

**Atwood Kenjura – Washington County Chamber of Commerce Mayoral
Candidate Questionnaire
4/22/23**

#1. Why have you decided to run for election at this time? Briefly outline the top 2-3 issues you feel will be of significant importance in the next four years.

I have enjoyed serving the public over the years and am fortunate to have the opportunity to give back to my community. Over the years, I knew if the opportunity arose to run for Mayor, that would be a position I would be honored to serve in, and not only lend my leadership skills, but ensure everyone's voice is heard. I have had good mentors such as Onion Schwartz who encouraged me to continue public service after retiring from the Blinn College Board, as he did after serving as President of Blinn College. Over the past few years, both while on the Blinn College Board of Trustees and as a current city councilman, these experiences have allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of our local government, experience working with leaders throughout the Brazos Valley area and planning for the challenges and growth that will be impacting our area.

The role of Mayor is not something you just walk into, it requires having established relationships with business, city, county and other community leaders. The role of Mayor requires an understanding of how to communicate, with whom to communicate and how to bring people together to move our city forward. The role of Mayor is to work as a team, gather facts and understand the impact of a policy or budget decision. The role of Mayor requires a deep understanding of our city, our values, our finances and ensuring we bring staff, community and business leaders together. I have been blessed to develop the skillset needed to be your next mayor. Is it going to be easy? No. Are the problems of water, public safety, economic development going to be resolved overnight – no. But I have already laid the foundation with our business community, public safety leaders, city staff, and key partners as I have been preparing for this role over the past few years.

As we grow as a city, so does the demand for services. So does the demand for public safety. We know public safety is top of mind for all residents – that is why I have been meeting with our fire chief, local police department and preparing for the emergency management needs of our city should we face a natural disaster, or an unfortunate situation that impacts our schools, businesses or your neighborhood – I can assure you we have proactive planning underway. I have been engaged with these dialogues asking questions and planning for the future.

High priority issues facing Brenham today that are of significant importance the next four years are: *Managing continued growth in population, business development and retention and workforce preparation and development, and I stand ready to lead and help address these priorities.*

#2. What key competencies do you feel you possess to be an elected official? Briefly describe your background in areas such as financial management, ability to be an effective leader and communicator, understanding of labor and human resource issues, understanding of local economic issues, ability to contribute to strategic planning and initiatives.

Personal Core Competencies:

- Honesty and integrity
- Listening skills
- Problem Solving skills, Decision Making Skills, Planning Skills
- Leadership and Strategy Formulation as evidenced by Blinn growth. Providing a proactive Board & Business Culture to Strategically determine “What” we wanted Blinn to become and the Planning process to decide “How” we would get there.
- Superb Networking skills and contacts at both local, regional and state level.
- While on the Blinn College Board, we worked as a board to manage workforce and educational programs throughout a thirteen county service area and exceeded state and national goals.
- Strong relationships with the Brenham Economic Development Foundation, Brenham Community Development Foundation, Brazos Valley Council of Government and well versed in their goals in objectives in terms of business recruitment, housing and infrastructure needs for our area.
- I feel, in this race, I know the heart, soul and value of not just Brenham but also Washington County

#3. What do you consider to be the top issue affecting local economic growth?

As stated in question one response: Managing continued growth in population, business preservation and development and workforce preparation and development. Brenham is going to experience continued growth. We must manage that growth to the benefit to the residents of Brenham. If we do not know **who we are** and **what we want to be**, our future will be determined by outside forces and we will be stuck managing reactively rather than proactively.

Critical issues that will be a priority are:

- Recruiting educated and skilled workforce
- Managing our infrastructure (utilities, roads, water and sewer)

#4. What could you do as an elected official to help small businesses in the community?

I know well the challenges of operating a private business, as a small business owner myself for over 50 years. It is important for our city government to help create a strong economic environment that will help small businesses to succeed. I will have a “Business Roundtable” advisory group, consisting of small and large businesses that will allow us to communicate regularly, listen to their ideas, share information between the city and businesses, and jointly plan for the future.

Additionally, I know well the challenges of operating a private business, and how important it is for our city government to help create a strong economic environment that will help businesses to succeed. Likewise, I know the challenges of working and meeting budgets as economically as

possible when it comes to governing a public entity such as the city of Brenham or Blinn College, particularly when those budgets are funded by members of the public.

I have developed a strong understanding of our areas economic development, understand there is a need to reduce bureaucratic barriers to ensure continued growth. And we know we must look far and wide to identify meaningful economic partnerships, identify grants that do not have “strings attached” and ready to lead our city into the next era of growth.

#5. How important do you feel the relationship is between the City of Brenham and Washington County government? How could it be improved?

I have a strong excellent relationship and regular communication with County Judge Durrenberger and other elected officials. However, the City and County must share common goals to the benefit of our citizens. I will invest whatever time and energy to make sure that communal goal is achieved. Our individual and collective decisions affect one another. Additionally, throughout the past few years, I have developed a strong understanding of not only city government, but our county, school district and surrounding areas. It is my goal to have routine meetings with all of these entities and ensure we are sharing valuable information, pursuing programs and economic development projects jointly, and share our goals with public jointly.

#6. What project or issue would be of primary importance to you to work on if you are elected?

I will set Priority to the issues at hand based upon:

- **Seriousness** of the issue
- **Urgency** of the issue

At the present, I feel we must take a proactive position on crime in the City, County and School levels. Safety of our community scores high in each of the criteria above.

If we don't have a safe, secure community, all the efforts in Economic development, workforce and grant proposals, etc. will be for naught.

Additionally, as a growing community, we must prioritize our growth planning – which encompasses our roads, water, and all infrastructure needs. As mentioned, the city developed a strategic plan that must be implemented and below is a link for those interested:

Historic Past, Bold Future: Plan 2040 -

<https://docs.cityofbrenham.org/Departments/development/documents/brenham-plan-2040.pdf>

#7. What would you do to help ensure that the local economy continues to grow and evolve?

In order for our local economy to continue to grow and evolve – we must all work together. I plan to hold listening sessions with public safety leaders, public works departments with all entities (Burton, Washington County, Blinn, and our school districts), public health leaders, and as mentioned previously – the business leaders of our county. Jointly, we can pursue the right

jobs, right businesses, the right grants and support and accomplish our goal of growing our local economy.

Ultimately being Mayor of Brenham is about serving you, the people. It would be an honor and a privilege to serve you as your next Mayor. I respectfully ask for your vote and support.