

City Council Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate: Sherrie Matthews

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QUESTION:

The Property Tax Amendment and Water Infrastructure.

HJR 1F on the November 3 ballot would raise the non-school homestead exemption to \$150,000 in 2027 and \$250,000 in 2028, cutting the City's annual revenue.

- Do you support this amendment?

- If it passes, how do you expect the revenue reduction to affect the City's support for water utilities, Lagoon monitoring, and water quality projects? If you intend to protect those programs, tell us specifically where the money comes from instead (which services or staff positions you would reduce, or what revenue you would raise).

CANDIDATE'S ANSWER:

1, I stand with Sebastian homeowners who deserve tax relief and responsible local government. That is why, as a Sebastian City Council member, I voted NO on the fiscal year 2026–27 tax increase. I urge voters to review this amendment carefully, make an informed choice, and know that I will work to carry out the decision of the people. Sebastian families and small businesses are making tough budget choices - City Hall should be held to the same standard.

2. The voters will decide, and as your city council member, my job is to work hard to uphold that decision while maintaining the level of service Sebastian residents expect.

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QUESTION:

Sustaining Restoration Under Funding Pressure.

Much of our local restoration relies on layered, non-guaranteed outside funding: EPA National Estuary Program dollars, competitive NOAA grants, the state Indian River Lagoon Protection Program, and water management district contributions.

- If state and federal funding are severely cut, how will you keep research and restoration moving for the Indian River Lagoon?

- Would you support a dedicated, recurring City funding source to insulate these projects? If not, what is your alternative?

CANDIDATE'S ANSWER:

1. Protecting the Indian River Lagoon means fighting for every available dollar. With the EPA National Estuary Program and the IRL Protection Program facing budget cuts, Sebastian needs strong local leadership to advocate for sustained funding, pursue alternative sources, seek state and federal support, and keep residents informed. As a city council member with strong relationships in Tallahassee, I will keep fighting to reduce the impact of these cuts, advance lagoon restoration, and make sure Sebastian's voice is heard.

2. I am not opposed to a dedicated recurring fund, but it must be supported by a clear, well-written plan. That plan should account for potential shortfalls, explain how the fund would be created and maintained, ensure it does not violate or conflict with grant conditions, and specify whether it would sunset if funds are returned.

QUESTION:

Understanding Our Lagoon.

The St. Johns River Water Management District's 2025 monitoring showed a significant rebound in Lagoon seagrass coverage after years of decline.

- In your own words, what are the current water quality issues facing the Indian River Lagoon?
- Do you read the seagrass recovery as a reason to sustain current spending and effort, or to ease off?
- Beyond funding, name one or two concrete City-level measures you would champion to restore and maintain Lagoon health.

CANDIDATE'S ANSWER:

1. The Indian River Lagoon continues to face poor water quality caused by high temperatures, shifting salinity, and excess nutrients from sources such as stormwater runoff and wastewater discharges. Ongoing restoration efforts and community involvement remain essential to addressing these challenges effectively.

2. SJRWMD documented 17,042 hectares of seagrass in 2025, up from 9,924 hectares in 2023—an increase of more than 7,000 hectares, or about 13,000 football fields.

Seagrass recovery is proof that smart investments and committed leadership can deliver results for the Indian River Lagoon. I will keep fighting for the sustained funding, monitoring, and long-term management needed to protect this progress, strengthen lagoon recovery, and support the waterways Sebastian residents depend on.

3. Septic-to-sewer conversions

City of Sebastian's Stormwater Management Strategy

QUESTION:

Future Water Supply and Utility Expansion.

- What is your assessment of the City's long-term potable water supply, and how do existing and expected utility operations (wastewater and potable, City and County) affect the City's overall water resources?

- What specific expansion of utilities is necessary to meet future demand and restore our water resources, including the planned connection of legacy septic systems to central sewer?

CANDIDATE'S ANSWER:

1. Sebastian developments in Indian River County must submit required potable water reports and analysis to the county, including water quality documentation and proof of compliance with centralized water supply regulations. These requirements ensure new projects connect to centralized water facilities and meet local health and safety standards

2. Water services are managed by the county, and the city will continue working closely with county officials to ensure requirements keep pace with future demand.

QUESTION:

City-County Collaboration.

- Where do you see tangible opportunities for the City and County to work together on water and land use?

CANDIDATE'S ANSWER:

1. I believe the city and county should maintain a strong day-to-day working relationship, with regular opportunities to collaborate and address issues together. This kind of partnership ensures that when real opportunities arise, both governments can move forward as one coordinated team. As your current city council member, I am committed to keeping that partnership strong and focused on delivering results for Sebastian.

QUESTION:**Annexation**

The recent Sebastian Pines and Cresswind annexations approved roughly 1,512 homes on former agricultural land. Because Sebastian operates no water or wastewater utility of its own, both developments will rely entirely on the County's system under an interlocal agreement.

- How will you navigate a situation where the City approves major density increases that the County is ultimately responsible for serving?
- Do the current interlocal agreements give the County too much leverage? If so, what specific changes would you pursue?
- Are you in favor of future annexations? What makes an annexation attractive to you, and what would make you vote no?

CANDIDATE'S ANSWER:

1. Sebastian developments in Indian River County must meet required potable water reporting standards, including water quality documentation and compliance with centralized water supply regulations. As your city council member, I spend hours researching each agenda item to ensure all legal and regulatory requirements are met, making informed decisions based on the law - not emotion.
2. No. The city has stricter guidelines that must be met. If I made changes, I would keep the reports, analysis, data, and other requirements intact and only adjust the order in which they are presented.
3. I am not opposed to growth; it is inevitable. But I believe Sebastian must grow with purpose and grace. The real question is who will shape that growth. Annexation should be about more than adding land - it should advance a long-term vision for our community. As your current city council member, a yes vote means supporting annexation that contributes to Sebastian's future. A no vote is for proposals focused more on private gain than public benefit.