

## Brett Dungan Announces Run for Mayor of Bayou la Batre, Alabama

Krista Moon  
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*Brett Dungan has decided if he will run for election as mayor of Bayou la Batre, Alabama. (Photo credit: Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium)*

Unificationist Brett Dungan, has announced his run for mayor of Bayou la Batre, Alabama in a special election. Bayou la Batre ( BLB), is a quaint fishing port with a population of 2, 588 located along the Mississippi Sound, on the Gulf of Mexico in Southern Alabama.

Instead of appointing a nominated candidate, Alabama Gov. Robert Bentley made the decision on April 29, 2013 for the town of Bayou la Batre to hold a special election to select its next mayor to fill in the gap left by the former mayor who was convicted of felony charges, according to the Bayou la Batre local news website, Local15tv.com.

If Dungan were to run for mayor, his extensive credentials speak for themselves; according to the article “Can Brett Dungan Unify Bayou la Batre?” featured in *Lagniappe Magazine* on April 26, 2013, an independent bi-weekly magazine based in Mobile, Alabama. See story below.

*Lagniappe* reported: “Dungan is a 25-year president of a successful maritime business. He’s been on the Board of Directors at the [Bayou la Batre] Chamber of Commerce for 15 years. He’s volunteered on numerous quasi-governmental committees, including a few on the national level. He’s a founding member and past president of the high-school booster club. He’s articulate and knowledgeable.”

Dungan is an activist in the Alabama coastal community and a senior advisor to Master Marine, Inc. after serving 25-years as president. He is also a founding member of the Alabama Working Waterfronts Coalition (AWWC), an advocate for waterfront businesses and maritime heritage. He was recognized in 2006 as one of the five national “Small Business Champions” by the national Federation of Independent Business (NFIB), and he is a founding member of both the south Mobile County Education Endowment Fund and the local high school Athletic Booster Club. He is the Alabama coordinator of the American Family Coalition.

“Moving forward to develop our waterways and waterfront resources will require a deeper understanding of our role as stewards, and the importance that all citizens have a seat at the table as decisions are made affecting the whole of society,” wrote Dungan in an e-mail to Unification News about the wide discussion of his qualifications for the mayoral role. “I actively work as a member of the National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB) promoting small-business issues, and I promoted workforce development when I served on the national board of directors for National Association of Manufacturers (NAM). These experiences, plus being a Defense contractor, a small businessman and entrepreneur have shown me the interconnectedness of our economic efforts, and have taught me the importance of attending to details and the value of building consensus across a broad base of constituents. I have been blessed with many experiences as a citizen of the State of Alabama; but the most important thing I have seen first-hand is what is possible when people put aside their egos and agendas and work together.”

“I believe it is his [Brett Dungan’s] destiny to hold a public office here in Alabama, and the best starting point would be for him to be appointed as the Mayor of Bayou La Batre,” wrote Teresa Yamane, state pastor of Alabama, in an e-mail to Unification News. She added: “To think that 30 years ago we were feared and shunned by many of the local Christian community leaders in Bayou la Batre; they even organized against us in the center of town in their pick-up trucks with shotguns! It would not only be the righteous thing to do, but he really would be the best person as Mayor; absolutely.”

It is Dungan’s involvement in the Bayou la Batre community which makes him an ideal choice as mayor. Yamane wrote, “Brett [Dungan] has always been active in local politics, supporting good candidates,

joining committees, attending meetings, organizing, and serving as a respected voice of wisdom and reason in the community. He has many friends who will support him, and the city will certainly benefit from his heart and investment.”



*Brett Dungan lives in Bayou La Batre, Alabama with his wife, Linda, and their three daughters, Brinda, Bonita and Becky. Barrett, their only son, passed away in 2008 at the age of 20. (Left to right) back row: Linda and Brett; middle row: Bonita and Becky; front row: Barrett and Brinda*

Dungan’s involvement in the community has garnered the support of many people in Bayou La Batre, including an endorsement from City Councilwoman Annette Johnson, who “felt like we [the Bayou la Batre City Council] needed to support an outside candidate” and County Commissioner Jerry, Carl who called Dungan an “asset,” according to *Lagniappe*.

However, there is only one issue people seem to have with Dungan as a mayor; the fact that he is a member of the Unification Church, reported *Lagniappe*.

Despite this, Dungan is quite forthright about being a Unificationist, and “he’s not shy about addressing it,” according to the magazine article.

“I’m very passionate about my faith and understand that others are passionate about theirs,” Dungan said in the *Lagniappe* article. “Whatever your faith is, my attitude is you need to live it. If you’re a Catholic, be a good Catholic. If you’re a Baptist, be a good Baptist. What’s happening in Bayou la Batre is a microcosm of what’s happening everywhere in our nation. So the question is, how do we rise to the challenge of whole-purpose thinking and put our egos aside and work together for the greater good?”

Rather than be drawn into an argument about religions, Dungan will emphasize community service over self, he told *Lagniappe*.

Councilwoman Johnson defended Dungan and said she was never asked her religion when she ran her campaign. “Brett doesn’t proselytize, and he’s not dogmatic, and he and his family have always shown up at all times when the city has something that needs to be addressed, and they’ve never made their faith an issue. The problem is, there is always a group of people who are holier-than-thou, and they think this man can’t serve in this capacity for our community when in fact our government was established for all people of all faiths and creeds and religions,” Johnson was quoted as saying in the article.

# LAGNIAPPE

## Can Brett Dungan unify Bayou la Batre?

Gabriel Tynes  
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On paper, Bayou la Batre's Brett Dungan has all the credentials you'd want to see in a mayor, especially if your last one is facing 30 years in prison and the other candidates can hardly pull their swords out of each other long enough to approve a new position on the payroll.

Dungan is a 25-year president of a successful maritime business. He's been on the Board of Directors at the Chamber of Commerce for 15 years. He's volunteered on numerous quasi-governmental committees, including a few on the national level. He's a founding member and past president of the high school booster club. He's articulate and knowledgeable. He wears a suit and tie to the City Council meeting.

In a short speech delivered shortly after Councilwoman Jennifer Stork made a motion to nominate him as mayor April 25, Dungan said he would prioritize dredging the Bayou's canal, an economic development project unmentioned by other candidates that has the potential to float unlimited revenue and additional jobs into the ailing port. He spoke of the need for cooperation to achieve common goals for the benefit of the entire community.

His resume lists Lt. Gov. Kay Ivey, Attorney General Luther Strange and Mobile mayoral candidate Sandy Stimpson as references. But it doesn't list his faith.

From the whispers in the audience at City Hall to the anonymous phone call to Lagniappe, people seem to have only one issue with Dungan as a mayor. He's a member of the Unification Church. But they don't use that term. Dungan's detractors prefer the pejorative name for his religion.

Stork's motion was seconded by Annette Johnson but immediately defeated in a roll-call vote. Dungan could not get the support of the majority of the five-member council. Councilors Ida Mae Coleman and George Ramires are still hoping to secure the mayor seat themselves but Kimberlyn Barbour cast a nay vote without comment.

So now, nearly 60 days since former Mayor Stan Wright was convicted on felony corruption charges, the decision on who will become the Bayou's next mayor appears poised to defer to Gov. Robert Bentley. A rumor during the public participation at the council meeting suggested several area elected officials had already petitioned the governor to nominate Dungan. County Commissioner Jerry Carl, who attended the meeting, later congratulated Dungan on the nomination and called him an "asset."

The governor's press office didn't respond to a request for comment, but others suggest Bentley would be unwilling to accept the political liability that could come with appointing any new leader to a town that has since dragged its feet on even the most routine management issues.

In several episodes since Wright's removal, public meetings have descended into shouting matches, with instigators questioning each other's loyalties, motivations and actions in the past. Councilwoman Coleman

expressed surprise and anger April 25 when Johnson suddenly withdrew her support from her and endorsed Dungan instead.

"I mentioned I wanted to work with you because you had a conciliatory spirit," Johnson told Coleman. "But since that time, your politicking has continued at every public meeting including at times I felt it was inappropriate. Several people brought Mr. Dungan's name forward and I felt like we needed to support an outside candidate."

With the apparent support of Johnson and others, the concern over Dungan's unorthodox religion is one of the more peculiar nuances of the politics of Mobile County's second-smallest city, which is unusually diverse for its size. And he's not shy about addressing it.

"I'm very passionate about my faith and understand that others are passionate about theirs," Dungan said. "Whatever your faith is, my attitude is you need to live it. If you're a Catholic, be a good Catholic. If you're a Baptist, be a good Baptist. What's happening in Bayou la Batre is a microcosm of what's happening everywhere in our nation. So the question is, how do we rise to the challenge of whole-purpose thinking and put our egos aside and work together for the greater good?"

Dungan said he didn't take faith or ethnicity or color or sex into consideration when he help found a youth soccer league in the city and it also didn't dictate which doors he knocked on when he ran for City Council 12 years ago. He won't be drawn into an argument about religion he says, but he will emphasize community service over self.

"Everything I have done for the community was to support the positive development of our town," he said. "There is so much diversity here and everywhere and the issue we have to grapple with is how to build consensus and realize our goals together."

Dungan lives just inside the city limits on McKee Road with his wife Linda. They have three adult daughters, Brinda, Bonita and Becky, who are all graduates of Alma Bryant High School. Their 20-year-old son Barret died in a motorcycle accident in 2008.

"When our son passed away five years ago, that experience really made clear to me what's important in life," Dungan said. "What you say doesn't matter much. Your actions do. I think we're kind of distressed with the lack of leadership in Bayou la Batre and leading this government into the future is going to be complex. People need to act and get involved no matter who becomes mayor and ensure there is a system of checks and balances."

Councilwoman Johnson later said she saw Dungan as a logical leader that could mend fences in a city that is often split on even minor decisions. She said the questions about his religion appear to be based in the inability to find fault anywhere else in his character or record.

"Nobody asked me or George Ramires or Mrs. Ida Mae about our religion when we were running our campaigns," she said. "Brett doesn't proselytize and he's not dogmatic and he and his family has always shown up at all times when the city has something that needs to be addressed and they've never made their faith an issue. The problem is, there is always a group of people who are holier-than-thou and they think this man can't serve in this capacity for our community when in fact our government was established for all people of all faiths and creeds and religions."

According to state statute, the governor will have 30 days to name a mayor or order a special election. With mandatory timelines for the qualification period, election and a runoff if necessary, a deferment by Bentley could leave the Bayou without a mayor through summer.