

Vero Beach City Council Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate: Robert MacCallum

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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:

I am fully in support of Amendment 3. It protects our most vulnerable citizens and helps keeps property rights where they belong with the property owner. According to multiple sources our city will not see much of an impact on our budget. We are looking at around a \$1.4 million hit. I feel we can make that up without cutting any services.

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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:

The health of the lagoon will remain a top priority and I will work with local, state and federal entities to find ways to maintain funding. One way is I would like the city to hire a grant writer.

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:

The seagrass recovery is a sign of progress and we need to continue that progress to keep the recovery going in the right direction. That is a essential part of our community and needs to be treated as such.

Continue to work with local agencies like Orca to maintain the progress and continue to lean on some of our local charitable organizations like Sunrise Rotary which I was President of in 2025. Our community cares deeply about the Lagoon and we will do what it takes to keep it headed back in the right direction.

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?
- The City provides potable water to Indian River Shores and reuse water to John's Island for irrigation, while the County develops an Integrated Water Master Plan. What specific City actions are necessary to meet future demand and restore the Lagoon, including connecting legacy septic systems to central sewer?

CANDIDATE'S ANSWER:

From what I know the city is in good shape with the new waste water treatment plant. I feel that will have a significant impact on the health of our lagoon. We also have a fair amount of extra capacity to accommodate more users so that could become additional revenue for the city when the county has to convert fully and does not have the capacity.

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:

From my understanding the communication between the city and county is virtually non existent. I have developed good relationships with the majority of the elected officials in this county and am confident I can hold discussions and bring solutions to enhance the benefit of both the city and county to work together to make our community better and stronger.

QUESTION:

Three Corners.

In mid-August, the City granted another 30-day extension for private-sector developers to negotiate a master agreement, including lease terms, for the Three Corners project.

- Would you facilitate the development of Three Corners? Explain why or why not.

- What would you propose to improve the project?

CANDIDATE'S ANSWER:

The can has been kicked down the road long enough. We need to start moving on projects that have been discussed and voted on. My issue is more with the lack of transparency in the negotiations. The public does not know where the negotiations stand nor do they know why it is being held up. When asked the answer is "we are currently in negotiation". That response is not good enough for our tax payers.