

2017 Beaches Watch

Atlantic Beach Commission Candidate Questions

Name of Candidate: Candace Kelly

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

A. Important Issues:

- a. What are the two most important issues for your district that you would address as a City Commissioner? How would you propose they be addressed?
 - **In District 4, residents are affected by the lack of parking spaces, particularly in the areas closest to the ocean front and around the Town Center. The City Commission recently approved the formation of a citizen's Parking Committee, whose primary task is to assess the current situation and make recommendations for the entire city.. I believe the solution will lie in innovation, creativity, and thinking outside the box. In the long view, I think we should aim for a more walkable city, friendly to pedestrians, bikes, and electric carts.**
 - **District 4 residents are also concerned about the tree canopy. The City Commission has authorized the formation of the Environmental Stewardship Committee, and a Tree subcommittee. These citizen boards will monitor the enforcement of the ordinances regarding trees and other natural resources. Another step should be an educational outreach, as the ordinances are not easily accessible to property owners. They need to have the appropriate information in order to be part of the solution. I think it will also be important to reward property owners for planting more of the preferred species in order to being growing the next generation of tree canopy.**
- b. In your opinion, what is the most important issue that should be addressed for the entire community of Atlantic Beach? What action would you propose?

B. Zoning codes: What aspects of Atlantic Beach zoning codes are not functioning and what would you do about it?

- **Many residents are concerned that some ordinances are not being enforced regarding lot density, impervious surface measurements, building heights, and tree removals. A search for a new Planning Director has not been successful and that office is understaffed and overwhelmed by the volume of permit applications. A partial solution is citizen involvement: If you see something, say something, call and question city hall. A longer term solution is to revisit the relevant ordinances and decide as a city whether we want to amend them, knowing that the current structures could not be affected by any new restrictions.**

- C. Citizen participation: Citizen participation in the government process is key to good government. What would you do to increase citizen participation in Atlantic Beach government?
- **The depth of professional experience among our city's residents in one of our greatest assets. In the recent past, various ad hoc groups have banded together spontaneously to address the issues most important to them, for example, the Atlantic Beach Preservation group and the Mayport Road Businesses. Citizen involvement has also been the foundation of the new Environmental Stewardship and the Parking committees. I do believe that the appointment of these committee members should be considered in light of their specific skill set and that they should represent all parts of the city.**
- D. City staffing: Staffing has been an issue recently. What would you suggest to improve the process of attracting, hiring and retention of quality city staff?
- **Since a lack of qualified leadership is holding the city back from providing the best services, we should ensure the search is reaching the right candidates and examine our compensation package in light of the quality candidate we are seeking.**
- E. Seminole Road South Gate: Should the city open the Seminole Road south gate into Hanna Park? Please explain your answer.
- **A Seminole Road connection to Hanna Park seems so logical when you bike/walk the length of the road to the fence. However, it is City of Jacksonville property, and they would be liable to staff the entrance and provide security for persons using the gate. I do believe Hanna Park is a partial solution to the beach parking problem. The park is spacious, with plenty of parking, pavilions, and security.**
- F. Mayport Road Corridor: What would you like to see happen in the Mayport Road Corridor?
- **The Mayport Businesses and Residents group have made a great start in assessing their immediate needs and crafting a proposed change to the land use code. Additionally, many citizens have become more politically active, speaking up about the types of infrastructure improvements that would enhance their quality of life. We should also investigate the effectiveness of creating a CRA for the area.**
- G. Parking: How would you address the parking problems at the Town Center and the beach accesses?
- Once the Parking Committee has completed its survey and made recommendations, I would be open to creative solutions, including collaboration with JTA, Neptune Beach, and the Town Center committee. The committee will probably recommend some expenditures for paint, landscaping, and signage. Whatever we decide will create a need to educate the public on what we have decided, perhaps including encouragement to visit Hanna Park, which has plentiful parking. Ultimately, I think our goal should be to make ours a walkable city, safe for pedestrians, bikes, and electric carts.**
- H. Budget: The Homestead exemption on the November ballot may result in reduced revenues for Atlantic Beach. How would you propose the city economize or raise revenue to cover the shortfall if the Homestead exemption is approved?
- The effect of the proposed exemption is expected to cost the city about \$104,000 out of an annual ad valorem tax income of \$4.6 million. That loss could be balanced out by increased scrutiny of department spending.**

- I. Quality of life: What do you think is the most important quality of life issue for Atlantic Beach at this time? Please explain.
- **I think the quality of life effecting almost everyone's daily routine is traffic and parking. Travel around the Beaches is becoming stalled by busses, left turns, congested streets, and increasing population. Likewise, parking effects how easily we can enjoy the beach or a meal at the Town Center. Unfortunately, none of these have a simple solution, so the sooner we get to work on them and find creative solutions, the sooner we will be able to enjoy the Beach Life.**
- J. Are there any other issues you would like to address? Please explain.
- **I think our long range planning should begin to examine topics such as the Opioid crisis and the increasing severity of weather events. Opioids have already crossed over into 32233, and they do not respect income brackets. As residents on a barrier island, either the ocean front or the marsh could experience significant water incursions The current Commission has made a good start by authorizing a comprehensive storm drain survey of the city, but then we will have to decide where we can make adaptions and mitigations.**