

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?

Crime – Public Safety is the number one responsibility of our city government. I will work to ensure we are exploring and implementing all types of Prevention, Intervention and Enforcement measures to improve Public Safety for all of Jacksonville. To do this, we need every city, community, business, faith based, nonprofit and other leaders all working together. We also need to support law enforcement and give them the number of officers and tools they need to adequately protect our growing city.

Affordable Housing – The national increase in inflation and mortgage rates over the past two years has made it even more difficult for most hard-working families to afford a house of their own. There are few things that give more pride and a sense of accomplishment than owning your own home. I will ensure the city is working with builders and developers to increase the percentage of affordable housing units for each proposed new community. I will also explore the various state and federal funding sources and public private partnerships to help pay for these and other initiatives.

Infrastructure - There has been a lot of population growth in Jacksonville and throughout Florida over recent years. One of the biggest challenges our city has is providing the needed infrastructure to support this growth. I will ensure our city is more focused on the long term and planning three, five and ten years out for growth rather than reacting and trying to catch-up after the fact. An initiative I will pursue is objectively assessing the roads, sidewalks, drainage, bridges, parks, playgrounds, services, and other things the city is responsible for providing and maintaining for all communities of Jacksonville. We should then set a minimum acceptable level for each area and prioritize projects until all communities are above that level. Once all are above that level, we will raise the bar and quality of life for everyone.

I believe these and other priorities I have for the first 4 years as your Jacksonville City Councilman, At-Large, Group 5, will positively impact the beaches because of my focus on the entire city.

2. Interlocal Agreement:

1. What is your opinion of the interlocal agreements between Jacksonville and the three beaches municipalities?

I believe it is time to review and revisit the terms of this 27 year old agreement. A lot has changed in that amount of time. As I have spoken with the beaches mayors and residents of their communities, they have stressed real concerns that should be addressed.

2. Are there any changes to the agreements you would suggest or support?

I have heard that 18 cents of every dollar the beaches communities put into the city coffers come back to their communities. I haven't yet verified this number but do believe we should do our homework to ensure an equitable and objective distribution of resources and projects throughout all of Jacksonville.

3. Mayport Village:

1. What is your vision for the future of Mayport Village?

I have been fortunate to listen to presentations of others' vision for the future of Mayport Village and believe these leaders and organizations have some very good educational, training, sailing, recreational fishing, ocean research and tracking, needed docks, restaurants, riverside trails, and other ideas for what could be for this wonderful historic part of our city if we all work together.

2. What is your plan for bringing your vision to reality?

I pledge to work together with Mayport Village, Beaches, City, State and Federal stakeholders to help realize this vision.

3. Are you willing to support additional funding for dock construction and/or development costs at the Village of Mayport?

Certainly.

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?

It is clear the work on Penman Road has been needed for years. Let's move out and get it done!

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?

I commit to work with the beaches leaders, City Resilience Officer and City Council Resiliency Committee to solidify appropriate studies and mitigation measures to address these concerns.

2. What, if anything, would you do to protect the health of the St. Johns River?

Protecting the health of our amazing St. Johns River should be something all of us can agree on. We can and must work to sustain strong economic growth and be good stewards of what God has entrusted to our care by maintaining our beautiful environment as well.

6. **Resiliency:**

1. How would you support the beaches communities in their efforts to address resiliency and sea level rise?

I will do everything I can to support these efforts. Sea level rise and related resiliency and mitigation efforts must be thoroughly studied, planned for and acted upon to preserve our beaches and communities.

2. How would you support beach renourishment and dune restoration efforts?

I will work with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and State and Federal leaders to secure the partnerships, relationships and project funding needed for beach renourishment and dune restoration efforts. I will also look for best practices throughout the world that we should consider rather than just continuing the same measures that are sometimes wiped out with a strong Nor'easter, let alone a hurricane.

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

Elected officials should learn by meeting and listening. I plan to attend as many district townhalls, beaches meetings and foster more regular exchanges with the beaches mayors and council members as possible. This will ensure I am current on what concerns them, so I may roll up my sleeves and do the hard work to best collaborate with and represent them.

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?

I believe there are good working relationships between JSO and the beaches police departments to ensure these events are properly covered. We also need to ensure these types of big events that many Jacksonville residents enjoy are properly resourced as well.

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?

At first look, this seems reasonable. I will certainly study the numbers when on City Council and will always do my best to support what makes sense.

10. **Other issues:** What other specific issues that affect the beach communities top your priority list?

I will mention two. One is we need to all work together to ensure our beaches are clean. I have been blessed to participate in various Surfrider beach cleanups over the last few years and am impressed at how beautiful our beaches are. When I lived here previously in the 80s and 90s, I don't remember them being as clean as they are now. We all need to work together to keep them that way for generations to come.

Also, the leaders and residents of the beach communities know best what their vision is for their communities. The next Jacksonville Mayor and City Council should ensure they factor this regular input into their decision making for everything that may affect the beach communities.

I served 30 years in the active-duty Army, was the City Mayor and City Manager of an Army city of 17 bases, retired as a full Colonel, I've served you all as Congressman Rutherford's District Director for the past six years and I am ready to put my experience to work for the good people throughout all of Jacksonville. As your City Councilman, I will lead with honor, integrity and ensure that local government is living up to its full potential.