

Beaches Watch 2023 Jacksonville City Council Candidate Questions

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1. **Priorities:** What are your priorities over the first 4 years of your term? And how would those priorities impact the beaches, either positively, negatively or neutral?

I have three main priorities for my term:

- Ensuring financial transparency through timely and accurate bookkeeping and reporting,
- Investing in our forgotten neighborhoods to increase quality of life and economic activity, and
- Protecting the safety of Jacksonville residents through investments in both our reactions to crime and the causes of crime.

I firmly believe that each of these priorities will have a positive benefit on the beaches, as a whole. Our beaches residents pay taxes into the city's general fund and are seeing their hard earned money be wasted and abused by a City Hall that cannot tell us where that money is going in a timely and accurate manner. Financial transparency will ensure and that everyone's tax money is being spent in a proper fashion. My second and third priorities go hand in hand in their effect on the beaches: improved safety and a decrease in crime. Anyone who looks through the crime section of the Beaches Leader can tell you that crime in the beaches cities tends to come from the mainland. I specifically think of the tragic July 4th shooting in Jacksonville Beach from several years ago, a shooting that was the result of gang conflict in Jacksonville. If we can make the investments necessary to eradicate the driving factors of crime in Jacksonville, there will be a positive effect for our beaches. I ask for your vote for Jacksonville City Council At-Large, Group 5, so we can work to ensure that the beaches remain a safe place for all and a place where families can raise their children without fear of harm.

2. **Interlocal Agreement:**

1. What is your opinion of the interlocal agreements between Jacksonville and the three beaches municipalities?
 1. The current agreements between the beaches municipalities and Jacksonville seem to be in a fairly well balanced place right now. While there is room for improvement, as I have stated below, I believe that the agreements are a sign of the progress made by consolidation in ensuring beaches sovereignty while also providing county wide guidelines and priorities.
2. Are there any changes to the agreements you would suggest or support?

1. My biggest change would be an additional agreement between the beaches municipalities and the City that specifically restricts the City from using general fund revenues to cover the deficit in the Solid Waste Account. Beaches residents are being taxed twice for a service they only receive once. Such an additional agreement will be an uphill battle, but one that is worthwhile.

3. **Mayport Village:**

1. What is your vision for the future of Mayport Village?
 1. Mayport Village is one of the true hidden gems of Duval County. From its fantastic restaurants to its always active fishing industry, Mayport Village provides a unique the opportunity to the City of Jacksonville as a tourist destination. As a part of the scenic A1A highway, and with the ferry being a part of the area, Mayport Village could easily serve as a great stopping point for those traveling up and down the eastern seaboard. My vision would include increasing the number of restaurants and smaller hotels. Fernandina Beach and Amelia Island provide great examples.
2. What is your plan for bringing your vision to reality?
 1. Such a vision comes down to two main points: zoning and incentives. On the zoning side, I would support land use changes that would encourage these types of businesses to open in the area. As it relates to incentives, I believe that we should take a similar approach to the Downtown Investment Authority, which can hand out incentives to developments in the area, but with the caveats that such developments would have to fit within the overall vision and character of Mayport and that representation from Atlantic Beach would be necessary due to their close proximity and the economic impacts that development in Mayport has on Atlantic Beach.
3. Are you willing to support additional funding for dock construction and/or development costs at the Village of Mayport?
 1. As I mentioned in the previous answer, I would support funding for development costs in Mayport, subject to the aforementioned conditions. While I believe that dock construction would be a beneficial economic driver in Mayport, we must be concerned about having the rug pulled out from under the residents of Mayport like it has in the past with the proposed expansion of JaxPort. In the same way that I have worked as a CPA for nearly 50 years, due diligence will be an absolute necessity.
4. **Penman Road:** Penman Road is a heavily utilized roadway by all the beaches communities and has a myriad of problems from traffic flow to pedestrian and bicycle safety. What is your plan to ensure that proper resources are dedicated to improve Penman Road?
 1. A major problem when dealing with the traffic on Penman Road is that much of the road is bordered by residential properties with land that is privately owned. So, any serious widening of Penman would require some form of eminent domain. But when making a small expansion of the road for the purpose of a bike lane, the issue would not be as pronounced. Ensuring pedestrian safety could be achieved through the expansion of illuminated crosswalks with proper signage, especially in the portion between 15th Ave. N and Beach.
5. **St. Johns River:**
 1. Both the St. Johns Riverkeeper and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers have stated that dredging the St. Johns River will increase storm surge and flooding at the beaches and

Jacksonville without a mitigation plan in place. What mitigation plan, if any, would you support to protect the beaches and Jacksonville?

1. I support the 2019 local mitigation strategy and the projects that accompanied it. Our county has a long running problem of seeking to change plans midstream and not allowing them to reach their endgoals. I believe the city should continue with this plan and complete the projects listed in it before contemplating any new plans.
2. What, if anything, would you do to protect the health of the St. Johns River?
 1. I believe that any further dredging of the River must be stopped as it has reached a point where the potential economic benefits of dredging has become significantly outweighed by the environmental damages. If we stop the constant cycle of dredging and disturbing our beautiful river, the ecosystem can begin to recover and heal. In addition, I would work with the Council to create a plan with the other counties along the St. Johns, as well as the SJWMD, to work on restoring important tributaries like the Ocklawaha River.

6. Resiliency:

1. How would you support the beaches communities in their efforts to address resiliency and sea level rise?
 1. On a city level, our best option in this area is to provide funding and support to our beaches municipalities as they know how to best protect their houses and businesses. What works in Atlantic Beach, which has three sides by the water, and what works in Jacksonville Beach, which has a commercial focus on the east side of 3rd Street, are different and the Council should respect their differences.
2. How would you support beach renourishment and dune restoration efforts?
 1. While the current plans for the renourishment require little non-reimbursed investment from the City, I believe that the City has some room to go above and beyond with a larger investment. Our dunes are the first and best line of defense we have and we must do all we can to build it up to a point where a bad hurricane season won't leave us vulnerable for the next several years.

7. Communication: What, if anything, would you do to improve the City of Jacksonville's communication and relationship with the beaches municipalities?

1. As the County entity, the City should ensure that communications between the City and the Beaches municipalities, as well as Baldwin, take place on all levels. This includes hosting public meetings with members of the City Council and the councils/commission of the Beaches municipalities. These meetings, supplemented by my plan to hold town halls in the Beaches as well as every corner of Duval County, would better allow the City to understand the issues faced by Beaches residents and how the City can lift up the Beaches municipalities.

8. Beach Visitors: Spring and Summer holidays, especially July 4th, bring a great number of people to the Beaches, straining the resources of all three communities. What suggestions do you have for Jacksonville to assist the communities in shouldering that burden?

1. I was very heartened to see the work of the three beaches police departments over this last July 4th. Continued assistance from JSO during these periods is essential to ensuring that the beaches remain a safe and family friendly place. However, this assistance can't come when our Sheriff's Office is, itself, understaffed. We need to invest in the officers we have now, as well as the future officers we want to recruit. Many different suggestions have been made, especially during this campaign season. I believe that any politician who tells us that they have an easy fix to complex problem is selling a false bill

of goods. This will be a problem that requires careful and thorough study by the Jacksonville City Council, in collaboration with the Beaches municipalities, as the crime that exists west of the Ditch has both a direct and indirect impact on the Beaches.

9. **July 4th Fireworks:** Will you support continued funding assistance of \$25,000 by the City of Jacksonville for the July 4th fireworks at Jacksonville Beach?
 1. Most definitely. The fireworks show at Jacksonville Beach is one of Jacksonville's prized events for the Fourth of July and serves as a great draw for both tourists and locals, alike. We must continue to encourage great events like this to ensure the continuing prosperity of our beaches.
10. **Other issues:** What other specific issues that affect the beach communities top your priority list?
 1. Housing has become a major source of contention at the beaches, as well as the entirety of Jacksonville. As we look to increase our housing stock and prevent families from being pushed out onto the streets, we must make sure that new housing meets both the needs of the market and the community. Local zoning has a major part in this work, but the City can set an example through its own zoning practices and through dialogues with the beaches municipalities about how to solve our housing problem while maintaining the unique character of each beach city.