



Enhancing Community Through Knowledge

## 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 motivation to run for City Council started during the Adventure Landing rezoning meetings. I began to attend council meetings and observed a council that seemed indifferent to the voices of the public. Over multiple meetings, multiple speakers, covering various topics and expressing concerns, yet the council consistently voted in ways that went against the wishes of many residents. A clear example was the rezoning for townhomes south of Gonzales Park. That project, with its density and lack of conformity to surrounding buildings, will undoubtedly reduce parking and the park's accessibility for our citizens. After that vote, I knew I had to step forward and run. What qualifies me to run is my unique experience as both a first responder and a small business owner. As a former firefighter and paramedic with St. Johns County Fire Rescue, I had a firsthand view of the interaction between government and citizens, from emergency calls to school safety programs. This experience gave me a deep understanding of a community's needs and the importance of responsive governance. Additionally, owning and operating Advanced Cardiac Training, a small business in Jacksonville Beach has given me insight. From payroll, HR, to payment of local sales taxes to how local legislation affects businesses and families. I understand the importance of thoughtful, balanced policies that benefit both residents and the economy.

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.

The most pressing safety issue for Jacksonville Beach is supporting our Police Department, particularly in officer hiring and retention. My primary focus would be on ensuring that we offer competitive wages and benefits to attract and retain top-tier officers. I would work closely with the city attorney and the council to develop initiatives that complement the Jacksonville Beach Police Department's efforts, especially during peak times when we face larger crowds. These initiatives must be designed to prioritize public safety while minimizing any disruption to residents' daily lives. We all deserve to feel safe in our homes and public spaces, and although we're fortunate to have a police department that performs exceptionally well, they've been doing so while understaffed. That shouldn't be the norm. It's crucial that our staffing levels grow in line with population increases and that we have enough officers to handle both routine law enforcement and unplanned events that may bring large crowds. Additionally, the rise of e-bike usage poses new challenges. With their extreme speeds and shared spaces with pedestrians, this issue requires thoughtful consideration to ensure safety for everyone. By properly staffing our police force, offering competitive compensation, and preparing for unexpected events, we can ensure that Jacksonville Beach remains a safe, welcoming community for all.

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?

I believe the city should adopt a tiered approach to communicating with citizens, ensuring that those most directly affected by upcoming issues are engaged early and effectively. Let me use the Urban Trails Master Plan as an example. When specific streets were first identified for paths, the homeowners on those streets should have been the first to know. The city could use door hangers, which I believe is one of the most effective methods for soliciting feedback. This would ensure that residents are informed early and feel included in the process. Before any renderings or final decisions are made, a meeting should be scheduled with those directly affected. This would allow them to express their concerns and preferences before plans are fully developed. Unfortunately, what we saw in the Urban Trails example was long-time residents—some living in their homes for 30, 40, or even 50 years—being told they would suddenly lose their ability to park along the street because of a 10-foot path. That lack of early communication can cause unnecessary frustration. After reaching out to the most affected residents, the city should move on to broader, city-wide communication through the usual channels—email newsletters, social media, and public notices—so everyone remains informed and has the opportunity to participate. By adopting this tiered approach, we can build trust and ensure that citizens feel heard, not blindsided by decisions that affect their day-to-day lives.

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?

Jacksonville Beach's effort to update the Land Development Code is a critical step toward addressing long standing issues, but there are key areas where I believe we need to proceed with caution and foresight. One of my primary concerns is parking, particularly in the downtown area. While I understand the reasoning behind reducing required parking if alternative options like bike racks and golf cart spaces are made available, I find the

suggested removal of any parking requirements in certain parts of downtown short-sighted. We must be realistic—how many times can the same parking spots be counted for both businesses and beach access? This approach could create a strain on the already limited parking options. Another issue is the current lot size requirements. Many of our lots don't meet the minimum size outlined in the Land Development Code, which creates a hardship that allows property owners to apply for variances to build beyond what's normally allowed. By reducing the required lot size, we could lessen this hardship and, as a result, reduce the number of variance applications that get submitted.. This would provide clearer standards and less ambiguity in development approvals. Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) are another hot topic. While I understand the desire to allow for additional living spaces, we need to ensure that ADUs aren't contributing to an increase in short-term rental properties, like AirBnB units. The focus should be on supporting long-term rentals that benefit our community, rather than exacerbating housing affordability issues with transient rental markets. Finding a way to allow ADUs while restricting their use to long-term rentals would be a responsible path forward. Finally, I support increasing the minimum width for townhomes from 15 feet to 24 feet. This adjustment will enhance the livability and quality of townhome developments, ensuring that we are building homes that meet the needs of our community, not just cramming in as many units as possible

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?

Now, this project has come a long way from its initial renderings. The first designs were quite troubling for the residents, with medians that would have blocked homeowners from backing boats or trailers into their own yards and it had an overzealous number of roundabouts. Thankfully, after community feedback, we saw updated plans during the second meeting. Some roundabouts were removed, and most of those restrictive medians were taken out, which was a step in the right direction. However, I still have concerns—especially about the segment between Seagate and Arden Way. Specifically, the 'dog bone' configuration. Imagine all the traffic heading south on Penman Road, trying to turn onto Seagate for Fletcher Middle and High School. Those drivers will have to merge or turn in front of the northbound traffic. With so many new drivers in the area—students as young as 16—this creates a potential hazard. Has this design been properly vetted, particularly near multiple schools with inexperienced drivers? The second issue that remains unresolved is drainage. When I asked about this during the last presentation, I was told it was 'being assessed.' But when I inquired whether the ditches and swales would be removed, the answer was no. Yet, the design showed green grass where the ditches should be. If we are going to undergo a project of this magnitude, drainage must be a priority. Flooding has been an issue in this area for years, and it's something that the city has addressed in other areas. It needs to be addressed here too Remember, this project is funded by Jacksonville. We pay plenty into the city, and we deserve proper services in return. Let's make sure this project is done right."

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

I recognize the potential benefits it can bring to our community, particularly by providing more things for families and kids to do. Jacksonville Beach currently lacks activities and

spaces tailored to teenagers and young adults—the "missing middle" of our population. Encouraging businesses and recreational areas that cater to them is essential for fostering a well-rounded, family-friendly environment. However, we must carefully weigh these benefits against the potential challenges. One major concern is the impact on our neighborhoods. What will residents have to bear in terms of new traffic, particularly if the trails attract not only families but also transient or troublesome individuals? We need to ensure that any new trail system doesn't compromise the safety or peace of our neighborhoods. Additionally, there are practical considerations like trail maintenance and policing. How will we fund the upkeep of these trails, and what will the long-term maintenance requirements look like? The presence of trails might necessitate the addition of bike patrols or other law enforcement resources, which brings up questions about the cost and feasibility of adequately policing these areas. Ultimately, while the Urban Trails Master Plan could be a great addition, these concerns need to be addressed. We have to find the right balance between creating spaces for families and kids to enjoy while ensuring we aren't opening up neighborhoods to unintended consequences that could affect safety and quality of life.

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

If elected, one of the key issues I plan to address is ensuring that our City Council listens to the residents. Too often, it seems that the voices of citizens are being overshadowed by outside interests. A prime example is Councilman Dan Janson's stance on the 2023 height referendum, which was rejected by 82% of voters. Despite this clear message from the community, Councilman Janson continues to advocate for a 55-foot height limit in the downtown central business district, prioritizing the opinions of developers over the will of the people. It concerns me that he appears to believe our downtown can't be safe unless we allow for taller buildings. This seems to undermine the hard work of our police department and our city's ability to design a safe environment without excessive height limits. I believe we can maintain both safety and the character of Jacksonville Beach without disregarding the clear wishes of our residents. As a council member, I will prioritize the voices of our community and work toward solutions that reflect their input, rather than deferring to outside developers. We need leadership that truly represents the people of Jacksonville Beach.