

## 2016 Beaches Watch Jacksonville Beach Candidate Questions

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When answering the following questions, please provide specifics as well as supporting data and facts wherever possible.

1) Crime/Public Safety:

- a. In your opinion, what are the most important crime/public safety issues in Jacksonville Beach and what should be done to address them? Please be specific.

***The most important crime/public safety issues in my opinion are the criminal acts or perception of criminal acts that come with the downtown area of our community whether by residents, non-residents or homeless. The influx of people to this area creates unique issues that are not necessarily felt in the residential areas of Jacksonville Beach but are critically important in ensuring that people will want to visit, work or live here.***

***The CAPE officers should continue to encourage voluntary compliance of laws by both the businesses and those enjoying our downtown area. Members of our public safety organizations should establish and maintain good relationships and communications with the businesses and employees in order to prevent small issues from becoming larger problems. I would also like to see us continue to work with partner agencies to target specific issues such as gangs, managing large crowds, etc. We should also enforce laws already on the books (such as fire codes when trying to reduce the volume of people in an area) before creating new and hard-to-enforce new laws.***

- b. Some candidates have said Jacksonville Beach needs more police officers and the police officer salaries should be increased. Do you agree or disagree? Please explain.

***The City Council needs to consider the market comparisons with other comparable police departments, quality of life for our officers and the cost of not retaining/replacing good employees. I believe we should not always turn to "more police officers" as a band-aid or a way to avoid bigger and more complex issues in our community, however, the size of the police force should be proportional to the needs of our community.***

- c. If you support hiring more police officers and/or increasing police officer pay, how would you propose the City pay for these costs?

***Should an increase in officers and/or pay be warranted, the funding should come out of general funds or CRA, depending on the most appropriate source.***

2) Parking:

- a. What is your opinion on paid parking in the downtown business district? Please be specific.

***I think the paid parking program as it currently exists has worked well. Problems that had previously existed in the parking areas have diminished. I would like to see the***

**city increase parking rates when demand is higher (special events, 4<sup>th</sup> of July, etc.) just as other parking lots do.**

- b. What changes would you like to see made to improve the parking situation in the downtown area?

**We could very easily encourage non-auto forms of transportation. I have advocated for more bike racks, low speed vehicle parking and Uber/taxi standing areas for quite some time. Adding more parking is an option, but I feel strongly that it should be in coordination with other non-traditional options.**

3) Central Business District:

- a. What changes would you support to achieve a safe, walkable and family-friendly environment in the Central Business District?

**We need to do a better job empowering the CRA to guide this process. We should seek comparable cities in Florida who have successfully transformed their business districts and take the lead from their examples. We don't have all the answers, but the answers are out there, we should not be afraid to go and find them.**

- b. What kinds of businesses and developments you would like to see in the Central Business District? What, if anything, would you recommend be done to encourage those businesses to come to Jacksonville Beach? Please be specific.

**I would like to adopt a model similar to what was presented by our short-lived partner, Jim Peters. The idea of a "sociable city" is one that "plans for people's need for connection by enhancing vibrancy in public and private space, assuring safety, both in venues and outside, and managing impacts on quality of life." We have a tremendous opportunity to utilize a good economy, very little debt and a burgeoning CRA fund to infuse public-private partnerships, purposeful incentives and a coordinated approach to changing the nature of our downtown. My vision is an area that is as busy at 10am as it is at 10pm, is active throughout the day and is welcoming to all ages at different times of the day. Specifically, that would mean less restaurants behaving as bars and more retail, dining and better use of our open public spaces.**

**We need to move to an approach of encouraging the businesses that we want to see instead of only talking about the ones we don't.**

4) Sign Ordinance:

- a. What is your opinion of the city's current sign ordinance? Please be specific and explain any changes you would like to see made to the sign ordinance.

**The sign ordinance went through a significant overhaul this year based on a Supreme Court decision. The cost and time invested were great and I feel the City is in a better position now that the work is done. I would like to monitor the response of businesses and organizations as they navigate the new sign code before any determination of if changes are necessary.**

5) Height Limit:

- a. Do you believe more highrise buildings (buildings that exceed the 35 foot height limit) should be allowed to be built in Jacksonville Beach?

**No**

- b. Please explain your answer to (a).

**Based on the 2004 ballot initiative, buildings higher than 35 feet are not permissible.**

- c. If elected, would you take any actions to change the height limit that was approved by 76% of the voters in 2004? If so, what would you change?

***I think many, including original proponents of the height limit, would like to have allowed for 50 feet in the Central Business District. I have never been asked to take action to change the height limit and I do not intend to. I do have areas of concern, particularly the property at the corner of Beach & 3<sup>rd</sup>. An unintended consequence of the height limit may ultimately be that the owners are limited to high-volume options like a drug store or gas station, as we see on two of the other corners of the intersection. I would far prefer a small hotel, restaurant or mixed-use building that would have less traffic and would be a more appealing entryway to our downtown. However, this discussion, if held, should be part of a broader coalition that should be started at the behest of the proponents of the original height amendment.***

- 6) Events: What is your opinion of the current special events policy and are there any changes you think should be made? Please explain.

***I am pleased with the changes that were made in 2013 that encouraged events in the non-summer months. I would advocate making the policy more specific and easier to understand. I would also advocate for a better process of approving/denying an event application, a specific timeline for approval and a more detailed appeal process. Special event policies should be consistently applied to all non-City events.***

- 7) Outdoor music: Do you support changing the ban on amplified outdoor music and sound at businesses? Please explain your position.

***There should be a process, however stringent, that would allow the option for a business to have outdoor sound. For the answer to simply be "no" to something like putting the volume on a football game or a musician is unnecessary and discouraging to potential new businesses.***

***Based on the discussions so far, I would support a two-tiered permit. One permit would focus on hotels and large venues to allow bands/DJs within a strict set of guidelines. The second tier would be a "pilot program" that would allow low-volume amplified music until 8:00pm. This would encourage day-time enjoyment rather than late-night nuisance to neighbors.***

- 8) Since Jacksonville Beach is built out, do you support or oppose increasing the number of town houses and multifamily housing units in traditional single housing unit neighborhoods? Please explain.

***Development should be consistent with the Land Development Code which should be reviewed periodically by the Council. Rather than targeting specific properties or handling on a case-by-case basis, we should update the Code to reflect the needs and direction of our community and apply it consistently.***

- 9) Jacksonville Beach Fire Department: Do you support the Jacksonville Fire Rescue Department (JFRD) taking over the Jacksonville Beach Fire Department? Please explain.

***Without seeing the details of such an agreement, I am reluctant to express an opinion. Should a plan like this move forward, it should be fair to all current members of the***

***JBFD in terms of rank, salary, pension, etc. and should not diminish the service levels or expectations of our residents and businesses.***

***I have informally spoken with members of the Fire Department who have advocated the merger because of increased training and career growth opportunities.***

***I will consider all sides of this issue before making a decision, should a plan be presented to the City Council.***

10) Communication:

- a. What could the city do to improve communication with the citizens of Jacksonville Beach?

***One area that I have advocated over the past four years is a better use of social media to communicate with our constituents. In 2012, the Facebook page was hardly touched and now, the page regularly promotes City events, distributes important information and is a vital source of contact during events such as Hurricane Matthew.***

***I would like to see the Police Department follow the lead of Neptune Beach Police Department that does a wonderful job keeping the citizens posted with safety tips, historic information and current public safety postings.***

***We can always do better and we should always be trying to.***

- b. What would you do to promote communication with your constituents?

***I always try to be responsive to constituents in whatever the communication form. Whether it be via email, phone or in the aisle at Publix, I'm always accessible and responsive and always try to help them find a resolution. I will continue these efforts.***

- c. There used to be public council briefings prior to the City Council meetings. Public Council briefings are no longer being held. Do you support resuming this practice? Why or why not?

***I do support resuming Council briefings. I do not believe that early morning or mid-afternoon briefings should return, however, I have suggested numerous times that we have a standing meeting set up for 6:00pm on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of the month. Having a standing date on our calendar would allow for briefings, special presentations, etc. versus finding a time when all seven members can attend. Additionally, holding the briefings just prior to the Council meetings would provide a greater opportunity for members of the public to attend.***

***The current system of attempting to meet with each council member one-on-one is unnecessarily time-consuming for staff and allows no candid exchange of ideas among the council members. They should be used on a strictly limited basis.***

11) Are there any other issues you would like to address if elected? Please explain.

***In general, I want our City to take this opportunity of a good budget, low taxes and significant CRA funds to make the improvements we want to see in not only our downtown area but in all areas that have fallen short since the 2008 recession.***

***A thriving and vibrant downtown that we all want to see IS possible to balance with the interests of our residents. We need to share a vision and start moving towards it.***

***We also need to take serious steps towards greater transparency. Addressed in the question regarding briefings, dealings with Council should not be in a silo and designed to eliminate citizen oversight. Council and city leadership should be held to account by the citizens we serve.***