

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.

We cannot adequately address public safety without a distinction between the two major Jacksonville Beach safety issues — our residents' well-being and the safety of our many visitors. I have walked our neighborhoods and met with residents who say they feel safe and have a high regard for the police. The police have shared with me their pride in work and commitment to community. Our City is a destination for tens of thousands. This places additional stress on public safety and requires an honest assessment by City leaders on how we support the police. The Beach provides Jacksonville its greatest asset. The way we promote the Beach affects the attitudes and perceptions of those who live here and visit. I support efforts to develop a "family friendly" Downtown experience, and more specifically, concepts that will engage our residents and business.) Ideas related to how the Downtown space has been used have much to do with our current environment. The willingness to advance large festivals in Downtown Jacksonville Beach can be counter-intuitive to creating a safe and family-friendly environment. We should strive for balance in our events policy. I will encourage more private initiatives that engage local business, and support their opportunities to connect with residents and visitors. I would like to see a better balance of "Open Event" non alcohol based concepts for Downtown. The Pavilion and Latham Plaza space are designed first and foremost to be accessible. By focusing on the well-being of our residents and local business, we can create a more positive mindset that enhances visitor understanding of who we are. This positive mindset can benefit our community and those who are tasked with keeping us safe.

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.

I agree that we need additional police if we continue to promote the City as a destination. For more than two decades, Jacksonville Beach has operated efficiently, and in some cases, "lean" with public service. The City is in a fiscally sound position as it heads to a debt-free status in 2020. We are blessed to live in a City that provides the level of exceptional service at such an affordable cost. With that said, over the years, the Jacksonville Beach police department has been challenged to retain good officers. The premise exists that after successfully training good men and women, we lose them to higher paying, less stressful jobs elsewhere. Forced overtime within the police department to satisfy the Beaches destination experience is one area that should be addressed (in a realistic manner) as we move forward with community development.

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

Again, this is a double edge issue. If the goal is to accommodate more and more visitors, then maybe an assessment of our police department budget can be done with the City of Jacksonville and Tourism Development. Possibly, there is an enhanced partnership to offset

costs for visitor safety. Conversely, most of the residents I speak to feel safe in their homes and neighborhoods. Interestingly, the stress of ongoing residential development within the neighborhoods is becoming a greater issue. Congested neighborhoods will support the demand for additional monies placed toward greater public safety. The City should be bold (and honest) as it outlines priorities for development, and the appropriate costs for public safety in an increasingly popular residential/destination community.

2) **Parking:**

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

I am an advocate of a paid parking system which allows residents to park free in the Downtown Business District any time and any place. We need to work on improving this system. Unfortunately, many residents remain uncertain of how the current paid parking system works. Also, the manner in which the City addresses paid parking with business in the Downtown District remains a touchy subject which hopefully can be nullified over the coming years. I propose the City formalize the current system and establish better communication on how it works for residents and visitors. Eventually, this topic can be an item reviewed by a broader community of business leaders operating through my proposed Jacksonville Economic Development Agency.

The JBEDA will be developed as a non-profit entity that includes long-standing, private/civic leaders who understand the Beach community. The Agency will promote private investment, advocate for small business growth, and help steward the economic health of Jacksonville Beach. This is a broad reach agency that encompasses the diverse and wide expanse of Jacksonville Beach business including the Central Business District. Our economic well-being will benefit from leadership and guidance of informed civic leaders. The JEBDA can work side by side with CRA and other private/public groups to enrich the lives of those who live and work at the Beach.

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

The future development of a parking garage Downtown and additional parking nearby is a positive first step. The City can also begin to develop and encourage easier access for residents who wish to come Downtown. More accessible private and public commuter transit operations should be encouraged that can move residents and visitors safely in and out of the Downtown Business District. "Bikeability" and "walkability" should be a message that is promoted. Also, work with business and residents through incentive-based initiatives to get more people out their cars and enjoy access through public transit or some form of multi-person residential transit.

3) **Central Business District:**

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

I applaud the vision plan for Downtown. Has it accomplished all have imagined? Not yet. The design and most of the infrastructure improvements have been made in line with the concept of an accessible and walkable space. We are at a critical juncture in framing the final piece of Downtown development. The ideas for promoting sustainable Downtown businesses go hand in hand with methods to promote Jacksonville Beach as a destination point. I think events in the Downtown park remain a critical aspect to how we promote and encourage a family-friendly environment. I wish to challenge the local business community to offer more private initiatives that invite residents and visitors to take in our beautiful Downtown space, while simultaneously promoting opportunity to visit nearby businesses without impediment. This is a great project for the Jacksonville Beach Economic Development Agency.

- 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 see a mix of apparel boutiques and sporting goods stores, with an emphasis on outdoor and active lifestyle, as well as a stronger cultural niche with more businesses in the creative service industry). The creation of a Jacksonville Beach Economic Development Agency will go a long way to assisting the City in attracting and sustaining the right mix of business for Downtown.

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.**

In my opinion, the current sign ordinance is cumbersome. Being able to effectively communicate with the public is extremely important for the health of our small businesses. The City should review its current permitting process, work toward improving the process, and offer the best options for signage while remaining sensitive to the expectations of the surrounding community and the environment. This would be another issue for a Jacksonville Beach Economic Development Agency.

5) 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.**

Qualified No.

The 35-foot height limit was established as a referendum by the citizens of Jacksonville Beach. I believe the over-arching benefit to the landscape of community has been understood and appreciated. Until the citizens and future leadership determine otherwise, there should remain a steadfast goal of supporting 35-foot height.

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

Property development in the Business District of Jacksonville Beach has been challenged by the height limit. Good or bad, the reality of space and how it is developed is naturally tied to profitability and sustainability of the investment. Ideas for Business District development require creative and thoughtful planning. Encouraging future private investment will take public initiatives that should include more incentives for private funding. Until we are more active in offering ideas to incentivize property owners, the challenge of height might continue to be a barrier.

- 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 do not intend to challenge the height limit.

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 love the design of the Jacksonville Beach Downtown space featuring the Sea Walk Pavilion and Latham Plaza. In the past 25 years, the hallmark of Downtown events has been large music festivals. For many reasons, the success of music festivals drawing large crowds to the space has defined our events policy. The financial success of those festivals, contingent on concession sales (specifically alcohol), seems to attract new promoters eager to take advantage of that particular event model. But this large and beautiful space should be used for many different types of events. I did not realize the full potential of this Downtown space until I created Deck The Chairs. I favor an events policy that takes a residents-first approach, with a core principle of approving more unique and culturally diverse family-friendly activities. Recognition of the benefits to businesses and residents from Open Event concepts will slowly take hold, and systematically change attitudes and perception of who we are and what matters most in our lives.

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

Outdoor music in the Downtown Business District is a big issue that I would like to see resolved. Amplified sound, and how it is managed, is currently moving through Council. We need to improve the vibe of Downtown, and music at managed levels is a great way to start. I hope to continue the conversation on appropriate levels of sound, and how we can build vibe in the Downtown without disturbing the neighbors who have made the decision to live close by.

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.

I oppose the increased development of multi-family dwellings on single-family lots. This is a safety issue and residents are growing increasingly discouraged with congested streets and traffic. Long-time residents never anticipated that the strain of overcrowding may be a reason to move from their homes and neighborhoods. Eventually, quality of life will be diminished, and the vibrant laid-back nature of this community threatened.

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

I do not support the JFRD taking over one of our crucial Jacksonville Beach first responders. The idea that we can operate with autonomy is what makes Jacksonville Beach special. For a City that has managed to create its own (highly successful) electric utility and boast its public works department should feel equally passionate about our first responders. We cannot hand this off and I will work to understand the best methods to ensure JBFD remains.

10) Communication:

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

I believe it is vitally important to find ways to engage the majority of citizens who have a general apathy toward government. The challenge to create systems that ease the access and promote citizen engagement could be handled by the formation of a Jacksonville Beach Communication Advisory Council. City resources brought to bear on providing better access is only one step. More engagement through private support should be promoted.

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

Utilizing technology and pressing forward with social media tools in all public meeting endeavors makes sense and can be done with current resources. I will commit to objectives that bring more citizen engagement. We need to enhance and ease access to information.

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 support public council briefings. This obviously supports the idea of greater shared communication. Government should work at a pace that supports broad, collective input. When citizens are without basic access to information, they feel disenfranchised.

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

Two items.

1) The Jacksonville Beach Economic Development Agency (JBEDA) is a concept that I whole heartedly support at this given time for our City. I have learned over my 30 years in business that most good ideas come from diverse yet focused energy. Private initiatives can be lifted up to support public need if there is a platform. A JBEDA can work at many levels with a variety of public/private groups to provide sound direction.

2) In recent years, the City Manager position has drawn scrutiny and criticism. I have lived at the Beach for 28 years and witnessed broad and positive change in the services and quality of life for residents. Managing a \$160 million dollar budget with diverse services requires great

skill and capacity to lead. My hope is that immediate desires and possible self-serving ideas by our future leaders does not result in disruption of the vision for Jacksonville Beach. We are a well-run community. The last thing I want to see as a result of this upcoming election is an attempt to fire the individual that has lead the City to solvency. A new Mayor and council opposed to certain long-standing visioning will most likely ask for immediate change in management. To that end, I would like to state that I approve of our current City Manager, and hope to see his retirement on terms that permit smooth transition to the next great City Manager of our beautiful gem by the sea.