



## 2020 Atlantic Beach COMMISSION 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?

While I have no prior political experience, other than being a super voter, I have always made it my business to participate in our local government. I attend meetings and workshops and feel that being an involved citizen is my responsibility. Otherwise, I have deep experience in community and civic engagement.

I was part of the inaugural committee to organize and host First Night Atlantic Beach, and later served on the Board of Trustees for Beaches Fine Arts Series for 6 years, culminating as President of the Board. Continuing my volunteer work, I served the Cultural Council of Greater Jacksonville as a grant panelist for 3 years where, as steward of the taxpayers investment in the arts, I was charged with evaluating and recommending several beach organizations including the Beaches Fine Arts Series, Players by the Sea, Atlantic Beach Experimental Theatre and the Beaches Historical Museum. I then served on the full board of the Cultural Council for an additional 3 years. I was a volunteer at the Gail Baker Community Center for several years where I helped kids with math homework and reading. I also planted a garden with the children there where we grew vegetables to share. I also served on board of the Florida Theatre, Renaissance Jax and the Women's Giving Alliance. I advise the city on the Facade Art Grant program and facilitate the hiring of actors for Shakespeare in the Park.

Professionally, I worked with a local historic preservation developer as his Director of Marketing and Community Engagement as we sought to restore the Barnett Bank Building and the Laura Street Trio in downtown Jacksonville. Currently, I am a Business Development Strategist at a local advertising agency. I have flexibility in my job to spend the necessary time to be an active and involved Commissioner that serves our precinct and the community as a whole. In the experience I mentioned, it was necessary that I be a really good listener, gather lots of information and input from my fellow board members and the organizations I served. I had to organize and arrive at consensus to make and implement decisions that determined programming. Another big part of my job was monitoring and approving large and small budgets to make sure those organizations were making smart

decisions. These are skills that I look forward to bringing to the job of Commissioner in Seat 3.

- 2. Priorities:** What is your number 1 priority to address during your tenure on the City Commission. Why is this your number one priority. Please be specific.

Sustainability and resiliency are my top priorities. This issue impacts every other issue our community is facing. As a coastal community, rising sea level, increased rainfall and storm frequency are very real concerns we need to pay attention to. It's imperative that we have a solid plan to modernize and fortify our infrastructure now and for the long term. Recently, I met with the City Manager, Shane Corbin, and our City Engineer, Steve Swann, to discuss ongoing efforts and plans for the future. Last November I attended the Beaches Watch presentation by Mr. Swann and Mr. Corbin of the Beach Vulnerability Assessment. Currently, they are preparing a study for the next phase - an Adaptability Plan, beyond that will come recommendations for implementation. Planning now for the long term is fiscally more responsible and allows us more time to work the cost of this into our annual budget. With the ultimate goal of preserving the value and beauty of Atlantic Beach, while keeping people in their homes and water out, I would work closely with our very capable city staff in their efforts to protect our community. I am looking forward to fully engaging in this process to lead and support a well thought out plan so every neighborhood in Atlantic Beach is protected.

- 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.

Key factors of this question depend on frequency and magnitude. If, for example, we have a one-off budget shortfall due to a hurricane or pandemic that won't be systemic, then we should be able to handle it through either budget cuts or by taking a distribution from our reserves. But again, that depends on the magnitude of the shortfall. If it's substantial or persistent due to a long-term downturn in real estate values and economy, then we would have to consider long-term cuts from all departments except that which impacts public safety. Our taxes here in Atlantic Beach are lower than the other beaches and the City of Jacksonville, but still we maintain a balanced budget (required by law). This year, in fact, we did NOT have to dip into our reserves to provide a balanced budget, in fact, we were able to put money BACK into reserves. We are currently in a good place, but 2020 has proven that things could take an unforeseen turn. If we did face a persistent, long-term budget shortfall, investing in our community through raising taxes would be my last resort, but not off the table. The question should be put to voters to let them decide whether the need is important enough to warrant an increase.

- 4. Charter Amendment:** The proposed Atlantic Beach Charter Amendment will extend the Mayor's term of office from two to four years, reduces the number of allowable consecutive

terms for the Mayor from four to two terms, and limits any Mayor holding office as of November 2022, who has served two consecutive terms, to one additional consecutive four-year term. What is your position on the proposed Charter amendment? Please be specific.

I think the Atlantic Beach Charter should be amended to allow for a four-year mayoral term with a two-term limit. Every two years is onerous, costly and likely to prevent quality candidates from running. Even though we have a weak Mayor system, the Mayor is responsible for setting the direction of the city and four years is a more appropriate time frame than two. All the beach cities, the City of Jacksonville, and most cities run on a four-year cycle. Here in northeast Florida I think the historical record would reflect that none of the other cities have had significantly negative outcomes as a result of a four-year term, nor does Atlantic Beach have a significantly more positive outcome with two years of service. Considering that \$50K+ will probably be spent on the Mayor's race this year, I would rather see people donate \$50K to BEAM or Feeding Northeast Florida in the off cycle election years.

5. **In-house Attorney:** Would you support hiring an in-house city attorney? Why or why not?

As Commissioner, I'd gather information from all perspectives and offer an informed opinion. I understand that this is a topic that comes up for discussion frequently. I asked city staff recently what their opinion is and have been told that, yes, an in-house attorney would be preferable. Whether this position would be a full- or part-time job requires evaluation, as does salary and the additional costs for benefits, etc. The benefit of accessible, professional legal advice would, in my opinion, serve our staff and community without the worry of incurring unbudgeted expenses.

6. **Land Development Regulations:** Describe specifically any changes to the Atlantic Beach Land Development Regulations you would support. What would you aim to accomplish by these changes?

I would not change the development regulations for impervious surfaces. The impervious area limit in all conventional residential zoning districts is 45 percent, brought down from 50 percent in 2019, and I think that's fair. How a lot is developed affects its surrounding neighbors, specifically for stormwater drainage, and as I mentioned in the first question, this is critical to addressing sustainability and resiliency. I am open to discussing a modification to our development regulations regarding building height as future coastal homes, whether on the ocean or the marsh, may need to be built off-grade. Further, I believe we need more rigorous efforts to preserve our tree canopy. Many people move to Atlantic Beach because of the unique beauty of our maritime forests. It truly is one of the only places on the east coast that live oaks grow side by side with pines and palm trees. Steadfast protection of this delicate ecosystem provides for a high quality of life and growing property values.

7. **Parking:** Are the present parking arrangements in the Town Center and beach accesses adequate for residents and visitors? What changes (if any) do you favor?

I am a proponent of paid parking at the beach, both at Town Center and at each beach access. In all cases, I want Atlantic Beach residents to be able to park for free at all times. Currently, paid parking at Town Center seems to be operating better and some of the kinks are being worked out. It is mainly under the control of Neptune Beach since they own the majority of the spaces. I would continue to solicit feedback from the business owners to make sure the current situation is meeting their needs. I understand that business owners want turnover of the spaces so their patrons have access, so paid parking with a limit of two or three hours is acceptable, and in my opinion, but must be enforced.

As for beach access, that will always be difficult. We are a residential neighborhood that happens to be on the ocean, so striking a balance between providing a growing population that has a right to enjoy the public beach with the privacy and public safety that our residents deserve, is paramount. There are a number of constraining aspects of it. We have a requirement to provide a certain number of spaces to qualify for beach renourishment funds from the Florida DEP and the City of Jacksonville. This is a huge expense that residents don't want to pay for, and our city couldn't afford. I am for providing the exact number of spaces required, and for ensuring that we enforce that number. There is a formula for determining where the spaces are to be located, and there are obvious space constrictions for the number that each access can accommodate. We must take into account the ability for safety vehicles to get down narrow accesses, so each access should be looked at individually. All beach access spaces should be first come first served, and again, free to AB residents at all times.

8. **Parks:** What changes or improvements would you like to see made to Atlantic Beach parks?

Our parks are one of our jewels and if you haven't done it you should participate in the "Tour de Parks" bike ride the next time we have it. I think we have a good mix of passive and active parks. I want to make sure that we fully fund the maintenance that each park requires and prioritize improvements in our Parks Master Plan.

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

I was curious about this since I have always felt safe in Atlantic Beach, so I met with Chief Gualillo. He said that our city is not different from other cities in that there are two kinds of crime - quality of life issues, and criminal issues. Traffic and parking are quality of life issues and are usually at the top of the list followed by property crimes such as simple thefts. Interpersonal crimes such as assaults are typically reactionary. Certainly, speeding in our

neighborhood streets is an issue, especially on Main Street and Seminole Road. I attended a community workshop recently to address and mitigate some of that. I am struck with the fact that our staff is actively listening to the citizens to solve these problems.

Otherwise, we are doing pretty well. We are a safe city. We have made advances in community policing and this philosophy is one that our police department wants to continue to move forward. Chief Gualillo tells me that our police and public safety officers feel supported. He says that pay equity is good and we're on par with Jacksonville and Neptune Beach, which hasn't always been the case, so now we are retaining good people. I was also happy to learn that as a city we are moving toward adopting an Officer Wellness Model to help our officers with career PTSD, that is, repeated low levels of stress and trauma that over a 15-20-year career takes its toll. It was emphasized that our Atlantic Beach Police Officers feel appreciated by the community, and that everything is working well - a trend everyone hopes to continue. Before I left my brief meeting with Chief Gualillo he emphasized his open-door policy and offered that any citizen from any neighborhood in AB reach out if they have concerns or questions.

10. **Resilience:** What are the Atlantic Beach infrastructure needs when it comes to sea level rise and resiliency and what would you support to address these issues?

This is the main reason I am running as I stated above. We need to protect our community for ourselves and children. Making sure that our infrastructure can withstand rising seas and stronger, more frequent storms is critical to our future. We must have a solid plan. I have observed in the many meetings that I've attended both in person and virtually, that we have very capable department heads and a sharp city manager who are all working together toward a common goal of a safe, healthy, and functioning city. There is a priority list for capital improvement projects to address the infrastructure needs such as helping Aquatic Gardens residents with flooding and moving others off septic. I want to continue to support this work and maintain the momentum we have gained.

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've run my campaign on the issues as highlighted on my website ([www.Lisa4AB.com](http://www.Lisa4AB.com)) and campaign literature. I pledge to continue to focus my campaign on those issues and stay away from negative campaigning and personal attacks. I will always maintain a nonpartisan perspective. The issues that we face affect all of us whether we're Rs, Ds or NPAs. We are neighbors and I will never inject a partisan divide into our city.

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

This goes with all my priorities. Everything costs money and running this city in a fiscally responsible way is important. We already have the lowest tax rate among the beaches cities and the COJ. I will work to maintain that, but there are issues on the horizon. When the Better Jacksonville Plan expires in 2030 the money we receive as part of that goes away. This funding currently helps to pay for infrastructure and public works projects. When those dollars are diverted to pay for the Police and Fire Pension for the City of Jacksonville, we will need to replace that funding stream. We need to start planning our budget now to account for this so we can continue to maintain the quality of life and livability that has brought all of us to Atlantic Beach.