

Vote yes for Measure A and Des Moines' future



Iowa view

File photo

Rev. Dr. Frederick Gaddy and Sally Boeckholt | Iowa View contributors | 1:01 pm CST February 26, 2019

What matters enough to you that you'd raise your own taxes to pay for it?

That's the question A Mid-Iowa Organizing Strategy (AMOS) posed to more than 500 people last summer in small groups across Des Moines. We wanted to know what our friends, neighbors and fellow citizens value about living in their city, and what they want our community to do better.

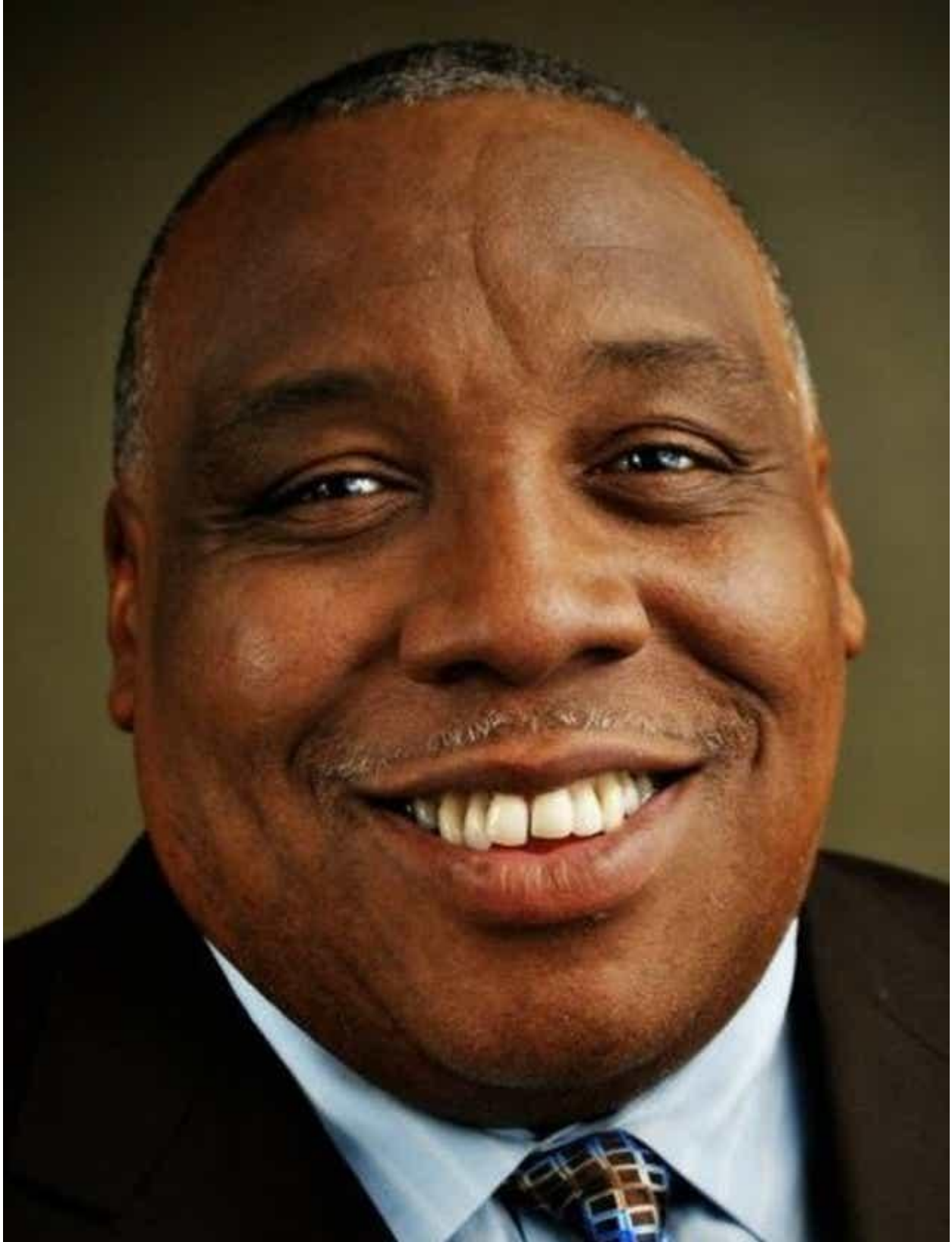
Those conversations brought forth stories of families and schools struggling to help children with mental health needs; of repeated flooding due to an antiquated sewer system; of houses sitting

empty and deteriorating for more than a decade; of rental housing with holes in walls, vermin, leaking pipes and mold. We heard stories of youth needing greater library access and more hours of recreation at two local parks. These stories provided a framework for us to engage our elected officials.

Out of those conversations, we formed an agenda of issues to be included on the ballot and spending resolution for the one-cent Local Option Sales Tax. We gathered all of our members on Sept. 23 and presented our agenda to city manager Scott Sanders. Over the following months, we met with members of the city council and with the city manager's office to negotiate our priorities:

- Improving infrastructure, including roads, sewers, and sidewalks
- Better rental property conditions, beginning with hiring 4-6 new housing inspectors
- City-wide attention to dilapidated and abandoned housing
- Expanding library hours to six days per week at all libraries, and seven days at the downtown and Franklin branches
- Investment in children's mental health crisis services

Additionally, the city manager and mayor committed to light two neighborhood parks, another AMOS priority.



Rev. Dr. Frederick Gaddy is the pastor of St. Paul African Methodist Episcopal Church in Des Moines.

We celebrated when all of those items were included on the spending resolution.

We understand the limitations of a sales tax. We know our tax system places too high a burden on the poor but we also know the needs in our city are too great to ignore, too great to wait, especially for the most vulnerable.

Don't make the perfect the enemy of the good. The city will be held to account to spend the money as they've promised through an annual audit, through the vigilance of its citizens and the work of organizations like AMOS. We are committed to that work over the long haul.

On March 5, please join AMOS in voting YES on Public Measure A.

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Link to article: <https://amp.desmoinesregister.com/amp/2992505002>



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