

Charles Bare – City Council

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. While the ordinances are not overly restrictive, the lack of responsiveness by permitting and inspections has a negative impact on businesses utilizing these services. In addition, businesses are penalized for doing the right thing and paying their business tax receipts. The ongoing argument about the tree fund, which trees need to be protected, and how development should be managed when trees must be removed needs to have more clarity. Finally, the presence of overlay districts such as the one in the CRA area have had negative effects on construction in those areas.

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

The lack of responsiveness on the part of permitting and inspections has slowed the ability of citizens to have items such as roofs inspected in a timely fashion to satisfy insurance requirements. It is very difficult to even get someone in permitting to answer the phone. The CRA Overlay District is far too prescriptive and provides unnecessary challenges to developers and builders in that area. There is no active enforcement arm for the business tax receipts, so the businesses that actually follow the rules pay an unnecessary tax. We should be encouraging businesses to come to our city, not penalizing them with another tax. Businesses have far greater impact than the business tax receipt provides.

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

1) Sec. 12-3-31. - Community redevelopment area (CRA) urban design overlay district. This ordinance provides overly restrictive rules for development in the area. The CRA should be eliminated as much of the blight it was created to address has been curtailed. The CRA provides an unnecessary lockbox of money for a small section of the city. There are other ways to control planning and development within the area. The overlay district is not the correct way. 2) CHAPTER 7-2. - LOCAL BUSINESS TAXES. Funds collected from local business taxes are a small portion of the city's budget. Paying them is nearly voluntary as there is no true enforcement entity in place. While code enforcement could be employed for such purpose, it is impossible to weed out all of the businesses that are home-based. We should be encouraging businesses to form in our city, not penalizing them with another tax. The positive impacts of having a business move into the city would offset the losses in revenue from the business tax receipt. Businesses in Escambia County already pay a business tax receipt to the county. Why should they be double-taxed in the city? 3) CHAPTER 7-7. - VEHICLES FOR RENT TO THE PUBLIC, ARTICLE II. - TAXICABS. The presence of taxicabs has greatly declined in our area with the proliferation of

ride-sharing companies. We should follow the lead of other cities in Florida and de-regulate the taxicab industry.

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

As a candidate for City Council, District 2, I believe our area needs some attention. We have only 8 of the 94 parks in the city. We also do not have a neighborhood center in our district. Within our boundaries, we also have much of Carpenter's Creek. This waterway is severely impaired and needs to be addressed. This creek impacts the water quality and citizen-enjoyment of Bayou Texar and Pensacola Bay.

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?

While there is some duplication of services between the city and the county, I think the focus needs to be on consistency in ordinances between the two. If we are going to keep the business tax receipt, I would prefer a consolidated approach. The city and county could split the cost of the business tax receipt and consolidate the database of businesses. I would also like to see the water and sewer back under the city. The city erred in selling the utility for the creation of ECUA in the 80's.

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?

We need real solutions for housing homeless individuals and families. This should take place through existing non-profits if possible. Grant funding could be added to assist the organizations in completing this task. The county and city need to work together on this issue. We have very limited land available for such purposes. Only through a multi-governmental approach will we address this issue.

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

I think the city has done a reasonable job in allocating resources to infrastructure. Unfortunately, the needs often outweigh the funding availability. One of our biggest challenges revolves around stormwater. We are the victims of decades of poor decisions in planning and building. Trying to alter the way water flows is the most daunting task. The stormwater fee has helped us to address these needs. As a member of council, I would continue to work with the mayor and my constituency to identify needs and seek solutions in the most cost effective manner.

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?

Stormwater control is our biggest challenge. As a city on a bay, we continuously fight stormwater and try to find ways to stop it from flooding streets, residences and businesses. Poor decisions from decades past make this more difficult. Water will always find a way. We must encourage the use of pervious surfaces and look for funding through grants and other sources to minimize the need to further tax our citizens for relief.

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.)?

I think it is very productive for the Mayor to attend City Council meetings. There are times at which other obligations might limit his/her ability to attend, but I think it should be a regular and consistent practice for the mayor to attend. If elected, I would like to have regular meetings with the mayor to share my concerns and find out more about his/her priorities. I would like to work collaboratively with the mayor, but there will likely be some occasions when we do not agree.

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

In the next five years, I would like to see the city population grow by 5%. I would also like to see the water and sewer franchise transferred back to the city through a legislative act. This would allow for better coordination of upgrading and improving sewer, water and gas lines. The city could then focus on addressing the elimination of septic tanks within the city's boundaries and utilizing the water and sewer services to annex adjoining areas of the county into the city. Finally, I would like the city to study the possibility of selling city hall and building a parking garage on the city hall parking lot. Many employees could work from home and a more city-central location could be developed for citizen services.

Economic Development Issues

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

City government provides infrastructure and limited tax incentives for the purpose of attracting businesses to Pensacola. Elimination of the business tax receipt could also assist.

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

High-tech industries such as cyber security and software development would be ideal for our area. There is also some limited capacity for aircraft maintenance and support capabilities. If we are going to continue to utilize the port for ships, we could focus on rocket recovery ships or niche operations that do not require a heavy industrial impact such as the aggregate shipments.

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 make a public inventory of all the land that it currently owns and let the public review it. This should be done through public meetings and presentations. Citizen input should be sought. My district only has 8 parks. I do not recommend any of them be considered as excess property. If the mayor or another council member believes other parks should be considered excess property, I would listen to their justification. This process should not be undertaken without significant citizen input.

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?

1) The city should utilize funding such as those from the Restore Act to provide access to waterways and our natural resources. 2) The city should continue to focus on stormwater management to minimize flooding from events as insignificant as an afternoon thunderstorm. 3) The city should ensure that its performance contracts with businesses charged with maintaining parks are up to date being performed as well as ensuring that existing facilities such as bathrooms are maintained. The city should also look for funds to add bathrooms to parks such as Veteran's Memorial Park.

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.

I would love for the public to have multiple access points to enjoy the waterfront along our coastline. This includes Bayou Texar and Pensacola Bay. This will require resources to ensure that the water quality is addressed in those areas. While public access is critical, poor water quality will be a limiting factor if not addressed. Unfortunately, decades of pollution and chemical contamination along our waterfront make this a daunting task.