

## **San Antonio Current 2013 City Council Questionnaire**

Arthur M. Thomas IV, Candidate for District 10 ([www.amtiv.com](http://www.amtiv.com))

**Name:** Arthur M. Thomas IV

**Current Employment:** Arias & Associates, Inc, Programmer

**BIO:** I graduated from Baylor University with Computer Science degree in 2001. I moved to San Antonio and have lived here since 2005 to work as a programmer for a small business. I spend much of my spare time helping with technical issues and supporting limited government causes.

**Reason for being a candidate:** We have plenty of politicians that have plans for growth and spending taxpayer money, but few that want to put resources back into the hands of taxpayers. I want to reverse government growth where possible and empower people to solve issues instead of being hopeful for 'good' politicians.

### **1) Could the City's recent ethics reforms be better enforced, especially in terms of conflicts of interest?**

Conflicts of interest should always be fully disclosed in city business by all involved. A truly ethical government is up to the voters. They should demand a transparent and open government at all times. Information about contracts and relationships of involved parties should be easily assessable for citizens and media. A good policy of making all information available allows private parties to become true watchdogs of government.

I do not believe an ethics auditor is needed on top of the existing ethics review board. If government is unethical to begin with how is trusting that same government to police itself going to work? This seems to be an unnecessary and expensive expansion of government.

The ethics ordinance, like all city rules, should be routinely reviewed so they are straightforward with tailored with a principle of informing citizens.

### **2) What's your opinion on encouraging economic development and civic programming via public/private partnerships, especially where public land, such as Hemisfair Park, is concerned?**

I am absolutely against public/private partnerships where private interest control public property or end up owning it. I believe there should be a hard line between public and private property.

I believe the state should free the land so San Antonio has full control to do as it wishes with the area. I would like to see any plan to preserve and replenish park land go to a vote for the citizens of San Antonio. If they want to restore the park lands then it should be protected for public use and stop further encroachment. If current boundaries are ok then they should be protected and the developed land should be zoned for private use.

The city needs a clear plan on what it is going to do with the property. The result we have now is from haphazard government through the years and mixed agendas. Public/private partnership would only further confuse the issue and cause more mixed agendas. If we are to have a public park then it must be done properly with a clear mandate and responsibility of

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the taxpayers.

### **3) Should the city establish an independent police monitor to better oversee the San Antonio Police Department? Why or why not?**

I am not clear on what the purpose of an 'independent' police monitor would be. San Antonio has an internal affairs unit and the city council members should also be responsive to complaints about the police.

Adding layers of bureaucracy to stop government that is bad only make bad government worse. If the offices and elected officials in place are not doing their job then it is ultimately up to the citizens to fix the root of the problem. Adding more government and cost on taxpayers doesn't mean issues are taken care of.

### **4) Do you support the way the health department currently regulates food trucks? If not, how could the regulations be changed to better serve San Antonians?**

Regulations give enormous control to government over who can serve citizens. While the intentions are clear the practicality of these regulations is questionable. They can often become protectionist policies. I believe the regulations could be reviewed to make them less restrictive. I believe people should have the right to try and make a successful living providing a service or good to the public. I support minimizing government that gets in the way of this.

### **5) How can the City support sustainable transportation options?**

Tax income for city roads grow as the city grows. Ensuring those funds are spent efficiently and reliably on transportation needs is key to meeting future expansion while maintaining current infrastructure. San Antonio should not encourage nor support toll road development around the city which is a double tax upon taxpayers. Also, the RMA loan should not be extended further.

Finding ways to support and encourage private transportation options should always be sought as well.

### **6) What value do you think the arts bring to San Antonio? In what ways can the City support local arts organizations and individual artists?**

I believe the arts are very important to culture and society, but government should have no role in arts development. Arts funding should come from people and the arts market. Having politicians pick and choose arts to support makes it a political process and is destructive to the free expression of culture they represent. Subsidizing these program further diminishes taxpayer decision making for these and other programs. The city can support the arts best by not interfering with their development.

### **7) Is it important for the City to strengthen its non-discrimination ordinances to protect**

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### **LGBT citizens? Why or why not?**

I believe the city should have a clear non-discrimination policy city wide that is uncomplicated. Discrimination in city hiring practices should not be tolerated. Race, gender, creed, sexuality, nor any other non relevant attribute should be considered in hiring practices as long as they do not interfere in the function of job performance.

These rules should only apply to city government and not take an overreaching step into the private arena. Non-discrimination ordinances can quickly become mandates when applied outside of government.

### **8) Is Animal Care Services doing enough to increase its live-release rate? Is ACS' public-private partnership model is working? If not, what else could be done?**

I believe a good live-release rate is a compassionate goal and one that citizens should be encouraged to support. I would want to see this become a full private charity and not a government subsidized charity.

### **9) What would you do to address the high vacancy rate in downtown buildings?**

Lower taxes and encourage growth. It is up to the community and businesses as to what is developed in any area. Government should not contribute to corporatism by picking and choosing what they want to 'win' in an area. It is not sustainable and it is an inherently corruptible political process.

### **10) Is the City's million-dollar incentive to create a downtown grocery store appropriate? Why or why not? Is there a better way to bring a grocery store downtown?**

The city should not choose businesses for people. It is not appropriate for politicians to play favorites with a market. Businesses should make a decision where to move based on taxes and the market in the area. If the city commits to tax breaks or subsidies it could create a trap for itself in which it is stuck in at the taxpayers expense. This is not how a city should serve the needs of all its citizens.

### **11) How can San Antonio balance economic development with historic preservation?**

With the will of the voters in mind, it should put hard lines down on what is historic and what isn't. If the voters decide they want an area preserved for historic reasons then it should be clear where those boundaries are and how it will be used.

Hemisfair Park is a great example of confusion of purpose and political will over time. The voters should decide if they want to spend money to preserve and area. I would also like to see these areas 'pay for themselves' through donations and charity as much as possible instead of adding tax burden to citizens.

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### **12) Do you support union organizers' push for a Tip Integrity Act for the downtown hotel and restaurant industry?**

No. This is government interference with a market. Even if passed, it is not clear what kind of impact this would have on hotel businesses. I support groups privately fighting for better employment conditions, but I do not support government force in that process. This is an issue between the hotels, the employees, and the customers.

### **13) What is the City's role in making consumer solar power affordable for residents as well as local businesses?**

The energy market is the only one with a role in this. Consumers demanding energy alternatives are how it should work outside of the monopolies that local and state government holds over consumer choice. Taxpayers should not be forced to invest in energy options that a market will not support on its own. We have already seen these failures at the federal level and do not need to make the same mistakes at the city level.

### **14) Is there more the City could do to protect the Edwards Aquifer in terms of building restrictions, funding conservation easements or other means?**

The state has protections in place and setup the Edwards Aquifer Authority. We do not need more burdensome and conflicting rules to be managed at the state and local level.

I am in favor of reducing tax burden for citizens and I think reducing taxes for citizens and businesses that use water friendly landscaping and development is an option here.

### **15) What are the most critical components to implementing Pre-K 4 SA? Are there any other opportunities for the City to support education?**

If it is to be implemented then making sure it meets its promises is critical. If it isn't getting educational results at the costs promised then the program should be stopped. If it cannot do this then it is just another government promise that becomes a taxpayer burden.

I do not believe the city should be involved in education. Lets focus on the basics and get those right before we even start talking about ideas that are more grandiose.

### **General Comments**

I believe San Antonio can be a city built by citizens and not politics. We should localize choices in city development as much as possible and end the funding battles between districts and politicians against taxpayers. Citizen need to be in control of the issues they care about directly.

To foster this effort I would like to create a "City Builder" website that people can use to create and donate to the causes they care about. It could be building a sidewalk, improving an area around a neighborhood, funding police overtime or new firefighting equipment. It would enable citizens to be in control of the things they directly care about. It would help foster

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community involvement and contact with local city services. It could be a tool all citizens use year round and not just 'investing' in a vote every 2 years. Citizens make San Antonio and together we can build it how we want and not leave it up to politicians and 'hope' they get it right.