

Dr. Charletha D. Powell – 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.**

The regulatory climate for business in the City of Pensacola is fair because Forbes recognizes Pensacola as one of the top 100 cities, and millions of dollars have been invested in our city from renewable energy companies, technology, and financial industries. Furthermore, the city provides a weekly one stop development review meeting to expedite permitting. However, businesses have also been impacted negatively by the division between city staff and the city council. To renew confidence in the regulations enforced by the governmental agencies, there must be a holistic approach to resolving regulatory issues. This can be accomplished through collective input from concerned citizens, city staff, city council, and business leaders. Through collaboration, regulations can be adjusted to resolve conflicts and create an improved business environment that limits the conflicts that arise between city stakeholders and business owners.

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

Land development regulations, such as tree protection ordinances and zoning regulations, have all significantly impacted the lives of residents, businesses, and developers in the city. Residents and developers often disagree over tree protection ordinances. The benefits of trees to residents go beyond aesthetics. Permitting restrictions, however, sometimes impede various forms of development. As a result, developers become discouraged and the public loses faith in the city government. Furthermore, zoning and redistricting are necessary for some of the development projects presented to the city; however, citizens are impacted by fear of encroachment on their property and the quality of life they have enjoyed in the city.

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

I do not have any specific city ordinances/regulations that I believe should be eliminated at this time. However, many ordinances and regulations must be adjusted to ensure harmony between the city, its residents, developers, and businesses.

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 District 2, also known as Uptown, as the next development focus. Development focus in District 2 would benefit the city, county, and community as follows: through cottage industries that support hospital services, safe and diverse parks that promote health and activity for neighborhoods, alleviation of the housing shortage, support of existing businesses and investment by new business interest, the preservation of Carpenter Creek that has significant environmental and infrastructure impacts, and infrastructure that connects it all.

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?

Many districts have portions of the county embedded in them; therefore, garbage service and police protection overlap or may be duplicated. This overlap causes confusion for the citizens and may cause some inefficiencies. For example, if an area of the county is within the city limits there could be an agreement between the city police department and the sheriff's department to service that area. Any money that is normally paid to the county for policing service would be paid to the city police department instead. This would also apply to the garbage service as well. Currently, the city picks up on one day and the county on another. Having one service would eliminate duplication of service on the same street, save money on fuel, keep the neighborhoods clean, and provide consistent service to the citizens.

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?

Panhandling has a significant impact on Pensacola businesses and its citizens. However, the Supreme Court decided that panhandling is a form of free speech protected by the First Amendment. Therefore, I suggest the following: Limit the way panhandling occurs. For example, the city could present a resolution prohibiting panhandling in front of stores, banks, schools, cafes, parks, playgrounds, and ATMs. Prohibit panhandling at major intersections and interstate exits that interfere with traffic safety and traffic right of way. Prohibit panhandling before 7 a.m. and after 5 p.m. These suggestions are not comprehensive but can formulate long-term solutions that do not violate the rights of panhandlers while providing support to businesses and citizens impacted by it. Homelessness impacts people in various situations due to finance, job loss, and mental health. I suggest utilizing abandoned buildings and vacant schools to

provide beds and services. The aforementioned buildings could provide a one-stop shop for beds, health care, mental services, veteran support, and jobs. The offices of these buildings could house local agencies that support the needs of the homeless while the rest of the building or classrooms can provide dormitory-style living. The residents will be responsible for cleaning and maintaining the property in order to continue residency. The goal would be to support citizens to reenter society or transition into health/mental health facilities that can provide the services they need. I believe this would take people off the streets and provide a long-term solution to reducing the number of homeless persons forced to live on the street.

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

I believe the city staff and city council make a concerted effort to allocate the resources available to infrastructure projects. I believe the projects should be prioritized according to their impact on citizen safety, health, environment, neighborhoods, schools, and businesses. An order of priority should be determined through citizen and business input combined with city government collaboration. Existing taxes, oil spill restoration funds, Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund, RESTORE, grants, county funds (in areas where infrastructure overlaps), and approved local option sales tax should fund infrastructure projects.

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?

The number one infrastructure concern is stormwater runoff. Stormwater runoff carries contaminants that enter our storm drains and empty into Bayou Texar, Bayou Chico, Pensacola Bay, Escambia Bay, and Carpenter Creek. Consequently, the issues with stormwater runoff cause flooding, environmental concerns, and health issues. I will review the Stormwater Master Plan for the City of Pensacola to understand what projects are complete or outstanding. After reviewing the master plan, I would visit the sites and follow up with the governing agencies to confirm we are on track and have the necessary funding to complete the projects. A quarterly review will identify new issues and confirm existing issues have been corrected. The stormwater utility fee charge will be assessed to confirm the proper allocation of the funds.

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 and the City Council should be united in leading the city. The division between the Mayor, staff, and the City Council diminishes the faith citizens have in our local government. It also compromises the confidence of persons interested in residing, developing, or doing business in our city. Since the Mayor cannot vote at the City Council meetings, attendance should not be a requirement. The Mayor should attend council meetings for specific items or issues as needed. The City Council should determine whether the Mayor's presence is necessary at the City Council agenda conference. However, city departments associated with agenda items presented at the meeting should be present to answer any council or citizens' questions or concerns.

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

A strategic five-year plan would: ^[1]_[SEP]

1. Unify the local government and develop best practices that create an effective organization providing citizens with high-quality services.
2. Provide long-term plans for financial stability and sustainability that include plans to reduce the city's current debt.
3. Improve and promote growth through smart city technological innovations, land use development, affordable housing, social services, ordinance reviews, and public safety strategies.
4. Focus on implementing projects that address stormwater management, environmental projects, hurricane safety, sustainability & resiliency, street safety, and water quality.
5. Build strong neighborhoods through communication and outreach that promote strong connections with businesses, community partners, and residents.
6. Provide military and veteran support. ^[1]_[SEP]

Implementation of this five-year strategic plan would include alignment with the city's budget process, capital improvement plans, city policy decisions, economic development initiatives, and public safety priorities.

Economic Development Issues

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

1. Securing investments in infrastructure,
2. providing support to local economies,
3. offering low-interest loans to businesses to upgrade facades and increase energy efficiency,
4. creating efficient zoning and planning ordinances,
5. offering cash grants,
6. rebates,
7. tax credits, and
8. tax incentives to relocate to the area.

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

The City of Pensacola should concentrate business development growth efforts on technology industries, chemical manufacturing, manufacturing, real estate, tourism, aviation, cybersecurity, and workforce development.

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 use excess properties to develop affordable/workforce housing for rentals & purchases for first-time home buyers. Properties that are ready for development and/or that have buildings that could be infilled for housing should take priority. City parks are attached to neighborhoods; therefore, the citizens that utilize those parks as well as the city council representative should decide whether the park is excess property or not.

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?

The top 3 ways the city can add value to the Pensacola business community with respect to increased tourism and positive tourist experience are as follows:

1. Highlight the history and culture of the city.
2. Promote and maintain heritage spaces, art galleries, and museums.
3. Responsible short term vacation rental regulations that promote diverse vacation experiences while maintaining neighborhood integrity and value.

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 should be a thriving area that supports activities for all local citizens and tourists. The Port of Pensacola should have mixed-use that includes retail, dining, and activities. However, the use of the Port should not be compromised by those expanded activities. The Bruce Beach project should come to fruition as planned to provide trails, learning and play activities, and cultural exhibits. The section from the Three Mile Bridge to Joe Patti's should reflect the vibrancy of Pensacola and its people through activities that support the reason people move here to live, work, and play.