

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 must be committed to building a safer city. I'm proud to have the endorsement of our Jacksonville Beach Police Officers (FOP) and Sheriff, Mike Williams. As a former Assistant State Attorney in Duval County, I understand the factors that lead to cycles of crime. I've seen first-hand the devastating impact that violent crime can have on the whole community. In my capacity as Assistant State Attorney, I sought justice for victims of crime, ensuring that criminals were held fully accountable for their actions. With my years of experience in this arena, I can identify the root causes of crime, and as councilman I will take the steps necessary to lower our city's crime rate. I have increased the number of officers downtown from 6 to 11 in 4 years without using tax dollars. It's clear the crime as permeated to residential area and that is concerning. To address this issue we need to utilize community policing and have our Community Response Team Unit be proactive in preventing crime by doing stakeouts and gathering intelligence. Community policing is a philosophy of full service personalized policing, where the same officer patrols and works in the same area on a permanent basis, from a decentralized place, working in a proactive partnership with citizens to identify and solve problems.

- 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.

Community policing requires the same officers patrolling and working in the same area on a permanent basis and encourages officers to be proactive in building partnerships with citizens to identify and solve problems. Therefore, it's imperative we keep the officers we have. We have lost 47 officers in the last 5 years and that's an alarming number. We're losing a majority of those officers to other agencies. These numbers indicate that we need a pay increase for our officers in order to keep them here. This would allow officers to develop relationships with the community through the years and make community policing possible. Imagine if the same officer was assigned to your area of town for 20 years, how many would be able to develop a relationship with that officer?

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

We would pay for these costs with the surplus the City has had the last each of the last four years. The surplus is based on revenues we received vs. our yearly expenditures. In 2014 we "profited" 15.4 million dollars and in 2015 it was 15.1 million. All of those funds simply when in our reserve account. A raise for our police officers is less than \$500,000 dollars and with public safety being a priority, that's where those funds should be spent.

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

I pride myself being the person who ensured Jacksonville Beach residents received free parking when the paid parking program was implemented and I will ensure it continues. To those of you who don't know, if you show your Jacksonville Beach driver's license when entering a City parking lot you're entitled to park for free. Your tax dollars paid for those lots and you should never be charged to park in them.

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

We need a parking garage if we want businesses other than bars to come downtown. My goal is to add several restaurants, coffee shops and retail stores but we need easily accessible parking to make it more appealing.

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 would like to hire a company to do a traffic study on 1st and 2nd street in the Central Business District and give their opinion on what can be done to achieve a safer environment. Right now 1st street barely allows for two cars to pass, and when you add pedestrians to the equation it becomes more dangerous. Since I'm no traffic expert, I'd prefer a professional offer suggestions on making the CBD a safe and walkable environment.

- 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 parking garage built on the City lot next to the Ritz. The garage would have retail along 1st street which would help pay for its cost through rental income. This would also free up the pier parking lot for private public partnerships with hotels, retail, restaurants and small business. I would maintain some pier parking for fisherman because I would never want to prevent individuals from enjoying our beautiful pier.

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.

We recently hired an attorney to revamp our sign code and bring it current with state law. We were told he is an expert in this field and I trust that made changes with city liability in mind. Therefore, I support the ordinance as amended by the sign code attorney Bill Britton.

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? Yes or No.

No.

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

This issue was passed as a voter referendum with a large margin and I don't envision this will ever be an issue that would come in front of City Council. Therefore, I support the voice of our community.

- 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?

Once again, I support the voice of our community and would not take any action unless a majority of our residents asked that the matter be addressed.

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

In 2013 we voted unanimously on a special events policy that allows for only 1 festival a month and they can only be one day except festivals occurring October through February. The off season multiday festivals were meant to help the downtown business while times are slow and they've achieved that purpose. Last year there were 8 alcohol festivals at Latham Plaza the entire year and in 2016 the same number is planned. I support the current policy because it restricts the number of events and prevents multiday festivals during the busy months of the year.

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

Currently there is a permit process in place that allows businesses to have amplified sound two times a year. On other days I would like businesses to be able to have outdoor music (acoustic guitar) but not amplify the sound that could be heard by neighboring businesses or residences.

- 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 support the land use codes currently in existence and do not believe we should increase ones ability to build a multifamily unit. We need to be careful on issuing variances for this purpose as well because I never want to change a community from single housing units to multifamily.

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

The only way I would support Jacksonville taking over our fire service is if there is no diminished service. We are in contract discussions on this issue and there must be rules for the number of firefighters or more at each station and each station we have must remain open. Additionally, we should ensure they still offer home inspections and car seat installations. If this was to work out and the terms agreed to we would save 1 million dollars a year.

- 10) Communication:

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

We need to stream the meetings online! There should be a recorded feed so you don't have to come to City Hall to see what's happening in our city. This will improve communication and promote others to get involved.

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

My cell phone is 904-234-1283 and I have placed my number on all campaign literature. I did the same when I ran for office in 2012 and receive calls on a weekly basis. We all should have open communication with our residents and I'm a firm believer in replying to all concerns I receive rather than rely on the City to send those individuals a message.

- 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?

Yes and I'm not sure why they went away. This goes along with the reason for a live feed of our meetings. Transparency is important and I will work to have the live feed and bring back public council briefings.

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

I would add that I have received the endorsement of every organization that endorses in Jacksonville Beach. Most of them conducted interviews of both candidates and I believe I won their endorsement because of my experience, ideas and accessibility. We may not agree on every issue but I will also have an open door to discuss any matter important to you and will always make an informed and educated decision on all issues in Jacksonville Beach.

I've been endorsed by:

Our Jacksonville Beach Business Chamber of Commerce (JAXBIZ)

Our Jacksonville Beach Realtors (NEFAR)

Our Jacksonville Beach Police Officers (FOP)

Our Jacksonville Beach Firefighters (JAFF)

Our Sheriff, Mike Williams