

2016 Beaches Watch Jacksonville Beach Candidate Questions

Name of Candidate: Charlie Latham

Phone Number: 904-920-4004

Email Address: charlie@charlielatham.com

Website: www.charlielatham.com

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. **With the increase of radical Islamic terrorism AND the hunting of Police Officers around our nation, we need to better prepare for such horrific possibilities. We should increase training within the Police and Fire Departments in order to be better prepared. We must also train our businesses to recognize potential threats and encourage them to contact JBPD. Although crime has mostly decreased in Jacksonville Beach over the past four years, there is a significant increase of automobile thefts in Duval County over the past year. We need to work more closely with the Gang Unit at the JSO to proactively identify the participating gangs and stop them from stealing vehicles. We also need to launch a series of PSA's reminding people to lock their cars. The majority of these thefts have occurred with unlocked vehicles... and many with the keys inside!**
- 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. **After long discussions with the leadership of our Police Department, it's clear to me that although a pay increase would be nice, it's more important for them to have more officers in the Department so that they will have more time with their families. Currently, our officers are paid a comparable wage to other cities but they have a significantly higher number of calls than cities with similar demographics (90% of those calls take place in a six block area of our downtown). In addition, because of the frequency of festivals, many officers are forced into mandatory overtime. During the next budget cycle, I intend to pursue the addition of six additional Police Officers to JBPD. This will increase each squad by one officer, and allow more time off, including vacations. Our police also have an issue with the "time in pay grade" that provides them pay increases based on their time in service, by rank. Jacksonville Beach has the worst "time in pay grade" program within the three beach cities, and that needs to change as well.**
- c. If you support hiring more police officers and/or increasing police officer pay, how would you propose the City pay for these costs? **I propose we implement a higher staffing level when the geo-political environment calls for it. For example, our current compliment is 68 sworn officers. If we were to implement a higher staffing level of 74 officers (the six additional mentioned above), as the "emergent manning level" then we would to pay them from the General Fund (C.A.P.E. officers would continue to be paid from the CRA)... and when the threat subsides, we could reduce to our normal compliment of 68 officers through natural attrition.**

2) Parking:

- a. What is your opinion on paid parking in the downtown business district? Please be specific. **As long as we continue to allow Jacksonville Beach residents to park for free, I will continue to support the paid parking. We only have a parking problem during peak times of the year (7 months, 3 nights/week). By having non-JB visitors pay \$5, we are**

able to pay for professional management (and increased safety) of the parking areas. We are also currently building a 100-spot parking area on 2nd Street North, which will help during peak times.

- b. What changes would you like to see made to improve the parking situation in the down Central Business District: **The building of the new parking lot (mentioned above) will help. We are in discussions with a few private entities that have expressed an interest in building a major restaurant or hotel in the downtown area, and working with the city to provide a parking garage. For the city to build and operate it's own parking garage is not a cost effective option for a problem that exists 7 months, 3 nights/week).**
 - c. What changes would you support to achieve a safe, walkable and family-friendly environment in the Central Business District? **We worked for two years with citizens, businesses and visitors to create a "vision plan." The vision plan is specifically designed to make our downtown area a desired destination for people of all ages. The vision plan includes improvements to public spaces, transportation, public safety, commercial spaces, entertainment, and quality of life issues.**
 - d. What kinds of businesses and developments you would like to see in the Central Business District? **Any business that doesn't sell alcohol as a primary revenue source is a good start. Hotels, restaurants, ice cream shops, candy stores, places that attract all age groups. What, if anything, would you recommend be done to encourage those businesses to come to Jacksonville Beach? Please be specific. We must continue to create a desirable atmosphere in our downtown district. I would also consider tax or monetary incentives for businesses that don't serve alcohol. I like to use St Petersburg Beach as an example. They have a proportional number of bars, restaurants, hotels and family-friendly shops of all varieties.**
- 3) 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. **We have already made the changes to the sign ordinance that seemed appropriate for the current city council. I would not recommend any other changes at this time. But I am open to reviewing the ordinance periodically to see if the changes in our local economy warrant changes.**
- 4) Height Limit:
- a. Do you believe more high-rise buildings (buildings that exceed the 35 foot height limit) should be allowed to be built in Jacksonville Beach? Yes or No. **NO.**
 - b. Please explain your answer to (a). **The people have spoken, and I agree with the current referendum of the people. Removing the height limit is the first step in building the next Daytona Beach.**
 - 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? **NO.**
- 5) Events: What is your opinion of the current special events policy and are there any changes you think should be made? Please explain. **In a sincere attempt to draw people into our downtown during the non-peak months, we have allowed too many of these festivals to occur. These festivals have become loud, obnoxious and numerous. Businesses do not benefit from these festivals and residents certainly don't benefit from them. The only people who benefit are the producers, the promoters and the beer companies. Our police officers are required to provide additional staffing for these events, which contributes to their mandatory overtime. I am also concerned that these large gatherings could become of interest to those who mean to do harm to our society. I also feel strongly that city employees and city council members should not personally financially benefit from any festival held on city property.**
- 6) Outdoor music: Do you support changing the ban on amplified outdoor music and sound at businesses? Please explain your position. **I do support the ban on amplified outdoor music. Although we will be considering outdoor acoustic music at a future workshop, I believe we need to side with residents who are concerned that amplified music will have a significant negative impact on them.**
- 7) 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. **I would prefer to keep our city much like it is now, and I'm not in favor of replacing single-family with multi-family housing. That being said, we cannot restrict a property owner**

from building what they desire to build on their property as long as they are compliant with zoning and Land Development Code requirements.

- 8) Jacksonville Beach Fire Department: Do you support the Jacksonville Fire Rescue Department (JFRD) taking over the Jacksonville Beach Fire Department? Please explain. **I have never been a proponent of allowing JFRD to take over our JBFD. The local Fire Union (JB) asked the city of Jacksonville Beach to investigate the possibility of transitioning them into JFRD, so we have initiated that investigation. Although the investigation is not completed, I've made it clear to the City Manager that I would not favor such a change unless it provides a significant financial benefit to the City of Jacksonville Beach (AND the JB firefighters would have to vote for the change).**
- 9) Communication:
- What could the city do to improve communication with the citizens of Jacksonville Beach? **Increase the number of workshops and town hall meetings.**
 - What would you do to promote communication with your constituents? **Chief Dooley and I conduct monthly Town Hall Meetings around the city. We may want to consider increasing the frequency to one every two weeks.**
 - 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? **When this was addressed by the council in 2013, I publicly stated that I was fine with the pre-council meetings OR the individual meetings with the City Manager & Deputy City Manager. Some on the council stated that the individual meetings were more convenient, as many of the council were employed full time and could not make it back to city hall in time for the meetings. Others stated that the private meetings (which is how Atlantic Beach and Neptune Beach conduct their briefings) allow them to ask "stupid questions" that they may not want to ask in public. I am fine with either option, and will support the wishes of the majority of council.**
- 10) Are there any other issues you would like to address if elected? Please explain. **If re-elected, I pledge to continue the pursuit of making Jacksonville Beach a 'debt-free' city in 2020. I also pledge to fully implement the 'vision plan' that we worked so hard to develop with the inputs from our citizens and businesses. I also pledge to continue to closely monitor the legislative agenda of both the City of Jacksonville, and the State of Florida to ensure we are not forced to deal with unfunded mandates. In 2016, the Florida League of Cities designated me "Home Rule Hero" for keeping a sharp eye on our state legislators and challenging them publicly if they attempted to pass legislation that was contrary to the interests of Jacksonville Beach. We've come a long way in the last four years. I'm proud of our progress and I will ensure that we don't go back in the wrong direction. None of us wants to see our beautiful city revert back to the days of a blighted adult entertainment center.**