

## 2010 RAVEN SOCIETY CANDIDATE POSITION SURVEY

*Please feel free to attach as many pages as are necessary to include your complete answers.*

1. Name: **Howard Kerr**  
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2. Website: **Kerr4MAyor.org**

3. For which office are you running?

**Blount County Mayor**

4. What is your professional background and current occupation?

***My professional background is nuclear engineering. I worked for 37 years as a research engineer specializing in nuclear reactor design and testing, experimental irradiation, nuclear safety, criticality safety, nuclear safeguards, medical isotope production, and nuclear non-proliferation program manager. I retired from Oak Ridge National Laboratory in 2001 but have provided consulting services to various institutions. I also served 6 years as an elected Tennessee State Representative. During that time I served on various boards and committees related to state and local government. I have been a part-time beekeeper for 45 years and have operated a honey production, crop pollination, and bee supply business for 40 years. I have conducted bee-related research projects, taught beekeeping at the University of Tennessee, and been a frequent lecturer at local, state, national, and international conferences. And I really like honey!***

5. Please list high school(s) attended and any higher education with degrees earned, if any.

***Eagleton Elementary (1948 – 1955) and Everett High School (1956 – 1960)  
University of Tennessee - BS Nuclear Engineering (1960 - 1964); General Motors Scholar Westinghouse Graduate Student Program (1964 - 1965)  
University of TN Nuclear Engineering Graduate program (1966 – 1973);  
Atomic Energy Fellowship Oak Ridge National Laboratory (1965 – 2001)  
Numerous technical training courses***

6. List professional, governmental, community service or other relevant organizational affiliations you have maintained within the past 10 years. List approximate dates of service.

**20th District State Representative (1994 – 2000) Board Member – East Tennessee Development District (1995 – 2000) Board Member - Blount County Public Building Authority (1996 – 2007) Citizen Representative on Gov. Ned McWherter’s Solid Waste Roundtable (1989 – 1991) Volunteer & Board Member – Boys and Girls Club of Blount County (1970 – Present) Maryville Kiwanis (2004 – Present) Blount County Chamber of Commerce (1992 – Present) Blount county Beekeepers’ Association (1966 – Present) Blount County Sister-City Organization (founding member) Volunteer for Boy Scouts of America (over 30 years) Led effort to protect Blount County from incineration of out-of-state medical waste (1988 – 1991) Led effort to adopt county-wide zoning to give citizens a voice in land use decisions**

7. Please comment on how your own background and skills would assist you as an officeholder.

***My professional experience has given me an in-depth knowledge of a broad range of issues and enabled me to develop the management skills to effectively address those issues. This same ability will be necessary to address diverse issues that will come before our County government. My service as a State Representative gave me a good working knowledge of state and local government operations and issues that can arise. This knowledge will be most helpful as the County Mayor must understand the relationship between local government and other governmental organizations.***

8. The Raven Society Mission Statement is at the top of this page. Do you support this mission? Why or why not? If elected, what will you do in support of this mission?

***I have; I do; and I will continue to support the protection of the rural, natural, and historic qualities of Blount County, and for many years I have been a community leader of activities to do just that. I led the county-wide effort to adopt zoning so property owners could have a voice in developments that may adversely impacted their property rights. I was born and raised in Blount County and have seen the impacts of unmanaged growth. If we as a community do not take effective steps to protect our county we will certainly watch the destruction of those very qualities that make this such a wonderful place to live. We will continue to see growth in our population with the attendant needs for more housing and supporting infrastructure. The only way to protect the county is to make sure we have in place effective programs to manage that growth so it adds to rather than detracts from the quality of life here. As County Mayor I will work to increase the level of community awareness and support for programs that protect the County, and I will work with other parties to identify practices that can accommodate***

***growth without compromising the quality of the County. Then I will exercise my authority to nominate and appoint persons to the various boards and committees that can implement those practices.***

9. What do you see as the three most critical issues facing Blount County? Being as specific as possible, please tell us how you will address each of these issues.

***1. Establishing Sound Fiscal Policies: The most immediate and urgent issue is the lack of a financial management plan for the county government that will help assure long-term fiscal stability while meeting our needs, managing our debt, and keeping taxes low. One of the primary duties of the County Mayor is to prepare the County budget and present it to the Commission. Historically this has been done by just assembling budget inputs from each department. As County Mayor I would work with all department heads to develop long-range projections on budget matters (both revenues and expenditures) and rely on proven financial planning principles to make fiscal decisions. I would also lead by example to encourage all departments to move toward zero-based budgeting. And I would initiate a program to reward employees who identify cost-saving measures that are implemented and reduce costs.***

***2. Jobs, Jobs, and Jobs: Integrating measures to accommodate the projected growth in our population and needed economic development activities to assure that we keep existing good jobs and attract new jobs so our people will continue to have a high quality of life and a tax base that will sustain the services provided by the county. Our population has increased steadily for several decades, it is reasonable to expect that trend to continue. That means continued residential development and the need for more jobs for our residents. Tax revenues from residential development are usually inadequate to cover costs of services associated with that development. Therefore we must expand our commercial and industrial development efforts to provide the quality jobs our people need and to provide the revenues our County needs for essential services. As County Mayor I would work closely with our economic development groups to assure that we are partnering with our existing businesses to help them remain successful and keep existing jobs in place. An integral part of this effort will be to support vocational training for young people and adults so local workers are prepared and qualified for the existing jobs. Another major thrust will be to identify strategic focus areas for economic development that are consistent with the resources available in this area. The research facilities in Oak Ridge and at UT will attract many related high-tech businesses to this area, and we need to structure our educational and vocational training programs so our local***

***3. Education: We need to move aggressively to provide our children with the education they will need to have fulfilling lives, and we must develop vocational education***

**strategies that are synergistic with our economic development strategies so our citizens will have the job skills needed in our local economy. We elect a school board to manage the operation of our public schools and they hire a director of schools to implement the programs to facilitate the education of our children. However the County Mayor can play a significant role in the educational system by working with the school board on fiscal matters, building public support for education initiatives, and recognizing educational achievements. As County Mayor I will support public-private vocational training programs and academic camps, and I will encourage stronger parental support of education. I will also encourage increased use of local talent as volunteers in the classroom to assist teachers.**

10. Rapid development in Blount County has implications for the County budget, as well as for our air and water quality, scenic heritage and community character. If elected, what principles would guide your decisions regarding growth and development?

**As previously stated we can expect our population to continue to increase into the foreseeable future. With that increase will come the need for additional housing as well as expanded commercial and industrial developments needed to provide the tax revenue for essential public services. If I am County Mayor we will adopt planning policies that are consistent with responsible growth and will work to make sure these policies are reflected in the actual practices of various developers and government officials.**

11. Do you support the extension of the Pellissippi Parkway (PPE) from Old Knoxville Highway (SR 33) to US 321?

a. **No**

b. Please explain *why* you support or oppose the extension, including any statistics or studies you may know of which support your opinion.

**At some time in the distant future our population growth may necessitate expanding the existing network of roads needed to accommodate the associated volume of traffic. In my opinion the PPE cannot be justified today on the basis of relieving traffic congestion. The only justification today is that the PPE is the next leg of a county-wide beltway, and I do not anticipate that beltway being built in the next 50 years. Some people tout the PPE as a way to get tourism traffic through the county without increasing traffic on existing local roads. Today, there is a much greater need to improve the existing roads to make them safer for local people**

**every day of the year and able to carry both local people and tourism traffic for many years. Any money available to complete the PPE should be used to improve the existing roads.**

12. If the PPE is eventually built, how will you address the development pressures this potential new road will bring, including impacts on Blount County's secondary roads, schools, public services, air and water quality?

**If PPE is built - either sooner or later - it will stimulate rapidly expanded residential and commercial developments in the near-by areas. Since the time period between the decision to build and the actual completion will be several years it is incumbent upon the community to make sure we have in place the tools necessary to properly manage the types of developments and to assure that the needed infrastructure is available to handle the increased needs for schools and utility services.**

13. Which, if any, of the proposals presented by the Growth Management Advisory Committee (GMAC) would you recommend using to raise funds to purchase and preserve green space in the rural parts of the county?

**To me the only reasonable approach to raise funds to purchase green space in the county is to levy a development fee on all new developments. That fee would be specifically earmarked for purchase of green space. We could also encourage landowners to put their property in a land conservancy and allow them certain tax breaks for doing so. And we**

14. If elected, please describe how you would incorporate the Five Guiding Policies of the county's Policies Plan into your own decision-making process.

**The 5 guiding policies are basically: 1.Preserve the rural character of the county 2.Manage and regulate the development to preserve the quality of life 3.Limit regulations so they focus on key issues that impact quality 4.Improve the roads to meet needs 5.Match growth with the infrastructure Please look at my responses to your other questions! Those guiding policies are and have been the basis of my thinking and actions for many years. I will continue to rely on these common sense policies to influence my priorities in my duties as County Mayor.**

15. What is your vision for Blount County in 20 years?

**I believe Blount County will continue to be a premier place to live, work, and raise a family; and therefore our population will continue to increase. That increase will mean more housing units will be needed and our local economy will have to grow to generate the revenues needed to provide the necessary public services for our people. This dynamic state of**

***development will require our communities to manage the growth in such a way that we preserve the high quality of life that we enjoy today and at the same time protect the characteristics that make this such a wonderful place to live. We will develop cultural activities and community infrastructure that will enable our residents to fully enjoy life. We will identify key area resources and develop strategies for economic development around those resources. We will have to align our educational systems with our economic development strategies to assure that our citizens are well qualified for current and future employment opportunities. And we will learn to use modern financial planning tools to guide us as we eliminate our debt and build a strong fiscal posture for the County.***