

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?

The affordable housing crisis and inequalities among the districts. In a way, they are related. We need to address the housing crisis and stop kicking the can down the road. It's why I called for a housing emergency in May 2022 and it's why I've called for real funding to be placed towards addressing the crisis. Sadly, my opponent and the current Council, haven't addressed the issue in any meaningful way and they are creating a problem that will impact our community negatively for years to come. But with that said, we have an opportunity to address the economic inequalities of our districts in our communities. Every community should be treated equally and supported in their needs. Whether addressing the housing crisis, infrastructure, city parks, afterschool programs and food deserts, as a Council, we have an obligation to ensure every citizen gets what they need and deserve.

In terms of the impacts at the beaches, investments in infrastructure, housing, equity will help support improvements in and around the area. As Jacksonville succeeds, so does our entire community. I also believe we should look at the double-tax system currently in place for waste management at the beaches, and look to eliminate it, so that those living at the beaches are only taxed once for the service. The time of playing favorites is over - my campaign is about community-first, people-first policies that invest IN the people. When elected, I believe we must address the inequalities in our districts if we truly want Jacksonville to be the city it can be. I'm running for an at-large seat on the Jacksonville City Council to make sure every person in Jacksonville is represented.

2. **Interlocal Agreement:**
 - a. What is your opinion of the interlocal agreements between Jacksonville and the three beaches municipalities?
 - b. Are there any changes to the agreements you would suggest or support?

It's important that this interlocal agreement is supported between the City of Jacksonville and the Beaches communities to support our consolidated government and services to all the people of Duval County. So a review of the agreement to see where it can be improved, to support the people, is an obvious necessity to support our Beaches community. I support local home rule and we need to work with the Beaches Mayors to identify and address the needs of the community through the interlocal agreement.

Absolutely - starting with waste management. Why is the Beaches community taxed twice for trash pick-up? It makes little sense to me and as a city, we need to address this issue quickly and eliminate the double-taxation of the Beaches with waste management. To me, it's an easy fix - it needs to happen and I'll work with the Mayors of the Beaches to look at other issues that should be amended to better serve the people of Jacksonville.

3. Mayport Village:

1. What is your vision for the future of Mayport Village?
2. What is your plan for bringing your vision to reality?
3. Are you willing to support additional funding for dock construction and/or development costs at the Village of Mayport?

I believe it is vitally important that Mayport be a working waterfront, and a redevelopment of a working waterfront, and that we support future development of Mayport Village. It's a historic area that the City of Jacksonville should look at building up for future generations. We are focused on lifting up our riverfront across the city and Mayport Village is certainly part of that. We need to support our small businesses, fisheries, shrimping industries and coastal communities around the Mayport area. But to do that, we need people on the council who recognize the importance of the Mayport area, like I do. As a "West Beaches" resident off San Pablo, I go to Mayport often and we need to work together as a council to lift up the needs with the rest of the council to convince our colleagues to act. In regards to future funding, I'll certainly consider it - I don't believe they are receiving enough support to build up the Mayport Village area after a few failed attempts - but it's a city resource that must be supported because it could breathe life into an area of the riverfront that currently needs support.

- 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?

We need better long-term planning by our transportation department to plan out needed improvements on roads across the city. Quality of life is important in every neighborhood and addressing poor infrastructure should be a priority in every community. So I would support funding the improvements needed for Penman Road and moving up currently planned funding so we can execute the roadway improvements in a more speedy manner. We need to address the Complete Streets project and prioritize our infrastructure needs here on Penman Road but also countywide. That takes having leaders who won't take "no" for an answer but will fight for their communities. I'll support the funding to move this project forward so that we may have safe streets, pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods, and less traffic flow issues on Penman Road in the future. Our city is growing, and this is a problem that needs to be addressed in the near term, not the long term.

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

We have dredged the river to expand our capacity for larger ships at the port, a benefit that is still being realized. The economic benefits have also brought with it many environmental and resiliency challenges, including flooding from major storms and even everyday tidal occurrences.. There is some talk of another round of dredging but I do not feel at this time that the risk is worth more than the reward. We are already facing major flooding in the years ahead and deepening the river would exacerbate those challenges. We need to preserve our wetlands that can absorb excess water when it does come and renourish the sand dunes that are the first line of defense on the coast. We also need to modernize and expand our drainage, pump and stormwater runoff systems. New construction should be built with resiliency in mind. For the health of the river, two of the biggest solutions we control is zoning in ways along the riverbanks that keep agriculture runoff and industrial waste from running into the river. We also must finally finish removing septic tanks from homes near waterways.

6. **Resiliency:**

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

First, it's great to finally have a Chief Resilience Officer and now we must support the position and make sure they have the resources needed to do their job. It shouldn't be a political position but one that has our community prepared to bounce back quickly from a disastrous event. We need to ensure JEA is part of the solution, and as a member of the City Council, I'll work to ensure the JEA board is committed to supporting resiliency in our community. We need to protect our wetlands, beaches, and natural shorelines from overdevelopment, so that we receive needed flood protection naturally from these hardened shorelines. I support signing a renewable energy pledge, and I believe we need to create and implement a greenhouse gas inventory and reduction plan. Resiliency must also be factored into our building codes and zoning ordinances, and developers should be incentivized to utilize resiliency best practices in new constructions. I believe all options should be on the table as it relates to addressing resiliency, but I'll lean heavily on experts in their fields and our Chief Resilience Officer to build future plans to protect our community from climate change.

In terms of beach renourishment and dune restoration, yes, the City of Jacksonville needs to be supportive of renourishment and restoration projects, through cooperation from the state and federal government through providing funding through grant programs to support these projects. Climate change is real and protecting our beaches and restoring them is becoming more and more costly. As your Councilman, I'll work with the Beaches Mayors to identify the

projects that are needed and work to address those needs by identifying the funding we need to address those projects, at small impact to our taxpayers. Our beaches are a tourist destination to our community and provide millions and millions of dollars to our local economy. We must do all we can to support our beaches and the tourism it brings with it.

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

While I am running for a countywide, at-large district, I live in Group 2, which includes the beaches area. I will be a council member who represents every community in Jacksonville including the beaches and surrounding neighborhoods where I live just to the west of the intracoastal. It is my commitment to stay in close communication with the elected officials at the beaches and to also have regular town halls to garner community feedback. My opponent in this race hasn't been giving the beaches the attention they deserve and that will end when I'm on the council. Listening, showing up, and acting is how I will ensure that the beaches are getting the services that they deserve as taxpayers and as our neighbors.

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?

It's a good thing that people from all over want to visit our beautiful beaches during major holidays. We want visitors to have a great experience so they keep coming back and so we can all benefit from the tourism dollars and sense of community that it brings. But the increased number of visitors also brings challenges. It's hard to have a good experience when crime increases, and a space is overcrowded with people. Being a strong partner to the beaches municipalities during high traffic times means surging resources, including JSO officers, and investing city dollars in solutions that keep the events safe, welcoming, and enjoyable.

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?

Yes, I will continue to support the funding assistance to Jacksonville Beach for the July 4th fireworks show. We need to provide entertainment throughout the county when celebrating our Independence Day and the City of Jacksonville should support the Beaches in these festivities. The people like them and our community is well served by supporting them.

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

Something that hasn't yet been addressed in this questionnaire is support for small businesses, the backbone of our economy. The beaches community is full of small businesses that the city must do just as good a job of looking out for as we do the large corporations. Many of these businesses are seasonal and driven by tourism. If we connect them to the resources that help them grow and survive the boom-and-bust aspects of the calendar, the local economy at the beaches will grow and attract even more people to the community.

