right? We've been using the same audit firm for years. What are the pros and cons of using the same audit firm that we've been using for years and should you be elected as comptroller, what would be your procedure that would guarantee that our audits are done timely and completed? (NOTE: Rev. Wheeler threw in an additional question- How do you feel about internal auditors also?)					

<p>Quotes from the Candidate</p>	<p>Minute 41:57 "Internal auditors are in fact a part of the larger picture. So, you need internal auditors to ensure that your books are audit ready. In fact that should have been happening all along; we have not had an internal audit and that is actually the job responsibility of the comptroller- to execute internal audits." Minute 42:32 "In terms of the benefit or pros and cons for an outside auditor and the term of the engagement, as Rev. Morton was saying, we typically have had the same partner or engagement manager over the years, and having that relationship may be okay but what we've done as a Charter Revision Commission is put something where after 5 years you can no longer have the same organization." Minute 43:31 "We need to, sort of, sweep clean and get a clearer perspective from top to bottom all of what's going on because we have been operating in the dark for far too long."</p>				
<p>My Comment:</p>	<p>Very good answer.</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
<p>5</p>					
<p>Question 6: For some time now we have probably been dipping into the fund balance. As comptroller, what do you believe the use of the fund balance is for and what would you do with the fund balance if elected?</p>					
<p>Quotes from the Candidate</p>	<p>Minute 46:30 "The alternative term used for a fund balance is a "rainy day fund". Rainy day funds are meant to be put aside and you calculate that in case of emergency you're able to tap that. Typically, it runs anywhere from 8 to 9% of your budget. Minute 47:13 "It was astounding for us to learn that our current officials actually made the decision to take all of our fund balance and put it into the operating budget process [inaudible] the term that I used in my opening remarks, 'we are walking a tightrope now, high wire with no safety net. It's not a place we want to be. Now we are pleading to get these 41 million dollars and that may be jeopardized based on decisions we are making right now."</p>				
<p>My Comment:</p>	<p>This was good. Presumably, the "decisions we are making right now" is a reference to the decision by the City Council to pass legislation to direct federal stimulus money to the water department.</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
<p>4</p>					
<p>Question 7: Mount Vernon is known as the "City of Homes". We have a lot of seniors here that own property (home owners). What would be your suggested policy for partial tax payment on those homes?</p>					

<p>Quotes from the Candidate</p>	<p>Minute 57:27 "The way this is best done is to certainly get it cleared through the City Council and adopting an appropriate plan. But essentially looking at it from both a policy and technology, bringing in the right technology that allows you to structure the kind of payment arrangement and policy to be tailored to the individual needs of not only seniors but others who may have [inaudible]- but I believe his point was that we should work to find compassionate payment arrangements for anybody experiencing economic hardship, not just seniors]"</p>				
<p>My Comment:</p>	<p>This is a good, process oriented answer. I like that Mr. Lawrence expanded his thinking anyone experiencing hardship.</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
<p>Question 8: Recently legislation was passed to create a pass-through account, to put the \$42 plus million dollars coming from the American Rescue Plan Act into the city clerks office to eventually end up in the water department, bypassing the comptroller's office. So if you're elected comptroller, how do you feel about that legislation for yourself?</p>	<p>Minute 1:01:46 "It's clear to me, by looking at both the Charter and the New York State Home Rule, this was a violation of our Charter to move in that direction and it increased our risk significantly by putting it in what I consider a less safe place in the Board of Water department, because there are several audits that recently noted that there are material weaknesses with the board of water supply. And so I believe we may be jeopardizing the second tranche of the money that's coming in 2022. The fact that this budget, or this ordinance sunsets in 2022 is also problematic because it would bypass whoever it is who is elected and so I believe that this particular initiative was illegally done, it's the wrong thing to do, the legislation should not stand and I think we are going to be hurt long term by that process, if it remains the way it is.</p>				
<p>Quotes from the Candidate</p>	<p>Minute 1:01:46 "It's clear to me, by looking at both the Charter and the New York State Home Rule, this was a violation of our Charter to move in that direction and it increased our risk significantly by putting it in what I consider a less safe place in the Board of Water department, because there are several audits that recently noted that there are material weaknesses with the board of water supply. And so I believe we may be jeopardizing the second tranche of the money that's coming in 2022. The fact that this budget, or this ordinance sunsets in 2022 is also problematic because it would bypass whoever it is who is elected and so I believe that this particular initiative was illegally done, it's the wrong thing to do, the legislation should not stand and I think we are going to be hurt long term by that process, if it remains the way it is.</p>				
<p>My Comment:</p>	<p>A thorough and persuasive answer.</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
<p>Question 9: (2 parts) 1) What would you say the role of the comptroller would be, and how would you achieve it? 2) How important is the relationship between the comptrollers office, the mayor's office, and the city council?</p>	<p>Minute 1:01:46 "It's clear to me, by looking at both the Charter and the New York State Home Rule, this was a violation of our Charter to move in that direction and it increased our risk significantly by putting it in what I consider a less safe place in the Board of Water department, because there are several audits that recently noted that there are material weaknesses with the board of water supply. And so I believe we may be jeopardizing the second tranche of the money that's coming in 2022. The fact that this budget, or this ordinance sunsets in 2022 is also problematic because it would bypass whoever it is who is elected and so I believe that this particular initiative was illegally done, it's the wrong thing to do, the legislation should not stand and I think we are going to be hurt long term by that process, if it remains the way it is.</p>				

<p>Quotes from the Candidate</p>	<p>Minute 1:09:03 "The comptroller has an opportunity to bring a perspective to the Board of Estimates and Control during that setting, and the way in which the role is played, it allows for a check and balance to do the auditing of the basic systems and the agencies- so the departments, as well as the this, you know the water department, the IDA." Minute 1:09:47 "We need to ensure that we have the right level of transparency all the way through."</p>				
<p>My Comment:</p>	<p>Auditing and transparency. Good ideas. We didn't hear any thing about the importance of the relationship between the comptroller, the council, and the mayor, so only part of the question was addressed.</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
<p>Question 10: The City of Mount Vernon has applied for many grants, and many of those grants or most of those grants require matching funds. So how would you as the chief financial officer of the city make sure that we have funds available to meet the match, so that the grant would be awarded to the city?</p>					
<p>Quotes from the Candidate</p>	<p>Minute 1:15:55 "In the current environment I know it's been done in a number of ways, but the best practice for dealing with accepting grants matching funds is really to go out and borrow. Essentially, leverage capital spending if you will. In most instances you have to spend first before you can draw these grants and so the simple process for me would be, work towards improving our rating so that we can get our ratings back so we can borrow and we'll be able to do the kind of balancing that means going to the debt market to spend first and then draw those funds down later."</p>				
<p>My Comment:</p>	<p>Borrowing to meet grant fund matching obligations is a creative solution to a difficult problem. In fact, we really don't have many other options right now since we aren't in a position to create restricted reserves to match incoming grants. In order to raise our reserves we need to raise more revenue from taxes (sales and/or residential property), or cut our expenses.</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>

<p>Question 11: Here in Mount Vernon if you watch any of our live sessions that come out of city hall, you'll notice that there seems to be a breakdown between the comptroller's office and the department heads. Should you be elected how would the comptroller's office assist the other department heads with the budget plans, cost analysis and purchases and repairs, because before we start talking about repairing our reputation outside the city, I think it's important that we work first of all in repairing our reputation within the city. Because if we're going to be destroyed, we can only be destroyed from the inside out. Note: Rev. Wheeler added the following for Dr. Morton: Our Comptroller's office right now and our other department heads, there seems to be a breach. Something is broken. How do you go about repairing what is broken?</p>					
Quotes from the Candidate	<p>Minute 1:25:03 "Step 1 in repairing what has been a frayed process is really working with the mayor. A CFO or financial entity is supposed to work hand in glove with the leader of the institution and that's the mayor." Minute 1:25:40 "One should understand that the comptroller's role is to be a supportive arm, but also help mitigate risks."</p>				
My Comment:	<p>Fine. Mr. Lawrence gave some examples of how the comptroller interfaces with the department heads as both a support and to assist with risk mitigation.</p>				
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
					5
<p>Question 12 (and closing statement): We've read a lot about each of the candidates, we've heard a lot about each of the candidates. What do you want us to know about you as a person running for the comptroller and this includes your final statement.</p>					

<p>Quotes from the Candidate</p>	<p>Minute 1:34:39 "Look, as I travel the City of Mount Vernon and speak to the voters, they are tired, they are frustrated, and they're saddened. Mainly they feel powerless in an environment that's been dominated by a musical chairs style of politics with the same recycled people leading to what I call disastrous results. With the 4 weeks left in this election cycle, I ask the voters to evaluate candidates based on their records. We all have public records." Minute 1:36:05 "So what do I want Mount Vernon to know about me. Number 1 is I held one of the first southern westchester tax forums with all of the leaders from Mount Vernon to New Rochelle, Pelham, Pelham Manor, Scarsdale, Larchmont. All of these leaders came to Mount Vernon. Today they won't touch Mount Vernon [inaudible], why? We talk about municipal budgeting. To talk about how you structure they went through a fiscal meat grinder and we were sharing information and talking through what works and what doesn't work, best practices. These are the kinds of things we need to do again. I'll be happy to lead one of those once I become comptroller. Number 2, I spent 3 years at the Westchester County Charter Revision Board, and with that time understanding the County's 1.7 billion dollar budget process, it's capital plan, the decision-making. All of these experiences of working in the government side of things will help me in the decision-making process to help our city of Mount Vernon."</p>				
<p>My Comment:</p>	<p>This was a favorable response. It was a little confusing at times but Mr. Lawrence asked voters to look at the public record when evaluating candidates which I think is important. He also highlighted his willingness to collaborate with neighboring communities and his involvement with Charter revision.</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
<p>Average Rating Derickson Lawrence:</p>		<p>4</p>			<p>4.46</p>

Rating Candidate Responses given during the Candidate Zoom Forum Hosted by The Greater Centennial A.M.E. Zion Church on May 11, 2021 (Moderated by Rev. Dr. Stephen Pogue & Rev. Jeffrey Wheeler)

Candidate: Darren Morton (current Chief of Staff to the Mayor)

Introductory Remarks					
Quote from the Candidate	<p>Minute 8:37 "So today I come to tell you that I want to be a good steward of the City's finances. And as a good steward of the City's finances, what I'm looking to do is improve the processes used in the office. I want to restore the trust and also save tax payers money; to improve the efficiencies and to enhance constituent services. And I will do that first of all by building a competent team, and I understand the role of the comptroller, which is to provide that executive management to ensure that we have the right people in place to manage the money, and to also work alongside with the mayor and the City Council to ensure that we are doing the best that we can to provide the services for Mount Vernon. And so coupled with my experience in not-for-profit, and also in public administration, and my management of multi-million dollar budgets, I believe that I'm the best candidate at this time."</p>				
My Comment:	<p>Straightforward, well-articulated introduction. As a preamble to this, Dr. Morton walked us through his academic credentials and financial management background.</p>				
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
				4	
Question 1: What process and procedure would you take to make Mount Vernon finances more transparent?					

<p>Quotes from the Candidate</p>	<p>Minute 15:02 "First of all I believe that when we look at transparency we've got to make sure that everybody is engaged in the process, so I think that transparency of our finances begins with our budgeting process, to make sure that there is a much more participatory budget process in which our constituents understand how the makeup of the budget, understand what are the uses of the budget, so we understand clearly what the sources and the usages are. That's first of all. Second of all, I think that the reporting is actually absolutely essential, and reporting to our department heads on a monthly basis so that they may also be able to do a reconciliation based upon the expenditures that they are keeping, the record keeping, they keep in their departments along with what is happening with the finance department. Minute 16:04 "We need to make sure that they [the public] on an ongoing basis understand where we are, what is our budget, our actuals to budget at the critical points and that we adhere to the charter as it pertains to when we should be reporting. Thirdly, I believe that we also need to make sure that it's accessible and so, therefore, there is where my degree in information systems will help to ensure that we have an enterprise resource program that allows us to be able to have ready access to understanding our finances and budgeting process to where we are in our expenditures and then we'll be able to do that through our web, through our web interface and we continue to communicate."</p>				
<p>My Comment:</p>	<p>This all sounds good, and my rating would be "favorable" if not for the following: 1) Dr. Morton said he has a degree in "information systems", but I don't think that's accurate. 2) Dr. Morton talked about the need to "adhere to the charter", but right now he is Chief of Staff to a Mayor who lobbied the City Council to ignore the city charter to send federal stimulus money to the Board of Water Supply, a cost center with a history of fiscal mismanagement and opacity. 3) Dr. Morton is the treasurer of the Urban Renewal Agency and has been for many years, and he was on the board of trustees and Chair of the Finance Committee of the MV PL from 2014-2016. I've posted reports about these government cost centers at mountvernoncitizen.org. The financial oversight of these public trusts has been atrocious. So, for me, there is a serious lack of correspondence between what this candidate says about fiscal oversight and what the candidate has actually done when in a position to provide that fiscal oversight.</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
<p>Question 2: What does your first 90 days as the comptroller look like?</p>					

<p>Quotes from the Candidate</p>	<p>Minute 19:35 "The first step is also getting a lay of the land. I think that right now we have no understanding, no knowledge of what our financial status is, and so the first step is first of all bringing in a team of professionals to work along with those that are in the finance department, and the Mayor and the Council to really do a deep deep dive into our finances; what's going on with our bank accounts and also beginning the process, the financial framework for a forensic kind of audit to what has been happening over the last few years. Minute 20:39 "At the same time, I think we also have to be able to chew gum and walk at the same time, so we've got to make sure that we begin to strengthen our policies and our procedures, work with our department heads to make sure that they are actually moving forward with their financial needs and they have a clear understanding of what the policies and procedures are. Also, the third thing is focusing in on our vendors, because our vendors have not been paid and our vendors need to have some assurance that we are actually going to pay them."</p>				
<p>My Comment:</p>	<p>This is a good plan. I very much like the call for a "forensic" kind of audit and the attention paid to our vendors.</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
<p>Question 3: The City of Mount Vernon has a reputation now of being "late payers". What procedure would you as the chief financial officer...establish in order to repair the image of our fine city from being "late payers", knowing that most bills should be paid within 15 to 30 or 45 days?</p>					
<p>Quotes from the Candidate</p>	<p>Minute 28:12 "The first step in this process is first of all engaging the vendors that they know that, of course, there has been a change a shift in the leadership, a shift in the direction and a shift in the commitment to them and to make sure they are paid for the services that they have provided. Minute 29:03 "The next step is also to establish a consistent ongoing policy and procedure for how we are going to pay." Minute 29:17 "The fourth part of that is communication with our department heads and our department leaders because they have the closer relationship with our vendors."</p>				
<p>My Comment:</p>	<p>This was fine. I only counted 3 steps but it's fine. I like that Dr. Morton mentioned taking a "team" approach.</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
<p>Question 4: How do you propose to help get the city get their credit rating back?</p>					

<p>Quotes from the Candidate</p>	<p>Minute 34:22 "First of all I agree that restoring the credit rating is going to take some time, it's going to be a long distance run rather than a sprint and I think that the public needs to know that it's going to take some time but there are some step processes that need to be in place. One is we sort of talked about early is unearthing exactly what our finances really look like and beginning to pull together at least at the bare minimum unaudited reports for our fiscal years, for the multiple fiscal years so that we can have a clear understanding of kind of a somewhat of where we are financially, and those will allow the auditing firm to be able to begin their work and to begin to develop a work product that will then eventually lead to a completed audit. Minute 35:18 "In addition to that, it's also working with our other agencies such as the URA and IDA and the water department to make sure that their audits are complete." Minute 35:50 "We also need to have a conversation about our auditing firm and also to ensure that our firm has the capacity to really complete the task that we need in a expedited timeframe and so that means that of course the city council, the board of estimates, are probably going to need to invest more and to ensure that we are able to do it."</p>				
<p>My Comment:</p>	<p>This was a good realistic response. My one significant reservation is that Dr. Morton has been the treasurer of the URA for years and the URA has a history of terrible financial recordkeeping and not being "audit ready". Please see the file "URA 2016 audit and 2018 TDA Consulting Report take aways" at mountvernoncitizen.org</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
	<p>3</p>				
<p>Quotes from the Candidate</p>	<p>Question 5: Our city is mandated to have annual audits, right? We've been using the same audit firm for years. What are the pros and cons of using the same audit firm that we've been using for years and should you be elected as comptroller, what would be your procedure that would guarantee that our audits are done timely and completed?</p> <p>Minute 40:02 "The advantage is that the auditing firm actually knows the company which they are auditing. Of course, the cons to that is that they do become entirely too familiar with the organization and there also is the potential in which your audits are not as complete or as reliable as you would like them to be because there can be some slippage there. The process is laid out for us, right, which is first of all to have the RFP done for a single audit and that includes all of our agencies including the water and the IDA and the URA and to be able to select them and then also to make sure that all of the finances are done and working along with those agencies to make sure that their reports are done and that their financial statements are complete and audit ready because if they're not audit ready then of course it's going to delay the process."</p>				

<p>My Comment:</p>	<p>The problem I have is that Dr. Morton has been in a financial oversight position for the city at the URA for years and during that time our auditors reported that the URA was not "audit ready". The same goes for the MV Public Library, where Dr. Morton also held an oversight role. So the question is this: how is it possible that Dr. Morton was unable to leverage his leadership and financial skills to bear at these agencies (i.e., the URA and the MVPL) where he served in an oversight role (and continues to do so at the URA), but he will be able to bring those skills to bear as city comptroller?</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
<p>Question 6: For some time now we have probably been dipping into the fund balance. As comptroller, what do you believe the use of the fund balance is for and what would you do with the fund balance if elected?</p>	<p>Minute 50:15 "First of all I'm going to say that I agree with Councilman Griffith that we should not have the public to believe that the current administration made decisions in a vacuum, and while we do not have our 2016 audit completed we do have the information from our auditors that gives us a guide as to what really should be in the fund balance based upon the calculations of what was there before. And then we also want to make sure that the public understands is that the fund balance, yes, is the rainy day- well it's raining outside, and the reality of it is that we need to make sure that the services are provided to the residents of the city of Mount Vernon. Minute 51:39 So the fund balance is not just easily explained to the public, but it does have different pockets of money for things that are going to happen in the future.</p>				
<p>Quotes from the Candidate</p>	<p>First point: Dr. Morton said that the administration "has information from our auditors that gives us a guide" regarding our fund balance. Ok. Why don't we- <i>the tax paying citizens of Mount Vernon</i> - have access to that information? Again, I for one have grown weary of talk of transparency without action to back it up. Second point: Dr. Morton says that the fund balance is not "easily explained to the public". I don't recall anyone in our City government actually trying to explain our reserve fund. For citizens who are interested, the NYS Office of the state comptroller has a publication that explains reserve funds in NYS. You can access it here https://www.osc.state.ny.us/files/local-government/publications/pdf/reservefunds.pdf</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
<p>Question 7: Mount Vernon is known as the "City of Homes". We have a lot of seniors here that own property (home owners). What would be your suggested policy for partial tax payment on those homes?</p>	<p>2</p>				

<p>Quotes from the Candidate</p>	<p>Minute 54: 58 "I agree that the first thing is to engage them and as you have seen in my roles in city hall so far is that I am easily accessible and I'm also responsive. Minute 55:45 "We want to make sure that we make it as easy as possible and I agree that we need to move away from this semi-annual payment structure. We need to increase the amount of times that our residents our taxpayers can pay their taxes even if it is on a quarterly basis or if they wish to come and pay down on their taxes that we have the right system in place to keep track of how much they have paid and so that at the end of the year we can tell them what their balances are."</p>				
<p>My Comment:</p>	<p>Fine. I didn't give a "Most Favorable" rating simply because Dr. Morton brought up that the city will have a way to track the interest penalty on late payments. This was a question about senior citizens who are often on a fixed income trying to keep up with escalating property taxes. In that context, talking about the penalty assessed for a late payment seemed unnecessary and out of place.</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
<p>Question 8: Recently legislation was passed to create a pass-through account, to put the \$42 plus million dollars coming from the American Rescue Plan Act into the city clerks office to eventually end up in the water department, bypassing the comptroller's office. So if you're elected comptroller, how do you feel about that legislation for yourself?</p>					
<p>Quotes from the Candidate</p>	<p>Minute 1:01:03 "It's not an ideal situation but unfortunately the challenges of the time warrant that there is a different process, but I look forward to being a part of the decision-making and also look forward to the reconciliation of those funds, the reporting because there's great [inaudible], and then being able to take over come June of 2022."</p>				
<p>My Comment:</p>	<p>Dr. Morton is in a tough spot here. He is Chief of Staff to the Mayor, and the Mayor has been laying the groundwork for this move around the Comptroller (and the City Charter), including lobbying city council, many weeks.</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
<p>Question 9: (2 parts) 1) What would you say the role of the comptroller would be, and how would you achieve it? 2) How important is the relationship between the comptrollers office, the mayor's office, and the city council?</p>					

<p>Quotes from the Candidate</p>	<p>Minute 1:11:07 "The comptroller needs to be that independent voice for the residents of the city of Mount Vernon, to be able to look at exactly what is the financial status of the city and what can the city afford to do." Minute 1:11:33 "I see the city comptroller as an executive that is able to manage the operation of finances. Minute 1:12:04 "As a leader, as the comptroller, who sits on the board of estimates, is to be able to inform the public, to be able to inform the city council, to be able to inform the mayor, and to do that with an independent voice for the people of Mount Vernon</p>				
<p>My Comment:</p>	<p>I think this was fine. As with the other candidates, Dr. Morton didn't really address the importance of the <i>relationship</i> between the comptroller, the council, and the mayor. Having a good working relationship is critically important. Regarding Dr. Morton's ability to "inform the public" about our finances, I have serious concerns. Here is what I wrote in my Comptroller "Round 2" scoring report regarding Dr. Morton's ability to communicate financial information: <i>when it comes to communicating financial information (a critical skill set for a Comptroller, particularly given the need to re-establish our bond rating), I have serious concerns. For example, as Treasurer of the IDA, the Candidate is required to present financial information to the IDA Board. At a recent IDA Board meeting (4.8.21), the Candidate's ability to present financial information was questionable (minutes 2:50 - 19:20). https://www.facebook.com/mountvernonny/videos/747783582602801</i></p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
<p>3</p> <p>Question 10: The City of Mount Vernon has applied for many many grants, and many of those grants or most of those grants require matching funds. So how would you as the chief financial officer of the city make sure that we have funds available to meet the match, so that the grant would be awarded to the city?</p>					

<p>Quotes from the Candidate</p>	<p>Minute 1:13:20 "The approach to this depends upon what is the accounting philosophy around where do you place the money? Because if you place the 20% into the operating budget, then it also has an effect upon the tax rate in which you may not know exactly how much of that match that you actually need. The counter to that is to be able to look at over the last past 7 years, 5 to 7 years, to see how much of a match have we had to pay and to come up with a, use a formula to come up with an amount that then you would budget in the budget so that you can ensure that the amount is there. Where would the money be if it's not in operating? Well, councilman Griffith talked about it: it would be in a restricted fund that is in the fund balance so that you can ensure that you actually can pay that amount should you need to pay the amount. Budgeting, accounting, is not an actual science; it is not concrete in the sense that you absolutely know every day. In fact, you are doing budget mods all of the time. Unfortunately, in our environment which we are in fund accounting, we don't have the luxury of just moving money around beyond what we already have based upon our tax base and so therefore we have to utilize things like our fund balance, like our contingency fund, to ensure that we are able to fund the unknown so that would be my philosophy, that would be my policy is to either 1) look at the trends- come up with the amount that is needed based upon the trends of our spending and place it in our operating budget or rely on a restricted fund in our fund balance to pay.</p>				
<p>My Comment:</p>	<p>I have significant issues with this response. First, the question is about the candidates philosophy, but the candidate gave us an answer that "depends upon what is the accounting philosophy". The candidate should give us <i>his</i> philosophy-specifically, concisely, and decisively. Second, and most importantly, Dr. Morton said that financial accounting is "not an actual science" and is "not concrete". Keep in mind that we are talking about math, which is widely regard as being very concrete. That "budget mods" need to occur is simply an acknowledgement that human endeavors are dynamic. The budget, the accounting, and the math, act as dependent variables against which the changing environment (a collection of independent variables) is measured.</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
<p>Question 11: Here in Mount Vernon if you watch any of our live sessions that come out of city hall, you'll notice that there seems to be a breakdown between the comptroller's office and the department heads. Should you be elected how would the comptroller's office assist the other department heads with the budget plans, cost analysis and purchases and repairs, because before we start talking about repairing our reputation outside the city, I think it's important that we work first of all in repairing our reputation within the city. Because if we're going to be destroyed, we can only be destroyed from the inside out. (Note: Rev. Wheeler added the following for Dr. Morton: Our Comptroller's office right now and our other department heads, there seems to be a breach. Something is broken. How do you go about repairing what is broken?)</p>					

<p>Quotes from the Candidate</p>	<p>Minute 1:22:41 "Well I think the simple answer is that I'm doing that now, as the chief of staff, with the department heads, and also with the comptroller when I can, which is to try to really work on the relationship between the comptroller's office and the department heads."</p>				
<p>My Comment:</p>	<p>This is fine. Dr. Morton went on to emphasize the importance of open, ongoing, communication. All good.</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
<p>Question 12 (and closing statement):</p>	<p>We've read a lot about each of the candidates, we've heard a lot about each of the candidates. What do you want us to know about you as a person running for the comptroller and this includes your final statement.</p>				
<p>Quotes from the Candidate</p>	<p>Minute 1:31:21 "What I want you to know is that I'm more than a pastor. I want you to know that I'm more than a preacher. I want you to know that I have been doing management, executive work, long before I became a preacher. And in that I got my bachelor's degree in Business Administration- I understand how business works I understand financial concepts; I have managed millions of dollars of budgets, over years and have maximized them; I have written grants and managed grants; I have made reports to federal governments, to state governments, and to private entities on these grants. So I understand about compliance. I also have engaged in risk management as a person who has been on several not for profit boards, been chairs of the finance committee, the risk management committee, being treasurer for the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge for the daycare managing their millions of dollars, ensuring that the reporting is done on an annual basis and the audits are complete. That I've done. I've worked at a major college or university in New York in which we had built several capital projects upwards 70 million dollars so I've managed capital projects. Minute 1:33:20 "Our financial department needs transformation. It needs a leader who is going to not only be there to crunch the numbers, but is also going to be one who is going to be able to look at the vision and create a strategic plan to modernize our office create transparency to be responsive to the residents of Mount Vernon and to work along side with the other elected so that we don't continue to have this infighting. So yes, I'd be willing to of course, hire Marcus Griffith as the accountant that's needed to be in the office or even consider Derekson Lawrence in the office that he can give some skill sets. But as a manager you've got to be able to pull that team together. That's what I offer to Mount Vernon. That's what I want you to know about me."</p>				

<p>My Comment:</p>	<p>A few points. First, please read my reports regarding the URA and MV Public Library. The question we should all ask is where was Dr. Morton's financial oversight of these agencies? Dr. Morton says that in the past, when in an oversight role for the daycare, he ensured that "reporting is done on an annual basis and the audits are complete". Why hasn't he done that for the URA and why didn't he do that for the MV Public Library? Second, despite Dr. Morton's claims the evidence suggests to me that his grasp of financial concepts is insufficient to meet our current needs. Third, if Dr. Morton is elected comptroller and he hires Mr. Griffith to be an accountant, I'd have very serious concerns. Finally, when Dr. Morton left the MV Public Library Board of Trustees in July 2018 he gave this reason: "There is a building on 9th Ave called Macedonoia Baptist Church that needs me" www.blackwestchester.com/mvpl-welcomes-2-new-trustees/ My impression is that Dr. Morton feels a strong sense of obligation to help the community and this is noble, but this sense of obligation has resulted in him taking on more roles than he should or should be expected to take on.</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
<p>Average Rating Dr. Morton:</p>		<p>2</p> <p>3.08</p>			

Rating Candidate Responses given during the Candidate Zoom Forum Hosted by The Greater Centennial A.M.E. Zion Church on May 11, 2021 (Moderated by Rev. Dr. Stephen Pogue & Rev. Jeffrey Wheeler)				
Candidate: Marcus A. Griffith (current City Council President)				
Introductory Remarks				
Quotes from the Candidate	<p>Minute 4:53 "8 years in, this will be my last year on the City Council because I think the best skill set that I have, that I've learned in college, my accounting degree is paramount and that is what this City needs more than anything. Minute 5:47 "So overall I have a whirlwind of experience to bring to the finance department and when you couple that with my work on the City Council, my dedication to this great City that I love Mount Vernon, you will find that I am by far the best candidate the most qualified person for this role of comptroller."</p>			
My Comment:	This was a good opening remark - clear and informative. Mr. Griffith covered his long tenure of service to the City, as well as his "whirlwind" of private sector work as an accountant.			
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable
				4
Question 1: What process and procedure would you take to make Mount Vernon finances more transparent?				
Quotes from the Candidate	<p>Minute 13:15 "In my career, my process has always been to report finances to the executives that need them. So wherever I was, my job was simply to report the finances- to aggregate the numbers, consolidate them, divide them in a way that the management team could use that information to move forward for the company, and in this case for the municipality. Transparency through accounting is a given." Minute 14:25 "And the public needs to know so that they can feel comfortable with their elected officials, and that's not something that's being done now."</p>			
My Comment:	This sounds good. The problem, however, is that I don't see evidence that would lead me to believe that Mr. Griffith is able to engage in behavior that backs this up. Take, for example, the audit report regarding the MV Board of Water supply that was released to the City Council in March 2021. Rather than releasing this to the public (which is what a Council interested transparency would have done), the City Council held the report.			
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable
				1

Question 2: What does your first 90 days as the comptroller look like?					
Quotes from the Candidate	<p>Minute 23:48 "The first 90 days are going to involve a lot of sleepless nights, because I know, and the folks in city hall know, that there hasn't been much activity going on down there for the last 4 years. So I'm expecting to spend a lot of midnights in city hall. I know that there's going to be a process of aggregating not only the financials, but also aggregating the expenses and our debt. We know that there's a lot of vendors out there that have been crying and that needs to be computed into a system so that they can be reported out to the Council, to the administration, and to the public. Minute 25:18 "I plan by the first 90 days to have key financials reported and exposed to the taxpayers and to the administration of the city so that we can begin to repair the detriment that we have been through financially for the last 4 years. That is my guarantee for the residents of Mount Vernon."</p>				
My Comment:	<p>This was good. Personally, I don't think it's a good idea for Mr. Griffith to be at city hall at midnight, and I don't like when politicians appeal to me by giving me their personal "guarantee", but there is little doubt that Mr. Griffith is a hard worker.</p>				
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
				4	
Question 3: The City of Mount Vernon has a reputation now of being "late payers". What procedure would you as the chief financial officer...establish in order to repair the image of our fine city from being "late payers", knowing that most bills should be paid within 15 to 30 or 45 days?					
Quotes from the Candidate	<p>Minute 30:25 "The easy answer to that is that we're going to pay, right? As soon as we get invoices we need to work really hard to speed up our payments." Minute 30:39 "We need to know that the allocation of those monies are set in the budget. We are going to set that policy, that the vendors know that the money has been allocated, reserved for them with the vouchers that are put forward and then we are swiftly going to pay. I don't think we have the opportunity now to have any credit. We have no credit with any of our vendors any more. The proof is in the payment."</p>				
My Comment:	<p>This was fine.</p>				
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
				4	
Question 4: How do you propose to help get the city get their credit rating back?					

<p>Quotes from the Candidate</p>	<p>Minute 32:30 "What we must do in order to get our credit rating back is to finalize our audits from prior years. Minute 33:35 "...the auditors will give us a clear audit and then we'll be able to go to the bond markets and to the credit agencies in order to get financing from there, but this will take time after the negligence that has been had in the comptrollers office for the last 4 years."</p>				
<p>My Comment:</p>	<p>I have a couple of issues with this answer. First, if there were years of neglect, I'm not at all confident that "clear audits" of prior years will even be possible. I don't believe that it's acceptable accounting and auditing practice (i.e., in accordance with GAAP or GAGAS) to go back in time- <i>perhaps years back in time</i> - to create financial records that are then auditable as if the records were maintained in accordance with GAAP/GAGAS all along. It may be possible to secure a modified audit opinion in such cases but it's difficult to imagine an unmodified opinion, which is necessary for a "clear audit". Second, it's possible to have a "clear audit" and still not be credit worthy because your finances are incapable of supporting additional debt without significant increases in revenues from a) sales and use tax (which will likely mean development), b) government subsidies in the form of entitlement grants, c) increased property taxes, or d) some combination of the 3.</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
<p>Question 5: Our city is mandated to have annual audits, right? We've been using the same audit firm for years. What are the pros and cons of using the same audit firm that we've been using for years and should you be elected as comptroller, what would be your procedure that would guarantee that our audits are done timely and completed? (NOTE: Rev. Wheeler threw in an additional question- How do you feel about internal auditors also?)</p>					

<p>Quotes from the Candidate</p>	<p>Minute 43:55 "Well, I think Reverend Morton answered the question as far as the auditors are concerned very well. O'Connor Davies has been our auditor. I want to say that in the condition that we've been in, we really haven't been audited in 4 years. So O'Connor Davies is very well known in Westchester and since we haven't been audited it really is a clear slate and they have a lot of understanding of how we work. I'm sure there's other auditors out there but O'Connor Davies is the auditor of choice in our region. But yes there is something to be said about changing auditors." Minute 44:37 "But what's more important for our discussion is who's best suited to be the accountant providing the data to the auditors? Of the other 2 candidates that are running neither have produced financials that have been audited as far as doing the actual accounting. Of my 25 year career, I've been audited every year of those 25 years working with very large companies. At Reader's Digest I was audited for my financials that were revenues for the year of 2 billion dollars. So you have to have - and Reverend Morton said this, "audit ready" financials that you produce and not only audit ready but you need to be ready for the challenges that the auditors are going to present to you. So your data has to be so well manipulated or put into place that you can flip that script and be able to explain to them when they throw that curveball at you. It's not the question of the auditor. Our question for the City of Mount Vernon is what accountant, what comptroller are you going to put in place that is going to be prepared with the accounting in the city that is going to be ready for the auditor."</p>										
<p>My Comment:</p>	<p>First, if we haven't been audited in 4 years, then what does it mean to say that O'Connor Davies has "a lot of understanding of how we work."? Isn't the point that they don't have any idea of how we work because we haven't been audited? Second, according to Mr. Griffith's resume, he worked at Reader's Digest as a financial system's analyst for about 2.5yrs ending in December 2003. For Mr. Griffith to claim Reader's Digest's consolidated financials as "<i>my financials</i>" seems like an overstatement.</p>										
<p>My Rating:</p>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Most Unfavorable</td> <td>Unfavorable</td> <td>Neutral</td> <td>Favorable</td> <td>Most Favorable</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">2</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable		2			
Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable							
	2										
<p>Question 6: For some time now we have probably been dipping into the fund balance. As comptroller, what do you believe the use of the fund balance is for and what would you do with the fund balance if elected?</p>											

<p>Quotes from the Candidate</p>	<p>Minute 48:13 "There is nobody better to explain the fund balance better than me. There's no question. I've had to explain what the fund balance is to other elected officials, residents, years and years over and over. The fund balance is our rolling fund. It is our rainy day fund. Minute 49:11 "So yes our fund balance I believe is extremely low right now. It is wrong for Derickson Lawrence to say that we used it all up. The administration, including me, spent a lot of time and effort trying to calculate the best we could how much was in our fund balance and the comptroller has provided us with no financials. So yes we delayed producing the budget but we had to move forward with the budget in order to collect the taxes and it is wrong for Derickson Lawrence to accuse the current administration of using all of the fund balance. I don't believe we used all of it but with our calculations, with my particular calculations, we believe the fund balance is much lower than it should be right now and we're going to have to build that back and reserve elements of that fund balance to move forward."</p>				
<p>My Comment:</p>	<p>First point: If we had an open government structure, one where citizens could access information about the budget themselves, people wouldn't have to depend on Mr. Griffith to explain the fund balance "over and over". Second point: If Mr. Griffith and the administration did calculations to come up with an estimate of our fund balance, why haven't those calculations been shared with the public? It's wrong to talk about transparency but act in opacity.</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
<p>Question 7: Mount Vernon is known as the "City of Homes". We have a lot of seniors here that own property (home owners). What would be your suggested policy for partial tax payment on those homes?</p>					
<p>Quotes from the Candidate</p>	<p>Minute 54:05 "So yes, eventually, we're going to move to more automated payment systems and we're going to move to monthly payments so that people can budget better."</p>				
<p>My Comment:</p>	<p>Fine. Mr. Griffith clearly believes in a hands on - person centered- approach to looking out for our senior citizens.</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">5</p>					

<p>Question 8: Recently legislation was passed to create a pass-through account, to put the \$42 plus million dollars coming from the American Rescue Plan Act into the city clerk's office to eventually end up in the water department, bypassing the comptroller's office. So if you're elected comptroller, how do you feel about that legislation for yourself?</p>					
<p>Quotes from the Candidate</p>	<p>Minute 1:03:18 "This question is a little unfair because I co-authored this legislation. Derickson Lawrence is clearly struggling with all of this. If you sent someone to the grocery store with your money to bring you back groceries and they never returned, there is no way I'm going to give them more money. Minute 1:03:56 "The city council and the administration had to find a way to not work with this comptroller <u>misappropriating our funds any longer.</u> (emphasis added). Minute 1:04:27 "To say that the water department, who is our third party administrator, administering these funds has risked significantly is not correct.</p>				
<p>My Comment:</p>	<p>Recently, I became aware that Mr. Griffith, along with rest of the City Council, and the Patterson-Howard administration, had in it's possession, <i>prior to passing this legislation</i>, an audit report about the Board of Water Supply (BOW) that identified serious material weaknesses. So in my view, what is "unfair" is not the question but the fact that Mr. Griffith participated in a legislative approval process that subverted our Charter, and he did so without releasing a highly relevant audit to the public. Furthermore, Mr. Griffith should be careful with respect to throwing out phrases like "<i>misappropriating our funds</i>", which is a <i>crime and grounds for removal from office</i>. If Mr. Griffith has evidence that Ms. Reynolds has misappropriated taxpayer funds, then steps should be taken immediately to remove her from office and an interim Comptroller should be appointed.</p>				
	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
<p>My Rating:</p>	1				
<p>Question 9: (2 parts) 1) What would you say the role of the comptroller would be, and how would you achieve it? 2) How important is the relationship between the comptrollers office, the mayor's office, and the city council?</p>					
<p>Quotes from the Candidate</p>	<p>Minute 1:06:38 "The comptroller's job is to keep the mayor in check as to how much money he or she is spending. The council is the tie breaker between the two." Minute 1:07:20 "The comptroller is the one who can maybe make recommendations to save money."</p>				

My Comment:	Mr. Griffith opened his comment with another attack on Derickson Lawrence, which I view unfavorably, and he ended with a brief pitch about himself. Both of these things are nonresponsive to the questions. He answered half of the question.				
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
My Rating:	2				
Question 10: The City of Mount Vernon has applied for many many grants, and many of those grants or most of those grants require matching funds. So how would you as the chief financial officer of the city make sure that we have funds available to meet the match, so that the grant would be awarded to the city?					
Quotes from the Candidate	Minute 1:17:19 "Well definitely I would have a reserve for the rolling fund for the grants but one of the issues that we have is that we're not getting all the grants that we deserve and in order to get the grants in order to produce the grants you need to have the data in place the statistics the KPIs - the key performance indicators- that prove that we are entitled to have that grant."				
My Comment:	Mr. Griffith tried to start his answer with an attack on Derrickson Lawrence's answer but, thankfully, Rev. Dr. Stephen Pogue did not allow it. Mr. Griffith did sneak in his attack later on in his answer. Regarding his answer (keep restricted reserves for the purpose of matching grants), this is fine for some grants but it may not be practical for large grants or multiple medium-sized grants. For example, if the city wants to secure \$10 million in grants and our match is 20%, we need to have, upfront, \$2 million in restricted reserves. Since we have no insight into our cash reserves right now, what do we do in the mean time to secure the grants? What are our options?				
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
My Rating:	2				
Question 11: Here in Mount Vernon if you watch any of our live sessions that come out of city hall, you'll notice that there seems to be a breakdown between the comptroller's office and the department heads. Should you be elected how would the comptroller's office assist the other department heads with the budget plans, cost analysis and purchases and repairs, because before we start talking about repairing our reputation outside the city, I think it's important that we work first of all in repairing our reputation within the city. Because if we're going to be destroyed, we can only be destroyed from the inside out.					

<p>Quotes from the Candidate</p>	<p>Minute 1:21:12 "The comptrollers office is a partner with the departments. DPW is our biggest but it even goes to recreation or any of the others. You need that financial arm. And again the data is important as well."</p>				
<p>My Comment:</p>	<p>A data driven partnership- good answer.</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
	<p>4</p>				
<p>Question 12 (and closing statement): We've read a lot about each of the candidates, we've heard a lot about each of the candidates. What do you want us to know about you as a person running for the comptroller and this includes your final statement.</p>					
<p>Quotes from the Candidate</p>	<p>Minute 1:28:10 "As you know I am a Mount Vernon historian. I can take you up blocks and people usually get bored with me getting into the history of the City of Mount Vernon, and that really means something. When you couple that with me being on the city council for 10 years when you couple me being on the Mount Vernon Planning Board for 4 years, my work on the Westchester County Planning Board for 10 [years]. When you add in my extreme corporate finance experience with companies that you absolutely know -AIG who brought me in when the federal government took them over and my task was to consolidate the companies that they owned for them to be sold so that the federal government could be repaid. When you look at my work at Reader's Digest, where I consolidated 2 billion dollars annually around the world, multiple currencies. When you understand that I am a true accountant. When you understand that my two other candidates, Derickson Lawrence clearly is not ready to be the accountant for the city and Darren Morton is an excellent administrator, but we have to be for real. He is not an accountant and we need an accountant that has accounting experience to do this office. So I'm going to make an offer. If I don't get this office I will not be in office anymore. I say that Darren Morton as an administrator can stay the chief of staff and make me the comptroller, which is perfectly suited for the experience that I bring to the city."</p>				

My Comment:	<p>Mr. Griffith continues to oversell his financial experience and expertise. According to his resume, he was a "financial systems consultant" for AIG for 11 months from March 2012 to Feb 2013, and he was at Reader's Digest nearly 20 years ago in a similar role. He would have us believe he was hand picked repeatedly by multi-billion dollar multinationals to save the day for them financially. That's highly implausible. More importantly, Mr. Griffith has been laying out a track record of involvement with our city government that has gotten us to where we are now. It's difficult to see how, after a decade of close involvement, he is going to become an agent for change. In short, Marcus A. Griffith cannot convince me that Mount Vernon will be any different if he continues to be involved in city government.</p>				
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
Average Rating Marcus A. Griffith:					2.54

Candidate Favorability Ratings

City Council Candidate Zoom Forum (hosted by various MV Neighborhood Associations,
moderated by Axel Ebermann)

May 23, 2021

Candidate Name	Percent Favorable
Carter, Lauren	93%
Poteat, Ed	89%
Lucio, Nicole	83%
Duarte, Janice	82%
Wallace, Andre	74%
Browne, Danielle	68%
Farquharson, Delia	64%
Gleason, Cathlin	54%

<p>Rating Candidate Responses given during the City Council Candidate Zoom Forum (hosted by various MV Neighborhood Associations, moderated by Axel Ebermann)</p>					
<p>Candidate: Lauren Carter</p>					
<p>Introductory Remarks</p>					
<p>Quotes from the Candidate</p>	<p>Minute 2:27 "See I know what the issues are; I have ideas on how we can solve these problems in the city, and I know the process on how we can get it done. I worked for the city for a number of years starting in the Planning Department where I worked for the Land Use Board, then as Deputy City Clerk. So I worked for the executive branch, and I worked for the legislative branch. Now in both roles I had to apply the laws of the City when handling my responsibilities, it's the charter and the code. In other words, I couldn't just do what I wanted to do. Now I announced my candidacy in November, and my platform includes quality of life. I have started an anti-littering campaign to encourage businesses and residents not to litter, and also for us to plant trees, flowers, and community gardens. I would like for us to vote to fund a few ordinances [moderator jumps in b/c Ms. Carter is over time]and there are many other initiatives that I have that I would like to implement as a member of the City Council."</p>				
<p>My Comments</p>	<p>Good opening remarks. Ms. Carter started by listing her education credentials (including her current USC Master's program in Urban Planning, which is a considerable asset), and several of the well known infrastructure and environmental issues that we face. She highlighted her experience working for the city and ended with a few beautification ideas, which is great. I would have given this a higher score but for the fact that she went well over her allotted time.</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
<p>Question 1: Assuming that the city is receiving 42 million dollars in pandemic relief, what would be your funding priorities?</p>					
<p>4.75</p>					

<p>Quotes from the Candidate</p>	<p>Minute 25:56 "One of the things we need to do we need to pay off some of the existing debt we have- we have outstanding bills, those need to be a priority to be paid. We have vendors that have not been paid for several years so we need to make sure that they get paid. We also need to (as was stated by a couple of the candidates), we need to address the sewer system; there's no doubt about it. We can't run from it. However, I don't think the entire 42 million should be appropriated and allocated to fix the sewer system because there are other things we can do although we don't have a credit rating, we can get low interest rate loans from HUD in order to address the sewer system problem. I used to work in planning, I know this. I would also like for us to strengthen our senior and youth programs.</p>				
<p>My Comments</p>	<p>Ms. Carter is the only candidate to mention existing debt as a possible use of stimulus money, and that's interesting. I don't know if it's possible or advisable, but it's interesting. Ms. Carter also noted some of the specific offerings of the Youth Bureau, how we as a city can partner with faith-based and not-for-profit organizations, and how quality of life issues are central to her platform. All good comments, although like other candidates, I'd like some more numbers at this point.</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
<p>Question 2: What is your stand on new "high density" residential development before the city has a Comprehensive Plan and has updated it's aging infrastructure such as the sewer system?</p>					
<p>Quotes from the Candidate</p>	<p>Minute 41:07 "I also believe that we need to finish the Comprehensive Plan. Again, that's one of my platforms, I've been talking about that since November. One of the things that planners look at when developing a city is infrastructure. So, planners look at the sewers, the roads, the schools, the hospitals, and, unfortunately, Mount Vernon hasn't been doing that. Minute 42:32 "I will vote as a Council Person, I'm going to vote to fund [inaudible. Maybe "the Comprehensive Plan"?] and the administration to hire the staff in order to complete it."</p>				
<p>My Comments</p>	<p>This was a very good response. It was concise, confident, informative, and definitive. Clearly, city planning is in Ms. Carter's "wheelhouse", which is significant strength given the importance of this issue.</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
<p>4.5</p>					

Question 3: What would you do to stimulate business and industrial development in the City of Mount Vernon?					
Quotes from the Candidate	<p>Minute 59:45 "I have been speaking with business owners, and I definitely believe that we need more businesses in Mount Vernon. I will say that a market study was conducted a couple of years ago that indicated that Mount Vernon has untapped potential of generating 400 million dollars in revenue in the city." Minute 1:00:32 "With the information from the market study what we need to do is develop an economic development plan. That's how we're going to be able to attract businesses. It's not necessarily going to be through the Comprehensive Plan, it's going to be through the Economic Development Plan that we craft here in the city." Minute 1:01:00 "We need to also incentivize startups to come into Mount Vernon as well, and we do that through the IDA. And I will wrap up by saying that we have Industrial Zones in the city. The Comprehensive Plan of Mount Vernon is basically built out. The Comprehensive Plan when it's done is going to focus on density- where we want high density, where we want low density because Mount Vernon is basically built out. But we need to craft an Economic Development Plan in order to attract businesses here to Mount Vernon utilize the [inaudible] and incentives from the IDA."</p>				
My Comments	<p>I thought this was a smart answer. Some of the other candidates speak about the city as if it's a blank slate and the Comprehensive Plan is going to be used to design it from scratch. Ms. Carter correctly points out that that is not the case. In addition, the issues with the IDA notwithstanding, using the IDA to incentivize startups makes sense to me because startups are often cash poor and need time to incubate, develop, and grow. I would have liked to hear a couple of specifics from that market study Ms. Carter mentioned, details that would inform the Economic Development Plan. The market study can be accessed here: https://cmvny.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/MarketingStudyWeb.pdf</p>				
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
					5
Question 4: You worked in the Mount Vernon Planning Department, and then later at the Clerk's Office. Given the dysfunction and chaos at City Hall, what specific steps would you take to improve the current situation?					

<p>Quotes from the Candidate</p>	<p>Minute 1:20:01 "Well first and foremost, continue the work that I did when I was in both departments, and that is being a person that operated with transparency, integrity, and high emotional intelligence. Minute 1:21:09 "In the midst of all of the confusion that has occurred throughout the city in the last several years, I remained a constant in city government and people respected that about me, and I would bring that same commitment as a Council Person working with my colleagues on the Council, working with the new Comptroller (whoever he may be), and working with the Mayor."</p>				
<p>My Comments</p>	<p>Bring consistency, integrity, transparency and emotional intelligence to the work. Very good.</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
<p>Each candidate gave a 30 second closing statement but I did not rate them.</p>					
<p>Average Rating Lauren Carter:</p>					<p>4.65</p>

Rating Candidate Responses given during the City Council Candidate Zoom Forum (hosted by various MV Neighborhood Associations, moderated by Axel Ebermann)			
Candidate: Ed Poteat			
Introductory Remarks			
Quotes from the Candidate	<p>Minute 12:56 "First, we can have a better future but we have to plan for that future by having a Comprehensive Plan. Minute 13:30 "The second reason that I'm running is to add a level of professionalism to City Council: I'm tired of the in-fighting, and that's why I'm really excited to be on the Mount Vernon Forward slate with Danielle Browne, and Cathlin Gleason."</p>		
My Comments	<p>Mr. Poteat noted his Master's in Urban Planning and his position as an adjunct at Columbia. I like that he gave us 2 specifics about what he hopes to accomplish if elected. I view the recurring reference to the Mount Vernon Forward slate by all of 3 of it's members to be unfavorable.</p>		
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral
		Favorable	Most Favorable
			4
Question 1: Assuming that the city is receiving 42 million dollars in pandemic relief, what would be your funding priorities?			
Quotes from the Candidate	<p>Minute 21:10 "Staff morale in the city is at an all time low, because of funding issues staff (your firemen, police officers, your DPW workers) have not been paid properly, do not have a contract and haven't been paid overtime that they earned during COVID. So my first priority would be to make sure that we're funding our staff the way that they should be funded, and given the work that they've done to make sure that we get them on the contracts that they rightfully deserve and fund the overtime that they rightfully need. I would also fund and make sure that we finish the audits and get those done. Why? Because with an audit done (we have 3 years that we haven't done), with an audit done we can then go for our bond rating, pull bonds, and then raise the necessary capital to complete the fixing of our sewer system."</p>		

My Comments	<p>According to Nicholas Mastrogiorgio, President of the MV PBA, police have been receiving their overtime pay (see Minute 14:43 of the "People Before Politics Radio Episode 301) at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=klzVxmzJVtQ). If DPW and Fire are not, it's shameful, as is the lack of a contract, but that has nothing to do with this question. Overtime should be funded and paid from the main budget, not from federal stimulus money. And even if it were, it would only make up a very small portion of the expected funds. Even if combined overtime in 2020 was 3x what was budgeted (which was about 2.5% of salaries across police, fire, and DPW), we'd only need \$2million from the stimulus money to cover it. And even if the consolidated audits run \$500k each per year that's only \$1.5million for 3 years, plus some of that cost would be allocated directly to costs centers like the URA, IDA, and Water dept. So, conservatively we could say 90% of the \$42million would remain unallocated. What's the plan for that money?</p>				
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
	3.5				
<p>Question 2: What is your stand on new "high density" residential development before the city has a Comprehensive Plan and has updated it's aging infrastructure such as the sewer system?</p>					
Quotes from the Candidate	<p>Minute 42:50 "I respectfully say this to all the current Council Members, and I do mean this respectfully: You were on Council, and so if there was frustration with the Comprehensive Plan not being passed, it should have been passed under your jurisdiction. The Comprehensive Plan is not that complicated. It should take about 6 months of technocrats working on it and then about 6 to 9 months of outreach. Minute 43:38 "But this is a complicated question. If it takes 15 months for the plan to be finished - 6 months of technocrats working on it and 9 months of community outreach- developers take 12 to 18 months to kind of get their projects moving, so to say we shouldn't have any development in the city when our homeowners are over-taxed is passing the buck."</p>				
My Comments	<p>This is clearly an area of expertise for Mr. Poteat. He referenced a short youtube video he released that outlines his 4 guiding principles for the creation of the Comprehensive Plan. I encourage voters to watch it and consider it in their decision-making process (https://youtu.be/Lvl32cns22Q).</p>				
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
	5				

Question 3: What would you do to stimulate business and industrial development in the City of Mount Vernon?				
Quotes from the Candidate	<p>Minute 51:49 "Sales tax revenue makes up about a sixth of our budget- the Mount Vernon budget is about 123 million dollars, sales tax revenue is about 23 million bucks so it's a significant portion of that. It's not going to come through retail because that ship has left; because of the internet, people aren't shopping in stores like they used to, they're shopping online. What is picking up though is the need for businesses to have warehouses and industrial space because we learned as a country because of COVID-19 that we should start making products back here in the states, not farming it out to China and other countries. What's great about Mount Vernon is we have a infrastructure mostly on the South Side of industrial warehouses that we can use and market."</p>			
My Comments	<p>I thought this was a very good response. I would like to hear Mr. Poteat build on this with numbers such as how many square feet of this space we have available and what annual revenues we might expect to generate.</p>			
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable
				4.75
<p>Question 4: So sometimes you are a real estate developer, as far as I understand it, you are doing a lot of affordable housing, not in Mount Vernon, but sometimes if you are a hammer everything looks like a nail to you. So what is your vision for project development in Mount Vernon, especially as low income development is concerned?</p>				

<p>Quotes from the Candidate</p>	<p>Minute 1:18:04 "I'm very proud of the work that I've done, throughout decades, making sure that communities that at first were devastated had development opportunities, and that as they gentrified, holding that line and making sure that poor folk living there could live there. However, does Mount Vernon need more low income development? No. However, Mount Vernon does need to make sure that the residents on 3rd street have the same public safety options, the same retail options, as we have in Fleetwood." Minute 1:18:49 "And so we have to make sure that if there is, or, when there is new development throughout our city. Secondly, we have to make sure that if there is, or, when there is new development here, that it benefits our city. I don't understand why there's not a local hiring program for every project that happens in the city. There's no reason why developers should come in with their own force outside of Mount Vernon and not hire people in Mount Vernon. If it's done right, development can be an economic stimulus"</p>				
<p>My Comments</p>	<p>Mr. Poteat answered this question well and gave a clear vision: 1) He believes we don't need any additional low income housing developments, 2) He believes opportunities for job training and employment should be baked into every new development project, and 3) he believes we need to make sure development is equitable on the south side and the north side.</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">5</p>					
<p style="text-align: center;">Each candidate gave a 30 second closing statement but I did not rate them.</p>					
<p style="text-align: right;">Average Rating Ed Poteat:</p>					<p style="text-align: center;">4.45</p>

Rating Candidate Responses given during the City Council Candidate Zoom Forum (hosted by various MV Neighborhood Associations, moderated by Axel Ebermann)					
Candidate: Nicole Lucio					
Introductory Remarks					
Quotes from the Candidate	<p>Minute 10:30 "I decided to run for City Council because I believe that my experience and my integrity will advance the legislative affairs and the quality of life of our beautiful city. I want to use my skills to improve our community. I've lived in Mount Vernon for over 15 years. By trade I'm a compliance officer, I investigate fraud, I am certified as an anti-money laundering specialist. Minute 11:23 "As a member of City Council I am determined to bring fresh ideas, I'm determined to contribute in ways that go beyond the job description and my sole accountability is to the residents of Mount Vernon."</p>				
My Comments	<p>This was a good opening remark. Ms. Lucio noted her credentials (which are strong), her community service focus on children and families, and she determination. She said she wants to bring "fresh ideas" to the City Council- it would have been good to hear a couple of those, but overall this was strong and she came in on time, which is a plus.</p>				
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
4.5					
Question 1: Assuming that the city is receiving 42 million dollars in pandemic relief, what would be your funding priorities?					
Quotes from the Candidate	<p>Minute 19:58 "Without hesitation the funding priority in my opinion is coming into compliance with the sewage system and the consent order that was received. That's the major priority and I believe that that's not enough to cover what's necessary to fix the issue. That's it. That's the major priority."</p>				
My Comments	<p>Focused, certain, and parsimonious.</p>				
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
5					
Question 2: What is your stand on new "high density" residential development before the city has a Comprehensive Plan and has updated it's aging infrastructure such as the sewer system?					

<p>Quotes from the Candidate</p>	<p>Minute 37:23 "I would love to say that I would agree with placing a moratorium on development until the upgrades of our aging infrastructure are complete. However, can we really afford to do that as a city? Minute 38:49 "I do believe that there are segments of the Comprehensive Plan that can be worked on and perhaps as a city we don't have to wait for a full Comprehensive Plan to be complete before development continues."</p>				
<p>My Comments</p>	<p>I found this answer difficult to follow. I pulled the quotes that I think most closely addressed the question, but it sounded like Ms. Lucio might have been talking about development in general rather than "high density" residential development, which is what the question was about.</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
<p>Question 3: What would you do to stimulate business and industrial development in the City of Mount Vernon?</p>					
<p>Quotes from the Candidate</p>	<p>Minute 55:03 "My understanding is that the current administration has actually placed a member of the City Council on the IDA and I think that's a great service to the city so I would be of the culture to offer PILOTS for industrial development for commercial use. I think that the benefits of these projects are profit generating, they include jobs, they also include sales tax revenue and I think that the city should want to incentivize this type of development especially since commercial use property is not necessarily as burdensome on the city services or the school system, so I think that PILOTS, exemptions, or incentives, of course they should be properly negotiated and that's what I would do to encourage and to stimulate business."</p>				
<p>My Comments</p>	<p>This was a straightforward response. The question is this: how effective have commercial PILOTS been in Mount Vernon? Do we know that the residents of the city has benefited from them? What we do know is that like may other money centers of the city, the IDA has had serious oversight and accountability problems.</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
<p>Question 4: You mention that you oppose gentrification. Can you please explain your stance, and what that means for you?</p>					

<p>Quotes from the Candidate</p>	<p>Minute 1:08:12 "My understanding of gentrification is that it's the process where the character of a community is changed, and the character of the community is generally changed by either wealthier people moving in, generally by wealthier people moving in. So with that, yes you do get improved housing- I'm aware of that- with that, there are businesses and new businesses that are attracted, but through the influx of more affluent residents and businesses, the controversy comes into play when there are certain demographics that are displaced and you know that's part of the reason why I'm opposed to gentrification because it often leads to displacement of a certain demographic."</p>				
<p>My Comments</p>	<p>I thought this was a solid answer. As is often the case with Ms. Lucio, her communication style is extremely deliberate, each word chosen with great care. The one thing I would have liked to have heard in this case, is a more straightforward discussion of the "demographics" we are talking about. I think it's in our collective best interest to talk openly about how gentrification affects socioeconomic and racial segregation. To read a recent study on this issue in Philadelphia visit https://mountvernoncitizen.org/blog (scroll down to "Other Files")</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
<p>4.75</p>					
<p>Each candidate gave a 30 second closing statement but I did not rate them.</p>					
<p>Average Rating for Nicole Lucio:</p>					<p>4.15</p>

<p>Rating Candidate Responses given during the City Council Candidate Zoom Forum (hosted by various MV Neighborhood Associations, moderated by Axel Ebermann)</p> <p>Candidate: Janice Duarte (incumbent seeking re-election)</p> <p>Introductory Remarks</p>					
Quotes from the Candidate	<p>Minute 4:58 "So some of my top priorities include: 1) implementing a technology solution to track the legislative process from beginning to end, 2) jumpstart a Comprehensive Plan with the new Census 2020 data that will become available this fall, and 3) continue to work hand-in-hand with our commissioners and hardworking staff to address some of our biggest challenges like our sewer infrastructure, and paving our roads. So I believe I brought a professional temperament, ability, and solution-oriented approach to the City Council, so I humbly ask for your vote on June 22nd."</p>				
My Comments	<p>This was a strong opening. Ms. Duarte started by noting her community roots, education, work experience, and "firsts" (first in family to go to college; first and only Portuguese woman elected to office in NYS), before listing her priorities (as a numbered list, which is highly favorable to me) and noting a few of the qualities that will make her effective.</p>				
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
<p>Question 1: Assuming that the city is receiving 42 million dollars in pandemic relief, what would be your funding priorities?</p>					
Quotes from the Candidate	<p>Minute 28:02 "I agree that our sewer infrastructure is an important priority given that we have the federal government, the federal justice system, and a consent order with the EPA and the DEC those are all items that we need to address as a high priority. We've been behind the schedule because of delays in our financial....in our fiscal payments, fiscal policies that we've dealing with, and so being able to put investment behind that is important. And I also agree that we need to - to the extend that we are able to given the requirements of these funds- to address our outstanding CBA or union agreements with our labor.</p>				
My Comments	<p>I thought this was a very good response. Ms. Duarte started by discussing the structure and broad requirements of the stimulus, got to the heart of the matter quickly (the sewers), and ended with a nod to the importance of fulfilling obligations via union agreements.</p>				
	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable

My Rating:	5			
Question 2: What is your stand on new "high density" residential development before the city has a Comprehensive Plan and has updated it's aging infrastructure such as the sewer system?				
Quotes from the Candidate	Minute 35:35 "The Comprehensive Plan is an important priority and given that we have the 2020 census data becoming available this fall, we're ripe for jumpstarting this process right now. So, whether we fund the Comprehensive Plan with the American Rescue funds, or we fund it in our 2022 budget, it has to be a priority."			
My Comments	What was missing from this answer is a direct response to the question about "high density" residential development occurring before the Comprehensive Plan. That's an important oversight on Ms. Duarte's part. If the question was specifically about the Comprehensive Plan, I would have rated this response "Most Favorable".			
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable
My Rating:	4			
Question 3: What would you do to stimulate business and industrial development in the City of Mount Vernon?				
Quotes from the Candidate	Minute 53:46 "I agree [with Ed Poteat] because the industrial businesses or manufacturing that still exist and still deserve to be supported, also have higher paying jobs. So if we're going to not just support the economy but also support our residents that can potentially get higher paying jobs locally, we want to be able to do that, so dovetailing those 2 initiatives and achieving those 2 goals are key. And that is why, again, if we are going to go back to the Comprehensive Plan, the Comprehensive Plan is going to be able to allow us to look at the data and look at the areas where we have the most potential to support and curate, essentially curate, the businesses and the industry that we want to see here in our community. Pushing out manufacturing, pushing out industrial development is not the answer. We need to encourage more of it here.			
My Comments	Ms. Duarte did an excellent job picking up where Mr. Poteat left off. Support existing manufacturing, "curate" it, build upon it, create access for residents to higher paying local jobs. All spot on ideas. But how? Where will the money for this come from? I give Ms. Duarte high marks for the idea but, at this point, particularly given her background, I expect more details on an executable plan.			

	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
My Rating:				4.5	
<p>Question 4: You voted for re-routing COVID relief funds to the city's water department, despite the troublesome history of that department, and despite a negative auditor report from January 2021. What was your reasoning behind this?</p>					
Quotes from the Candidate	<p>Minute 1:06:28 "The city's very concerned about the office of the comptroller's ability to receive these funds (if she would receive them at all), as well as appropriate them according to the requirements that the federal government has conditioned these funds with. That's one. Two, the City Council, based on the state comptroller's audit from last year, the City Council sets financial policy and it is our obligation to ensure that we secure those funds for the benefit of the community. That's two. Three, the Water Department that exists today is not the Water Department of 2 years ago, and I credit that with Mr. Andre Wallace who appointed Carlton Spruill Commissioner of the Board of Water Supply, with a mandate to clean up and improve that department, which he has."</p>				
My Comments	<p>I understand Ms. Duarte's rationale and I think her intentions are good. But I have serious issues with the process that led to this decision and the decision itself. First, the City Council had the audit noted above before it made this decision but they did not release it to the public. With respect to transparency, that was a serious error. It gives the impression that the City Council wanted to keep that audit from the public. For Ms. Duarte to say now that they want to be "fully transparent to the public" really bothers me. Second, according to the audit report, as of January 2021 the Board of Water Supply was still in the process of rectifying system deficiencies; we have no independent verification regarding the status of these deficiencies. Without independent verification, the public is being asked to simply trust what we are being told about the system, which is something that I, for one, am not comfortable doing at this point in time. Third, we will be sending money to the Board of Water Supply that has nothing to do with its mandate, in amounts that far exceed what it deals with annually. That is a recipe for trouble.</p>				
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
		2			
<p>Each candidate gave a 30 second closing statement but I did not rate them.</p>					
<p>Average Rating for Janice Duarte:</p>					<p>4.1</p>

Rating Candidate Responses given during the City Council Candidate Zoom Forum (hosted by various MV Neighborhood Associations, moderated by Axel Ebermann)			
Candidate: Andre Wallace			
Introductory Remarks			
Quotes from the Candidate	<p>Minute 15:13 "We are at a critical juncture right now and I absolutely believe that there is no time for on the job training- there is simply too much important priorities that need to be attended to, and if elected to City Council I'll pick up where I left off in 2019 by working with everybody to restore our bond rating, to push the necessary changes for the Charter, to work with the Mayor and other elected officials to revitalize the investment in our city, but also to have a Comprehensive Master Plan in place and most important help to restore the needed sanity and fiscal responsibility back in the budget because we went away from that and I think we are in dire straights right now, even the State Comptroller has said the same thing. I honestly believe Mount Vernon's best days are ahead of us but we're going to have to work altogether, there's no one person that's going to do this and make it happen. As your City Councilman I promise to be true to your values and principles, and I'm committed to changing Mount Vernon for the better. This is who I am."</p>		
My Comments	<p>Mr. Wallace started off a bit doom and gloom, but he ended on a positive note. He also mentioned several specifics such as restoring the bond rating, a Comprehensive Master Plan, and changes to the Charter, although he didn't say what those changes would be. Overall, I thought this was a good opening statement, just a little long.</p>		
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral
			Favorable
			Most Favorable
			4.5
Question 1: Assuming that the city is receiving 42 million dollars in pandemic relief, what would be your funding priorities?			

<p>Quotes from the Candidate</p>	<p>Minute 22:36 "With that \$42million we definitely do have to put some of that money into our infrastructure. We're going to have to fix our crumbling sewer systems to avoid the continuous fines from the EPA that we're getting right now. So we have to solve those problems. We also not only have to do our sewer systems we have to put some money into our fresh water system that's dumping the raw sewage into the Hutchinson River and the Bronx River so we have to work on that too. We also have to re-assess our tax base in all of the whole of Mount Veron. We need to spend that million dollars to re-assess the tax base because there are some people that are paying thousands of dollars more than big companies that are located here. Minute 23:30 "We also need to make sure that our senior programs and our programs for our youth are funded in ways that we can make sure that we keep these children off of our streets and get them into some programs that'll keep them occupied.</p>				
<p>My Comments</p>	<p>I thought this was a solid answer. Mr. Wallace delved into the complex and important issue of tax assessing, which is something we haven't heard about during this campaign. In spirit I agree with Mr. Wallace about beefing up funding of our Senior and Youth Programs, but I'm not sure that using stimulus money is the right way to do it.</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
<p>4.5</p>					
<p>Question 2: What is your stand on new "high density" residential development before the city has a Comprehensive Plan and has updated it's aging infrastructure such as the sewer system?</p>					
<p>Quotes from the Candidate</p>	<p>Minute 39:18 "I believe right now we have enough development, at the moment. I think we need to wait for the Comprehensive Plan, because we need to know where everything is going to be charted out, especially the amount of children that we are putting into the schools that are already overcrowded, they can't hold any more children. The problem we have also with building without this Comprehensive Plan is that we open up the door for more people to come in with some of these low income and affordable housing from other communities that are pushed out from other communities and put into Mount Vernon. Mount Vernon has its fair share of all of this low income housing and all of this stuff already. Minute 40:27 "We just continue to try to stuff everything in here which is not a good plan, especially with a crumbling sewer system."</p>				

My Comments	<p>Mr. Wallace addressed the question directly and he gave a clear position, which is good. I think his strongest argument for holding off on development is the tenuous nature of our sewers and roads. However, the idea that the schools are "overcrowded" is not supported by the data - enrollment has decreased by nearly 10% in the last 5 years (from 8096 to 7326). In fact, population decline in general is a more serious threat than overcrowding. In other words, we need people to move to Mount Vernon. Also, I'm not entirely comfortable with Mr. Wallace's stance on low income housing. I do think we need a range of housing options, but I also think if people are being "pushed out" of other communities, that's a stain on those communities. For us to close our doors makes us no better. (https://data.nysed.gov/archive.php?instid=800000035289)</p>			
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Most Favorable
	3.5			
Question 3: What would you do to stimulate business and industrial development in the City of Mount Vernon?				
Quotes from the Candidate	<p>Minute 1:01:42 "Ok here's the problem that we have and the reason why I've been screaming about this Comprehensive Plan for over 10 years. We have gone into a place right now where we have take away a lot of our commercial base, and not only that we've re-zoned it and replaced it with where you can now do residential to put in these low income and high rise buildings." Minute 1:03:01 "We need to focus on our commercial industry, and we need to get down to targeting that specifically, very strongly, very fast, or we're going to have a lot of problems."</p>			
My Comments	<p>A couple of things: 1) I went back and reviewed my notes from the Mayoral forum at Grace Baptist Church from the spring of 2019. It was attended by Mr. Wallace, Ms. Patterson-Howard, Mr. Isley, and Mr. Thomas. That forum would have been the perfect place for Mr. Wallace to emphasize the importance of a Comprehensive Plan. He never mentioned it. In fact, none of the candidates did. 2) Mr. Wallace never told us how he would stimulate business and industrial development, he just complained about the past and present.</p>			
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Most Favorable
	2			
Question 4: While Mayor you allowed the abuse of our land use process. How can the public trust you to do better if you're re-elected to the City Council? Specifically talking about 1 Bradford.				

<p>Quotes from the Candidate</p>	<p>Minute 1:12:00 "Yes, they did abuse it but I didn't allow them to abuse it. Ok, what we did was I met with them in my office several times to get the building up and going. I also had them go before the Council to show the Council the plan as well. The Council liked the plan, we all liked the plan, and they moved forward with certain things to get things done. But what they ended up doing was changing everything that they said. They weren't supposed to close the wall, they were supposed to cut certain trees, they definitely weren't supposed to build any garage and fix all this stuff- these are things I didn't know, and these are things that they did after also I left office and then [they] told the new administration that I gave them permission to do that, which was never true. Minute 1:13:14 "And yes, it may look like, you know, because they said I gave them permission- never happened. There's nothing in writing, nothing ever happened."</p>				
<p>My Comments</p>	<p>This sounds like a reasonable explanation of events to me and as far as I know there is no evidence to contradict what Mr. Wallace is saying. This does illustrate the importance of documenting all meetings that take place with anybody doing business with the city.</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
<p>Each candidate gave a 30 second closing statement but I did not rate them.</p>					
<p>Average Rating Andre Wallace:</p>					<p>3.7</p>

<p>Rating Candidate Responses given during the City Council Candidate Zoom Forum (hosted by various MV Neighborhood Associations, moderated by Axel Ebermann)</p>					
<p>Candidate: Danielle Browne</p>					
<p>Introductory Remarks</p>					
<p>Quotes from the Candidate</p>	<p>Minute 18:12 "I'm running because I believe that we need emotional intelligence on the council, and we also need people who know how to work together for the greater good of Mount Vernon versus themselves. That's why I chose to run with Cathlin Gleason, and Ed Poteat because we are a team of qualified candidates that really believe in the good of Mount Vernon."</p>				
<p>My Comments</p>	<p>Ms. Browne started by noting roots in the city, her education and work experience (including a leadership role on the Police Reform Commission), all of which represent a solid foundation for elected service in the city. As far as why Ms. Browne is running, she was short on specifics; emotional intelligence is fine, and so is believing in Mount Vernon, but I'm really interested in details at this point, not platitudes. Also, I view the constant mentioning of the Mount Venon Forward slate as unfavorable.</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
<p>Question 1: Assuming that the city is receiving 42 million dollars in pandemic relief, what would be your funding priorities?</p>					
<p>Quotes from the Candidate</p>	<p>Minute 24:21 "Definitely invest in our Comprehensive Plan, fixing our infrastructure, investing in enforcement officers- a lot of the issues we are having are quality of life issues and we need people to actually enforce the legislation that we have on the books so that Mount Vernon is a better city for everyone." Minute 24:58 "We also need a technology upgrade; we are completely behind on the times when it comes to technology and finding out what's going on in city hall, what legislation was passed, how you find a deed, who owns what property. So we need to be able to upgrade some of those things as well. Also, youth programs. I grew up playing basketball here in Mount Vernon when I was going to school there was a ton for us to do. It's not the same for kids now, so we also need to invest in those programs and it doesn't just need to be sports it needs to be creative arts, it needs to be entrepreneurship, things that they're invested in, that they care about."</p>				

<p>My Comments</p>	<p>One gets the sense that Ms. Browne is brimming over with ideas. One thing I'd like to hear is a break down by percent allocated to each initiative. For example, 2% enforcement officers 2% Comprehensive Plan, 3% Youth Programs, 10% technology upgrades, 50% infrastructure, and so on. It is time to hear specifics. Also, I'm not convinced that things that involve permanent commitments to staffing (e.g., enforcement officers, and youth programs), should be funded via this stimulus money.</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
<p>4</p>					
<p>Question 2: What is your stand on new "high density" residential development before the city has a Comprehensive Plan and has updated it's aging infrastructure such as the sewer system?</p> <p>Minute 46:14 "So I agree with Ed and Cathlin. We can't put a moratorium on development here in the city but I think there are some things we can do in the interim until we get that Comprehensive Plan because the Comprehensive Plan is essential, and upgrading our sewer system is essential. What we could do is bring in consultants before we have the Comprehensive Plan completed to take a look at best practices in other cities as well as to see whether or not that particular development is good for this city and is in the right place for the city. So we don't need to have the Comprehensive Plan completed by that point to have consultants come in and give advice on whether or not that is something that's beneficial for the city. Like Cathlin said, we also need to require more from our developers. If you're going to come in and your'e going to put a lot of pressure on our sewer systems, well you need to replace a portion of that sewer system, you need to be responsible for that sewer system. Not only should you be responsible for that portion of the sewer system but you should also be responsible for the cost that you're going to bring to the city- so if that's more policemen, more firemen, well that's something you also have to fit the cost for, fit the bill for because the city isn't demanding enough from developers, we kind of give away the farm and we need to stop doing that."</p> <p>Quotes from the Candidate</p>					

<p>My Comments</p>	<p>Is the Comprehensive Plan "essential" or not? If it's essential, that means, by definition, that it is necessary in order for "high density" residential development to move forward. But after Ms. Browne said the Comprehensive Plan was "essential", she went on to undermine the need for it at all. If we can hire consultants and stipulate all of the things that Ms. Browne listed as required in order for us to grant permission for new development, why have a Comprehensive Plan at all? Also, it's not clear what it means to have developers pick up the cost for service personnel such as police and fire. For how long? One year's salary? Five years? I think developers will balk at that arrangement and rightly so. The idea is that new development expands our tax base, and through that expansion we generate more revenue, which allows us to afford more services (like fire, and police). Finally, I find the "I agree with Ed and Cathlin" statement unfavorable.</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
<p>2</p>					
<p>Question 3: What would you do to stimulate business and industrial development in the City of Mount Vernon?</p>					
<p>Quotes from the Candidate</p>	<p>Minute 56:25 "I agree with what Ed said earlier, but I also think that part of the problem why we haven't been able to stimulate business is the lack of leadership we've had at city hall. Many people just don't want to do business with Mount Vernon. So we have to change the culture of city hall so that people actually want to interact with us and want to come to the city. Another thing that I think we need to do is start to enforce- like I said earlier- some business owners, some landlords just keep their property in any shape. Well, if you're a new business coming to the city, that is hard for you and you don't want to come into the city so we need to start enforcing some of our ordinances. I think that will start to attract new businesses to the city. Another thing that we can do is once we complete the Comprehensive Plan we'll be able to identify where we're going to put certain things - where our commercial district is, where our hospitality district is, where our entertainment district is, and once we have a vision we can then recruit people to the city and have them operate in those areas. I say it all the time, Mount Vernon used to be the 'it city' - we have to actually have a plan and a vision so that people can buy into that plan and that vision, and that way we will start to stimulate business."</p>				

My Comments	OK 3 ideas are presented by Ms. Browne: 1) improve leadership/change the culture at city hall so people want to do business with the city, 2) enforce existing ordinances that relate to property maintenance, and 3) Use the Comprehensive Plan to recruit new businesses. #2 is something that can be enacted upon immediately but it's not clear that this in itself will stimulate significant business and industrial development. #1 needs more detail. For example, what exactly will you do to change the culture at city hall? #3 might be a good recruiting tool when it's done, but that won't be until sometime in 2023 if not later.			
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral 3.5	Favorable Most Favorable
Question 4: If elected how will you maintain your independent judgement on zoning and development matters when your campaign has been prominently conducted and supported by well-known developers?				
Quotes from the Candidate	Minute 1:13:53 "My integrity speaks for itself. My campaign has been supported by developers, it's been supported by business people, it's been supported by regular citizens; it's not just developers. Minute 1:14:27 "Also, I'm an attorney so I'm held to a higher ethical standard so all the under the table deals that other people are able to accept that's not something that I'm willing to do because I'm not willing to jeopardize my license and I don't believe in doing such things. That's actually why I'm running because I feel like Mount Vernon has been plagued by corruption in so many ways and we need to change that."			
My Comments	I reject Ms. Browne's assertion that lawyers are somehow held to a higher ethical standard than non-lawyers. The city's last corporate council (Lawrence Porcari) was convicted of diverting hundreds of thousands of dollars from the Board of Water Supply to pay for outside lawyers to defend former Mayor Richard Thomas. There is a whole class of jokes just for lawyers for a reason. Other than that, this response was fine.			
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral 4	Favorable Most Favorable
Each candidate gave a 30 second closing statement but I did not rate them.				
Average Rating for Danielle Brown				3.4

<p>Rating Candidate Responses given during the City Council Candidate Zoom Forum (hosted by various MV Neighborhood Associations, moderated by Axel Ebermann)</p>					
<p style="text-align: center;">Candidate: Delia Farquharson (incumbent seeking re-election)</p>					
<p>Introductory Remarks</p>					
<p>Quotes from the Candidate</p>	<p>Minute 6:58 "My focus on the City Council has been transparency, representing with integrity the will of the community. It is most important that we understand that the power resides [inaudible but probably "with the community"?. For that reason I've worked to serve this community in my capacity as City Council Member. I am pleased to offer my service, my record of service, for your consideration for re-election. I will defend everything that I've done because all the legislation that I've proffered has received practically unanimous support from all the City council members. That demonstrates my willingness to work for the good of this community."</p>				
<p>My Comments</p>	<p>Ms. Farquharson described herself as a "servant-leader" in our community and listed her role on various school committees, her service as an elected school board trustee, and her time on the City Council. It would have been helpful for Ms. Farquharson to have listed a couple of specific legislative achievements, and to preview what she hopes to achieve if re-elected.</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
<p>4</p>					
<p>Question 1: Assuming that the city is receiving 42 million dollars in pandemic relief, what would be your funding priorities?</p>					
<p>Quotes from the Candidate</p>	<p>Minute 29:47 "Of course we must address the public infrastructure, the problems with our roads and sewers, and I want to say that we must put the money into something that will be sustainable. So I think it's really important that something that is encouraged by the American Rescue Plan is that we must invest money in our small businesses. It is the hub of the economy, and here in Mount Vernon we must be deliberate in investing in our small businesses so that we can see that money regenerate results for us. That's really crucial.</p>				
<p>My Comments</p>	<p>Ms. Farquharson opened by discussing the need to take care of city workers, public health & safety, and the ongoing and growing need for housing assistance. She also noted the importance of having public input in the allocation process. Most significantly, Ms. Farquharson called for investment in small businesses. No other candidate mentioned this.</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
<p>4.5</p>					

Question 2: What is your stand on new "high density" residential development before the city has a Comprehensive Plan and has updated it's aging infrastructure such as the sewer system?					
Quotes from the Candidate	<p>Minute 33:29 "So my position is demonstrated by my vote, and that is that I vote against the development of high rise buildings at this time because our infrastructure is not able to sustain that." Minute 34:00 "So we need to be all asking ourselves, Why has the Comprehensive Plan not gotten completed? What is the reason for that? Why have we not been able to put the effort that is required to complete this plan so that we know what we want our city to look like, where we want developments to be, where our business districts will be located, what are the services, where the green spaces are going to be located, those are the things that need to be answered by a Comprehensive Plan and that has failed for not just this cycle of city council but previous many cycles, and I think that that has been intentional, it has been deliberate because how difficult can it be? We've funded other things, we just need to put effort into making sure that a Comprehensive Plan is done before we decide that we want to put 30 stories, or 25 stories or however many stories we want."</p>				
My Comments	<p>I have a couple of issues with this answer. First, I don't like when politicians float conspiracy theories without offering specifics. It's distracting. Second, for all of Ms. Farquharson's protests, piecemeal development has continued throughout her time as an elected official. So with respect to building in the city and the development of a Comprehensive Plan, Ms. Farquharson has either been ineffective or the role of the City Council is de minimis and we shouldn't even bother discussing it because they have no control over such matters.</p>				
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
		2.5			
Question 3: What would you do to stimulate business and industrial development in the City of Mount Vernon?					
Quotes from the Candidate	<p>Minute 58:32 "I think completing the Comprehensive Plan will give us a sound sense of what we have and what we have to offer. The need exists right now for manufacturing, for other industries that are developing that are more sustainable fields, and I think we have the opportunity as such a prime located city to market the resources that we have. But again, we must complete the Comprehensive Plan, and there must be intentionality brought to the fact that we've been shortchanging ourselves as a city because the narrative that's out there about us is a negative narrative. We are missing the fact that we have so many strengths, so many resources that can be used to build the economy of this city and so that's what it's going to take."</p>				

My Comments	Ms. Farquharson give no actionable ideas in this response.			
	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable
My Rating:	2			
Question 4: Your independence is evident. However, we have not seen where you gather consensus. Have you thought about changing your approach to be more effective in terms of building consensus with the other Council Members?				
Quotes from the Candidate	<p>Minute 1:09:56 "Again, I bring your attention to the legislations that I've passed. In all of the legislations that I've passed, I have gathered the support of all- most if not all- of the City Council. So I think that demonstrates consensus." Minute 1:11:15 "I pride myself on asking questions that others don't consider, and so we cannot have that because the best interests of the community must be represented at all times and that only comes from asking crucial questions that others may not consider."</p>			
My Comments	<p>If is frustrating when candidates talk about their accomplishments but give no specifics, and they don't make the information easily available to voters. Ms. Farquharson could easily have a list on her campaign website of her legislation accomplishments and a link to the Article 78 she referenced, but the information is not there. Also, asking the right questions is important but it is not enough. Questions help identify and clarify problems but they don't solve those problems.</p>			
	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable
My Rating:	3			
Each candidate gave a 30 second closing statement but I did not rate them.				
Average Rating Delia Farquharson:				3.2

Rating Candidate Responses given during the City Council Candidate Zoom Forum (hosted by various MV Neighborhood Associations, moderated by Axel Ebermann)			
Candidate: Cathlin Gleason			
Introductory Remarks			
Quotes from the Candidate	<p>Minute 9:14 "What I would like to do going forward, becoming a City Council member is very important to me. I've been involved in the Mount Vernon Community since I was about 13 years old. I served as the 2nd vice chair of the Mount Vernon Democratic Party for many years. I also am the past vice president of the Youth Community Outreach Program, which is Y-COP, which is striving [thriving?] right now. [inaudible, but something about involvement w/the Fleetwood Neighborhood Association, maybe?] on the board there. So in moving Mount Vernon forward what do we have to do? We have to collaborate between city departments, we have to support city departments, we are not rubber stamps for anybody. I'm running along with Danielle Browne and Ed Poteat.</p>		
My Comments	<p>Ms. Gleason started by giving her reason for seeking a City Council seat: frustration. She then listed her community involvement (e.g., MV Public Library, Planning Dept, soup kitchen), then it sounded like she was about to list some of the things she'd like to accomplish if elected, but aside from saying "we have to collaborate between departments", and "we have to support city departments", she didn't offer any specifics. She did note her political alliance with Danielle Browne and Ed Poteat (the "Mount Vernon Forward" slate), which is something we have heard in the past and will continue to hear from these 3 candidates. In my view, this is unfavorable.</p>		
My Rating:	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral
			3
<p>Question 1: Assuming that the city is receiving 42 million dollars in pandemic relief, what would be your funding priorities?</p>			

<p>Quotes from the Candidate</p>	<p>Minute 31:10 "We definitely have to fund a Comprehensive Plan, we have to invest in the infrastructure, the sewers, the paving, the quality of life, cleaner streets. One of the biggest things that I will be championing as a City Council person is the investment in our fire houses and the equipment that DPW, the police department and the fire department are dealing with right now. Right now the fire houses, if they were owned privately, they would be condemned; they're in poor shape, and we ask our firemen to run into fires to save our lives yet their risking their lives just going into the firehouse sleeping at night. We have police cars that are outdated. We need to invest in our police cars. We need to also make sure that the audits are done so that we can build our bond rating so that we can make sure that we can go out for capital projects bonds. Our buildings department is one of the largest revenue getters for the City of Mount Vernon. We have to digitize it, bring better technology into the buildings department because if we do not have that we do not have extra money coming in to offset the tax base. Also, we absolutely have to empower our IDA; we have to make sure that the IDA is actually doing what they need to be doing to help small business because our tax revenue was the only revenue for the city through the pandemic and it did not suffer, it maintained."</p>				
<p>My Comments</p>	<p>This is a good list. At this point, some numbers would be helpful. For example, according to PBA President Nicholas Mastrogiorgio, 10 new police cars would be a game changer for the city. Conservatively, that's about \$500k. How much will it cost to renovate the fire houses? How much for DPW equipment? Even some rough cost estimates would help transform Ms. Gleason's wishlist into a plan that is quickly actionable.</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
<p>Question 2: What is your stand on new "high density" residential development before the city has a Comprehensive Plan and has updated it's aging infrastructure such as the sewer system?</p>					
<p>Quotes from the Candidate</p>	<p>Minute 45:22 "I do not agree with putting a moratorium on development. Why do I not agree? I think it will cripple the city, and it will cripple the city to the point where we can't stop development for 2 years, it won't be good for the taxpayers here in the City of Mount Vernon. Also, what the Planning Board has been requiring for large developments, any development- even if it's a 1 family house- we've been making these developers (which is something we had not been doing in the past), one of our priorities has been to scope the sewer system in front of any project and it's not just the 10 feet in front of the project, it goes East, West, North, and South. Wherever the hub is [inaudible] we've been requiring the developer to replace it."</p>				

<p>My Comments</p>	<p>What would be the cost to taxpayers of holding off on new "high density" residential development until we have a Comprehensive Plan? For me, it's not enough to say "I think it will cripple the city". Will it "cripple" the city? It's an empirical question that deserves an empirical answer. Also, Ms. Gleason has been on the Planning Board for years. She noted that the Board has been requiring developers to contribute to the care of the sewer system as part of the development process, but since when is not clear, and as far as I'm aware this is not a formal policy, which means it's vulnerable to being applied inconsistently. Furthermore, Ms. Gleason said that this practice of requiring developers to attend to the sewers was "something we had not been doing in the past". I'd like to know why this wasn't done in the past? Perhaps if it had been standard practice all along the sewer system wouldn't be in such sad shape right now.</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
<p>2</p>					
<p>Question 3: What would you do to stimulate business and industrial development in the City of Mount Vernon?</p>					
<p>Quotes from the Candidate</p>	<p>Minute 1:03:38 "#1 we need to invest in marketing the city better. You see back in the 80s and 90s, Yonkers was constantly in the newspaper. We need to start insulating Mount Vernon a little bit better and start promoting what's great about Mount Vernon. When we promote what's great about Mount Vernon, people are going to want to come to Mount Vernon. Also, we need to invest in our Chamber of Commerce and make sure that our Chamber of Commerce is the liason between the Industrial Development Agency and our small businesses here in the City of Mount Vernon. Minute 1:04:18 "Ordinance enforcement. That's very important. We need to create a standard here for the City of Mount Vernon and make sure that it's enforced. Walking down 4th avenue, 3rd street, Sanford Boulevard, we're talking to the store owners and, you know, we're cleaning up in front of their stores. We can't have that. We have to maintain cleanliness here in the City of Mount Vernon to make sure that businesses want to come to the City of Mount Vernon."</p>				
<p>My Comments</p>	<p>I didn't find this to be a very substantive response. "Insulating" the City is a euphamism for downplaying, sidestepping, or papering over (with marketing material, for example) problems that do, in fact, exist. For example, the first thing people experience when they drive into the city is bad roads- that leaves an impression on visitors that marketing materials cannot overcome. Yes, enforcing ordinances related to cleanliness is important and yes, the Chamber of Commerce can be an important catalyst for change.</p>				
<p>My Rating:</p>	<p>Most Unfavorable</p>	<p>Unfavorable</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>Favorable</p>	<p>Most Favorable</p>
<p>3.5</p>					

<p>Question 4: You are on the library board and there are several issues of concern right now: the finances seem to be in shambles, the board hired a director with a poor previous employment record and a city council member was given a part-time accounting contract. If elected to the City Council, what is your plan to achieve a better outcome over there in that body?</p>					
<p>Minute 1:16:15 "Myself being the finance chair of the Mount Vernon Public Library, I was able to identify some deficiencies in reports that were being given to the board, in turn we were able to -unfortunately during COVID the treasurer of the library went out sick- we needed to get a budget together quickly, and we needed somebody who understood it and could guide us through it and that was the sitting City Council Person [Marcus A. Griffith] he came in, took over, did an excellent job putting it together and being able to get it out to the public quickly. I've often done at least in my opinion a great job of identifying deficiencies there. Being on the City Council I will do the same thing. I mean I have a finance background I run a financial department in a retail operation in New Rochelle, and I've been working there for 18 years running million dollar budgets. I think that my experience with my father being the past Fire Commissioner of the City of Mount Vernon, sitting down with him and going over the budget every year: I think I'm one of the few people who knows it well outside of some of the council people who have sat on the finance committee and done oversight with the Comptroller's Office and the budget that the Mayor presents."</p>					
<p>Quotes from the Candidate</p>					
<p>My Comments</p>					
<p>It's a shame that Ms. Gleason didn't take this opportunity to affirm the ethical pledge that she signed. #4 of that pledge is about admitting mistakes. If ever there was a mistake to admit it is the poor fiscal oversight of the Public Library. I urge citizens to look carefully at the history of library's finances during Ms. Gleason's tenure providing oversight. I have written about this and you can find the information at https://mountvernoncitizen.org/blog. Without belaboring the point, I have one additional question: If Ms. Gleason has the fiscal expertise and budgeting ability that she claims to have, why hire Mr. Griffith at all? Why couldn't Ms. Gleason leverage her expertise to resolve the financial deficiencies that she says she discovered and draft the budget? As a member of the board and head of the finance committee, who better to do this than Ms. Gleason?</p>					
Most Unfavorable		Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
1					
<p>My Rating:</p>					
<p>Each candidate gave a 30 second closing statement but I did not rate them.</p>					
<p>Average Rating Cathlin Gleason:</p>				<p>2.7</p>	

City of Mount Vernon, NY
City Council Democratic Primary
Final Favorability Ratings
Please Vote: June 22, 2021

3 Seats up for Election	Raw Score	Percent Favorable
Lucio, Nicole	53	88%
Carter, Lauren	51	85%
Duarte, Janice	43	71%
Farquharson, Delia	41	68%
Wallace, Andre	41	68%
MVForward Slate*	39	65%

*The MVForward slate is Danielle Browne, Cathlin Gleason, and Ed Poteat. Since these candidates have repeatedly insisted that they are lockstep across the board of variables a voter might consider in their decision-making process, on my scorecard they are treated as a single individual. Since we are voting to fill 3 City Council seats, in order to vote for the MVForward slate, it would have to hold top position on my scorecard. Since that is not the case, none of the candidates are a voting option for me.

Percent Favorable: The maximum score including bonus points is 60. A raw score of 60 yields a 100% favorable rating.

Introduction

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The Candidate Scorecard is an orienting device- it is designed to help voters engage their observational, analytical, and critical thinking skills so they can better evaluate a group of candidates competing to secure their votes. It is designed to help voters make informed voting decisions. The hope, of course, is that by making better voting decisions communities will select more effective elected officials. To read more about this, to go mountvernoncitizen.org and read the (awkwardly named) file, "*The merits of using a candidate scorecard to inform voter decision-making (in response to the April 16 candidate forum)*".

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Variables were selected (e.g., candidate temperament, leadership skills, etc.) by reflecting upon those qualities and characteristics that may make for more effective elected official. It's not an exhaustive list by any means, but these variables seem like a reasonable place to start.

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A rating scale (and in this case a 5 point favorability rating scale) is just a way to organize and quantify information so it's easier to make comparisons and decisions. Rating scales are common across virtually every area of our lives. Companies are constantly badgering us to take a few minutes to rate their products; physicians ask us to rate our pain; psychologists ask us to rate our happiness.

"Deductions" and "Bonuses"

The variables assigned to "deductions" and "bonuses" represent customizations to account for things that *I think are important* and that *I want to measure* but do not fit into a 1-5 rating scale. For example, the candidate either did accept the endorsement of the local democratic party or they did not; the candidate either has relevant advanced education or they don't. These are "yes" or "no" variables.

Determining the point value of each "Deduction" or "Bonus"

With the exception of "relevant criminal convictions", I worked within the 5 point rating system to assign deductions/bonuses. In other words, no deduction or bonus is more than 5 points. This was done to limit the impact of any single bonus/deduction to no more than a fraction of the maximum score a candidate could receive.

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Relevant Financial Experience- this may include 1) a business owner or corporate employee with direct responsibility for some or all aspects of financial operations, 2) a financial consultant, 3) a CPA, 4) a fraud investigator, or 5) a government employee with financial oversight functions. If there is no evidence to support higher/lower scores, the candidate will receive a score of 3.

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Endorsements- Endorsements from current/former elected officials, unions, or political parties may increase or decrease a candidate's favorability score. Endorsements from political parties and unions are largely transactional. If a voter's interests are not in alignment with the political interests of the union or the party giving the endorsement, the candidate's favorability score for Endorsements may go down. The baseline score of 3 ("neutral") is given in the absence of compelling evidence of less/more favorable endorsements.

Electability- Current and past elected officials, candidates who have demonstrated electability in other ways (e.g., selected to leadership roles in public commissions and committees), and candidates with party or union endorsements are likely to receive more favorable Electability scores than candidates who have run for elected office in the past but have lost, or candidates about whom there is relatively little public information available. A baseline score of 3 ("neutral") is given in the absence of compelling evidence of less/more favorable endorsements.

Public Policy Goals & Beliefs- a measure of how favorably the voter views the candidate's public policy beliefs and legislative agenda. For example, if the voter is against the use of corporate Payments In Lieu Of Taxes (PILOTS), but the candidate is in favor of the use of PILOTS for industrial development, the voter would likely view this policy belief as "unfavorable". Potentially, there are many policy beliefs and goals in addition to PILOTS that will go be considered in scoring this variable (e.g., social policy, infrastructure, environmental issues, taxes, etc.). The voter should evaluate and weight policies that are important to them. A baseline score of 3 ("neutral") is given in the absence of compelling evidence of less/more favorable Public Policy Goals & Beliefs.

Point Deductions

Democratic Party Endorsement (-1 points). A candidate who accepts an endorsement from the local Democratic Party will receive a 1 point deduction from their final score. This is done to reflect the view that the local Democratic Party serves the narrow interests of it's leadership above the interests of the voting public.

Current Elected Official (-2 points). Given the extreme dysfunction that exists with City of Mount Vernon government, across multiple election cycles, current elected officials running for re-election will receive a 2 point deduction from their final score.

Uses Campaign Distortion/Misinformation Tactics (-4). If a candidate does not *publicly* denounce and discourage his/her supporters from waging proxy social media campaigns using unsubstantiated rumors, unattributed "sources", and false claims against political rivals, the candidate will receive a 4 point deduction from their final score.

Bonus Points

Most Favorable Score in Relevant Financial Experience (3 point bonus). Given the complexity of our current fiscal situation, and the fact that significant new public monies will flow into the city from the federal government, a heavy premium is placed on candidates with the most favorable financial experience. Therefore, a 3 point bonus will be added to their final scores of these candidates.

Relevant Advanced Education (2 point bonus). Advanced education would include post Bachelor's Degree academic training (e.g, Master's Degree, Doctoral Degree), or trade certifications (e.g., in finance, in fraud investigation). Relevance is determined on a case by case basis. For example, a Master's Degree in Art History would not be deemed relevant, but a Law Degree might if the candidate has relevant experience to go along with the advanced degree.

City of Mount Vernon City Council Candidate Scorecard

N Lucio
Final Ratings
6/4/2021

Nicole Lucio City Council	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
	1	2	3	4	5
Temperament					5
Leadership Skills				4	
Honesty & Ethics					5
Adheres to Principles over Politics					5
Relevant Financial Experience					5
Communication Skills					5
Endorsements			3		
Electability				4	
Public Policy Goals & Beliefs				4	
A.M.E. Zion Church Zoom Forum 4.27.21			3.75		
Neighborhood Assoc. Zoom Forum 5.23.21				4.15	
Point Deductions			Bonus Points		
Democratic Party Endorsement		Most Favorable score in Relevant Financial Experience			3
Current Mt. Vernon Elected Official		Relevant advanced education			2
Uses Campaign Distortion/Misinformation Tactics		Total Deductions + Bonus Points			5
				Candidate's Final Score:	52.9
<u>Final Scoring Adjustments</u>					
<u>Public Policy Goals & Beliefs</u> - increase to "Favorable" based on answers given by Ms. Lucio during the various candidate forums held this spring.					
<u>A.M.E. Zion Church Zoom Forum 4.27.21</u> - see full report at mountvernoncitizen.org					
<u>Neighborhood Assoc. Zoom Forum 5.23.21</u> - see full report at mountvernoncitizen.org					

City of Mount Vernon City Council Candidate Scorecard

L Carter
Final Ratings
6/4/2021

Lauren Carter City Council	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
	1	2	3	4	5
Temperament					5
Leadership Skills				4	
Honesty & Ethics					5
Adheres to Principles over Politics					5
Relevant Financial Experience			3		
Communication Skills					5
Endorsements					5
Electability				4.5	
Public Policy Goals & Beliefs					5
A.M.E. Zion Church Zoom Forum 4.27.21				4.13	
Neighborhood Assoc. Zoom Forum 5.23.21				4.65	
Point Deductions			Bonus Points		
Democratic Party Endorsement	-1	Most Favorable score in Relevant Financial Experience			
Current Mt. Vernon Elected Official		Relevant advanced education			2
Uses Campaign Distortion/Misinformation Tactics		Total Deductions + Bonus Points			1
				Candidate's Final Score:	51.3
<u>Final Scoring Adjustments</u>					
<p><u>Adheres to Principles over Politics</u>- Increase to "Most Favorable". There was an issue with a person I consider to be a "campaign proxy" for Ms. Carter engaging in what I considered to be "Distortion/Misinformation Tactics". I reached out to Ms. Carter about this. She reaffirmed her principles and the issue was resolved. I viewed this very positively.</p>					
<p><u>A.M.E. Zion Church Zoom Forum 4.27.21</u>- see full report at mountvernoncitizen.org</p>					
<p><u>Neighborhood Assoc. Zoom Forum 5.23.21</u>- see full report at mountvernoncitizen.org</p>					

City of Mount Vernon City Council Candidate Scorecard

J Duarte
Final Ratings
6/4/2021

Janice Duarte City Council	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
	1	2	3	4	5
Temperament					5
Leadership Skills				4	
Honesty & Ethics					5
Adheres to Principles over Politics				4	
Relevant Financial Experience			3		
Communication Skills					5
Endorsements			3		
Electability					5
Public Policy Goals & Beliefs				4	
A.M.E. Zion Church Zoom Forum 4.27.21			3.5		
Neighborhood Assoc. Zoom Forum 5.23.21				4.1	
Point Deductions			Bonus Points		
Democratic Party Endorsement	-1	Most Favorable score in Relevant Financial Experience			
Current Mt. Vernon Elected Official	-2	Relevant advanced education			
Uses Campaign Distortion/Misinformation Tactics		Total Deductions + Bonus Points		-3	
				Candidate's Final Score:	42.6
<u>Final Scoring Adjustments</u>					
<u>Leadership Skills</u> - Increase to "Favorable" based on observation of how Ms. Duarte has conducted herself in City Council meetings over the last 3 months.					
<u>Adhere to Principles over Politics</u> - Increase to "Favorable". While I don't necessarily agree with all of Ms. Duarte's decision-making, I think her decisions are rooted in a set of principles, which I view as favorable.					
<u>Public Policy Goals & Beliefs</u> - Increase to "Favorable". Although I did not receive responses to the policy questions I asked in April, based on the answers given by Ms. Duarte during the various candidate forums held this spring, I believe there is positive alignment between Ms. Duarte's goals and beliefs and my own.					
<u>A.M.E. Zion Church Zoom Forum 4.27.21</u> - see full report at mountvernoncitizen.org					
<u>Neighborhood Assoc. Zoom Forum 5.23.21</u> - see full report at mountvernoncitizen.org					

City of Mount Vernon City Council Candidate Scorecard

D Farquharson
Final Ratings
6/4/2021

Delia Farquharson City Council	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
	1	2	3	4	5
Temperament				4	
Leadership Skills				4	
Honesty & Ethics					5
Adheres to Principles over Politics					5
Relevant Financial Experience		2			
Communication Skills				4	
Endorsements			3		
Electability				4	
Public Policy Goals & Beliefs			3.5		
A.M.E. Zion Church Zoom Forum 4.27.21			3.25		
Neighborhood Assoc. Zoom Forum 5.23.21			3.2		
Point Deductions			Bonus Points		
Democratic Party Endorsement		Most Favorable score in Relevant Financial Experience			
Current Mt. Vernon Elected Official	-2	Relevant advanced education		2	
Uses Campaign Distortion/Misinformation Tactics		Total Deductions + Bonus Points		0	
					Candidate's Final Score: 40.95
<u>Final Scoring Adjustments</u>					
<u>Temperament and Leadership Skills</u> - Increase to "Favorable" based on observation of how Ms. Farquharson has conducted herself in City Council meetings over the last 3 months.					
<u>Public Policy Goals & Beliefs</u> -Increase to "Neutral" based on answers given during various candidate forums held this spring.					
<u>A.M.E. Zion Church Zoom Forum 4.27.21</u> - see full report at mountvernoncitizen.org					
<u>Neighborhood Assoc. Zoom Forum 5.23.21</u> - see full report at mountvernoncitizen.org					

City of Mount Vernon City Council Candidate Scorecard

A. Wallace
Final Ratings
6/4/2021

Andre Wallace City Council	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
	1	2	3	4	5
Temperament					5
Leadership Skills		2			
Honesty & Ethics					5
Adheres to Principles over Politics		2			
Relevant Financial Experience					5
Communication Skills				4.5	
Endorsements			3		
Electability				4	
Public Policy Goals & Beliefs					5
A.M.E. Zion Church Zoom Forum 4.27.21			3.5		
Neighborhood Assoc. Zoom Forum 5.23.21			3.7		
Point Deductions		Bonus Points			
Democratic Party Endorsement	-1	Most Favorable score in Relevant Financial Experience			3
Current Mt. Vernon Elected Official		Relevant advanced education			
Uses Campaign Distortion/Misinformation Tactics	-4	Total Deductions + Bonus Points			-2
					Candidate's Final Score: 40.7
<u>Final Scoring Adjustments</u>					
<p><u>Uses Campaign Distortion/Misinformation Tactics-</u> There are facebook groups that, in my view, function as social-media proxies for Mr. Wallace. These groups allow and even encourage campaign distortion/misinformation tactics. Mr. Wallace was present on one of these facebook group discussion threads when I called upon an individual who, in my view, was engaged in distortion/misinformation to contribute to the well-being of the city by elevating the level of political discourse. In reply, the individual made a disparaging remark. <i>Mr. Wallace did not step up to discourage the behavior, which I believe, as someone seeking a leadership role in our city government, he had an obligation to do.</i> In early May I contacted a Westchester County Democratic Party Committee Member regarding my concerns (John-Carlo Bautista, informally known as a "District Leader"). I see no evidence that anything has changed in terms of these facebook groups engaging in distortion/misinformation tactics. For these reasons, on my scorecard, Mr. Wallace receives a 4 point deduction.</p>					
<p><u>Leadership-</u> Decrease to "Unfavorable" for failure to manage proxies who engage in negative campaign and misinformation tactics.</p>					
<p><u>A.M.E. Zion Church Zoom Forum 4.27.21-</u> see full report at mountvernoncitizen.org</p>					
<p><u>Neighborhood Assoc. Zoom Forum 5.23.21-</u> see full report at mountvernoncitizen.org</p>					

City of Mount Vernon City Council Candidate Scorecard

MVForward Slate
Final Ratings
6/4/2021

MV Forward Slate* City Council (D. Browne, C. Gleason, E. Poteat)	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
	1	2	3	4	5
Temperament				4.7	
Leadership Skills		2.0			
Honesty & Ethics	1				
Adheres to Principles over Politics	1				
Relevant Financial Experience				4.3	
Communication Skills					5
Endorsements			3		
Electability			3.8		
Public Policy Goals & Beliefs			3.5		
A.M.E. Zion Church Zoom Forum 4.27.21			3.7		
Neighborhood Assoc. Zoom Forum 5.23.21			3.5		
Point Deductions			Bonus Points		
Democratic Party Endorsement			Most Favorable score in Relevant Financial Experience		2
Current Mt. Vernon Elected Official			Relevant advanced education		1.3
Uses Campaign Distortion/Misinformation Tactics			Total Deductions + Bonus Points		3.3
Candidate's Final Score:					38.9
*To determine the score for the slate, individual slate member scores were averaged.					
<u>Final Scoring Adjustments</u>					
<p><u>Leadership Skills, Honesty & Ethics, and Adheres to Principles over Politics</u> Avg. rating decreased due to a) releasing their "Ethics Pledge" without citation of source material and b) failing to own up to the error when it was pointed out to them. In addition, Ms. Gleason has failed to accept responsibility for poor financial oversight of the MV Public Library (she is on the board of trustees and heads the finance committee).</p>					
<p><u>A.M.E. Zion Church Zoom Forum 4.27.21</u>- see full report at mountvernoncitizen.org</p>					
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City of Mount Vernon, NY
City Comptroller Democratic Primary
Final Favorability Ratings Please
Vote: June 22, 2021

	Raw Score	Percent Favorable
Lawrence, Derickson	47	94%
Morton, Darren	40.5	81%
Griffith, Marcus A.	24	48%

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Public Policy Goals & Beliefs- a measure of how favorably the voter views the candidate's public policy beliefs and legislative agenda. For example, if the voter is against the use of corporate Payments In Lieu Of Taxes (PILOTS), but the candidate is in favor of the use of PILOTS for industrial development, the voter would likely view this policy belief as "unfavorable". Potentially, there are many policy beliefs and goals in addition to PILOTS that will go be considered in scoring this variable (e.g., social policy, infrastructure, environmental issues, taxes, etc.). The voter should evaluate and weight policies that are important to them. A baseline score of 3 ("neutral") is given in the absence of compelling evidence of less/more favorable Public Policy Goals & Beliefs.

Point Deductions

Democratic Party Endorsement (-1 points). A candidate who accepts an endorsement from the local Democratic Party will receive a 1 point deduction from their final score. This is done to reflect the view that the local Democratic Party serves the narrow interests of it's leadership above the interests of the voting public.

Current Elected Official (-2 points). Given the extreme dysfunction that exists with City of Mount Vernon government, across multiple election cycles, current elected officials running for re-election will receive a 2 point deduction from their final score.

Uses Campaign Distortion/Misinformation Tactics (-4). If a candidate does not *publicly* denounce and discourage his/her supporters from waging proxy social media campaigns using unsubstantiated rumors, unattributed "sources", and false claims against political rivals, the candidate will receive a 4 point deduction from their final score.

Bonus Points

Most Favorable Score in Relevant Financial Experience (3 point bonus). Given the complexity of our current fiscal situation, and the fact that significant new public monies will flow into the city from the federal government, a heavy premium is placed on candidates with the most favorable financial experience. Therefore, a 3 point bonus will be added to their final scores of these candidates.

Relevant Advanced Education (2 point bonus). Advanced education would include post Bachelor's Degree academic training (e.g, Master's Degree, Doctoral Degree), or trade certifications (e.g., in finance, in fraud investigation). Relevance is determined on a case by case basis. For example, a Master's Degree in Art History would not be deemed relevant, but a Law Degree might if the candidate has relevant experience to go along with the advanced degree.

City of Mount Vernon Comptroller Candidate Scorecard

D Lawrence
Final Rating
6/4/2021

Derickson Lawrence Comptroller	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
	1	2	3	4	5
Temperament					5
Leadership Skills					5
Honesty & Ethics					5
Adheres to Principles over Politics					5
Relevant Financial Experience					5
Communication Skills					5
Endorsements			3		
Electability				4	
Public Policy Goals & Beliefs					5
Point Deductions		Bonus Points			
Democratic Party Endorsement		Most Favorable score in Relevant Financial Experience			3
Current Mt. Vernon Elected Official		Relevant advanced education			2
Uses Campaign Distortion/Misinformation Tactics		Total Deductions + Bonus Points			5
		Candidate's Final Score:			47
Final Rating Adjustments					
No change since rating done on 5.5.21					

City of Mount Vernon Comptroller Candidate Scorecard

D Morton
Final Rating
6/4/2021

Darren Morton Comptroller	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
	1	2	3	4	5
Temperament					5
Leadership Skills					5
Honesty & Ethics					5
Adheres to Principles over Politics				4	
Relevant Financial Experience				4	
Communication Skills				4	
Endorsements			3		
Electability					4.5
Public Policy Goals & Beliefs					5
Point Deductions		Bonus Points			
Democratic Party Endorsement	-1	Most Favorable score in Relevant Financial Experience			
Current Mt. Vernon Elected Official		Relevant advanced education			2
Uses Campaign Distortion/Misinformation Tactics		Total Deductions + Bonus Points			1
		Candidate's Final Score:			40.5
Final Rating Adjustments					
No change since rating done on 5.5.21					

City of Mount Vernon Comptroller Candidate Scorecard

M Griffith
Final Rating
6/4/2021

Marcus A. Griffith Comptroller	Most Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Neutral	Favorable	Most Favorable
	1	2	3	4	5
Temperament			3		
Leadership Skills		2			
Honesty & Ethics					5
Adheres to Principles over Politics				4	
Relevant Financial Experience				4	
Communication Skills					5
Endorsements			3		
Electability		2			
Public Policy Goals & Beliefs			3		
Point Deductions		Bonus Points			
Democratic Party Endorsement		Most Favorable score in Relevant Financial Experience			
Current Mt. Vernon Elected Official	-2	Relevant advanced education			
Uses Campaign Distortion/Misinformation Tactics		Total Deductions + Bonus Points			-2
Candidate's Final Score:					24
Final Rating Adjustments					
<p>Communication Skills- increase to "Most Favorable" based on observing the candidate in several forums over the last 3 months</p>					
<p>Electability- decrease to "Unfavorable". At this point, the odds that Mr. Griffith will be elected to run the city's finances are long.</p>					
<p>Public Policy Goals & Beliefs- increase to "Neutral" based on observing the candidate in several forums over the last 3 months.</p>					

Mount Vernon, NY
Spring 2021 Democratic Primary
City Council and City Comptroller
FINAL THOUGHTS

I found this in my “notes” app:

We pay taxes for the social good. To maintain roads, remove trash, and help fellow citizens in need; to provide police & fire services, to keep clean water flowing to our homes, and to shelter - humanely- stray and discarded animals; to provide a sound education for our children, and to provide many other important social services. Our government is a social services agency that helps to bind us together as a society...as a community.

Our local taxes are an investment in ourselves. When we elect fellow citizens to govern our community, they enter into a social contract with us- and along with us- to help ensure that this investment we make, these taxes we pay, are returned to us in the form of social value. We input taxes...we get out social value. Through our taxes we are purchasing quality of life.

Right now, we are not getting a fair return on our investment. I believe this is because the citizens we have elected to manage our investment have drifted off task. Perhaps they were never interested in the task as I view it. That’s possible. But it seems to me that they have put self-preservation and self-interest above their community. They have broken the social contract, individually and collectively. Habitually. Chronically. And it is deeply disappointing.

I will go to the candidate debate tomorrow night. I hope at least one of the candidates will say something that convinces me that they share my beliefs about their responsibility to convert our tax dollars into social value. My mind is open, but I’m skeptical.

I wrote this in June 2019, the day before my wife and I attended a Mount Vernon Mayoral Candidate Forum at Grace Baptist Churchⁱ.

A lot has changed in the intervening two years. A global health crisis, a fiscal crisis, an infrastructure crisis, a crisis of violence and despair, and a crisis of confidence in ourselves and trust in each other.ⁱⁱ

But my skepticism has not changed, and surprisingly, neither has my open mindedness. In fact, rather than disengaging, my sense of engagement has become heightened. I might be experiencing what psychologists call “self-transcendence”. In a world filled with threats and uncertainty, *actively caring* seems to have become more essential to my well-being.

Over the last 3-months, my active-caring projects have involved feral catsⁱⁱⁱ and local government. With respect to local government, I started looking closely at the finances of our city, to the extent that that is even possible. That led me to looking closely at other “cost centers” around the city, such as the Urban Renewal Agency (URA), the Mount Vernon Public Library (MVPL), the Industrial Development Agency (IDA), and the Board of Water Supply (BOWS).

In addition, I developed a decision-making framework to help me figure out who to vote for in the upcoming Democratic Primary, an important decision given our current level of need.

Thinking that other MV residents might find what I was doing useful or interesting, I set up a .org^{iv} and started uploading the documents I was writing. Since I work full-time, I had to let go of the idea of editing and crafting what I write. That has been a good thing. Part of self-transcendence is the idea of “self-dissolution”. Being forced to work quickly, I let go of being self-conscious or embarrassed and dissolved into the work at hand. Whatever I do, it is good enough.

I have no doubt that what I view as “active-caring” does not feel very much like caring to the candidates I have been scrutinizing. I lose sleep over this. I worry that I come across as just being meanspirited. I don’t intend to be meanspirited and I don’t feel meanspirited when I’m writing. I do believe I have done a poor job communicating the difference between my criticism of “the candidates” and the inherent value and respect I feel for “the people” running for office. *I do value and respect each person running for office and the fact that that does not come through in my writing is a shortcoming of mine.*

Below are a few final comments about the candidates.

CITY COMPTROLLER

Derickson Lawrence. *I will vote for Derickson Lawrence for 4 reasons.*

1. He has a natural science background (undergrad degree from Howard in Electrical Engineering). This may not seem relevant, but it is. There is a methodological rigor that comes along with training in the natural sciences that lends itself well to financial management. We will all benefit from Derickson’s training.
2. He has a strong background in finance and financial auditing. Of course, this is crucially important at this juncture in time for our city.
3. He has a history of building consensus. I have been on several calls with Derickson over the last three months and he always works to build consensus. This is not easy to do, but it is critically important when it comes to governing.
4. Relatively speaking, he is an outsider.

Darren Morton. It is patently obvious that Darren Morton is a good person. It is also patently obvious that he lacks the requisite skills to be in-charge of our finances. Furthermore, it’s patently obviously that those who support and endorse his candidacy do so for purely political reasons. *The message from voters should be that we have had enough of a class of local politicians binding themselves together at the expense of the people they are supposed to serve.*

Marcus A. Griffith. At best, during his decade in office, Mr. Griffith has been unable to do anything other than watch as our city disintegrates financially. Given his “extreme” financial skills, I’m sure he’ll have no problem finding work outside of our government. Thanks for your service and good luck with your future nongovernmental endeavors.

CITY COUNCIL

Nicole Lucio. I will vote for Nicole Lucio. She has excellent credentials, and she has handled herself well throughout the campaign.

Lauren Carter. I will vote for Lauren Carter. I like her quality-of-life agenda, her grad degree in urban planning will serve us well, and her background at the clerk's office should be an asset to the entire City Council team. One question: *Will Ms. Carter be able to make the hard budget decisions?* I believe she will, and I hope we find out.

Janice Duarte. I voted for Ms. Duarte in the last election, and I will vote for her again. Although Ms. Duarte is an incumbent and she seems to align herself with the Local Democratic Party Machine, I think Ms. Duarte should remain in the City Council. She is a stabilizing force, she communicates well, she is technical, and she has good policy ideas. She is a capable elected official. One question: *Given her potential and given our need, will Ms. Duarte step up and lead the City Council?*

Delia Farquharson. I voted for Ms. Farquharson in the last election, but I don't really understand why she is seeking re-election. She says she is a "servant leader", but she reminds us that she does not really need to serve given the demand for her skills in the private sector. And during this recent discussion over our need for a financial oversight board, she lashed out at state officials -*who were trying to help us*- regarding a draft document that she later admitted she did not fully read. I'm sorry but in my view, these are not the words or the deeds of a servant leader.

Andre Wallace. Mr. Wallace has good financial skills that I believe would serve us well. However, he allows his supporters and social media proxies to engage in misinformation campaigns in effort to elevate his status and diminish his rivals. What's more, he has not put an end to this, which indicates that he (at least tacitly) approves of the approach. It is a classic political "win at all costs" mentality. No thank you.

The MV Forward Slate. (Danielle Browne, Cathlin Gleason, and Ed Poteat)

Ad nauseum, this slate told us they are lockstep in agreement. Clearly, this is a political decision. They each bring a base of support – my team votes for you guys, your teams vote for me, and we each get 3x the votes. Whoopee! Nope. Not for me. In addition, these candidates are incapable of admitting mistakes, which runs contrary to their own ethics pledge. Ms. Gleason clearly owes the community an apology for not keeping a closer eye on the MVPL finances, and they all should have apologized for a press release that entailed language taken from a source that they failed to acknowledge. And what a shame this is. Ms. Browne and Mr. Poteat both have the potential to be highly effective elected city officials. My suggestion: when Lisa Copeland's seat becomes available, run again but run alone^v.

ⁱ My wife and I voted for Mayor Patterson-Howard

ⁱⁱ Mayor Patterson-Howard inherited an epic mess. I have great admiration for the work she is trying to do. I expect that she sleeps little and fights back tears often.

ⁱⁱⁱ If you want to hear the details of the feral cat project my wife and I are completing, I can be reached at csmdonough@mac.com

^{iv} <https://mountvernoncitizen.org/blog>

^v Since there will be only 1 seat open, this should be doable.

Elected Official Candidate Commitment

Candidate Name:

Office Seeking:

Municipality: City of Mount Vernon

In exchange for his/her signature on my petition for office, City of Mount Vernon resident

_____ living at _____,
(resident name) (resident address)

asked that I commit to the following principles while campaigning and if elected.

1. I will behave ethically: I will be honest and fair. I will be a model of integrity for the community, particularly for the children living in our community.
2. I will behave with the best interests of the City of Mount Vernon in mind. I will do this even if the interests of the City are not in alignment with my personal best interests.
3. I commit to fiscal transparency. I will work to ensure that detailed **actual** City expenditures are made available to the public at least quarterly. By “detailed” I mean line by line actual expenses for each department and each budget line code in the approved City budget.
4. I am human and I may make mistakes in my elected capacity. If I make mistakes in my elected capacity, I will report them to the public as soon as possible. In addition, I will give my analysis as to how the mistake was made and what actions will be taken to reduce the risk of making the same type of mistake again.
5. I will promote peace, cooperation, well-being, harmony, and fellowship in our City.

Candidate Signature: _____ Date: _____

NOTE: The Candidate should keep this hardcopy. The resident should take a photo of the signed copy for their records.

STATEMENT REGARDING MV FORWARD SLATE'S
PRESS RELEASE REGARDING ETHICS AND TRANSPARENCY

On March 18, 2021, I posted a document I created called "Elected Official Candidate Commitment signature page" to mountvernoncitizen.org, FB and Nextdoor.ⁱ The document espoused 5 principles that were important to me. The idea was simple: if a candidate knocked on my door asking for a petition signature (a requirement to get on the election ballot), I would only consider signing their petition if they signed my Elected Official Candidate Commitment. I invited other voters to use the document as is, or to use it as a template to create their own signature page, one that espouses their principles.

On April 7, 2021, Danielle Browne reached out to me to share that she, Cathlin Gleason and Ed Poteat had signed a version of my Candidate Commitment. She shared their version with me via a google drive link. They used my first, second, fourth and fifth principles, verbatim- word for word. They offered a modified version of my third principle, and they added 3 new principles. I told Ms. Browne that I thought it was great that they signed this Pledge, and that I liked the principles they added (i.e., #s 6,7, and 8).

On May 20, 2021, I found out that on April 8, the day after Danielle Browne and I spoke, the MV Forward Slate issued an online "press release" to the website Medium.com announcing that they were "Leading an effort to bring ethics, courtesy, transparency and commitment" to Mount Vernon politics.ⁱⁱ They posted their Candidate Commitment- including word for word sections taken from mine- without citing authorship.

A few concerns:

1. Had this press release been posted to the MV Forward website and FB Page, I would have seen itⁱⁱⁱ and I would have reached out to them immediately about the lack of acknowledgement of my work. I created the "Candidate Commitment" as a tool to help voters hold candidates accountable. For the MV Forward Slate to take it, repackage it, and put it in a press release without proper citation was an error on their part.
2. I found out about this press release because someone forwarded an e-mail to me in which a MV resident was pitching the MV Forward Slate to some other residents (none of whom I know) and using the press release as evidence of the integrity of the MV Forward Slate. Since the press release didn't acknowledge my work, the residents on the e-mail would have been left with the impression that the Pledge was the original work of the MV Forward Slate.
3. On May 21, I posted a statement about this to a small FB group I set up^{iv}. Bizarrely, Ed Poteat posted this in response: "In all fairness Chris, we made this commitment before your pledge. It's one of the reasons we decided to run together. That's the thing about good ideas. More than one person can have them...lol. But I'm happy you are holding the candidates accountable."

This is bizarre because the right thing for Mr. Poteat to do was to acknowledge the mistake and correct it (by correcting the press release). Instead, Mr. Poteat attempted to frame the error in a positive light for them with "In all fairness...". Fairness to the MV Forward Slate is not the issue. The issue is the unacknowledged use of someone else's work in a press release. The result is that whoever reads that press release will be under the false impression that the content was the original work of the MV Forward Slate, when half of it was someone else's work.

Consider the 1st principle of the MV Forward Pledge. "I will behave ethically: I will be honest and fair. I will be a model for integrity for the community, particularly for the children living in our community." *I wrote this principle*, but the MV Forward Slate did not acknowledge this fact in their press release. That was a mistake that has not been acknowledged or corrected.

The Candidate Commitment that I wrote is an expression of Principles that are important to me. While citation standards can at times be ambiguous, in this case there is no question that in their press release the MV Forward Slate had an obligation to acknowledge that a significant percentage of the content of their Pledge came from another source.

What's so sad to me about this is that this mistake could have been fixed so easily. The MV Forward Slate just had to adhere to Principle #4 of their Pledge: "I am human and I may make mistakes in my elected capacity. If I make mistakes in my elected capacity, I will report them to the public as soon as possible. In addition, I will give my analysis as to how the mistake was made and what actions will be taken to reduce the risk of making the same type of mistake again."

And for the record, I wrote Principle #4, not the MV Forward Slate.



Chris McDonough 6/13/21

ⁱ My Candidate Commitment Signature Page can be viewed here: <https://mountvernoncitizen.org/blog> (scroll down to "Other Files")

ⁱⁱ The MV Forward Press Release can be viewed here: <https://votemvforward.medium.com/news-mount-vernon-forward-team-signs-candidate-commitment-pledge-on-ethics-and-transparency-4f5d0005216a>

ⁱⁱⁱ Since early April, I've been in the habit of intermittently checking candidate websites and FB Pages. There is no question that I would have seen this press release prior to May 20, 2021 had it been posted by the MV Forward Slate.

^{iv} <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1308902019483373/permalink/1371856246521283/>