



2024 Neptune Beach Candidate Written Questions

Candidate Name: Michael R. Phillips

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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?

- a. **Education**

Bachelors of Science in Business University of South Carolina

Juris Doctorate Florida Coastal School of Law

- b. **Employment**

Fletcher & Phillips Law Firm, Partner

Trial attorney with focus on Family Law matters specifically related to complex divorce cases, child custody, business valuations, and military issues.

- c. **Community Service**

Master of the Florida Family Law American Inns of Court and past Jacksonville Executive Committee member of the Florida Family Law American Inns of Court.

Active member of Rotary International – Beaches Oceanside {Past President}

Oceanside Rotary Sponsor for Interact Club at Fletcher High School

Jacksonville Chapter Carolina Alumni Association {Past President}

Neptune Beach Police Pension Board – Trustee

Hodges Presbyterian Church – Past Chairman, Endowment Committee

Beaches Habitat for Humanity – Volunteer

Salvation Army – Annual Bell Ringer

Men’s Faith-Based Mentoring Group – Leader

Alco Half-Way House – Member of the Board of Directors

Lakeview Health – Volunteer

Gateway Behavioral Health – Speaker, Mentor, Volunteer, and Peer Support Services

Deck The Chairs – Sponsor and Volunteer

Beaches Clean up – Volunteer

Missionary Trips to Nicaragua – Volunteer

Oceanside Rotary Bike Rack Project – Leader of Project

St Pauls Basketball League Coach

I-9 Flag Football Coach

Learn to Read, Inc. – Volunteer and Tutor

Marsh Fest – Project to Purchase Dutton Island for a Park – Volunteer

d. Endorsements

Endorsed by the Fraternal Order of Police

e. Please explain what motivates you to run for office at this time?

To whom much is given, much is expected.

I have a desire to serve my community and help elevate Neptune Beach to the bright shining example that we all know it can be.

We have a few toxic, negative voices who try to divide our community and bully and intimidate good people in public office. Our community needs to come together to put an end to the hate and the cyber bullying.

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.

Protecting our Small-Town Charm

I believe we can have it all: a thriving city with a thriving heart. A place where opportunity and progress seamlessly blend with the charm and warmth that make us unique. But some things have changed nearby. Shadows of large-scale development loom at the edges of our town.

While progress is important, I believe we can manage our future without sacrificing the small-town heartbeat that defines us.

Transparency and Open Communication

We are lucky to share this corner of the world called Neptune Beach. The decisions made by our city government impact us all. That's why transparency and open communication aren't just good ideas or buzzwords – they will be the bedrock of my leadership as your mayor.

It comes down to this:

- When you know what's happening, you can be engaged citizens, offering informed opinions and solutions. Open discussions build understanding and a strong sense of collective purpose.
- Transparency builds trust. As your mayor, I will share plans, explain decisions, and listen to your concerns.
- Open communication fosters better decisions. Diverse perspectives lead to stronger solutions. Tapping into a pool of local knowledge, creativity, and passion is important. After all, it is the residents who have made our town unique.
- It strengthens our community spirit. Sharing challenges and triumphs builds a sense of shared responsibility and shared success. We become more than neighbors; we become partners in shaping our future.

I will be humble enough to admit when I don't have all the answers. And I will be open about uncertainty and acknowledge when learning or further discussion is needed. As Mayor, of Neptune Beach, I pledge to be open and transparent with you.

Infrastructure

As a resident of Neptune Beach, I share our resident's worries about the state of our city's water and sewer infrastructure. For too long, we've neglected these vital systems, and the consequences are becoming increasingly dire. Leaky pipes waste precious water, untreated sewage threatens our health and environment, and crumbling foundations put homes and businesses at risk. As Mayor of Neptune Beach, I will prioritize the complete overhaul and modernization of our water and sewer infrastructure.

My plan is clear:

- Review the city's needs assessments: We need a clear and current picture of the extent of the problem, identifying critical areas and prioritizing repairs.

- Secure funding: I will work tirelessly to secure state and private funding to support these essential projects. Innovative financing mechanisms like public-private partnerships will be explored to ensure long-term sustainability.
- Ensure transparency and community engagement: Every step of the way, residents will be kept informed and involved in the decision-making process. This is our city, and our voice matters.

The benefits of this investment will be far-reaching:

- Improved public health: Clean water and proper sanitation are essential for preventing disease and promoting healthy communities.
- Enhanced environmental protection: Upgrading our infrastructure will reduce pollution and protect our precious water resources.
- Economic stability: Reliable infrastructure is imperative for our local businesses

Safety and Protection of Our Residents and Our Visitors

Safety and Protection of Our Residents and visitors. Working with our Neptune Beach Police Department to insure the safety of our beach.

It is critical for our Mayor and our Police Department to work together.

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?
 - a. Community wide emailed or mailed newsletter detailing current events and current issues. This can be handled by staff already in place and sent out weekly or bi-weekly.
 - b. Community Advisory Board. A small group of residents from all parts of Neptune Beach to give a balance and sampling of every part of our community. Meeting once per quarter to discuss issues regarding our city and finding solutions.
4. **Land Development**: What is your opinion of the Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Code update by Dover Kohl? Is there anything you want to change?
 - a. Very ambitious plan. Action is required. We need to slowly begin making progress and taking steps forward.
 - b. 2019 and 2020 the process started.

- c. 2022 Land Development Code Revisions.
 - d. The time is now to begin implementation of our Vision Plan.
5. **Penman Road**: What is your opinion of the proposed improvements to Penman Road and what, if anything, would you want to see changed or done differently?
- a. The improvements to Penman road are long overdue. We need to allow the road to be primarily a local traffic road and less of a thoroughfare that non-residents drive down.
 - b. The Safety Pedestrian cross-walks are very important and a great benefit to the project. The safety of pedestrians and bicyclists is one of the most important issues. We need to make sure our children are safe.
 - c. Insuring the ability of emergency vehicles to travel safely and quickly through Penman Road should also be a top priority.
 - d. The medians seem to be a hindrance in the flow of traffic and the ability of folks to get in and out of their homes and the businesses on Penman Road. We need to take a closer look at whether the medians are necessary in Neptune Beach.
6. **Infrastructure**: Neptune Beach has an aging infrastructure that will be very costly to replace and/or repair. What do you propose be done to address this problem and how would you fund it?
- a. Review the city's needs assessments: We need a clear and current picture of the extent of the problem, identifying critical areas and prioritizing repairs.
 - b. Secure funding: I will work tirelessly to secure state and private funding to support these essential projects. Innovative financing mechanisms like public-private partnerships will be explored to ensure long-term sustainability.
 - c. Ensure transparency and community engagement: Every step of the way, residents will be kept informed and involved in the decision-making process. This is our city, and our voice matters.
7. **Other issues**: Are there any other issues you would like to address if elected? Please explain.

My campaign is not about standing still. It's about responsible redevelopment and enhancement of our community.

Any redevelopment should respect our existing charm, invests in our core values, abide by our codes and city charter, and foster opportunities for all without losing the essence of what makes us who we are. Here's how:

- **Protecting Our Green Spaces:** We will prioritize the preservation of parks, natural areas, and historic landmarks. Green spaces are the lungs of our city, and their protection ensures both environmental well-being and a strong sense of community.
- **Empowering Local Businesses:** We will champion policies that support our vibrant network of small shops, restaurants, and family-owned businesses. When we strengthen our local economy, we strengthen the heart of our community.
- **Investing in Public Spaces:** We will enhance our libraries, community centers, and public transportation, creating vibrant hubs for connection and fostering a sense of belonging.
- **Celebrating our Heritage:** We will honor our history and traditions, supporting local artists, cultural events, and historic preservation efforts. Our cultural fabric is what makes us distinct, and preserving it is key to our identity.

Bringing back the community and home town feel of Neptune Beach. For too many years our local Neptune Beach elections have been overrun by a few negative voices filled with toxic, divisive, hate speech that does not represent what our community stands for.

We need to stand up against hateful attacks and cyber bullying being spread by a few people. Our community is better than this. We are blessed to live in the best city, in the best country, in the world! We should treat each other with kindness and respect and discuss issues important to all of us. We should not tolerate hate.

My campaign has been a positive campaign. We have focused on bringing people together and finding solutions. We have focused on spreading love and not hate. If this is important to you, I would appreciate your support.