**Greater Pensacola Chamber**

**2020 Candidate Questionnaire**

**County Commission---Jeff Bergosh Response**

**Business Climate / Regulations Issues**

1. Rate the regulatory climate for business in Escambia County. Is it Good/Fair/Bad? Explain your answer. I believe the regulatory climate for most businesses is very good in the Pensacola/Escambia area due to the ease with which businesses can work with the tax collector’s office in person or online to obtain a license to operate. In addition, the staff at the county has streamlined the permitting/inspections process to assist those in the construction/service businesses.
2. Please provide any examples of how regulations have affected the life of county residents in a positive or negative way. The removal of concurrency in 2013 by the then BCC affected citizens in a negative way; it has led to a situation where unchecked growth has over-taxed existing infrastructure in some areas of the county leading to issues with overcrowding in schools and roadways that are insufficient for the newly created traffic. Our code enforcement regulations have assisted homeowners in a positive way in helping such neighbors address properties that have fallen into disrepair and become nuisances in communities. Regulations that allow for abatement and fines for owners of such properties results in better neighborhoods, and higher property values for the rest of an area’s residents who properly look after their own individual homes and properties.
3. Name the top 3 specific county ordinances/regulations you would like to see eliminated. Explain why they should be eliminated. I’m working a plan to take 46-206 and modernize the process for how this regulation is implemented. This regulation deals with the lease rates for property renewals on Santa Rosa Island. As it has been written and implemented, it has resulted in lease fees that are dramatically less than market value, leading to lost revenue for SRIA. 50-35 Needs to be modernized or repealed, as currently it stipulates limitations on the value of contributions to volunteer firefighters. In my opinion we need to appreciate and value our volunteer firefighters and work to remove regulations that impede our ability to foster and grow the ranks of volunteer firemen in Escambia County. 86-33 is a regulation concerning the naming of streets in the county, particularly in new subdivisions or for streets that do not have names. This needs to be modernized to allow more latitude by the developer to pick the name and not be subjected to arbitrary rejections as I have seen happen.
4. What is your strategy to leverage the county’s interest in regards to state and federal funding opportunities? We must be intelligent with our seeking of grant funding for roadways that are designated state roads and/or federal highways that serve our existing populations. To the maximum extent possible we should use state and federal money on such roads anywhere we can, saving local dollars for our local roads and working to bring more state dollars to the county by working with the Florida/Alabama Transportation Planning Organization to leverage additional monies where we can to make existing roadways/signals more efficient. Currently the board is doing this with an area-wide smart traffic systems center we will be funding with a combination of local and state dollars. This will significantly improve traffic flow in our area’s more than 1000 traffic signals while we share the costs for this system with neighboring counties and the state. We also done this by having the state pay for critical infrastructure and stoplights in District 1 at Beulah Road and Mobile Hwy, and we are leveraging state and federal dollars to construct our interchange in Beulah from the I-10 freeway. Additionally, we did a key road swap that tremendously benefitted District 1 by swapping Beulah Road for Perdido Key Drive—which will put the State on the hook for paying the nearly $10 Million in upgrades, 4-laning, and safety issues. Had this swap not happened, these costs would have fallen on local citizens to pay.

**Operations / Infrastructure Issues**

1. 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?

Human Resources, Legal, Engineering, and even Administration are areas where services for citizens could be consolidated to save money for taxpayers of both the city and the county. The vehicle mechanics, planning, zoning, code-enforcement and potentially the parks and recreation departments could consolidate if the political will existed to do so at the city.

1. 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? Joint meetings with our peers on the ECUA, the Escambia School Board, and the Pensacola City Council have been cordial, informative and productive. In our meetings, we have worked to provide bus passes for all students to ride ECAT, and we have also could offer library cards for our county public libraries for all students in the school district (particularly helpful over the summer) and these are just two initiatives of many that have come from the joint meetings held over the last several years.
2. Do you believe the county allocates sufficient resources for infrastructure projects? How would you prioritize these projects and fund them? There is never enough money to do all the projects that are needed in the county. I believe we continue to do them in cycles and handling acute issues as they arise utilizing our LOST funds, while simultaneously growing our revenue sources by growing the economy, which serves to spin off more revenue for use on infrastructure projects. We have also leveraged oil spill monies for multiple drainage and roadway infrastructure projects and we should always be looking for grant and federal/state dollars where applicable to augment our local spending on these projects.
3. What is your opinion of the beach congestion plans that have been proposed? What is your vision for solving this problem? My vision which I have enunciated from the dais involves removing the toll booth and allowing the traffic to flow freely through, syncing the lights through Gulf Breeze and at Fort Pickens road, and making up the revenue from the toll booth removal by charging for parking in a tiered system in the Casino Beach lot while leaving 20% of it “free.”
4. There is a proposal for a new sports/meeting facility. Do you approve of this project and how would you propose to pay for this type of facility? We have a Civic Center that is paid for. We need to spend enough money to fix it such that we can get another 20 good years out of it. We can utilize existing yearly bed tax revenues already allocated for the civic center, bonded over 20 years, to accomplish this with no utilization of general fund revenue or LOST funds.
5. What would your Five-Year Plan for Escambia County look like? I’ve written a four year plan entitled NEXT4Escambia, [linked here,](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1GvI7XATCf7-vwvh3_PbKtzHoUAkArrxf/view) and also available at [www.jeffbergosh.com](http://www.jeffbergosh.com) which discusses this in detail, the critical elements of good governance (The Economy/Jobs, Infrastructure/Public Safety, Transparent Governance, and Quality of Life/Quality of Place)and how I will pursue improvements in each of these categories and also multiple “big ideas” for larger, systemic issues which plague our governance system in the county.
6. Name the three-top infrastructure needs in Escambia County or The City?

Beulah Interchange, Pine Forest 4-lane from I-10 to 9-Mile Road, Completion of 9-Mile Road 4-lane Project in Beulah.

1. What are your plans to increase affordable housing opportunities for county residents? I will work with the area housing committee and local non-profits and faith-based groups to assist with this issue.

**Economic Development Issues**

1. What role should county government take in attracting new businesses to the area? What types of jobs would you like to see growing in Escambia County? Be specific. I believe this is a critical, essential function of local governments and I am proud to have been involved in bringing the OLF8 land swap in for a landing, which will eventually produce a minimum of 1000 good jobs for Escambia citizens. I am also proud of the County’s role in landing the $230 Million Dollar ST Engineering project at Pensacola’s airport—which will bring a total of 1,725 direct, good paying jobs to Escambia County. I’m also proud of the partnership we have developed with Navy Federal Credit Union to develop OLF8—leveraging their funds to master plan that that property while simultaneously realizing 300 additional jobs and $4 Million from NFCU for a small portion of that property.
2. What is your vision for the various commerce parks or potential sites throughout Escambia County? We are working to divest ourselves of the downtown technology park, and that process is moving forward. As for the rest of our parks, they have been very successful and have created thousands of jobs for Escambia citizens. Heritage Oaks, sold out. Marcus Pointe, sold out. Ellyson—supports thousands of good jobs and beat revenue projections a decade ahead of schedule, only a few buildable lots remain. mid county park—phase one is sold out. So, these parks are long-term propositions, that take time to fully build-build out with tenants. We are currently working on the heavy industry park, “The Bluffs” in conjunction with Florida West—and that park is moving ahead and we are receiving state funding allocations for much of the initial work we are doing on the site.
3. What should the county do with excess properties that it owns? Be specific. I believe we should keep only what we need to do the work of government-and all other marketable properties held by the county should be sold to the private sector so they can be put on the tax roll to generate revenue for the county.
4. Tourism is an integral part of Escambia County’s economy. In what ways, can the county commission rebuild tourism post COVID-19? Read my 11 page plan for this NEXT4Escambia at [www.jeffbergosh.com](http://www.jeffbergosh.com) or download it at this link [here.](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1GvI7XATCf7-vwvh3_PbKtzHoUAkArrxf/view)
5. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, what do you believe the county did well and what could they have done better? Please be specific. We communicated the changing issues and conditions with frequent updates to our web page and in-person news conferences. We activated our EOC and we put out a daily SITREP listing hospital bed and ventilator capacity. For the month of April, I held weekly coffee meetings online, livestreamed so all citizens and news outlets could participate, with the top medical professionals in the area to include our Health Department Director Dr. Lanza. Perhaps to improve communications we could have held more press conferences—but this is a very unusual circumstance we are all trying to navigate and we are in uncharted territory on this. But we are trying our best.
6. What types of Triumph/RESTORE projects would you like to see funded? Be specific. I support and want to see long-lasting, high-impact, self-sustaining projects funded locally that produce jobs and generate revenue. I also would like to see additional environmental remediation projects completed that will make our community better.