



2020 Jacksonville Beach MAYOR Candidate Written Questions

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1. **Qualifications and Motivation:** What qualifications in terms of education, experience, and prior community service do you bring to your candidacy for public office? Please explain what motivates you to run for office at this time?

As a Navy kid, our family moved around the country several times. We were very fortunate to spend many years in the Jacksonville Beach area and when it was time for me to put my own roots down, I chose Jacksonville Beach. Being fully invested in the community to me means also seeking ways to serve and better it, which lead me to run for City Council.

My professional, educational and community service experiences have all given me a unique perspective on our community. From supporting emergency services to families to helping preserve our history to graduating from our island's only high school, I have a depth of respect, understanding and connections throughout the community that will benefit our community.

- *Beaches Museum, Executive Director*
- *City of Jacksonville Beach General Employees Pension Fund, Vice-Chair*
- *Preferred Governmental Insurance Trust Board of Trustees, Vice-Chair*
- *Baptist Medical Center–Beaches Board of Directors*
- *Oceanside Rotary, Vice President (2020), PR Chair (2018-2019), Community Service Chair (2016-2017), 2016 Rising Rotarian award winner, Founder, Beaches Health Jam*
- *Leadership Jacksonville Class of 2016*
- *Volunteer Lifesaving Corp Board of Directors*
- *BEAM Board of Trustees, Fundraising Chair, 2009-2013, Beach Ball Chair, 2010-2012*
- *Member: JAX Chamber-Beaches Division Board, Beaches Watch, Beaches Business Association*
- *University of North Florida, Masters of Business Administration*
- *University of Florida, Bachelors of Arts, Political Science & Criminology*
- *Fletcher High School & Neptune Beach Elementary*

I have served on the City Council for two 4-year terms, serving for the past two years as the Mayor Pro Tem. It has been an exceptional experience that has taught me so much more about our community, our residents, businesses and of course, myself! The potential that we have in Jacksonville Beach to create a place that exudes community pride is palpable. I want to be a part of the leadership team that works hand-in-hand with citizens, city staff, businesses and everyone who has a stake in the city's future to truly make it great.

2. **Priorities:** If you are elected Mayor, what are the three most important issues you would address during your term and how would you address them? Please include how you would ensure adequate funding to address the issues.
 1. Ensure a safe and vibrant community by working together with first responders and citizens to use traditional and creative solutions that meet the needs of both.
 2. Making sure our government is transparent, accessible and one that works for the citizens. Working toward more proactive communications, opportunities for participation and a spirit of partnership are critical in making this happen.
 3. We need to be prepared for the future including flooding, storms, changing technology, etc. by staying ahead of the curve and with our infrastructure, training and preparedness measures.

3. **Budget:** In the event of a budget shortfall, would you consider a millage increase to maintain levels of service? If not, what specific items in the budget would you recommend adjusting? What specific strategies would you suggest to raise additional funds? Please be specific.

Our city is well-run fiscally which has allowed us (as of early October) to become debt free. Sound management through 2008 and many of those same principles being applied as we face our current challenges have allowed us to keep services strong while keeping taxes and fees in check. Beaches Energy, for example, one of the most popular departments of the city, routinely passes on savings to consumers where appropriate.

Jacksonville Beach has strong reserves, a capital improvement budget and routinely looks years in to the future to forecast surpluses and shortfalls. A poor economy is not the time to add taxes to the burden of our residents, however, in anticipation of a major budgetary impact, such as the ballot referendum to increase the homestead exemption, the City Council voted for a modest rate increase to provide for the expected increase in public safety costs. This was a responsible decision in a strong economy that ensured a continued balanced budget going forward. It is never easy but sometimes necessary to balance the needs of the community against budgetary constraints in this case out of control of the City.

4. **Charter Amendments:** What is your position on the following proposed Jacksonville Beach charter amendments that will be on the General Election ballot?
- a. **Amendment 1:** A super majority vote is required to remove the City Manager.
 - b. **Amendment 2:** A super majority vote is required to remove the City Attorney.
 - c. **Amendment 3:** A voter referendum is required to eliminate Beaches Energy or Police Department.
 - d. **Amendment 4:** Clarifies that, except for purposes of inquiry, no City Council member or appointed board member can interfere with the performance of the duties of a City employee who is under the direct or indirect supervision of the City Manager.

I voted in support of placing these amendments on the ballot and support them for our City.

5. **Coastal Resiliency:** Going forward, what actions does Jacksonville Beach need to take to mitigate flooding vulnerability and sea level rise?

I was very glad to see the City take advantage of a grant through the Florida Department of Environmental Production. The grant provided modeling to show the effects of storms, tides and sea level rise and the areas of anticipated impact in our city. This is a great step in the discussion of resiliency in our community. This work led to an adoption of changes to our Comprehensive Plan and should ultimately impact the Land Development Code and discussion of our city's future.

In addition to the recommended changes and adherence to state statute, our city has worked diligently to improve storm water drainage in partnership with our neighboring cities and the state. This sort of cooperative effort should continue in order to maximize the positive impacts on the beaches area.

I would also like to see Jacksonville Beach move towards a program to acquire sensitive property. Creation and funding of a dedicated source to provide matching funds to state and federal grants would allow this program to be more impactful in protecting the land and surrounding area. The hiring of a grant writer for this work as well as MANY other areas of priority in our community would be well worth the investment.

6. **Growth Management:** While you are in office, Jacksonville Beach will be updating the Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Code.
- a. What specific changes do you want to see made to the Comprehensive Plan? Please explain your proposed changes and why you recommend these changes.

The Comprehensive Plan should be a guiding document for the City that should be on the list of similar important documents to be reviewed on a regular schedule. Every 10 years, once the results of the census are known, to do a full-scale review, with a more frequent check-in review will help keep the document not only top of mind, but relevant.

Since the city is largely built out including roads, schools and other infrastructure, the impact of population change and how that impacts the next 10-20 years of the community should be considered. I support the hiring of a professional firm to assist the city with this effort.

- b. What specific changes do you want to see made to the Land Development Code? Please explain what specific aspects of the Land Development Code are not functioning and what would you do about them.

Like the Comprehensive Plan, I support a full-scale review periodically and at the least every 10 years. Additionally, the City should schedule an annual “clean-up” for minor changes, errors, etc. I would also support the engagement of a professional firm to assist the city through this process.

I would not classify my thoughts on the LDC as areas that are “not functioning” but I do believe that such an important document should be reviewed and assessed to ensure that it reflects the changing demographic, needs of the community and is able to be effectively and consistently administrated.

A few areas that I would personally be interested in discussing in particular are:

- Modifications in parking and outdoor dining requirements in our the Central Business District (see question 8)
- Ensuring that our LDC reflects that we are largely built out and effectively address the redevelopment of our community.
- Providing for a layer of protection for historic, older and architecturally significant buildings.
- An analysis of variances and if/how the code can be modified to reduce administrative burdens on both the city staff and the property owner.

7. **Crime & Public Safety**: What are the most important crime & public safety issues in Jacksonville Beach and what should be done to address them and fund them? Please be specific.

I think the biggest threat is the need to balance the demands of the community with the resources of the agencies responsible. Ensuring the necessary manpower, equipment and training are critical issues facing all departments and municipalities.

We need to approach public safety issues from both sides. Instead of reacting to the issues, we need to get ahead of them as much as we can. For example, I will continue to advocate for our downtown to have a more diverse mix of businesses. Instead of a crush of people from 10pm-2am, we need a busy and active downtown all day. Utilizing the tools that the CRA affords us will allow us to get creative in how we incentivize a shift in opportunities downtown.

The homeless/transient issue is one that is very concerning to the residents, visitors and business owners in our community. It's a very visible issue that gives the perception of poverty and crime in our city. While legal remedies are limited, I believe that we need to do a several things from different directions to reduce the impact of this issue on Jacksonville Beach:

- Work with venues and areas that attract this population to reduce the negative impact on our community's perception. A strong relationship with Mission House - not just our police department but our city leadership is crucial. Ensuring that services are being offered appropriately and that bad actors are not enabled to stay in our community are good steps to take.
- Making sure that our law enforcement is empowered to enforce existing laws. The City Attorney, Police Chief and other leadership should work together to ensure that officers know what remedies may be applied, as well as look to other municipalities who have successfully mitigated this issue.
- We need to drive a more vibrant and active downtown. Empty green spaces and closed businesses are a perfect scenario for vagrancy. Businesses and public places that are busy throughout the day will make that less comfortable.

8. **Downtown:**

- a. What do you propose be done to promote and encourage new business and redevelopment to achieve the community's vision for a safe, walkable, and family-friendly downtown area?

I want to create a vibrant downtown by working hand-in-hand with property owners, strategically utilizing incentives and by celebrating our natural resources and assets.

Two years ago, the City Council and the Community Redevelopment Agency met as a group and began to break down the silo of communication that had previously existed. While not everyone agreed on every topic, it was the consensus of the group that the structure of CRA staffing needed to change. This year, we have budgeted for a Program Manager that will have 100% responsibility for our downtown and south-end CRA.

Having one person responsible for these specific areas will make a tremendous difference in communications, project management and developing relationships with key stake holders downtown. I am very optimistic that this will lay the groundwork for our city to begin to more fully use the tools in our toolbox.

Consolidation of the various plans for downtown in a unified document should provide a clear roadmap to move downtown forward.

- b. What kinds of businesses, developments, and improvements would you like to see in the downtown Central Business District? Please be specific.

Recent visioning meetings by the City Manager had many commonalities among the citizens and business owners: our residents do not feel like downtown is for them. The term “family-friendly” has been used frequently without true definition. I would like to see us adopt “resident-friendly” as a guiding principal going forward.

My goals would be:

- A downtown area that is busy at all hours of the day, not just late-night, thus distributing the need for resources such as parking, public safety, etc.
- A partnership approach with property owners and developers to encourage a give and take wherein more of our vision priorities are achieved by negotiating on parking requirements, for example.
- An incentive program to attract and retain those businesses that align with our vision for downtown.
- Review of parking requirements specifically in relation to outdoor dining or encouraging of non-auto transportation.

I would like to see an effective and interesting mix of restaurants, bars, shops, offices and residential taking full advantage of the proximity to the oceanfront, public parking and open community spaces.

9. **Strategic Plan:** With input from citizens and businesses, the Jacksonville Beach City Council is developing a vision and strategic plan for Jacksonville Beach.

a. What is YOUR vision for the future of Jacksonville Beach?

A safe, well-run, fiscally responsible city that instills pride in its residents is home to a vibrant and creative business community and celebrates its natural assets.

b. If you are elected, what would you do to achieve that vision?

I fully support the time and effort that will go in to the visioning and strategic planning process. It will provide the roadmap to achieve not my vision, but the collective vision that is decided upon in that process. I look forward to participating in and supporting that effort.

10. **Vacation Rentals:** Would you change anything in the current Jax Beach vacation rental regulations? Please explain what you would change and why.

The City Council worked for quite some time to create the regulations that ultimately passed. We heard from countless citizens, STR owners and representative organizations over several months. While most, including many STR owners and representative organizations, agreed that we needed some level of regulation, it was a challenge to balance the needs of the property owners and the residents that were being impacted by the STRs.

The resulting regulations were passed unanimously and reflected countless hours of hard work by staff, Council and those on both sides of the issue. The City is continuing to monitor the issue but in my opinion, it is too soon to see the impact of these regulations.

11. **Campaign Pledge:** Will you make a pledge to carry out a campaign based on issues and facts and renounce the use of name-calling and inuendo? What will you do if such literature (for instance by mass mailings) is distributed?

I have always run my campaigns focused on the issues, the citizens and my qualifications to serve. While I was the target of a PAC-funded negative campaign in the past, I was pleased to see that the citizens of Jacksonville Beach have no patience or respect for such tactics. I will run a campaign based on issues, facts and my own attributes and will not support any efforts otherwise.

12. **Other issues:** Are there any other issues you would like to address if elected? Please explain.

The City staff has gone through a major transformation in the past two years. The hiring of a new City Manager and addition of an in-house City Attorney being the most prominent of those changes. With this election, I would like to see a more robust training of City Council as to their roles, responsibilities and resources available to them. I would like to see additional fellowship opportunities for Council and staff to create a positive working environment.

There should also be a an annual council calendar assembled to document their major responsibilities including budget, board interviews, staff assessments, LDC clean up, etc. This would allow for better anticipation of time and resources needed for both the city staff and the Council members.

I'd like to ensure that there is a consistent communication plan from City staff to the Council and the community on short and long term projects, opportunity for public input and celebrate positive achievements in our community.