



2024 Jacksonville Beach 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?

My passion is creating strong and vibrant communities by engaging those within that community. This passion led me to pursue a bachelor's degree in communication studies, a master's degree in Public Administration, and a PhD in Political Science, with a focus on public and nonprofit management. I am currently a professor at UNF where I teach public and nonprofit management. I am also a consultant, and work with both public and nonprofit organizations on strategic planning, goal setting, leadership coaching, and the review of city charters.

When I served on council from 2018-2022, I ran to ensure that our government had the guardrails needed for us to protect our quality of life and remain independent from the county. The first big fight was the attempt to keep our Fire Department. While I am not questioning that the JFRD has the knowledge, skills, and abilities to serve this critical function in Jax Beach, my concern was handing over the control of this group of first responders to the county, outside of the direct control of Jax Beach. Luckily, we have not yet had a major hurricane to test how command and control operate under this new structure. Secondary was that we gave Jacksonville all our fire service infrastructure, which increases the complexity and costs if it is ever decided that we want to bring this service back in-house.

Because we lost our fire department, I fought to make sure elected representatives could not themselves make the decision to hand over our police department or our local utility. We did this by passing a charter amendment that requires any decision to contract out our police department or our electrical services to be voted on by our residents, not a small group of individuals on council.

I was then involved in not only creating a strategic plan for the city but also being a part of the first full Charter Review in over 40 years. It was these conversations where a couple

topics were identified to be put in the 'parking lot' to be revisited later: increasing the height limit and increasing the number of 4COP liquor licenses in the city. It was also clear to me that there was a desire to put these issues before the voters in a low-turnout election. I knew that with the then-composition of council, I would be in the super-minority voting against putting the height limit on that ballot. I knew I would be able to have a much greater impact as a citizen instead of a council member. Off council, I was able to successfully fight against the proposal regarding the height limit, it being defeated 82% to 18%. If the composition of the current council does not change, we will face this same fight to increase the number of liquor licenses.

These are just a couple reasons why I am running for Mayor. I will ensure that Jax Beach listens to its residents, not the interests of outsiders. We are at an inflection point where we could move in the direction of becoming a vacation destination, or we can remain an eclectic beach town that invests in our own community to enhance the quality of life for our residents.

With a passion for our city and a thorough understanding of governance principles, I will lead Jacksonville Beach into a bright and sustainable future by:

- Enhancing civic participation by pushing for a transparent government that encourages community input and engagement.
- Ensuring our neighborhoods maintain their unique characteristics and feel.
- Emphasizing the importance of citizen engagement in the City's upcoming 2025 Strategic Plan.
- Promoting development that balances economic growth with maintaining our quality of life.

My mix of practical experience, academic expertise, and unwavering commitment to public service makes me the best candidate to be your next Mayor. I am dedicated to upholding the values of accountability, transparency, and citizen empowerment to foster a thriving and vibrant Jacksonville Beach for generations to come. I look forward to the opportunity to lead our city towards a brighter tomorrow.

2. **Priorities:** If elected, what are the three most important issues you would address during your term and how would you address them? Please include how you would ensure adequate funding to address the issues.

Tackling Crime: The safety of our residents is my top priority. I propose to not only strengthen our local law enforcement but also make sure the environment in our city, particularly downtown, is not conducive to crime and disorder. It is difficult for us to expect residents to care for our city when it doesn't look like we do.

The crimes that have been happening are largely being done by people who do not live at the beach. They come here to engage in undesirable activities because our elected

officials have advocated for a downtown environment that is more attractive to outsiders than to residents. The crime issues we face are part of a larger problem, and only hiring more police or increasing the presence of law enforcement officials will not solve it. We should be looking to Jacksonville for additional finances to address this problem. It is time to honestly and holistically look at the issue of crime, which largely stems from the downtown area, and address it holistically through policing, creating a positive environment. and promoting pride in our city.

Stopping Overdevelopment: While development is necessary for the growth of our city, it should not come at the expense of our resources or the character of our neighborhoods. I will advocate for responsible development that respects and preserves the unique charm of Jacksonville Beach.

This starts with ensuring that the city's Land Development Code, the document that dictates what can and cannot be done in certain zones (residential, multi-family, business, commercial, etc.) is revised in a way that maintains the character of the community while addresses long standing issues such as parking. The Land Development Code is in the final stages of being re-written and I will make sure it reflects how you want the city to develop.

Maintaining our City Character: Jacksonville Beach has a rich history and a unique character that we all love. As we grow, it's important that we preserve this character. I will work to ensure that any changes enhance our city's character, rather than detract from it. This includes supporting local businesses, preserving historical sites like the Lifeguard Station, and promoting events that bring our community together.

Over my opponent's last 12 years in elected office, you have seen many negative changes to some of the long-standing relationships our city has had with local organizations and events that have enhanced our community culture. I will work to ensure we re-engage, maintain, and grow these relationships that are at the core of our community.

3. **Communication:** What, if anything, do you think should be done differently to inform citizens of upcoming issues and solicit their input on the issues?

Putting information on social media is not a strategy for engagement. I was the first council member to have a newsletter for residents and later the city adopted the same format. The city needs to develop a communication plan that is multi-modal and meets residents where they are. This includes door hangers for any construction in a neighborhood, contact information for an individual for each project, and a timeline that is continually updated so residents know where projects are in their implementation.

I also pledge to hold town hall meetings at least quarterly to hear and learn about the issues you are confronting, and then to find solutions. This is your government, and it should be working with and for you, not against you.

4. **Land Development Code:** Jacksonville Beach has begun the process of updating the Land Development Code. Please explain what specific aspects of the Land Development Code you believe are not functioning and what changes you would support?

I am concerned about overdevelopment in neighborhoods. Legally, we cannot reduce the value of any property, but there are many areas of the code that need to be cleaned up and when there are conflicts (aka loopholes), they need to be resolved ASAP. The current council's unwillingness to prioritize this led to the development of North Beach Townhomes south of Gonzales Park.

Other areas that need a close look are lot coverage, minimum zoning standards, and setback to protect neighborhoods.

5. **Penman Road:** What is your opinion of the proposed improvements to Penman Road? What, if anything, would you want to see changed or done differently?

Penman Road needs improvements, but I was disappointed to see that there would still be ditches on the sides of the road. The original plan was way too aggressive, and it showed that residents and businesses impacted by this project had not been engaged. The most updated version is better, but I will fight to make sure Jacksonville not only engages our residents and businesses, but that our Planning Department is engaged in the development of the plan as well.

6. **Urban Trails Master Plan:** What is your opinion of the Urban Trails Master Plan? What, if anything, would you change?

I was involved in the original concept. When the council held its visioning sessions in 2020 (with residents and businesses), moving around the city safely was a priority. This was in reference to walking and biking. We agreed that we should look at some type of bike/walking path for residents to get around and that this path should be connected to where people are trying to go (schools, parks, shops, etc). My understanding was that each segment of the trail (block by block) would fit in that segment; it was never meant to be one size fits all – at least from my understanding. There was mention of making sure the trails would be shaded with trees as well, and that e-bikes and other motorized vehicles would not be allowed.

I am not sure what happened, but what is being presented now is not how it was envisioned (at least not by me).

There were open sessions in early 2021 where residents were able to provide input on where the trail should go. I attended them, and I will say the turnout was not great (although we were slowly coming out of the pandemic at that time). Looking back, I think the city should have done a better job at advertising it and not rely on social media as much. That said, early on there were no identified routes; that was the purpose of the sessions. Once the routes started to solidify, word should have gone out to those who live in those areas for their input and possible options.

Still, we are where we are today. I like the idea of getting around the beach safely on foot or bike, but I think the current plan is too ambitious. My personal concern has always been going north-south, not east-west. High-traffic east-west roads I can see, and many of them have a light to cross 3rd. In my opinion, the scope of the plan needs to be reassessed.

Pedestrian and bike safety varies a lot by neighborhood. I would like the city to re-engage residents now that the plan for a trail is well known.

When the concept and maps were being developed, we were coming out of the pandemic. People had a lot of things they were dealing with. I understand why many people were not participating, and a large part of that is how the city let people know. Posting on Facebook is not an effective communication strategy. Once there was an initial draft of where the trails would be located, everyone who owns property on those trails should have been contacted individually, by door hanger and mail, in addition to e-communications. I am a huge proponent of citizen engagement, and while the city has gotten better, there is still a long way to go.

I have been asked which sections of the trail I support. I will need to see the data to determine which sections make the most sense. That is the missing part, which includes input from residents. How many people walk/bike on which roads, and what are the traffic counts? I prefer to make data-driven decisions coupled with the input of residents. In this case, it is those who live on the routes as well as those who currently (or potentially) use those routes. It is not up to me to decide where the trail goes. That is a community decision.

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

I have been asked about how I would propose controlling cars that speed on our roads. That is a complex issue. I have read posts on social media sites about concerns about people speeding (I live on 16th S., so I see it often). I also read about how people tend to slow down when they see the digital sign that lets you know how fast you are going (while it also monitors speed and the number of cars). The solution that is often asked for is a speed bump or speed hump. There are implications of having speed bumps and humps for emergency vehicles. This is something that would make a great town hall discussion to see where agreement can be found. This involves the city looking at some of its long-standing policies to see if they need to be updated to meet the needs and requests of our community. This is one way to make sure Jax Beach is working for and with you, and not against you. I am not running for office because I think I have all the answers. I am running because I know how to bring people together, listen, and identify ways to move forward.