

2015 Beaches Watch

Atlantic Beach Mayor Candidate Questions

Name of Candidate: Carolyn Woods

Phone Number: 241-8973

Email Address: woodsformayor@gmail.com

Website: woodsformayor.org

When answering the questions, please provide specifics as well as supporting data and facts wherever possible.

1. Important Issues: For the whole of Atlantic Beach, in your opinion, what are the three most important issues that should be addressed? How would you propose they be addressed?
 - a. Fiscal responsibility starting with finalizing the new plan for our police building. The new plan is the right size, the right price, in the right place and the right design for complimenting our community character. My opponent was the chair of the committee that sought to build a much larger and more expensive building in our busiest park next to our tot playground. It is important that the city maintains the new well-received plan for the renovations of the existing facility in its current location.
 - b. Maintaining the positive momentum of improving our business corridors with the creation of the Mayport Corridor Community Redevelopment Area, CRA, which I have championed. This program is a long-term plan for reinvesting the tax dollars from this area in this area to improve the infrastructure, facilities and recreational opportunities in this area. This is the mechanism for partnering with investors so they know the city is committed to long-term sustainable improvements that will help their investments grow and their businesses succeed.
 - c. Protect and preserve our quality of life by continuing to focus on our priority of pedestrian and bicycle safety, adding ped paths that will create a network of safe pedestrian and bicycle travel throughout the city. In concert with this is the preservation of our fantastic residential neighborhoods.
2. There are a number of Charter amendments on the ballot. Do you support the recommended changes? Please explain why or why not.
 - a. I support the amendment that makes perfunctory changes as well as strengthens the protection of our parks from being used for any other than recreational activities and/or facilities. This amendment also reduces the % of voter signatures required on a petition that would require the commission to reverse action on a particular issue, and establishes a process for regular charter reviews.
 - b. The other amendment would have citizens voting for only two of the 5 commissioners. All citizens would vote for the mayor/commissioner but would only be able to vote for the commissioner that resides in their district, not the other three commissioners. It is hoped that this will provide for true district representation and give each district a stronger voice in choosing their representative. I am remaining neutral on this issue

because I want everyone to give it serious consideration and talk to each other about all of the ramifications before deciding.

3. There is a proposal on the ballot to change the election of district commissioners from at-large to election by those living in the district. Do you support the proposal? Please explain why or why not. See 2b above
4. Seaside Community Council: What is your opinion of the Seaside Community Council? Please be specific regarding the reasons why you support or oppose this council.
 - a. As the sponsor of the Seaside Community Advisory Council I am in favor. There are so many talented people within our community and the larger university system here that are willing and able to give of their time and experience for the greater good it seems a waste of one of our greatest assets not to tap into this vast wealth of knowledge. There are many issues that are particular to a coastal community that could be explored in depth to aid the commission in making informed, prudent good governance decisions to enhance our quality of life, protect our shores and plan for fiscal resilience. This approach would not only tap into our community but save untold revenues on consultant fees.
5. East Coast Greenway Bike Path: A representative of the East Coast Greenway has said that Mayport Road is the weakest link in the East Coast Greenway. How would you propose to connect the greenway from Mayport to Neptune Beach?
 - a. I have not seen a viable plan yet. Atlantic Beach is a cul-de-sac community with narrow arterial roadways running north and south. I am opposed to any plan that would either poke an opening in our cul-de-sac or place further burdens and demands on our over taxed roadways.
6. Mayport Corridor CRA: What would you like to see happen in the Mayport Road Corridor as a result of the Mayport Road Corridor CRA?
 - a. I am proud to say that I have championed this project during my time as mayor and would like to see the stakeholders come together and create a shared vision for improving the infrastructure, facilities and recreational opportunities. I believe there is great potential to begin to close the divide created by the geographical reality of having such a major highway running through our city. First on my wish list is a complete update and improvement of the street scape of Mayport Rd. that will incorporate identifiable and friendly elements of our very popular Beaches Town Center so we can start to create a similar "Atlantic Beach" feel and identity for this business corridor.
7. Parking: How would you address the parking problems at the Town Center and beach accesses?
 - a. Atlantic Beach does not have the financial resources to create parking lots or garages. I believe the beaches town center agency has made great progress with their multi faceted approach to providing parking solutions. At some point in the future it may be that citizens are willing to create a no car zone around town center to relieve the pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular conflicts and create external parking areas. Neptune Beach has for years had a policy of reducing the required parking by 50% in this area, a good plan to stimulate growth maybe but now the unintended consequences are being

realized and they are considering reversing this policy. I have as a small step in helping, initiated 2 bicycle parking lots to make access easier for local residents.

8. Budget: In the coming years, balancing the city's budget will continue to be an issue due to continued revenue shortfalls and demands to maintain infrastructure and essential services. What, if anything, would you propose be done to reduce the budget and/or increase revenues?
 - a. Atlantic Beach is in very good financial shape but like all other communities we have put off many projects during the past economic recession that now must be taken care of. While on the commission I have worked on pension reform that will save the city money every year going forward, have successfully shaved \$2 million dollars off the cost of our Police Facility renovations and kept our tax rate the same. Governing, just like life, gets more and more complicated and more expensive every year. To maintain our quality of life and level of city services the citizens desire maintaining our current tax rate combined with long term fiscal planning will be the key to managing our city's budget. Improvements along our business corridors and the natural increasing values in the housing market should help the city receive the additional revenues needed to keep up with inflation, unfunded mandates and infrastructure maintenance plans.
9. Quality of life: What do you think is the most important quality of life issue for Atlantic Beach at this time? Please explain.
 - a. Keeping our streets safe for our children and their children for generations to come.
10. Are there any other issues you would like to address? Please explain.

As Mayor I have helped guide Atlantic Beach through a staff reorganization that has led to a more open and responsive government, improved staff morale and realize fiscal savings. These have been very positive changes for the city insuring that public records are public and easy to attain, that every citizen is heard and treated with respect, and that long term planning is now an institutional norm. All of this leads to transparent decisions with citizens better able to participate and keep an eye on city expenses. As a citizen these things are important to me, not just because of the fiscal responsibility but they have a direct effect on that quality of life now and moving forward creating a positive vision and collaborative structure for doing business as our community in the future.