

NOT QUALIFIED?

Yesterday, at 3:00 p.m., a portion of the Atlanta business community (CBA) published its assessment of candidates for the upcoming municipal elections. That assessment was based upon a questionnaire and interview of candidates who chose to participate. Even candidates who knew their positions did not completely align with the business community participated, hoping to gain some level of public exposure. I am one of those candidates. A former federal prosecutor here in Atlanta, graduate of Harvard and Stanford Law School, and an alum of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division, I hoped to garner at least a well-qualified rating. But the CBA rated me as unqualified to be an Atlanta City Councilperson. Truth be told, I was stunned. Not qualified?!

But I thought further and more deeply about what "not qualified" meant to the CBA. It meant that all or some of my views did not line up with their business interests. I mentally recounted the questions and my answers and a few stuck out. First, I probably became radioactive when I stated that I would push for a mandatory inclusionary zoning ordinance to ensure that a portion of any development is allocated to low-income homeowners and renters. Second, my opposition to gaming in Atlanta probably did not sit well, as I referred to it as a "tax on the poor." Third, suggesting to the CBA that some homeless could be reunited with their kinfolk may have seemed radical, yet it took repeated efforts by my family to finally convince my brother to leave the streets. Finally, the truth that we have too many criminals - not too few cops, may have "sunk my battleship."

I, along with my supporters, affirmatively and unequivocally reject the notion that I am "not qualified" to serve as your City Councilperson - Post 2 At Large. Still, if the CBA chooses to designate me as "not qualified" according to its criteria, I can live with that.

Bret Williams