



## 2020 Jacksonville Beach COUNCIL Candidate Written Questions

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1. **Qualifications and Motivation:** What qualifications in terms of education, experience, and prior community service do you bring to your candidacy for public office? Please explain what motivates you to run for office at this time?

I have been a Beach resident since 1990. I graduated from Fletcher High School, bought a house in Jacksonville Beach after college, and became a business owner in our JB downtown business district. My two children were born at Baptist Beaches, and to complete the circle, they are now students at Fletcher High School. During all this time, I have experienced life in our beach town from many different perspectives, and I understand the importance of protecting the culture we all know and love.

Over the past 8 years, I have been volunteering my time as a board member of the Community Redevelopment Agency (the "CRA"), which oversees the redevelopment of certain portions of downtown Jacksonville Beach as well as a portion South Beach Parkway near JTB. Through this experience, I have helped focus the beach's various vision plans and implemented infrastructure development needed to set the beaches up for the next stage of development. I have learned how the city operates, who the key players are, and what processes are in place.

Security has been an ongoing topic during my time on the CRA. Our work on the CRA has helped fund the Downtown Community Assisted Policing Effort (the "DT CAPE" program), which increased the number of officers dedicated specifically in downtown Jacksonville Beach and provided additional vehicles and equipment to support them. To broaden my knowledge and understanding of the complexities surrounding the topic, I enrolled in the Citizen Police Academy. I have also had discussions with the Mission house to gain a better understanding of the complex issues that impact our homeless population.

I am motivated to run for City Council Seat 1 At-Large because there is a lot of growth coming to Jacksonville Beach. As a citizen and through my volunteer work for the city, I know that this growth can happen many different ways, but I believe it is critical to guide development in a way that taps into the potential of our city while preserving our culture.

2. **Priorities:** What is your number one priority to address during your tenure on the City Council. Why is this your number one priority? Please be specific.

Put simply, it is to support a culture that is driven with Community in mind.

I risk being cliché, but the common theme of all JB Downtown Vision Plans is “family friendly”. I believe family friendly is a result of a strong community, not a goal or priority. To this end, I think we need to look at what our JB spaces (districts/neighborhoods) look like on paper first. What do we have to work with? Does our current zoning fit those areas to support the type of community services or businesses we want to have? Does it create an environment that will attract our citizens as well as tourists? In addition to zoning, codes and how they are enforced may need to be reviewed. I believe this work will open up opportunities or find processes that need attention. If we find ways to incentivize builders and drive the type of community growth our citizens are looking for, from housing to retail to entertainment, family friendly will be the result.

My hope would be that the work done over the next 4 years will drive growth and development in a way that stimulates our local economy, while preserving the community culture we value so much.

The CRA has put into place a lot of the infrastructure needed to begin implementing the development needed to encourage this kind of environment. As a voice on the council, I will be able to continue advocating for the long-term plans the CRA has been putting into motion, as well as broaden that beach cruiser community feel throughout our neighborhoods.

3. **Budget:** In the event of a budget shortfall, would you consider a millage increase to maintain levels of service? If not, what specific items in the budget would you recommend adjusting? What specific strategies would you suggest to raise additional funds? Please be specific.

Jacksonville Beach is currently debt free and we are a City with a large amount of incoming revenue. For this reason, I do not think it likely that we would have a shortfall in the near future. For the sake of this question, I see no reason to increase the millage rate as there are places in our current budget that could be looked at if services were jeopardized. For example, there is 1 million allocated to the Internal Services (subcategory Meter services) that could be reviewed. There is \$700,000 allocated to the Non-Major Department fund and \$800,000 allocated to the Non-Major Enterprise fund for leasing facilities. However, before any of these I would look at supplementing any services with the \$600,000 allocated to the Non-Department Unanticipated fund or simply stall a Capital Improvement Project if so warranted.

If for some reason, none of these areas could be thinned down, a solution could be to issue municipal bonds to cover a Capital Improvement expenditure and redirecting the originally budgeted funds to cover the cost of other services needed. This option would be very specific to the Capital Improvement project and would need to be studied in detail before making a decision.

4. **Charter Amendments:** What is your position on the following proposed Jacksonville Beach charter amendments that will be on the General Election ballot?

a. **Amendment 1:** A super majority vote is required to remove the City Manager.

I do not agree that a super majority vote should be required to remove the City Manager. The City Manager is hired by the City Council with a simple majority, and I believe the same simple majority should be able to remove him or her.

b. **Amendment 2:** A super majority vote is required to remove the City Attorney.

I do not agree that a super majority vote should be required to remove the City Attorney. The City Attorney is hired by the City Council with a simple majority, and I believe the same simple majority should be able to remove him or her.

c. **Amendment 3:** A voter referendum is required to eliminate Beaches Energy or Police Department.

I do agree with requiring the voters to have a say regarding the elimination of Beaches Energy or the Police Department. These services have more of a direct impact on the day to day lives of our citizens than any other department in our local government, and if we are striving to achieve “community” we need to include the community in a major decision like this.

d. **Amendment 4:** Clarifies that, except for purposes of inquiry, no City Council member or appointed board member can interfere with the performance of the duties of a City employee who is under the direct or indirect supervision of the City Manager.

I agree that the City Council has no business interfering with hiring and human resource issues regarding city employees who are under the direct or indirect supervision of the City Manager. To have a council member or the mayor interfere with the performance of duties of the city employees could open up the potential for an abuse of power. The City Manager is responsible to the City Council, and if a council member has an issue with an employee that reports to the City Manager, it is the City Manager’s responsibility to resolve this issue. Keep in mind that if there is an ongoing issue that is not resolved, the City Council will always have the ability to discipline or remove the City Manager.

5. **Coastal Resiliency:** Going forward, what actions does Jacksonville Beach need to take to mitigate flooding vulnerability and sea level rise?

During my term on the CRA, we have worked diligently to improve drainage and redirect water in the Downtown district and South end. This includes improvements to the holding ponds, drainage pipes, and pumps. We also ensured that our funding was sufficient to

include ongoing maintaining of those items. I believe flooding in the areas we have improved will be significantly less than it has been in the past.

We should also ensure that new projects going forward in our particularly vulnerable properties along the beach and the Intracoastal Waterway are set up for success by including any necessary infrastructure improvements in the planning of major new developments. For example, the area on 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue North and 20<sup>th</sup> Street North (by Rick's Bait and Tackle) needs to be addressed. With all the rain we had in the last couple weeks, the area has been dealing with a lot of standing water forcing some of the businesses there to alter their operations temporarily. I think it is important to put a plan in place to address this, especially in light of next year's proposed COJ Capital Improvement of 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue towards the boat ramp. That way, we don't have to destroy any new improvements to implement structural changes necessary to improve the drainage.

For sea level rise, we need to continue supporting our beach renourishment projects and consider how development along the beach can include ways to fortify our sea wall. For example, part of the CRA plan for downtown includes extending the boardwalk south of the lifeguard station all the way to 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue South. The board walk could be elevated and constructed in such a way that it provides a barrier, similar to a bulkhead, which can provide a line of defense for those communities in the event of a storm surge.

Less direct, but no less important, actions we can take involve having the city do its best to reduce its carbon footprint by reviewing its own practices, and incentivizing private development include more eco-friendly features in their projects.

6. **Growth Management**: While you are in office, Jacksonville Beach will be updating the Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Code.
  - a. What specific changes do you want to see made to the Comprehensive Plan? Please explain your proposed changes and why you recommend these changes.

I am excited with the prospect of being able to help direct the future of our community during this cycle of updating the Comprehensive Plan.

In the Future Land Use Element section, I would like to see proposed sidewalks look more like major roadways or arteries within the City infrastructure. The current map looks submitted. To promote outdoor, beach community living; we as a City need to provide safe, wide, and designated pedestrian roadways to destinations all over the City.

In the Transportation Element, I gravitated to the Parking facilities. Specifically, Objective Policy TE 1.4 – where it allows for consolidated or free-standing parking facilities. Part of the Central Business District (CBD) development plan specifically mentions reducing traffic by controlling where vehicular traffic travels. This is done by one directional roads and centralized parking to support surrounding properties.

The Comprehensive Plan also calls for exploration of alternative transportation such as Beach Buggy and the Trolley from different consolidated parking areas through out the City. This is something I have been advocating for. A smart, multi-use, visually appealing parking center could be a way to bargain or direct future building in our downtown district. In addition, the City could better direct vehicular traffic to encourage safer pedestrian travel and hopefully will create an area easier to police.

In the Housing Element section, I question Policy HO 1.5.3 and its limit of no more than 6 residents per an alternative DCF or foster care facilities. I would like to explore this more as there are many family units who live in all housing categories R1, R2 and R3 that are larger than this maximum.

I would recommend that Policy CM 2.2.2 of the Coastal Management Element and Policy RO 1.8.2 be reworded. They currently state that replacement parking must be no less convenient for beach visitors than what is replaced. If parking is replaced across a street or down the block, does this mean it is less convenient? I believe a longer distance would not be less convenient if pedestrian travel from the replacement parking is safe and easy to traverse.

- b. What specific changes do you want to see made to the Land Development Code? Please explain what specific aspects of the Land Development Code are not functioning and what would you do about them.

My review of the Land Development Code challenged me to visualize “community” in conjunction with the different aspects of zoning, which lead me to speak to a few developers about where some of their personal frustrations are stemmed from. I also drove around various neighborhoods in the city to get a feel for the environment in different residential zones, such as R1, R2 and R3. The biggest issue that sticks out to me is residential overflow of parking on to our streets.

Our current land use limits land development to 35% of the lot (generally) and includes part of the driveways in that calculation. This blanket rule, across all types of residences should be addressed.

In R1 – Less Density this 35% land use calculation did not seem to be too much of an issue.

In R2 – Moderate Density the 35% land use calculation should be addressed to help limit street congestion. Most of these houses have single car garages. I would propose an incentive for builders to design more functional parking solutions to keep the average sized family’s vehicular needs off the roads. If a design included a solution the city would not include it in the land use calculation. Side effects could include less crowding in the streets, safer environment for children to play and hopefully some creative, but nice, street facing yardscapes.

In R3 – High Density the land use calculation is a little more lenient. However, most multi-family dwellings are short parking and utilize the streets as well. I also noticed that the landscaping around many of these developments were sparse, as residents converted yard space into weed filled gravel parking spaces. Allowing a larger driveway at initial construction would be better for the residents and the neighborhood. While I understand the purpose of these codes is to maintain some green space and provide a setback for utility work, an idea would be to allow these elements in exchange for having certain landscape features, like a substantial tree, for example.

I believe these adjustments will encourage builders to create a community that anyone would like to live in, and it follows the 2030 Comprehensive Plan's policy to emphasize a pedestrian and bicycle-oriented environment.

7. **Crime & Public Safety**: What are the most important crime & public safety issues in Jacksonville Beach and what should be done to address them and fund them? Please be specific.

I personally think our police department is on target with regard to protecting our community. Our city is one of the busiest beaches in all of Florida, considering our small size and high traffic, and that means that a lot of the crime we experience in the community is coming from outside of the community. Obviously, we need to continue supporting and standing behind our Jacksonville Beach Police Department. My work on the Community Redevelopment Agency has directed funding towards adding more officers in the Downtown district and provided equipment and infrastructure needed to support them.

That being said, public safety is more than just calling the cops when there is a problem. We need to change the environment that allows problems to fester by updating the image of our Downtown. Providing an environment that locals want to utilize more than, or as much as our visitors do, will help reduce our crime rates as locals and families have very different behaviors than visitors that come into our community to hang out at the bars.

I believe the biggest public safety concern is a Jacksonville Beach Downtown district that is not diversified to include more than hotels and bars. We currently have 5 hotels between Beach Blvd and 7<sup>th</sup> Ave. North with more proposed. We have 3 retail shops, and almost every other business is a bar or a restaurant with a full bar. Without incentives to have builders support a more diverse downtown, to include shopping, eating and daytime destinations, we run the risk of a downtown that only gives visitors the opportunity to hang out on the beach, drink, and loiter, which can lead to a lot of the crime we've been experiencing. A bustling downtown will attract more diverse crowd looking for family fun as well as food and drink.

8. **Downtown**:
  - a. What do you propose be done to promote and encourage new business and redevelopment in the downtown to achieve the community's vision for a safe, walkable, and family-friendly area?

I have been pushing for, and our original downtown development plan discussed, centralizing parking. Strategically providing parking that businesses can use instead of requiring parking to use up square footage on their properties can be a way to incentivize businesses to take full advantage of their properties. Centralizing parking can provide the opportunity for the city to direct automobile traffic, control pedestrian flow throughout the area and decreases the amount of “hang out spots” that have to be policed. All of these increase safety. With these incentives, we will also need to ensure that the city includes basic design guidelines so that future development includes pedestrian-friendly features and enhances the family-friendly image we are creating. We will also need a PR campaign to get people to check out the new Jacksonville Beach.

Downtown improvement is a process, and a lot of things need to happen to make it work. Just completing one piece without considering the whole picture will not be as effective. So, this will be a massive project, but it is worth doing.

- b. What kinds of businesses, developments, and improvements would you like to see in the downtown Central Business District? Please be specific.

Our boardwalk needs some diversification. As a parent, I would have loved having a spot I could grab a sandwich or smoothie for my children while we enjoyed the beach. The pier parking lot provides an opportunity for a plaza on the boardwalk that includes food, snacks, and refreshing drinks. Like an open-air food court where you can be covered in salt and sand, but still walk up and grab a bite.

The Community Redevelopment Agency’s Vision Plan includes provisions for something like this for the Pier parking lot. It also includes additional plans for developing a food and retail plaza in the parking lot next to Latham Park near City Hall.

It would be great to get these developments started, but we must have the infrastructure to support it. Centralized parking is a must. People need to be able to easily find parking, and once they get out of their cars, they need to be able to easily walk to wherever they are going. It would also help to have friendly JB downtown themed signage to help everyone find what they are looking for.

9. **Strategic Plan:** With input from citizens and businesses, the Jacksonville Beach City Council is developing a vision and strategic plan for Jacksonville Beach.
  - a. What is YOUR vision for the future of Jacksonville Beach?

Our city has just over 4 miles of coastline, and I envision a downtown designed to attract businesses that will make it a destination for our residents as well as visitors from Jacksonville and our neighboring beaches. If you are a visitor coming all the way out to the beach, I want you to be able to spend the entire day here and have all the shops, services, and entertainment you need. If you are a resident, I want

you to be able to hop on your beach cruiser and go anywhere you want to go safely without feeling like you need to avoid the tourists.

- b. If you are elected, what would you do to achieve that vision?

Jacksonville Beach has had a Downtown Vision Plan since the 1980's, but if you compare the original plan and all of its potential to what we currently have today, you will see that almost nothing in the original plan was really accomplished as it was intended. There have been multiple revisions to that plan, but now because of the development that currently exists, the original plan is basically obsolete.

The Downtown Vision Plan has always been one of the primary responsibilities of the Community Redevelopment Agency, and I think the CRA needs all the support it can get to get the job done. This includes updating the Vision Plan to account for our current environment as well as being an advocate for progress to be pushed forward. In the past, under the prior City Manager, many of the CRA directives did not make it to the Council, and valuable time and funds have been lost as a result. I will work hard to ensure that communication flows from the CRA to the City Council so that things are not held up. The Vision Plan is comprehensive, so if the CRA and the City Council works together, they can make great progress in transforming our community.

10. **Vacation Rentals:** Would you change anything in the current Jax Beach vacation rental regulations? Please explain what you would change and why.

The regulations regarding Short-Term Vacation Rentals are reasonable to me, and I don't believe that the code needs to be updated. However, the biggest complaints I hear have to do with behavior more than the rules. For example, I know a person who lives next door to a vacation rental, and her biggest complaint is the amount of garbage on the property. The rules regarding informing renters about how to deal with the garbage are clear, but obviously, it is still a problem. So, the real issue seems to be enforcement of the rules, and I believe we need to review how those codes are monitored. We need more code enforcement and we need them to be friendly, community-minded people that are encouraging, helpful, and understanding.

11. **Campaign Pledge:** Will you make a pledge to carry out a campaign based on issues and facts and renounce the use of name-calling and inuendo? What will you do if such literature (for instance by mass mailings) is distributed?

I do pledge to carry out a campaign based on issues and facts, and I renounce the use of name-calling and inuendo.

I believe in rules of engagement and do my best to stay away from unproductive actions. There isn't much to do when others distribute misleading material other than to stay true to myself, and speak my message honestly. I don't believe that it helps to react to a

slandorous campaign by responding with more slander. That just polarizes the community and distracts everyone from the real issues.

12. **Other issues:** Are there any other issues you would like to address if elected? Please explain.

I touched on code enforcement in my answer on Short-Term Vacation Rentals, but I also want to review code enforcement in the city as a whole. Currently, we only have one code enforcement employee, which is not enough to cover the whole city. Adding additional code enforcers will allow the code enforcement team to work with our citizens to fix code violations in a more community friendly way.