

City of Franklin, Alderman At-Large Position B

Please tell us about you and your family. What are your qualifications, skills, and experience? Tell us about your faith, your civic involvement about any character traits that will help you be an effective alderman or mayor.

Brandy Blanton

My family: I am a fourth-generation Tennessean, born in Nashville and raised in Franklin since the age of 10-years-old. My husband of 27 years, Mendall, and I have raised our five children in Franklin, who also attended Franklin Special and Williamson County schools, just like me. We are a very close-knit family, (now with 16 people, including six grandchildren), who gather together weekly for Sunday (family) dinner. My family is deeply rooted in Franklin – this is our home; this community is our people. Qualifications/Skills and Experience: I have served as an alderman since 2011 and have gained valuable insight into how things work, and how to get things done. My diverse background compliments this position well. After working for twelve years at a local restaurant, I took my love for my hometown and created Southern Exposure Magazine in 2002, a publication “dedicated to the heart of Williamson County”. I served as publisher for 16 years, sharing the stories of the people and places of our community, which only deepened my knowledge, relationships and love of Williamson County. I am proud to say that SEM is the longest-running publication in WilCo more than 20 years later. Since 2018, I have served as the development director for High Hopes, a 39-year-old nonprofit which predominately serves children with special needs with our inclusive school and pediatric therapy clinic. This organization is very special to me and my family, as they were instrumental in providing services to my first granddaughter, who was born with a rare, terminal form of dwarfism, until her passing at four-years-old. All of my professional experiences have been hyper local and only further deepened my roots and love for my community. I am a proven leader who has sweat equity in this community. I am committed to supporting our citizens and helping them work through the minutiae of government – to problem solve and connect the dots in order to get things done and maintain our quality of life. Faith: My faith is deeply intertwined into the way I

Gary Moore

Christian with a Biblical Worldview, Conservative and proud American. Lead a World Outreach Church small study group. Numerous charities with donations of money, clothing, furniture of all kinds to children, young adults, released prison young adults, foster care and veterans to name a few. My website is live vote4garymoore now and can answer lots of these questions.

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Why are you running?

Brandy Blanton

I am running for re-election because I love serving my community in this role. Having been in this position for the last 12 years, I have valuable insight into how things work and how to get things done. I feel I am an asset to the board, but most of all the citizens of Franklin. Franklin is a wonderful community. It is a great place to raise children. I want to keep it that way.

Gary Moore

Children and young adults and their families are being sexualized due to pride events that should not happen. I will vote no forever to any so called "family-friendly" pride events.

What is your view about the U.S. Constitution and how it should be interpreted?

Brandy Blanton

The Constitution is the blueprint for our democracy. It should be strictly interpreted.

Gary Moore

There should be a course at about the 6th grade and another in high school until they graduate entitled Christian Civics-How the Holy Spirit worked in and thru our forefathers in the most remarkable and revered document, The Constitution.

What does liberty mean to you? How does government influence liberty?

Brandy Blanton

Liberty is the essential cornerstone of our democracy. The Founders of America codified it in the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence. Patrick Henry used his famous "give me liberty or give me death" speech to urge the colonies to fight for independence from England. Over the course of our nation's history, liberty has been the rallying cry behind our country's willingness to fight in conflicts like World War II. Liberty means freedom from unreasonable governmental restrictions on our lives. It is essential to our freedom. The Constitution, as our current Supreme Court has found, guarantees that government cannot unreasonably interfere with our protected freedoms.

Gary Moore

Freedom of speech, religion, and right to bear arms are are subject to too much erroneous thinking.

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What is the primary role of government?

Brandy Blanton

The primary role of government is to serve its citizens. For Franklin City Government that means providing services to ensure that Franklin's residents are safe, that they enjoy a good quality of life, and that services rendered by the city such as water, sewer, wastewater, trash pick-up, fire, police, parks, and traffic control are rendered in an efficient, high-quality matter. In August, the City of Franklin released the results of a City-wide survey of its residents. That survey revealed:

- 97% of Franklin citizens rated the quality of life in Franklin as excellent or good. Compared to national benchmarks, Franklin ranked 7th in the nation for quality of life
- 89% of Franklin citizens rated the overall quality of City services as excellent or good
- 93% of Franklin citizens rated Franklin as excellent or good as a place to live
- 95% of Franklin citizens rated the overall feeling of safety in Franklin as excellent or good. And 99% of Franklin citizens rated their overall feeling of safety in their own neighborhood as excellent or good

These survey results are simply off the chart. Franklin citizens believe Franklin's government is serving its citizens. I pledge to continue to make sure our local government renders high quality services to all of our residents.

Gary Moore

To oversee the rights of its citizens thru the constitution. To protect its citizens against war and terrorism. To provide assistance to our widowed, orphaned, elderly, veterans, foster care, adoption, juvenile delinquents, released persons from jail, drug/alcohol related problems--u get the picture--helping people help themselves---not handouts.

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What are the three most critical issues facing Franklin today and how would you propose that Franklin address each issue?

Brandy Blanton

A. Maintaining a Balanced Budget and Keeping Taxes Low. These are very important issues to me. During my past tenure as Alderman, I have always voted for a balanced budget. Out-of-pocket spending on behalf of the citizens of Franklin should never exceed the revenue we are receiving. Similarly, I have kept my promises to keep taxes low. Taxes were not raised in this year's current budget. I will continue to support only "balanced budgets." I will continue to stand for low taxes. B. Maintaining High Quality City Services and Maintaining a High Quality of Life for Franklin's Citizens. This is one of the most important reasons that local government exists. During the time that I have been an Alderman, I have supported a variety of initiatives focused on maintaining high quality city services. First, I supported and worked on many transportation-related issues. Although the work on the extension of Mack Hatcher began long before I joined BOMA, I was on the board as we worked with TDOT to complete the Mack Hatcher extension. I celebrated as we drove over the new bridge from Hillsboro Road towards Westhaven, a bridge I was instrumental in having named after my dear friend, the late State Representative Charles M. Sargent. I approved, along with BOMA, the road widening, sidewalks, and streetlamps running from Downtown to Harlinsdale, Franklin Road Streetscape. I have supported a number of other street improvement projects, including the extension of Carothers Parkway toward Long Lane. I led the effort to develop a sidewalk trail down Murfreesboro Road into downtown Franklin and supported a similar initiative on Highway 96W from Downtown to Westhaven. I supported the improvements to Bicentennial Park and the sidewalk and trail along Chestnut Bend which now connects to the pedestrian bridge currently being built across the Harpeth River into Harlinsdale. One important consideration in all of these transportation projects is that they have been done with the city being able to leverage both federal and

Gary Moore

There is more info on my website, but: 1. Protect all children and families in Franklin-- Pride events must be stopped; 2. Require responsible urban growth/infrastructure--work more closely with the urban growth plan, and inspect all bridges and railings for repair and debris removal. 3. Conserve natural spaces and enhance water quality/quantity. Inventory odd/acreage areas being threatened for urban sprawl. Develop contingency plans for droughts, storm damage, updates to waste/water treatment plants and loss of power.

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Do you have any concerns about how city officials are appointed? What involvement, if any, should the BOMA have in recommending and/or approving appointments?

Brandy Blanton

When you speak of “city officials” I assume you mean committee members to the various boards and commissions we have, i.e., Historic Zoning Commission, Sustainability Commission and the like. I think BOMA has a very comprehensive structure in how those positions are filled. First, it is important to know that each of these commissions have an elected official/BOMA member who sits on the commissions, making sure that not only they share their knowledge about city workings, but also report back to the entire board. In vetting members outside of BOMA, the citizenry is made aware of the opportunity to serve in this capacity, submit a resume of qualifications, then they are vetted by staff and the mayor, before they are submitted to BOMA for review and approval. I believe we have a very diverse, knowledgeable and invested group of citizens who are serving our city in this capacity. Similarly, BOMA has appointment powers over our City Administrator, City Judge, Police Chief, Fire Department Chief, and similar appointments. We vet these appointments after seeking interest from qualified persons. The appointments are then approved by the full Board. This is the way it should be done.

Gary Moore

The BOMA should have an application process with interviews of top candidates for key supervisory positions and later refer the very top candidates to the Mayor for appt.

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What concerns do you have regarding Franklin's finances and how would you propose they be resolved?

Brandy Blanton

I do NOT have concerns regarding Franklin's finances. I am very proud of what our Mayor and Board of Mayor and Aldermen have accomplished. The City of Franklin celebrates a bond rating of AAA from Standard & Poor's and Moody's – the highest attainable rating given. We have built our reserves to a level that is unprecedented in our history as a city, and our revenue sources from sales tax, property tax and other special revenues, including hotel/motel tax, impact fees and more are stable and growing.

Gary Moore

200 hundred million debt is too much for even this well to do city-- we are leaving a debt load to our children and the citizenry that will soon be unmanageable. Consideration should be given for a line by line item budget and asking for a 2% reduction of all departments.

What is your commitment to the Envision Franklin document? What changes would you propose, if any, to the Envision Franklin document?

Brandy Blanton

As with any of the well thought out programs of our city, I support and am committed to this flexible land use document. A common confusion is that it is law, but in reality, it is not law, but it is a guiding document to help Franklin plan for the best uses of development throughout our community. As with any vision, there are always pivots from what was thought to be appropriate until it is put into practice, and in those cases, BOMA weighs in on any modifications during the submittal and review process. The city is in the midst of an update to the existing document, and it has hosted various opportunities for citizen's input. I look forward to approving the updated version of Envision Franklin.

Gary Moore

Not looked into enough for an informed decision, but always planning is a must with public input anytime funds, private property, and urban growth with or without annexation is being considered.

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For new development, how do you think the additional infrastructure (water, sewer, roads, police, ambulances, fire, etc.) should be funded?

Brandy Blanton

I support the current way these funds are garnered and allocated. With our immense growth over the past few decades, the new residents should pay their proportionate share of infrastructure. Of course, this is done by impact fees, paid by the developer, and passed on to the buyers. It is not appropriate that the burden for growth be placed on the City's existing residents. As a city, we are always looking forward and planning for future growth in areas where that will most likely occur.

Gary Moore

Grants and bonds approved should always have a component for infrastructure. Reductions in budget could be moved into this area. Halt any future permits for development until we see what funds will be available. Halt the city hall construction and use some of that money.

Some citizens have expressed concern that the building in which City Hall resides is no longer adequate. What are your thoughts?

Brandy Blanton

I whole-heartedly agree that the current City Hall facility has outlived its useful life. The current City Hall is located in what used to be a retail mall with stores that included Sears. It was retrofitted to become City Hall in 1982 and there is not only a lot of unusable space (the long hallway), but also many efforts were made over the years to band-aid uses with modifications that were costly and not good for the long term. BOMA recently approved moving forward with a plan to keep City Hall on the existing site (after much deliberation and research) that will address our needs for the next 100 years. As BOMA explores this idea, I will support only initiatives that are cost-savings friendly and efficient.

Gary Moore

City hall construction should be stopped with only some remodeling/updates, building security, state of the art GIS mapping and cybersecurity measures for all IT.

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What are your views concerning Franklin giving tax breaks to attract new businesses?

Brandy Blanton

I do not support corporate welfare. I recognize that there are rare occasions when modest tax breaks provide an opportunity for Franklin to reap huge rewards. In those rare cases, BOMA should consider the opportunity. During my time as an alderman, there have been three tax abatements granted by the city: Lampo Group (Ramsey) headquarters, Lee Company headquarters and recently, the In-N-Out Burger Regional headquarters. The City "matched" the level of property tax abatement granted by Williamson County. In none of these cases were tax contributions to education and the school system reduced. I supported all three of these abatements. These decisions, not only translated into thousands (collectively) of high paying jobs for our community, they also are bringing a substantial amount of revenue to our city through property tax collections. In each case, the benefit to Franklin greatly exceeded the "tax" break given. For instance, the city recently approved a ten-year payment in lieu of taxes for In-N-Out Burger. In-N-Out Burger will invest \$125.5 million in Franklin and is expected to create 277 new jobs. This is the type of rare circumstance where modest tax breaks provide much greater benefits to Franklin.

Gary Moore

For small businesses wanting to update or relocate here, i am for it. For larger businesses, i would like to see a process of need with results and with great scrutiny, a huge reduction in their request or totally eliminated.

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***"Should the City of Franklin have a code of decency for events held at publicly owned venues?
How should the attendance by children be addressed at events which may contain adult content, including sexual content?"***

Brandy Blanton

The City of Franklin currently has a code of conduct in place that I believe spells out the expectations of how citizens should conduct themselves in public. This past year BOMA considered how and whether to implement a separate code of decency. A draft of that code was prepared. It attempted to place responsibility on the permit holder for the actions of the attendees. BOMA believed that was problematic. Additionally, our attorneys discussed the difficulty of drafting a code of decency that could withstand constitutional challenges. As a result, the draft was pulled. Our current requirements for special events prohibit:

- the use of "profane, obscene or vulgar language, gestures, decorations, accessories, and signs."
- indecent exposure, lewd behavior, sexually explicit nudity, and any material or performance that depicts sexually explicit nudity or sexual activity and that taken as a whole is patently offensive standards in the adult community concerning what is suitable and lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value.

In addition, we have a broad range of laws that allow our police officers to protect our children and our community.

As to children and sexual conduct, there are absolutely NO events that allow this type of behavior in public spaces, regardless of whether children are present or not. From a personal perspective, I believe we should expect our citizens to act with respect and decency. When they don't I believe we should rely on law enforcement to enforce ordinances and statutes that restrict or prohibit such events.

Gary Moore

A code of decency would be quite difficult to enforce, so the disallowance of any sexually themed or titled groups should be halted in its tracks.

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Is it the government's role to ensure the availability of affordable housing? If so, how?

Brandy Blanton

Everyone wishes that Franklin provided a stock of affordable housing that enables our teachers, nurses, EMS personnel, police officers, and firemen to live in the community they work in. I know I do. That was the way of life for many of us as we grew up. State law, however, mandates that cities cannot require that developers to build homes with limited price points. Basically, state law prohibits cities from creating affordable housing requirements. However, since I joined the board, BOMA has sought to address the ongoing problem of adequate housing availability for our entire citizenry, sometimes referred to as affordable, workhouse or attainable. An Affordable Housing task force was created that is now the Housing Commission. One way we have supported affordable housing is through the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program. This is a federally funded program that provides annual grants on a formula basis to entitled cities and counties to develop viable urban communities by providing decent housing and a suitable living environment and, by expanding economic opportunities, principally for low- and moderate-income persons. HUD recognized the City of Franklin as an entitlement community in 2006 and the city completed the application requirements beginning with the 2007-08 program year, and continues today. However, BOMA has gone further with our support by allocating one million dollars out of the general fund to help offset or reduce impact fees for the nonprofits in our community to allow projects to come to completion. And, our biggest step in supporting affordable housing comes through the Hill Project where four nonprofits have come together to form an LLC to create a housing project on City land located on Hillsboro Road, previously housing public works. I have supported nonprofits in our community who have tried to remedy the need for affordable housing through their efforts: Hard Bargain Association, Franklin Housing Authority, Habitat for Humanity and Community Housing. What we have

Gary Moore

Affordable housing is difficult to define as what is affordable here would not be somewhere else. Couples need to learn to live within their means thru education. The inner city families are not interested in selling out, so why not use some tax money with churches and charities and volunteer labor to make their homes more energy efficient with plumbing and roofs being considered.

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What are your thoughts about the "Middle Eight" development project?

Brandy Blanton

I support the Middle Eight development. City staff approved it. BOMA voted 6-2 to approve it. I think it is answering the need for a diverse style of housing and its location is appropriate as the infrastructure is already in place.

Gary Moore

Not that keen on it yet with issues of floodplains, parking, congestion, rental values, skyline heights and loss of more natural spaces that should be left alone.

What do you think about how Franklin handled the pandemic? What would you have done differently?

Brandy Blanton

Franklin handled the pandemic appropriately. When the pandemic was in its infancy and our local hospital was overflowing with COVID patients, Franklin enacted reasonable restrictions. As we learned more about COVID, Franklin reduced restrictions, eliminated requirements for masks, required employees to be in the office, and held open meetings. City government insured our city continued to function at a high level. I am proud of the way City government responded to the pandemic.

Gary Moore

The mask mandate was too much as it was everywhere and the vax should be a family decision--not a govt decision.

As a citizen and a voter, do you think the county and the state have any election integrity issues? If so, what are the issues?

Brandy Blanton

I do not believe that we have had election integrity issues in City elections. Chad Gray and the Williamson County Election Commission have managed our city election process with professionalism. I cannot recall any candidate for City office ever complaining that the votes were not properly counted.

Gary Moore

We need to go back to non-internet machines to handle tallying, cybersecured and compiling ballots with utmost efficiency and even hand ballots again would be more trustworthy than what we are dealing with at present.

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How should the City of Franklin make decisions regarding the placement of historical markers?

Brandy Blanton

The City of Franklin has appropriate measures in place regarding the placement of historical markers. The City of Franklin becomes involved in that process only when a proposed historic marker is to be placed on city property or in a city right-of-way. The current process requires the applicant to first discuss the proposal with BOMA in a non-voting Work Session. The applicant is then required to attend sessions of either the Public Arts Commission or the Civil War Commission or both (depending on the type of marker being requested) where the purpose, type of marker, location, and text is vetted. In some cases, the proposed marker must be reviewed by the Historic Zoning Commission. Depending on the type of marker involved, this process may take months. The Commission then recommends approval or disapproval, and it then sends its recommendation back to BOMA for a vote regarding the placement of the marker. This process has served our city well. During my tenure, we have approved unanimously installing markers/street names to former Chief Justice of the Tennessee Supreme Court, Cornelia A. Clark, markers on Franklin's Civil War battlefields, markers at Harlinsdale, markers at churches, and at a variety of other locations. In 2018, BOMA unanimously approved the Fuller Story markers and the USCT Soldier statue on the Square. I personally am currently involved in the placement in Downtown of a marker and statue at Five Points celebrating Coach Jimmy Gentry and our many World War II veterans, especially those heroes that did not come home from war. I also applaud the efforts of Rick Warwick and the Williamson County Historical Society. They are often involved in the process of installing historic markers on City property, but they also are involved in the placement of historical markers that do not require city approval. The Williamson County Historical Society and other related organizations have installed 247 markers across our City and County dedicated to our history.

Gary Moore

Do not destroy any historical markers. If any new ones are being considered, then an application process with a mixed panel to review and public input--there would be parameters set for the application itself.