

City Council Candidate Questionnaire

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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:

No I do not. I think it is short sighted

If it should pass I would take these steps to insure public safety and residents comfort.

- 1) Freeze or delay nonessential capital projects and discretionary purchases that are not required for public safety, infrastructure preservation, or regulatory compliance.
- 2) Reduce administrative and operational overhead where positions can be consolidated through attrition, retirement, or reassignment rather than immediately filling every vacancy.
- 3) Review contracts, consulting agreements, travel, equipment purchases, and other discretionary expenditures for opportunities to reduce costs without reducing essential service levels.
- 4) Aggressively pursue outside funding for water-quality and Lagoon projects.
- 5) Keep dedicated utility revenues dedicated to utility purposes.

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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:

If state and federal funding is cut, I don't think we should just stop working on the Lagoon. We need to keep the progress going, even if we have to do it at a smaller scale.

I would first make sure we are taking care of the projects and water-quality work we already have in place. I'd also keep looking for grants and partnerships with the County, water management district, nonprofits, and other local groups so we can stretch our dollars as far as possible.

I would support having some steady City funding for Lagoon and water-quality work. It doesn't have to be a huge amount, but I think having money set aside each year would give us stability when outside grants aren't available.

I'd want that money to go toward things we can actually see and measure, like stormwater improvements, water-quality monitoring, and projects that keep nutrients and pollution out of the Lagoon.

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:

We're seeing more seagrass coming back, But I don't think it means we can back off.

The Lagoon is still dealing with too many nutrients and pollutants getting into the water from stormwater runoff, septic systems, wastewater, and other sources.

To me, the seagrass recovery is a sign that what we're doing can work. It's a reason to keep going, not a reason to stop. We should stay focused on keeping pollution out of the Lagoon and protecting our progress

At the City level, I'd like to keep improving our stormwater system so we can catch and clean up runoff before it reaches the River and the Lagoon. I'd also support better local monitoring so we know where our biggest problems are and can spend our money where it will do the most good.

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:

I think Sebastian is in a good position with our drinking water, but we can't just assume that will always be the case. We need to plan ahead and make sure we have enough water for our community as we grow.

Our water and sewer systems are also a big part of protecting the Lagoon and our groundwater. One thing I think we really need to focus on is getting older septic systems connected to central sewer where it makes sense. That can make a real difference in reducing the nutrients that eventually find their way into our waterways.

I'd also like to see us continue upgrading our sewer and wastewater systems so we have the capacity we need for the future. We should also look for ways to reuse water and reduce waste whenever it makes sense.

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:

One example is sewer and septic conversion. The City and County could work together to identify older neighborhoods that are still on septic, prioritize the areas closest to the Lagoon and waterways, and look for state and federal grants to help pay for the conversions.

Another is stormwater. Coordinate projects where water flows between the City and County, instead of looking at drainage one property or one jurisdiction at a time. For example, if a drainage improvement in the County could help reduce flooding or pollution entering the City, it makes sense to plan and fund that project together.

I also think we need better coordination on future development and land use. Before approving major new development near our waterways, the City and County should be looking at the same questions: Do we have enough water? Do we have enough sewer capacity? Where will the stormwater go? And what impact will the project have on the Lagoon?

I'd like to see more cooperation on land conservation and protecting wetlands and natural areas.

The biggest issue is communication. We don't need to agree on everything, but we should be talking to each other early and looking for solutions that make sense for the whole community.

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:

I think the City and County need to be on the same page when it comes to growth. If the City approves a large development, but the County is responsible for providing the water and sewer.

I'd like to see the City and County communicate earlier and work together on major projects, especially when it comes to water, sewer, roads, and drainage.

As far as the interlocal agreements, I think they should be looked at and updated when needed. I'd want clearer rules about who pays for additional infrastructure when new development creates the need for it. The developer should carry a fair share of those costs rather than putting the burden on existing residents.

I'm not against annexations. Annexation can make sense when it benefits Sebastian and makes sense for the people already living here. But I would look at each one carefully.

For me, an annexation is attractive if it has good planning, pays its fair share, has adequate roads, drainage, water and sewer, and fits with the character of Sebastian.

I would vote no if the development is simply too much for the area, creates infrastructure problems we can't afford, puts too much burden on existing residents, or doesn't make sense for the long-term future of Sebastian.

Growth is going to happen. My job would be to make sure we manage it responsibly instead of just saying yes because it brings more houses and more tax revenue. I would like to see annexing land to build a tiny house community for younger people to buy. This could be where they can build equity. It would be a starter home.