

Brian Hoffman – City Council Candidate

Business Climate / Regulations Issues

- 1. Rate the regulatory climate for business in the City of Pensacola. Is it Good/Fair/Bad? Explain your answer.**

Fair. The real question is how does the regulatory climate of Pensacola compare to Escambia County or Santa Rosa County. In certain areas, such as permitting, the County has a more favorable climate than the City. This is a big issue that the City needs to focus on in order to attract important business and economic development. If the regulatory climate is not good, then development will choose another location.

- 2. Please provide any examples of how regulations have affected the life of city residents in a positive or negative way.**

On June 22, 2022, the City Council (acting in a Quasi-Judicial Capacity) Case 22-00696) heard the appeal from a City Resident pertaining to a ruling from the Architectural Review Board (ARB) regarding a recently installed metal roof. The ARB ruled that the roof had to be replaced. Ultimately, the City Council (by 6-1 vote) overruled the ARB. The real issue was the City Land Development Code does not have written regulations addressing the roof requirements. In that particular case, the roof matched the other neighbors, who also apparently had incorrect roofs, but not based on written regulations. This is an example of how regulations affect city residents in a negative way. Regulations preserving the heritage of our historic districts are important, but like all other regulations they have to be in writing and readily ascertainable by city residents . Otherwise, the result is inconsistency in application, which is frustrating for all citizens. Clear, and well written regulations are often beneficial to citizens, but not all of our City's regulations are written, clear and concise. In particular, the City's Land Development Code should be reviewed and updated to avoid these types of inconsistent application.

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

First, as stated in response to question #2, portions of the Land Development Code need to be eliminated and updated to avoid inconsistent application that was recently addressed by the City Council in an appeal from ARB seeking to force a citizen to take down a roof that was identical to the majority of the roofs in the neighborhood. Second, Section 6 of the Code places limitations on certain downtown parks such as Plaza Ferdinand, which per the code provision history seems to be based upon damage to the park following a festival in 1987. Essentially, these restrictions substantially limit events and use of Plaza Ferdinand. Now thirty-five years later, it is time to revisit any restrictions on our parks, particularly downtown parks, to ensure we are maximizing our public space to the benefit of the entire City. Third, Section 8 of the Code addressing panhandling is insufficient. This Code provision should not necessarily be eliminated, but it needs further refinement to ensure the vibrancy and safety of our City while at the same time protecting homeless and vulnerable individuals.

4. Downtown Pensacola has grown and flourished over the past decade. What areas of the city would you like to see development focus next?

I would like to see a focus on development and re-development in District 2, which lies around the nucleus of Cordova mall and northeast along Ninth Avenue. This area includes underutilized strip malls and substantial parking areas that have tremendous potential for redevelopment in a positive direction for the City and also increasing the City's property tax base.

Operations / Infrastructure Issues

5. 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 are several areas of overlap and duplication. For example, sanitation services provided in portion of District 2 result in different providers from one street to the next since the City's boundaries are not straight lines. For those type services there are possible avenues for reducing costs by avoiding duplication, but it requires careful analysis. Furthermore, any discussion for consolidation must begin with the quality of the service provided; not simply cost savings. In particular, our City has an excellent police and fire department and consolidating those type services would jeopardize the quality of service our City appreciates.

6. Homelessness and panhandling continue to be a significant problem in the city of Pensacola. What are your solutions to this pressing problem that impacts the business community?

See response to Question 3 above. One option to limit panhandling would be new ordinances to fine anyone contributing to panhandlers. However, if that approach were taken, then the City needs a real time option to allow someone willing to give money to a panhandler to immediately donate that amount to a cause or organization providing real time services to that vulnerable population. This could be a mobile device application or QR Code that is readily known and allows for donation at that moment. Additionally, while affordable housing is a separate and distinct topic, it does tie into the homelessness discussion because those in our community need affordable places to live.

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

No. Carpenter Creek is a good example of where funding has been lacking. The challenge is any potential project that expands beyond the calendar year budget, and projects that also require grant funding or additional funding sources. Despite these challenges, the City needs to allocate for long term projects like Carpenter Creek, which have the potential to turn an infrastructure problem into a natural resource that could be enjoyed by all citizens. Another infrastructure effort that needs improvement is stormwater and drainage, and the immediate problems that

result when those systems fail. These are also long term projects, but ones that substantially impact affected citizens.

8. 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?

See Response #7 above. Carpenter Creek is my primary infrastructure concern for several reasons. First, the Creek has been substantially degraded in recent year. More importantly though, through cooperation with the County funding was dedicated for the restorethewatershed.com project resulting in multiple site plans that were produced at substantial expense. Those plans were favorably received by the public when debuted this year. We now have plans and projects to seek out funding and grants, so it is critical to bring those projects across the finish line.

9. 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's Office and City Council need to improve the relationship so that they are generally proceeding in the same direction. Admittedly, City Council is a public forum where debate occurs and ideas and projects are refined. However, in recent meetings agenda items from the Mayor's office have at times been received with 6-1 votes in opposition from the Council. For the public at large that degree of disparity does not look like debate, but discord, which needs to be improved. I do not believe the Mayor needs to be at City Council meetings to resolve that issue, but more one on one communication with council members in advance of meetings would be helpful to improve that relationship.

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

Five year plans for the entire City are challenging because the weight of efforts is focused on what is in the plan and what gets left out. Five year plans for a particular need, or area, or sector though, are manageable and help keep the City on task. From a need viewpoint, ensuring sufficient affordable housing is critical. From an area viewpoint, Carpenter Creek rehabilitation and affording public access for kayaks and trails is a well focused five year plan. From a sector standpoint, focusing on attracting top talent that now have a choice where to live – and we want them to choose Pensacola.

Economic Development Issues

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

The City should primarily be focused on the amenities and services being provided to City residents. We are now in a new era where people are not choosing to move here for a job, but to live, and then to find a job. A more remote world following Covid has only accelerated that trend. The City should be focused on expanding and improving upon the list of reasons why a person or family would choose to live in Pensacola.

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

See Response 11 above. The City should focus on people choosing to move to this area, many of whom now have the ability to work remote. Our City, with the Beaches, parks and opens spaces and vibrant history, is uniquely positioned to grab that development and growth in the future.

13. 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 re-envision potential uses for excess property to not only provide new amenities and services but to expand the tax base. Priority as to which properties depends on the potential use, which is not a one size fits all; it requires careful consideration and input from citizens. Portions of city parks should be considered for potential redevelopment, but only to the extent that use expands upon the use of the park. For example, a coffee shop adjacent to one of our City park with a playground could further expand a park for use by young children and parents.

14. 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 increasing tourism and nurturing a positive tourist experience while here in Pensacola?

First, the City needs to address panhandling (see Response 6 above), which is a negative to tourism. Second, improve walkability in portions our City, particularly around the Maritime Park and Bruce Beach. Third, continue to expand upon amenities that would be chosen by tourists. We have always focused on our beaches, but projects like the Skate Park, are new ways to give potential tourists a reason to choose Pensacola.

15. What is your vision for Pensacola's waterfront from Three Mile Bridge to Joe Patti's? Feel free to incorporate the Port of Pensacola, Community Maritime Park, the Hashtag Project, and Bruce Beach.

Pensacola's waterfront, both the aesthetics and developments, have improved dramatically for the better since I was a kid. However, as stated in Response 14 above, walkability needs to improve. Right now the lack of walkability compartmentalizes the Maritime Park relative to Bruce Beach. While plans are in the works to develop Bruce Beach, we need to keep pressure on these projects to see them across the finish line.