

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 homeless/transients are probably considered the #1 problem from my conversations with police and rescue personnel. Dealing with the homeless situation is very difficult. Within the homeless population you have a mix of people with vastly different issues. The "easiest" group to help is the people that have hit a rough spot and are now homeless due to job, financial and/or medical issues. The city and mayor's program, Mission House, BEAM and other groups work hard to help this group get back on their feet and BEAM works hard to help keep our residents from getting to this point. After this group there are the mentally ill, the substance abusers (drugs and/or alcohol) and the people that just don't want to live in a home and like being homeless. Good community policing, mental health services and tough enforcement may be the best solution to problems with these groups. Unfortunately there seems to be a never ending stream of new transients coming in and I don't foresee any long term solution to this problem.

During the spring there have been problems with "flash crowds" that pop up due to social media use. This has resulted in some problems with gangs and groups coming from Jacksonville and bringing their conflict with them. The police have done a great job this spring preparing for this, but it is expensive and uses heavy man power. This still seems to be the best way of dealing with it.

Another problem is that when the police do a great job in the downtown area some of the problems move north and south out of the area. These problems will continue as the greater Jacksonville areas population continues to grow. There is no more beach access growing with that population so we will have more people coming to use our facilities and beach.

- 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 police department currently has 5 openings and is having problems filling them. A raise in pay may help, but the size of the department and lack of upward mobility combined with the necessity of working so many weekends make it difficult. Current openings need to be filled before there is any thought of increasing the size of the department. Higher pay for officers should help with retention other local agencies pay a higher salary. The police deal with the problems of our society and deserve our support and respect.

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

At this time I do not know enough about the budget to recommend ways to pay for increased pay. Higher salaries may be offset by not having to hire & train replacements.

2) Parking:

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

According to the City Attorney there is no way to take control (loitering, partying and just hanging out) of the large city parking lots without leasing them or using an outside parking service. The parking service seems to be working fairly well. We were definitely headed in a bad direction before. I see no need for a massive pay everywhere system.

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

I believe we could use more parking. Downtown used to have angle parking on the avenues and we lost 100 parking places when the streets were redone. When the consultant the city hired from Gladdis-Jackson found out he was stunned that that happened Perhaps a parking garage with retail on the bottom would be a solution to lack of retail space and parking. Or we could once again redo the avenues. I would like to see some enforcement of the 1 and 2 hour parking. This would increase turnover of these spots.

3) Central Business District:

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

Overall the CBD is a safe environment. Questioning of the police confirms this. Sidewalks are in good shape. Sidewalks on 2nd Street could be wider. It would be good to have a wider variety of retail and day time open restaurants in the CBD.

- 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.

The CBD needs more retail and it would be nice to have an ice cream and coffee shop. The problem is there really aren't vacancies to put these businesses in. In the past the city offered businesses in the CBD matching money up to \$5000 (I think that's the right amount) to redo facades and even signage, subject to approval. Making an offer like this to entice new small businesses may help. Using city property such as Latham Plaza or the pier parking lot to build designated retail space with parking on top is an option that should be considered.

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 most important thing we need to do is to work on enforcing the current sign ordinance. The code enforcement for signs seems to be lax. Illegal signs are everywhere and odd exceptions in permitting have been made over the years. I may be out of the loop on this but I have not had anyone speak to me about any need to change the sign ordinance.

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.

No

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

See (c)

- 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?

If an absolutely incredible project was presented to the city it should only be permitted with a referendum passed by the voters in Jax Beach.

- 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 believe the current special events policy is working. I am against more drinking events even ones clothed in a "family friendly" label and I do not want one "every weekend" as has been proposed by some candidates. The police are currently overworked on the weekends without adding more mandatory work time.

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

Outdoor music enhances the ambience and feel of an area. I support outdoor unamplified live music. I support outdoor amplified music, live or canned, with strict noise levels, strict enforcement and rapidly escalating penalties for offenders.

- 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.

Unless there is a great demand from the citizens, single family zoning should stay that way. I am not looking to make any changes to the zoning laws at this time.

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

The city council has a responsibility to the residents to provide the best fire protection it can to the residents (for what it is willing to spend - everything is a trade-off). After that it has a responsibility to the fire fighters to treat them fairly. We would be negligent if we didn't look at an offer from JFRD. I am leery though of taking Jacksonville on their word for coverage. If financial problems arise they may decide on cutbacks or make other decisions that could impact our protection. It may be best to leave us as masters of our own house.

- 10) Communication:

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

I believe the city communicates pretty well with its citizens

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

Use of phone calls, emails and making myself available.

- 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 favor public briefings. Too often the Council comes to a meeting with a decision seemingly already planned. I think interested public has the right to know what happens at briefings.

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