



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 grew up at the beaches, attended Episcopal High School and Auburn University where I majored in Political Science. While in college I interned on Capitol Hill for our local Congressional Representative, Ander Crenshaw. I have been an active supporter of The First Tee of North Florida beginning as a volunteer coach and evolving to a donor and sponsor. Currently I hold the role of General Manager at Marsh Landing Country Club. I feel this role is very similar to one on City Council. At work, I listen to the needs of members and staff, I weigh the benefits and the costs, and I make a decision to act, not act, or to table this for the future. There are always competing interests and judging which course of action is not always easy but it's imperative to make the decision in the best interest of the majority and the business. Because of this, I feel my work experience has prepared me for City Council, to meet the needs of our citizens and come up with the most common-sense solution the provides the greatest benefit to all.

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.

My number one priority will be to create a more viable downtown district consistent with the current vision plan that is being established. When I participated in the vision meetings, there was a consistent message for our downtown area- we as locals and residents want more to do in a similar manner to what Neptune Beach has done. Currently, we have an excellent nightlife in the downtown section, however there is a distinct lack of additional activities for us as locals and for visitors to our city. We need more to draw people downtown! We need to add retail shopping, coffee shops, ice cream stores, and restaurants. We have the opportunity to make a commercial and residential hub in our downtown district that will draw us locals and visitors alike. This is my number one priority because of several reasons. A lot of us in Jax Beach and even those in Ponte Vedra will drive through Jacksonville Beach to go to Neptune Beach. They do so because there is more to do in that area. They have created a walkable, bike friendly downtown that offers activities from sun-up to sun-down and beyond. I'm confident this can be done better in Jacksonville Beach. Another reason is it will create a safer environment. By creating activities for everyone to enjoy, you will have more people in that area, creating a natural crime deterrent. If we can add residential to the downtown, then there will be an even

further crime deterrent as there will be more eyes on the streets. Last with more businesses in the sector, our tax base will grow, and we can hire more officers and pay our officers a better wage for their work keeping our streets safe. We will also have more money to improve all aspects of life including our parks and recreation and public works. I believe that by creating a downtown that features activities for everyone, prime retail and shopping, while still offering the nightlife will further grow our economy here and allow us to expand other services.

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.

In the event of a budget shortfall I would consider a millage increase, however I am not a proponent of this solution and would do everything possible to avoid that option. My goal would be to keep the burden off the individual taxpayer. I believe through stronger business initiatives we can help grow the tax base to maintain and improve the level of service. Having a viable downtown sector and improving the Central Business District would be one way to raise the tax base. I would support incentives for businesses to open and for smart redevelopment of dilapidated buildings. Last, I would look to the City of Jacksonville if no other options were present to help eliminate the shortfall. The cost of cable TV per month can be greater than the cost of city services to the taxpayer through their property taxes. If we could get a slight millage rate increase from the City of Jacksonville, we would be able to fund our budget without a shortfall and still provide the same service levels.

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. It should be a majority vote of the council. It is our duty to make sure our citizens are being well represented and served. We need to keep our City Manager serving in the best interest of the city and it is the job of the council to protect that.
- b. **Amendment 2:** A super majority vote is required to remove the City Attorney. It should be a majority vote of the council. It is our duty to make sure our citizens are being well represented and served. We need to keep our City Attorney serving in the best interest of the city and it is the job of the council to protect that.
- c. **Amendment 3:** A voter referendum is required to eliminate Beaches Energy or Police Department.

I am in support of this amendment. Beaches Energy is one of the best utility companies in the State of Florida. It serves its citizens well. The citizens should have a voice if the city decides it would want to incorporate into JEA or have it run a different way. I believe one of the best aspects of our municipality is the local Police Department. JSO has nearly 2,000 police officers according to their website, we have 67 sworn officers to protect our citizens. I like that we have the personal level of care and attention those 67 officers provide on a daily basis. I am an ardent supporter of our Police and will continue to support them. If the city decides it wants to incorporate into JSO, it needs to be left to the voters and not the City Council.

- 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 believe this weakens our City Council and enables a City Manager to have too much authority. Similar to a company, the City Manager is like the CEO, and the City Council is like a board of directors. I believe it is the duty of the board to oversee the actions of the CEO and those working for him to hold him and his staff accountable. On City Council, we should hold our City Manager and those under his direct orders and supervision accountable just as we are held accountable by the constituents of Jacksonville Beach.

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

We need to constantly look to upgrade our stormwater management system and do so in conjunction with local and state authority. We have done tremendous work in the past few years, upgrading drainage pipes, retention ponds, dry storage, and drainage basins. It's imperative that we continue our Public Works Department and FDOT cooperation to get these projects completed and done so in a timely fashion. We currently have A1A drainage improvement projects as well as a downtown Infrastructure project ongoing. The sooner we can get these done, the better prepared we will be for the next storms to hit the region. We must also work with the state to protect and expand our beaches and sand dunes. The sand dunes on our beach is the most valuable barrier and protection against sea water and possible sea level rise. We must get funding through Beach Management Funding Assistance Program and work with the Corps of Engineers to get our beaches and dunes built up to withstand storm surge. We must also protect our dunes, it's imperative we have them to protect our homes and businesses inland.

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.

We should update our Comprehensive Plan, it's an important tool used to look ahead and provide a baseline for growth. I believe that instead of overreaching changes, we should look to better implementation of the goals and objectives already in the plan. We should look to our Policies on the Central Business District, and that they should encourage redevelopment of the core area. These were supposed to be implemented into the zoning regulations; however, redevelopment is not possible via the LDC because existing building currently occupy 90% coverage, they are supposed to be redeveloped in the same manner as they are, however the current LDC does not allow 90% coverage and no parking. Our Comprehensive plan says we need to enable and provide access to affordable housing, we should look for better implementation there. The city should help assist in this program and enable the redevelopment our Comprehensive Plan calls for, instead of prohibiting it in many cases found today. Our city should emphasize pedestrian pathways and the further creation of bicycle pathways as encouraged in the Plan. We should look to the creation of multiuse greenways within our community further enhancing the walkability and bicycle use of our residents. These

are some of the many examples found within the Comprehensive Plan that deserve attention going forward. While some changes will be necessary, it is imperative that these are done by planning professionals.

- 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.

We should conduct a complete review of the LDC. This should be done via special committee appointed by the mayor which consists of residents, business owners & property owners, and planning professionals. One thing is that we keep referencing “mixed-use” however our code features no definition of what that is. We emphasize mixed-use throughout our LDC and Comprehensive Plans but fail to provide any definition for what that really is. I believe our downtown continues to struggle because of archaic regulations in our LDC. In our Civic Corridor, the Comprehensive plan calls for “..buildings to remain and be rehabilitated in a style consistent with their original construction and design.” These buildings featured no parking and 90% lot coverage. However, the current LDC would not allow this to happen because it requires parking and a driveway for that parking. These are just a few examples of our LDC that does not support the Vision Plan that we have for Jacksonville Beach. These examples highlight why a comprehensive overhaul is needed, and one that should be conducted by a specially appointed committee.

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.

First, we have to manage the influx of crime from outside our city. Crime knows no borders and it's a fact that the majority of arrests, over 90% are non-Jacksonville Beach residents. To address this, we need to focus on more vigilant patrols by our officers and increase the number of patrol officers. I would also suggest installing a traffic camera, similar to St Johns County, that captures the license plates of those entering Jacksonville Beach. That way there's a record of the vehicles that enter and exit the city. These projects would come from our Police funding. Currently 42% of our budget goes to law enforcement. Based on other budgetary needs, I see this as an acceptable number at this time. What I would like to see increased is our overall budget. We only increased our budget 0.31% but we had a 1.4% increase in revenue. With an increase to our budget, we can devote more funds under the same percent. Secondly, we need to create a safer city for pedestrians and bicyclists. One of the best aspects of our beach city is the walkability, including bicycling. However, there are continual pedestrian accidents involving vehicles. This can be tackled multiple ways. We need to increase pedestrian and bicycle awareness. Yes, a lot of the accidents are due to pedestrians being in the roadway improperly and bicycles running stop signs, they're required to stop too. We must also look at the driver too, we need to work to decrease impaired driving and monitor speed limits to decrease

speeders down our streets. Specifically, this needs to add more patrol to our neighborhoods, more traffic enforcement, and more education for our pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers.

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?

We should encourage businesses to come to our downtown area by providing incentives if necessary. However, I don't believe they'll be necessary if we can allow a few changes to be made. First, we have to let the business worry about parking. To encourage redevelopment, we should allow 90% lot coverage and eliminate the parking requirement. This will allow businesses to adequately occupy their space and allow them to be successful. It will also encourage redevelopment as the old building that could not be redeveloped, now have an avenue to. Second, we should allow more than 25% outdoor space. If COVID has taught us anything it's the want of outdoor dining and recreation. Our current mandate only allowing 25% discourages businesses from having it for the 9 months a year its enjoyable, because they lose out on those 3 months. If you allow more space, they will be able to put it in other areas, such as rooftops, without it being a negative cost benefit. We should look to Neptune Beach in how they have handled the extremely limited parking. They have also encouraged a lot of activity for all ages including restaurants, retail shopping, and spots like coffee shops and ice cream stores. We should also look into closing 1st street on the weekends in the downtown area to encourage that walking environment. This would help keep our pedestrians safe and limit the vehicular traffic through our downtown.

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

I would like to see restaurants first and foremost. I think we have the most valuable resource a city can have, the beach, and I believe it is severely underutilized. I would love to see restaurants with rooftop and oceanfront dining along 1st street. I would love to see coffee shops, boutiques, retail shopping, ice cream stores, everything that a vibrant downtown town center should have! Make the Central Business District an area where us locals can go and enjoy the day with people of all ages. It can still have the nightlife but give us more to do in the forms of these other activities. I would like to see smart redevelopment of older buildings and create a central hub of activity that draws us in time and time again. I would also like to see safe and maintained sidewalks and passageways for pedestrians and bicycles to encourage us to go down there without our cars and to spend the day walking around, visiting shops, getting food and drinks, and enjoying the great things we can offer our residents.

8. **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?

I see Jacksonville Beach as maintaining its status as “affordable living at the beach” while also improving the quality of life of its residents by providing a viable hub in the downtown district. I want to see us expand beyond the nightlife and become a place where all residents feel comfortable going to the downtown and it is offering something to do for us all. I see a safer Jacksonville Beach, working to eliminate violent crime, where criminals know this isn’t the place for them to come. I see us offering pathways for residents to move around the city outside their vehicles, creating East-West pathways to access the beach. I see us as a pro-business and pro local city, where a resident can start a business or bring their business to their city, and we support them as residents. My vision is to return Jacksonville Beach to its place as “First Coast’s Finest Beach” and do so in a sustainable way for the future.

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

If elected, I will work every day to make Jacksonville Beach better than the day before. I will work with residents, business and property owners, and our government to support smart and safe enterprise. I will start a committee for our Central Business District consisting of residents, property owners, and planners to create a sensible plan to get our downtown to become the hub for business and activity it was meant to be. I will work with our Police Department to support their needs to accomplish their mission and with our residents to support them as well. I will work with Public Works to help establish the East-West beltways and better sidewalks and bike lanes. I will work to keep our individual taxes low by supporting and expanding local business in our city. To help accomplish my objectives, I look to grow our economy through smart growth practices and helping businesses grow and succeed. Most of all, I will protect the citizens of Jacksonville Beach and our local way of life which makes this one of the best cities to live in.

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

I would not change our current Jacksonville Beach vacation rental policy. I think our policy is comprehensive enough to protect both our local families and tourism. Property owners must go through a lengthy checklist to obtain a Short-Term Vacation Rental Certificate. I believe this protects neighborhoods, homeowners, and our locals by keeping vacation rentals accountable.

10. **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?

My campaign will spend all of my time and resources talking about my vision for the future of Jacksonville Beach. I encourage all other campaigns to focus on positive campaigning, though I can’t speak for any other candidate, committee or group.

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

