**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.**

The City of Pensacola can and should do more to make it easier for entrepreneurs to start a new business. Permitting and licensing should be able to be done quickly and easily from a smartphone. The City should especially do more to encourage and assist minority and women entrepreneurship, including grants, workshops, and community outreach to make citizens aware of the resources that are available.
2. **Provide any examples of how regulations have affected the life of city residents or businesses in a positive or negative way.**The double-edged sword of code enforcement has brought increased property values by reducing blight for some people, while at the same time overburdening financially-limited homeowners with costly repairs. We must examine the pros and cons of ordinances which may have unintended effects like losing the fabric and character of a neighborhood. Any ordinances that have an economic impact on a citizen should be reviewed with careful consideration and amended or repealed if found to be causing displacement or economic hardships.
3. **Name the top 3 specific city ordinances/regulations you would like to see eliminated. Explain why they should be eliminated.**

- Chapter 7-7, which regulates garage sales to a frankly bizarre level of detail. No one follows these rules, and the city doesn’t enforce them.
- Section 8-1-12, which makes it unlawful to use slingshots within the city limits. I don’t know that we’ve busted anyone for a slingshot in the last 50 years.
- We should also take a look at Chapter 7-10, which contains extremely detailed rules and regulations for taxicabs. In an era when anyone can start driving people on Uber or Lyft, these rules are outdated and put traditional taxicab companies at a competitive disadvantage.
4. **What can the city do to facilitate a more livable downtown environment that also attracts and caters to the interests of visitors?**

As the city council member for District 5, I will be more focused on District 5 than on downtown Pensacola. While I believe a strong and vibrant downtown is an important part of a strong and vibrant city, downtown Pensacola has received much attention, funding, and investment in recent years, while District 5 has not. My priority will be to facilitate a more livable District 5.
5. **What is your strategy to leverage the county’s interest in regards to state and federal funding opportunities?**
With the collaboration of non-profit organizations and my long history working with county commissioners and staff on regional projects impacting Pensacola, we have developed a common vision for projects like the Hollice T. Williams park and the Chappie James museum utilizing the funding sources from grants, donations and city/county dollars.

**Economic Development Issues**

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

The mayor should take a lead role in promoting Pensacola as a destination for business. The city council should support his efforts and work with the mayor to allocate funding and pass legislation as necessary.
2. **Which industries should the City of Pensacola should concentrate its business development/growth efforts? Be specific.**

A recent report found that only 1 of the top 10 jobs in Pensacola can support renting a two-bedroom apartment. Too much of the region’s economic development efforts have focused on relatively low-wage sectors. Our efforts should be focused on industries which provide sustainable, long-term, living-wage jobs, like technology, aviation, healthcare, and manufacturing. But more importantly, we need to take a step back and address shortcomings like education, housing affordability, and infrastructure in order to make our community a more attractive destination for businesses. By directing more funding into infrastructure and education, we can create a flourishing environment for economic development.
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?**

Excess public property should be put to good use. City-owned residential property can and should be used for affordable infill housing, while non-residential property should be evaluated case by case to determine how to maximize the benefit to and/or value for city residents.

I absolutely would not support selling off city parks.
4. **What is your vision for Pensacola’s waterfront properties (i.e. Port of Pensacola, Community Maritime Park, Bruce Beach, Bayview Park)?**

Pensacola’s publicly-owned waterfront should remain publicly-owned and used for public purposes. I will not support any effort to sell off public waterfront property to private developers.
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?**For too long, Pensacola’s tourism efforts have focused primarily on our beaches. While those are an incredible asset, we are more than a beach community. Pensacola has a rich and diverse history than can compete with that of any city in the country, but we have not capitalized on our heritage. So much of Pensacola’s story remains untold. The city should work to market our community as a heritage tourism destination. This includes preserving our endangered historical assets, reconstructing in whole or in part historical assets we’ve lost, and promoting storytelling through heritage tourism trails, kiosks, etc.
6. **What is your vision for the various commerce parks or potential sites throughout our community?**

Pensacola has failed remarkably in its efforts to develop “commerce parks” — take the so-called “Downtown Tech Park,” still vacant after a decade, for example. It is apparent from these failures that public dollars would be better spent on other initiatives.
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.**

It’s easy to second-guess decisions in hindsight. I think the mayor and city council have done an admirable job of keeping the public informed and encouraging people to practice social distancing, wear masks, etc. One thing that the city could have done better in hindsight is worked with businesses and non-profits to provide face masks for residents who couldn’t find or afford them.

**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?**

As the council member for District 5 my first priority will be the infrastructure within District 5. We need better street lighting, more sidewalks, and better parks, and that is the infrastructure I will work to fund as a city council member.
2. **Do you believe the city allocates sufficient resources for infrastructure projects? How would you prioritize these projects and fund them?**If the city had allocated sufficient resources for infrastructure, District 5 neighborhoods would not be as dark as they are at night. District 5 residents would have more sidewalks to walk on and better parks to play in. As District 5’s council member I will work to ensure that District 5 gets its fair share of city resources to improve the quality of life for the working families in our neighborhoods.
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?**

There is quite a bit of duplication of services between the city and the county. It makes no sense to regular folks that we have multiple agencies providing garbage pickup and police and fire service to the metro area. However, I am only interested in discussing consolidation of services if and when it will result in the same or improved service as well as cost savings for the residents of District 5.
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 only interested in joint meetings if they result in joint action to improve our community. I have no interest in photo-op meetings.
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.)?**

The mayor should have a positive working relationship with city council members and should work hand-in-hand with each council member to address the needs of that council member’s district. At the same time, the city council as a body needs to better understand its powers so that there is a more balanced city government working to improve Pensacola for citizens and businesses alike.
6. **What would your Five-Year Plan for the City of Pensacola look like?**As the council member for just one of seven districts, it wouldn’t be my place to dictate a plan for the entire city — but I look forward to working with my fellow council members, the mayor, my neighborhood associations, and other stakeholder groups like the Chamber to develop a plan for the next five or even 10-20 years.
7. **What are your plans to increase affordable housing opportunities for city residents?**

The city should partner with developers specializing in affordable infill housing, and use any surplus city-owned property for that purpose. Furthermore, the city should explore the establishment of incentive programs and/or tax abatements to attract private developers to build affordable infill housing.