

**Greater Pensacola Chamber**  
**2020 Candidate Questionnaire**

**Pensacola City Council**

**Business Climate / Regulations Issues**

1. Rate the regulatory climate for business in Pensacola. Is it Good/Fair/Bad? Explain.

Fair. In conversations with Pensacola developers and business owners, I've heard that while there are certain regulations that may be burdensome, these regulations are reasonable and no more burdensome than those in other cities. Nonetheless, we should try to improve our regulatory climate so that business owners are advantaged when they choose to bring their companies to Pensacola instead of other cities in Florida.

2. Provide any examples of how regulations have affected the life of city residents or businesses in a positive or negative way.

Over the years, Pensacola has changed tremendously. Now, residents want a vibrant and walkable downtown. Regulations such as the pilot program for shared micromobility devices have helped promote a walkable downtown, while calls for minimum parking requirements encouraged less walking and more vehicle traffic.

Additionally, regulations about food truck locations have both supporters and detractors that will argue that such regulations are good for our local brick and mortar businesses or bad for our entrepreneurs that can't afford a larger operation.

3. Name the top 3 specific city ordinances/regulations you would like to see eliminated. Explain why they should be eliminated.

The top 3 city ordinances/regulations that I would eliminate are as follows and in no particular order:

Sec. 4-2-33(b): This section prohibits animals from certain public places. It states "Animals so found . . . in direct control by the owner, shall be impounded" and the owner is subject to a citation and civil penalty. I don't believe any animal directly controlled by the owner should be impounded under these circumstances.

A citation and civil penalty are sufficient punishment and the owner should be told that they must leave the property with their animal.

Sec. 6-3-12: This section addresses alternative parks and green spaces to be used instead of Plaza Ferdinand. It states “After construction of the Community Maritime Park is complete, it also will be open to group events as well as spontaneous, casual and passive uses.” This section should be removed and updated to reflect that the Community Maritime Park was built and is in fact now open to group events. This is important because our ordinances should be current and be as clear as possible.

Chapter 7-12: This chapter establishes the dockless shared micromobility device pilot program. This chapter should be removed and replaced with permanent regulations. Programs like these are helpful to create a walkable community and we should put in permanent regulation to entice new companies to come in and work within Pensacola.

4. What can the city do to facilitate a more livable downtown environment that also attracts and caters to the interests of visitors?

The City can incentivize the building of blended income apartments in a mixed-use property that has retailers and restaurants located underneath them. This will create a base clientele for businesses, provide the locals needed and welcomed resources, and creates a vibrant location for visitors. Additionally, the city can continue to work and implement ideas taken from the SCAPE plan as well as work with UWF to promote our waterfront and rich history. This would increase local pride while also acting as a tourist attraction.

5. What is your strategy to leverage the county’s interest in regards to state and federal funding opportunities?

We must build a strong relationship with our representatives in Tallahassee. That entails traveling to Tallahassee with our mayor, citizens and other influential residents and working with our advocates in the Capital to ensure our governor and others think about us when funding is discussed.

We should also designate an employee to keep track of funding opportunities and to work on our behalf, and with others in Florida, to fill out applications for funding. This would 1) ensure that we don’t miss opportunities and deadlines and 2) make sure we turn in strong applications. We could also use have that employee

reach out to the State to help apply for federal funds. This would make sure that our voice is heard throughout the process and that we can advocate from the beginning for why our county deserves funding.

### **Economic Development Issues**

1. What role should city government take in attracting new businesses to the city?

City government should act as an ambassador for the City and entice businesses who fit within the city's vision of growth, preservation and a healthy community. The government should also educate and support local businesses, entrepreneurs and trade students. The City should not stand in the way of innovative and new companies,

2. Which industries should the City of Pensacola concentrate its business development/growth efforts? Be specific.

Pensacola has strong finance and tourist industries. We should double down on these and build on existing capacities. We should take advantage of the skilled work force trained by companies like Navy Federal and put ourselves in a position to be a hub for regional financial institutions, community banks and credit unions. To bring more tourists to the City, we can also work to attract name brand retail stores and a big name neighborhood grocery store like Trader Joe's.

Additionally, we should leverage IHMC and our proximity to Andrews Institute to attract and develop industries in the STEM fields that can hire students from UWF or people trained on one of the military bases close to Pensacola.

3. What should the city do with excess properties that it owns? Which properties should take priority? Do you believe certain city parks could be considered excess property?

The City should only keep and maintain property to ensure environmental safety, for certain historic reasons, or if the property is a valuable piece by water or near a high traffic area. The City should prioritize these properties because they could be good sources of civic pride, revenue and/or are vital to the health of the community. The other properties should be sold. Allow the private sector to come up with new and innovative buildings and uses for the other parcels. Plus the sale

of the properties can be used to help fund crucial projects or revitalize old city initiatives like the Housing Initiative Fund.

Pensacola has 93 parks. It is very hard for our City to maintain all of these parks in a manner that is safe and clean for all of our citizens. In some cases we have parks that are within a half mile of each other. I believe that certain parks could be considered excess property and would look conversations with the community and location data to determine which, if any, can be sold or given to non-profits or neighborhood associations.

4. What is your vision for Pensacola's waterfront properties (i.e. Port of Pensacola, Community Maritime Park, Bruce Beach, Bayview Park)?

I like the SCAPE plan and Bruce Beach proposals. I'd like to see a connected, easily walkable waterfront with mixed-use and blended income living and family friendly attractions. The creation of a floating marina at the Community Maritime Park and a fishing dock at Bruce Beach are proposals that I especially think would be helpful to invite more foot traffic downtown.

5. Tourism is an integral part of Pensacola's economy. What are the top 3 ways that the city can add value for the Pensacola business community with respect to rebuilding tourism and nurturing a positive tourist experience in Pensacola post COVID-19?

Our beautiful beaches and great weather will always be a magnet for tourists. At the right time, we should invest in a marketing campaign that shows Pensacola took the right precautions to deal with COVID-19 and that we are safe and open for business. We can promote the city's encouragement of mask use and our closure of Palafox to allow restaurants and stores to take their services outside. Additionally, we should work with businesses to ensure they are incorporating safe practices for our tourists and residents alike.

We should also enhance our current tourist attractions. We could create more events around our Ferry system and routes as well as advertise our historic downtown in conjunction with our world-class Naval Aviation Museum.

Last, we have been hit hard by natural events like Hurricanes and the BP Oil Spill. We should invest in tourist attractions that are less dependent on good

weather. We could work with UWF to enhance the historic museums and houses downtown, work with the MESS Hall and children's museum to encourage more families to come into Pensacola, or create a venue that shows off why Pensacola is the City of Champions. Additionally, we could work to attract medical/professional tourism by emphasizing the work of places like IHMC and the Andrews Institute.

6. What is your vision for the various commerce parks or potential sites throughout our community?

The City should work to attract companies that rely on skilled employees that can be trained here. We should take stock of our trade schools and college programs and attract employers looking for the individuals coming out of the programs. We can also build up our tech industry and the tech park by emphasizing the caliber of potential employees coming from our cybersecurity courses and from the various military bases.

I envision our commerce parks and other sites being filled by companies with high grades on worker satisfaction and support whose presence is mutually beneficial since they will give constant jobs to our residents and we will provide them well trained employees.

7. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, what do you believe the city did well and what could they have done better? Please be specific.

I believe the City did a good job communicating to its citizens directives coming from the governor and looking for ways to keep people safe while providing support for local businesses.

I believe the City could have conveyed more clearly the criteria it used to assess risk and reward of re-opening and surrounding decisions to mandate the wearing of masks.

## **Operations / Infrastructure Issues**

1. What do you consider to be the number one infrastructure concern for the City of Pensacola going forward, and how do you propose to address that concern?

Various areas around Pensacola experience issues with street safety and flooding. For years we have heard concerns about Cervantes Street on the westside of Pensacola and the safety concerns of residents and business owners on the street. We should work with FDOT to find a solution that the community can support by building on the ideas of FDOT and not scrapping them. We should also look at our City prioritize and work to fixing the flooding issues in a similar manner that we have addressed stormwater management issues.

2. Do you believe the city allocates sufficient resources for infrastructure projects? How would you prioritize these projects and fund them?

I believe the City allocates sufficient resources for infrastructure projects. I would prioritize projects and fund them by first looking at which ones were the most environmentally impactful. We need to remake the city into something that is more pedestrian friendly and safer to live in. I would fund them in the same manner we have in the past but ensure that we have a clear set of priorities that are explained to the residents.

3. Do you see any overlap or duplication of services between the county and the city? If so, what services, and how could these services be consolidated?

I do not see any overlap or duplication of services. But where the County's and City's interests align, we should make sure funding sources don't overlap and create shortages elsewhere.

4. There have been a number of joint government meetings over the past few years. What is your opinion of these meetings? What types of cooperative meetings would you like to see moving forward?

I am a strong supporter of joint government meetings to ensure that our political bodies are working efficiently and communicating well. However, I do not approve of meetings that are unproductive. I'd like to see meetings that are succinct, substantive and that end in decisions being made that move all entities forward.

5. What would you change about the relationship between the Mayor's Office and City Council (i.e. should the Mayor attend all city council meetings, etc.)?

Under Article IV, Section 4.01, the powers and duties of the mayor include "attend[ing] all meetings of the City Council." So I do believe the Mayor should attend City Council meetings. Or, if not, the mayor should at least have representation in the meetings to create a more full dialogue between the city council and the office of the mayor.

I would like to see city council members and mayor work together more often to develop relationships with state and federal politicians and businessmen to better advertise our city.

6. What would your Five-Year Plan for the City of Pensacola look like?

My plan is to develop more thoroughly Pensacola's waterfront and other properties in an inclusive, accessible and affordable manner that attracts young talent and tourists alike. I want to see Pensacola continue to grow and use the tax revenue from new residents and tourists to maintain the cost of running our City and develop it for the future.

7. What are your plans to increase affordable housing opportunities for city residents?

I will steal a quote from a resident of Pensacola whom I spoke with. We should, "make housing a piece of the community's infrastructure."

First we should do more to help stabilize our low and moderate income residents. Re-start the Housing Initiative Fund, reach out to larger businesses to assist either monetarily or in helping renovate/update homes to prevent families from having to spend money on costly and unforeseen issues, and try to attract more HUD approved programs to assist those with bad or no credit so that they can get loans.

We should also create more affordable houses. That means using the work of programs like the Housing Coalition and building on their findings and suggestions. We should recruit more people to act as landlords for HUD housing

and explain the benefits of doing this. For example, landlords during COVID-19 did not have to deal with failure to collect rent because the government subsidized the payments. Also, we should create covenants with developers to create more blended income living spaces and find sub-contractors who employ qualified members of lower income residents to make sure they have the opportunity to afford housing in our City.

Also, since a majority of our residents in need of services are elderly and/or disabled we should work to find more federal and state grants that can go to building more ADA compliant residences and updating those that are not compliant.