

## Beaches Watch 2015 Jacksonville Candidate Questions

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**1. Interlocal Agreement:**

- a. In your opinion, do you think the Beaches are receiving their fair share of county services as stated in the interlocal agreement? If not, what would you propose be done to resolve any issues?
- b. How would you resolve the disagreement between the City of Jacksonville and Neptune Beach over tipping fees?

Beaches cities have a lot at stake as part of the interlocal agreement. As such, it is absolutely essential that these cities get back what the agreement says is owed. Unfortunately as I speak with beaches cities elected officials, it is clear that the City of Jacksonville has more work to do. As mayor I will work with local officials so the taxpayers of the beaches get their fair share and the attention from Jacksonville City government they deserve. In the first 90 days as mayor, I'll convene meetings with the mayors, budget officers and city managers of the beaches cities to discuss any outstanding issues with city government – with an eye toward solutions - and will meet each quarter thereafter to make sure lines of communication are fully open with this important part of Jacksonville.

If beaches officials want to clarify portions of the interlocal agreement (since it has not been reviewed substantively in nearly twenty years) I am open to that and will personally commit to this review. It may include such items as tipping fees, public works expenditures in the beaches cities, animal care and protective services and other matters as requested.

- 2. Jacksonville Beach Fireworks:** Would you vote for or against the City of Jacksonville contributing \$25,000 (half the cost) for July 4th Fireworks at Jacksonville Beach? If you answer no please explain your reason.

Even in tough budget climates, I think that our public rituals and expressions of our nation's history deserve to be a part of our cultural life. I will work with private companies, city agencies, and public safety leaders to identify cost savings, but ultimately we will have vibrant, exciting celebration of this great nation's freedom.

- 3. Human Rights Ordinance:** Would you vote for or against including the categories of gender identity and gender expression with the other categories of persons protected by law from discrimination?

I reject the idea that the people of Jacksonville are people who discriminate. However I recognize that there are some individuals who may discriminate, and I reject oppression and discrimination in all its forms. Oppression and discrimination are wrong, and as mayor I will not

only be part of discussions about our problems, but I will lead by bringing together local stakeholders, business owners, and faith leaders to ensure we continue to have a city where that respects and celebrates our shared goals and our differences. With my leadership, the people of Jacksonville will be the source of solutions to Jacksonville's challenges.

4. **Consolidation Task Force Recommendations:** Which consolidation task force recommendations would you support implementing if elected?

Clarification of the relationship between the Mayor's office and beaches communities is important as a first order of business. Regular and open communication between the Mayor's office and beaches mayors and city managers, especially around budget items and the interlocal agreement, is critical to a healthy relationship. Ensuring service levels that are appropriate is my priority.

5. **Police and Fire Pension:** What is your opinion of the current proposal regarding the police and fire pension? What, if anything, would you recommend be done differently?

The time for pension reform is now, and I will be accountable to the taxpayers of Jacksonville as we meet this challenge together. So I will, immediately conduct collective bargaining with the unions in the sunshine addressing COLA, DROP, benefits for new employees and other issues.

By law we cannot change benefits that have been earned, but a thorough review and discussion at the bargaining table about next steps is in order.

By negotiating in good faith, an agreement can be reached that honors commitments made to the heroes in uniform, protects the taxpayers and keeps taxes low. With trust, mutual respect and openness, I believe an agreement can be reached with unions representing people who risk their lives for our city's safety. But if not, I will send a fair pension reform proposal to City Council. And it can be implemented according to state law.

Specifically, I will - within 90 days of becoming mayor:

- Complete and publicly present a comprehensive review of our city's financial condition and options.
- Submit a fundamental pension reform plan that has been subject to a public process.
- Present a thoughtful, accurate budget that reflects Jacksonville's priorities.

6. **Library:** The Beaches Branch Library was threatened to be closed due to lack of funding for the library system. Do you support continued funding for the Beaches Branch Library? Please explain your answer.

Parks, libraries and public art are all important components of our cultural life and identity. But at a time when Alvin Brown's budget cuts took 147 policemen and policewomen off Jacksonville's streets and out of our neighborhoods - a move that led to a sharp increase in violent crime - my first budget priority is to restore those cops and, working with the Jacksonville City Council, restore funding to effective programs of the Jacksonville Journey. Public safety is the first responsibility of government and all other spending is prioritized after that. In order to increase revenue so Jacksonville can have a vibrant cultural life, we need to reverse Alvin Brown's policies that stifle investment and job creation. A strong economy with

more jobs for Jacksonville's families will provide the revenue we need to afford a great system of libraries. In the case of the beaches library, I know it is much more than a library. It is a community gathering place, a place for evening and weekend meeting opportunities and is a vital beaches community asset. It must be maintained as the important venue it has become. Working with members of the state legislative delegation, I will also pursue Jacksonville's fair share of state and federal resources for Jacksonville's quality of life.

7. **St. Johns River:** Do you support the proposed dredging of the St. Johns River to 47 feet to accommodate Panamax-ready ships? If so, how do you propose the dredging be funded? Do you support the removal of the Rodman Dam?

The St. John's River is a great natural asset for our community, and we must strike a balance to protect this treasure while also making our port world-class. This balance can be struck with leadership. I will utilize relationships with our Governor, our State and Federal representatives, and the community as whole to get state and federal money to fund the dredging and to ensure our River is protected.

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

In addition to being personally available, via regularly scheduled meeting in beaches cities, I will designate a member of staff as a contact for the beaches. I intend to regularly visit with people where they live in town hall meetings and the beaches will be a regular part of that outreach. I would also have the designated staff member available in local office hours to facilitate a consistent and direct dialog regarding issues specific to the beaches cities.

9. **Mayport:**

- a. What is your vision for the future of Mayport? What factors are essential for realizing your vision?

Any investment of taxpayer dollars must be fully vetted and have clear accountability built in so that people can feel that the investment of their money is appropriate and worthy. Having assets like Mayport is an important part of the allure of our beaches. We need to find ways to grow tourism and quality of life. My friend Bill Gulliford has proposed important ideas that could help bring Mayport back.

- b. In your opinion, is future funding of the Ferry secure? What changes would you advocate? Please explain your answer.

Left without this service, an important part of Jacksonville will face negative impacts to the local economy, transportation flow, tourism and potentially the natural environment. I am pleased that the Jacksonville Transportation Authority, working with the Ferry Commission, has found a way to keep the ferry operational. I am also pleased that the Florida Department of Transportation and the legislature have agreed to help with the long-term capital maintenance of the vessels and the slipways and wharfs. I will continue the fight to find a way to keep the ferry.