

Sherri Myers – Mayoral 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.**

Good. I base this statement on the fact that many businesses have opened in District 2, the Uptown area, including downtown. Housing is being built all over the city at a great pace. I see no evident sign that any regulations are creating barriers to new businesses. Based on monthly, quarterly and yearly financial reports provided to city council it appears that our revenues are increasing with sales tax, property values, gas tax revenues, communications fees and revenues, and other sources of revenue. From all appearances the city has a robust economy and housing market.

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

I generally do not receive complaints regarding regulations. However, the majority of complaints from city residents has to do with the lack of enforcement of regulations that already exist. The lack of enforcement of traffic laws, speeding, cut through traffic in neighborhoods, loud noise, illegal mufflers, are just example of the quality-of-life negative impacts that exist in the city that are directly the result of lack of enforcement of regulations. I believe enforcement of code and sanitation ordinances could be improved which, again would have a positive impact on our businesses and residents.

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

The city recently recodified and updated all of its ordinances and repealed some and modified others. As a member of the city council for 12 years, I would think if there are ordinances that need to be eliminated should have been addressed. However, I do believe that are numerous issues that need to be addressed by implementing ordinances that address the environment, protection of trees, infrastructure needs, climate change, complete streets, animal welfare, incentives for businesses, are examples. The strong mayor form of government. While this is not an ordinance/regulation it is a charter that the citizens have change several times through referendums. I have served for 12 years under the strong mayor form of government. Pensacola's form of government is an anomaly. The majority of cities the size of Pensacola has a manager/council form of government in Florida. The present form of government is ineffective, lacks transparency, allows the mayor to lobby council members behind closed doors and make deals, and lends itself to corruption and cronyism, as well as cost taxpayers more to fund two branches of government. There needs to be major changes to the current form of government, least requiring the mayor to be a member of the city council, requiring the city council to determine the organizational structure of the city and to codify the structure in to ordinances. The present charter allows the mayor to change the structure everyday if that person so chooses, and it

is amazing how often it does change. The form of government in Pensacola limits predictability which is bad for businesses and the citizens. It also makes it difficult for the city council to function as the governing body of the city.

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

The area of the city called Uptown. Uptown is the commercial and business core of Escambia County. The Uptown area that includes the airport, PSC with 10,000 students a day, Ascension Sacred Heart one of the county's largest employer, Baptist Hospital will soon be open its new hospital and facilities in Uptown, more retail that one can shake a stick at, a thriving medical industry, St. Engineering, hundreds of professional offices, and great neighborhoods - yet, there is virtually no interest by city council and the mayor in providing any amenities - not even street lighting to this area. I have had to fight to get streetlights on Bayou Blvd from 12th to Davis and on 9th Ave. Streetlights in the most heavily traffic area for cars and pedestrians is a no brainer. Over the past 20 years the area known as Uptown as only received 1.3% of all of the city's LOST and yet, most of it is being generated here in the Uptown area. Ninth Ave. is the longest street in the city and yet, it is totally neglected when it comes to streetlights, traffic control and sidewalks and amenities. Ninth Ave corridor is the goose that laid the golden egg that nobody wants. It is full of opportunity with all of the many malls and huge parking lots that are prime sources for retrofitting suburban. Compared to downtown, Uptown has great infrastructure. Why is it ignored? I have been the ONLY city official advocating for improvements to 9th Ave and Bayou Blvd. When I become mayor, we will see a paradigm shift in the city. The opportunity to leverage huge unused acres of asphalt will be a top priority of the Myers administration. Creating housing for seniors and low-income individuals in areas accessible to retail, hospitals, etc., by bus is where the focus needs to be - and that opportunity is in Uptown. In addition, to Uptown the city needs to aggressively partner with Baptist Health Care to provide the infrastructure needs to develop the Moreno area property to transform that area of the city, providing new housing and retail opportunities. At the same time, we need policies in place to ensure that opportunities do not result in gentrification of minority neighborhoods.

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?

The essential services provided to the citizens of Pensacola are not services that need to be consolidated with the county. However, there are services that the county runs, such as public transportation and animal services that the city should find ways of supporting. In the past the city provided funding for ECAT and Animal Services. The city stopped providing funding for ECAT around 2008, as with animal services. In recent years when the county imposed a 4-cent gasoline tax the city allocated the city's portion to the operation of ECAT. About 60 % of the riders of ECAT live in the city. A decrease in funding for ECAT has a negative impact on low-

income residents and people with disabilities. The city should be working with the county to provide more funding to ECAT to lessen the burden of gasoline cost for working and low-income people. Furthermore, more people taking mass transit lowers greenhouse gas emissions by eliminating the need for cars for travel. As for animal services, animals are suffering from lack of animal services in the city. The issue of cat overpopulation, animal cruelty and breeding cannot be addressed given the county's lean animal services budget. At one time the city's animal control ordinances were superior to the county's ordinances. The level of services for animals and their welfare has been diminished in the city limits.

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?

I certainly understand the impact of homelessness and panhandling on the business community. I think the issues, while overlapping, are two different issues. While, mitigating homelessness will reduce panhandling it will not resolve panhandling. I have worked on homeless issues for 40 years as a legal aid attorney. The issue is complicated and cannot be reduced to one size fits all. Most of the homeless are not visible. Most of the homeless who are living in tents, on the streets, etc, are people with disabilities. More people are living in cars due to the rising cost of rent. The city has allocated a lot of money over the past year to assist organizations in their efforts to provide appropriate services and housing to people experiencing homelessness. I have the experience and proven commitment to address the issue of homelessness. I will continue to work with local organizations and other jurisdictions such as Escambia County and Santa Rosa County to find ways to create affordable housing for low-income families and individuals who are unable to afford market rent. If I am elected, I will establish an advisory task force to the mayor to develop a plan that is effective and measurable to look at policies and programs that need to be implemented to reduce homelessness and panhandling within the limits of the law.

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

I have served on city council for 12 years and am knowledgeable about the infrastructure needs of the city. Stormwater, sidewalks, bike lanes, complete streets, streetlights. I do not believe the city allocates sufficient resources for infrastructure projects. The city has wasted a lot of money on projects that are wants, not needs. The infrastructure priorities are often not sexy showy projects. Based on the severe consequences of flooding and drainage I would prioritize stormwater infrastructure as a number 1 priority. Based on 12 years on city council and knowing the tremendous problems with drainage and flooding that impact every area of the city - stormwater infrastructure is the single most important infrastructure issue. Many of the storm water problems that impact the city exist on state roads, but city drainage impacts the volume of water state stormwater facilities can handle. There are funding sources that are not being utilized to address stormwater and flooding issue in the downtown urban core that is in CRA districts. Funding from CRA revenues should be used to address issues in CRA urban core. Instead, CRA

funds have been bonded to build projects whose primary objective is not stormwater infrastructure and flooding. CRA funding for stormwater and drainage infrastructure should not be overlooked. There has to be a collaboration with the state, county and city to adequately address stormwater and the funding necessary would have to come from numerous sources. Furthermore, there needs to be a more aggressive effort to offer incentives to private business owners to green up parking lots, especially in the Uptown area so that stormwater is retained on site.

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. This issue can be addressed in a number of ways. Stormwater and drainage are major concerns for a number of reasons (1) flooding (2) water quality in our creeks and Bayous. The approach to addressing stormwater should be numerous such as replacing aging stormwater pipes, re-designing streets, using public lands to better absorb water, STOP CLEAR CUTTING what is left of our urban forest, stop allowing the removal of trees from the Carpenters Creek watershed, plant thousands of trees strategically throughout the city, use the tree trust fund only for replacement of tree canopy and urban forest, require new parking lots to use green infrastructure to retain water on sight, target the massive acres of asphalt in the Uptown area by incentivizing repurposing parking lots and greening them up as other cities are doing. Implement the city's Climate Task Force recommendations.

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.)?

No, the mayor should not attend all city council meetings. The mayor should attend agenda conferences and official council meetings, but not workshops and special meetings unless there is a specific reason for the mayor to do so. The form of government is what needs to change. At this time the mayor can lobby council members and make deals with council members behind closed doors. Most strong mayor form of government charters require the mayor to be a member of the city council. In the state of Florida, this means the mayor cannot lobby council members behind closed doors. The council cannot act effectively without information, and most of that information comes from the mayor. It has been my experience, serving on the council for 12 years that council is not given the information it needs to make informed decisions. I don't see that changing under the present form of government. Most recently, in spite of the fact that the charter requires the mayor to enforce all ordinances of the city, Mayor Robinson has unilaterally decided that he will not enforce Section 12-5-6 of the city's land development code during political campaign season. This is a flagrant abuse of power. Rather than going through the city council, the legislative body, to change an ordinance he doesn't like, he has decided to make up his own rules. Should I be elected mayor, I will respect the powers and duties of the city council and the laws that body has created. I will work closely with the city council to bring about ethics reform to take money out of politics (modeled on the city of Tallahassee) as I have stated in my campaign platform at www.sherrimyers4mayor.com. The reason ethics reform and taking money

out of politics is important is because special interest drives the mayor's agenda, and the mayor can lobby city council members on behalf of special interest. I will also work to have a lobbying ordinance so citizens will know who is influencing not only the mayor, but city council members.

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

I do not think anyone running for the office of mayor has the information necessary to formulate a five-year plan for the city. I have served on city council for 12 years under two different mayors. I have had to make many open records request to try and obtain information necessary for me to make informed decisions. The council is not well informed regarding the operations of the "executive" branch of the government. I do not believe any candidate for mayor can truthfully assert they have enough information about the city's budget, the operations of the mayor's office, the operation of all of the departments (which are constantly changing without any input from the council) to formulate a five-year plan. There needs to be an objective evaluation of all city operations. I believe the public and the council need to know if the present form of government is as effective, productive and accountable as the previous council/manager form of government. Based on unbiased information decisions need to be made regarding how to improve the governmental operations of the city. I plan to ensure that equity becomes a core value of everything the city does. I will develop a plan based on objective criteria to ensure that the city policies and operations delivers services, opportunities, and fairness to all areas of the city, especially to underserved areas and communities and businesses. I address the lack of affordable housing by developing partnerships with for profit and nonprofit organizations to develop the Baptist Hospital site on the westside and to develop affordable housing in the Uptown area along 9th Ave. Expanding opportunities for growing Pensacola's population by increasing housing opportunities beyond the downtown area and CRA districts and promoting the Uptown area as a desirable place to live work and play. Work to implement the West Main Street Masterplan as soon as possible, especially the Maritime Park as promised to the people who voted for multiuse in 2006. Protecting tree canopy by overhauling the tree ordinances to protect urban forest and restoration of Carpenters Creek. I have an objective of planting 5,000 trees, including pines, and other native trees in the Carpenters Creek watershed, some on private property. Working with the county to purchase land along Carpenters Creek including land that is in the county. Re-use of public spaces to better serve the citizens including, using parks for community gardens, intention

Economic Development Issues

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

The city of Pensacola has had a great working relationship with Floridawest which should strengthen and continue in the future. The government should play a critical role in attracting new businesses to the area. For example, through the collaborative efforts of the city, county, state, and federal government we have been able to attract St. Engineering to the Pensacola International Airport in an effort to promote the repair and maintenance of aircraft industry. The

city should work with all stakeholders and partners, not just to attract businesses to the city limits, but also regionally with both Escambia and Santa Rosa Counties. The city has a thriving medical industry that should be promoted. In the city limits are two of Escambia County's top employers - Baptist Health System and Ascension Sacred Heart. In the Uptown area, along Davis Highway, Ninth Ave, 12th Ave, and Corporate Woods office complex is a rapidly grown medical industry that includes hospitals, rehabilitation centers, urgent care centers, doctors and dentist, therapist, and other specialty medical fields. The city should promote emerging businesses as well as the expansion of existing businesses.

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

Port of Pensacola vessel services
St. Engineering Aircraft RMO
Medical industry
Cybersecurity
Information technology

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?

First, there needs to be a definition of excess properties. The city has different types of property. There is vacant land and then there are physical facilities. If there is unused land there needs to be a determination made as to its potential development for housing, stormwater, or community gardens, or other projects. As to excess facilities perhaps looking at a facility such as city hall that is not fully occupied, has maintenance issue, and should be evaluated by a professional to determine if there is a better use for the property. I do not want to apply the word "excess property" when evaluating potential reuses of property. I have advocated for years looking at other uses for Osceola Golf Club, which is not located in the city limits, does not improve any neighborhoods, is no longer a viable enterprise and which the city has spent millions of LOST funds since I have been on city council. The millions of LOST that has been spent on Osceola could have been spent on infrastructure projects to improve downtown drainage issues, for instance. Furthermore, Osceola is subsidized by the general fund.

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. Promoting Pensacola's vibrant downtown, festivals, art and Uptown that are great places to visit. Millions of visitors come to Pensacola through our Airport, and yet the city does not promote the Uptown area with its many restaurants and shopping malls. There should be a transportation route down 12th Ave., that connects Uptown to Downtown so visitors who stay in hotels in the Uptown area can conveniently go downtown without cars. Perhaps a trolley.
2. Promoting historical and cultural tourism, as well as African American and Native American history and culture.

3. Promoting areas where many health care facilities in Uptown, including the new Baptist Health Care and the location to many restaurants and stores. Some people will travel out of town to hospitals that are located within walking distance great amenities such as those located in Uptown, including hotels, restaurants and shopping. Home 2 Suites is building a motel across the street from Ascension Sacred Heart and a stone's throw to Cordova Mall.

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.

First, I am not running for mayor to promote my vision. I am running for mayor to promote the vision of the people of Pensacola. There have been many meetings to gather input from the community regarding the vision and plans for Community Maritime Park, Hashtag Project and Bruce Beach. I believe the area from Graffiti Bridge to three mile bridge needs to be improved. The area is trashy and deteriorating. It is shocking. Tourists and locals should have an inviting, aesthetic and safe fishing, boating and picnicking experience at Wayside Park. If I am elected mayor I am committed to implementing the vision of the citizens who have voted for and participated in the planning of the projects downtown. Furthermore, cleaning up and revitalizing the Graffiti Bridge and Wayside Park will be accomplished through engaging the public as to a possible new vision for the area and the funds needed to implement the changes. In 2017, I asked the city council to allocate \$100,000.00 to look at additional potential uses of the port. I believe there are additional uses of the port that can contribute to the revitalization of downtown and the CRA urban core. I believe certain industries are no longer appropriate at the port due to truck traffic and air pollution, and other issues associated with industrial uses.