



Beaches Activists Movement

2022 Candidate Questionnaire

Questions	Atlantic Beach City Council Seat 4	
	Candace Kelly	Jennifer Lagner
<p>1. Please tell us briefly why you are seeking this office and what life, professional, and volunteer experiences have prepared you for this role, including service on volunteer city boards.</p>	<p>I am seeking re-election to Commissioner, Seat 4. The last 5 years have been immensely rewarding as we addressed emerging issues in our community, especially in environmental protection, quality of life, and adapting to legislative mandates. We led the region in assessing vulnerability, measuring resiliency, and making a ten-year capital improvement plan to prepare. We applied for millions in grants to pay for them, and received 1.5 million already. We were among the first small cities to earn LEEDs Certification, which is a tool to measure our environmental impact. As a Commission, we meet to set goals for the coming year and created a City mission statement based on citizen inputs.</p> <p>I have served on the Board Member Review, and commission liaison with the Pension and Code Enforcement boards, and to the Environmental Stewardship Committee.</p> <p>After a career in Naval Aviation, I taught AP World History at Fletcher HS and earned National Certified Teacher Board certification. I earned a B.A (Public Administration) and M. Ed (Leadership) from UNF while on active duty. As Commissioner, I attended 3 Elected Official classes and other online courses sponsored by the Florida League of Cities.</p> <p>In my personal life, I volunteered extensively with the National Park Service, church ministries, American Legion, Jacksonville Beach Citizens on Patrol, Fletcher PTA, Oceanside Rotary, and Daughters of the American Revolution.</p>	<p>As an AB resident for 20+ years, I love the community and am entrenched in it. Although not a career politician, my commitment to solutions and putting residents first fuels my passion for ensuring we maintain the haven in which we live and play.</p> <p>My prior experience includes 20+ years human resources experience, 25+ years project management, operations/ facilities management. I have worked with the city in various capacities include resident, homeowner, home builder, committee member and board member including: serving as the president for 9 years of a 100-unit condominium association leading the property through various capital projects; member of the COAB Parking & Pedestrian Safety Advisory Resource Committee (PPSARC 2017 - 2018); member of COAB Community Development Board (CDB 2020 - 2022).</p>
<p>2. What would you say are the 3 most important issues facing Atlantic Beach in the next 5 years? And what are your priority proposals for the one you consider most important?</p>	<p>Our most immediate concern is the recruitment and retention of city employees. While we have the right people in leadership roles, several key roles remain unfilled. To address this, we awarded a substantial pay raise, expanded benefits, and also allocated extra funding for expanded recruitment efforts in the 2022-2023 budget.</p> <p>The recent extreme weather events across the world trouble me. Our reserve account is healthy enough to sustain us through a</p>	<p>Stormwater management, safety and fiduciary responsibility and accountability are priorities. Those 3 are large overarching buckets that feed into other aspects such as infrastructure (drains, proper paving, impervious surface, trees), parking, sidewalks, speed management, enforcement, resident education, project scope/priorities and strategic planning, then into policies to start.</p> <p>Regarding priority proposals, I would want to further delve in with city staff on what was done, what is planning to be done before</p>

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	<p>"normal" storm season. But the overwhelming cost associated with implementing all the Resiliency Plan projects makes the pursuit of grant funding a high priority. We need to continue to implement environmental protections as possible.</p> <p>Several projects in the near term will require the attention of the Commission and city staff. The Lifeguard station needs to be designed and built. The Land Development Code needs another update, and the City Charter is due for review.</p>	<p>presenting a plan that may not be accurate. This also includes speaking the long-term residents and delving into the history to further understand what was done and how we can capitalize for future.</p>
<p>3. Stormwater management and sea level rise are of obvious concern for coastal communities like ours. If elected, what would you propose first to improve our community's ability to manage these threats?</p>	<p>Our community is already along the road to resiliency. We conducted a vulnerability survey, resiliency evaluation, prepared engineering plans, solicited grant funding, and have started implementing our capital improvements plan. We have made a few land purchases to enhance our ability to service stormwater systems. The Utilities department has embarked on a plan to replace aging stormwater systems.</p> <p>To reduce vulnerability to flooding in the neighborhoods, the land development code limits impervious surfaces to 45%, limits grade buildup, and requires onsite rainwater retention. We purchased a vacuum truck to clear out storm water drains and ramped up drainage ditch clearing. As trees are the first line of defense against flooding, we planted hundreds of trees on city property and offered free trees to homeowners.</p> <p>Next, we plan to survey the conditions on the marsh in order to establish a baseline. When evaluations reveal changes in the marsh, we can take steps to protect properties there.</p> <p>The challenge is to continually pursue more grant funding.</p>	<p>See above.</p>
<p>4. As you make decisions regarding new development, how will you balance maintaining our city's character and livability with the pressure to continue growing?</p>	<p>This is an ongoing challenge. There is considerable support from long-time residents to protect and preserve the tree canopy, particularly because it is the first line of defense against storms and rising sea levels. However, property owners do have rights, too. There is very little undeveloped land left in Atlantic Beach, so growth has been coming more and more through redevelopment of older properties. Developers and recent investors are less interested in historic features, such as old growth trees. This creates some friction with established residents. The City's Tree Code and land development codes were updated with community</p>	<p>We have to balance it together but also look at our codes and what they allow for new development. For example, when I built my house, I intentionally underbuilt to what I could have by code because I wanted to maintain the look and feel of the neighborhood (I have a lot and a half). There is also a resident piece to this.</p>

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	<p>input, to balance private property rights with community protection.</p> <p>As for livability, we made many safety improvements such as lighted pedestrian crossings, lightning predictor system, maintenance of park equipment, adopted Complete Streets policy, more handicapped assessable park facilities, and mold control at the lifeguard station. Together with citizen input, we created a Master Parks Plan and included the chosen projects in the Capital Improvements Plan. We embraced Environmental Stewardship standards, from tree planting, reduced use of plastics, beach cleanup, encourage composting, education, and LEEDS action plan. We expanded youth programs at the Community Centers and celebrated several notable hero citizens. All official meetings are recorded and many requests for city services are now available online.</p>	
<p>5. In today's divisive political atmosphere, many voters are looking for leaders who can bridge the gap between the parties. Is that a goal for you? How would you do it?</p>	<p>Atlantic Beach elections are non-partisan. I prefer collaborative decision making, having been part of a team throughout my career. During my term as Commissioner, I felt the 5 of us were in accord on almost every issue. And when we weren't, there were no hard feelings. After all, we do represent a variety of citizens and interest groups. We make an effort to invite the public to input on issues, and have been careful to thoroughly study and discuss with staff, experts, and among ourselves before voting. This does slow the process, but it also ensures that best practices are followed. I believe in equitable spending across the city as a whole, listening to citizens, and preparing for the future. I think we are all united in pursuing these goals. Each commissioner brings strengths and skills to the tables, and we're all dedicated to serving the City. As the saying goes, all government is local. Nearly everything you use in the morning to get the day started is provided by the city or county: water, sewer, electricity, cell transmission, roads, streetlights, schools, dog park, sidewalks, public safety... We live, work, and play here, together.</p>	<p>My apologies I do not understand the question to answer it. This is a nonpartisan race so are you using the political parties as an example for divisive groups? Happy to talk more so I can better understand the question.</p>
<p>6. As our public beaches and city center draw increasing numbers of people, the demand for parking keeps growing. How would you</p>	<p>Parking for Atlantic Beach access is limited by our built-out neighborhoods. The joint paid parking project with Neptune Beach was started to create turnover in Town Center. It accommodates residents, who can register their license plates for free parking. And the low cost of parking does not unduly penalize visitors.</p>	<p>Parking will continue to be an issue because the demand is outpacing the availability. We need to enforce what we have in place and not alleviate fines - if you overstay then you pay. Enforce the codes and rules in place for everything so those who are non-residents know this is not a dumping ground and respect the area and each other.</p>

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tackle this problem - balancing the rights and needs of city residents with those of the general public?	<p>Further north at 18th and 19th streets, we added paid parking on the weekends as another step in managing litter, noise, and unruly behavior in the parking lots, which has adversely impacted the quality of life in nearby neighborhoods. Data analysis to date shows that nearly all the vehicles parked there belonged to visitors, not residents. Again, for a modest fee. Parking for bicycles and low speed vehicles are included.</p> <p>In other parts of town, the City has been enforcing the requirement to keep right-of-way spaces free of obstacles intended to prevent others from parking there. Not all are cleared, but we are working on it. We also formalized parking in places such as Water's Park.</p> <p>Finally, the City adopted a Connectivity Plan, with input from the public, which lays out future investments in sidewalks, pedestrian crossings, paths, and other methods of making it easier to get around town without involving motor vehicles.</p>	<p>Encouraging people to walk, ride bikes and other non-vehicles can help as well. Going street by street to understand that landscape and also the ROWs. However, we should also be encouraging people to check out other businesses and parks on Mayport Road, Hanna Park etc. This will not get fixed overnight, but we need to start taking some steps sooner than later. The trolley between the beaches was an interesting idea as well.</p>
7. Our neighborhoods comprise residents of different socio-economic levels, ethnic groups and political viewpoints. How will you address the varied needs of all of our residents including those facing food insecurity, securing affordable housing and accessing health care?	<p>With Commissioner Norris as a strong advocate for her district (5), the Commission has made a concerted effort to equalize our attention and spending to all parts of the city. This included paving, sidewalks, park maintenance, utility upgrades on the west side. We added pickleball courts, parking, and resurfaced basketball courts in the community center parks. With funding from the City of Jacksonville, we plan to expand Baker Center and add a splash pad to Donner Park. Donner Road is being rebuilt to better connect the east and west sides of town.</p> <p>The Mayport Road business corridor has received facade grants, roadway improvements, a food truck lot, a mural project, and updated ordinances in collaboration with business owners. Affordable housing is lacking in Atlantic Beach, but we support the efforts of Habitat, which has added senior housing repairs to their services.</p> <p>I give kudos to the mayor for sponsoring the Mayors Council on Health and Well-being, a community-based think tank discussing ways to improve life in Atlantic Beach, inspired by Baptist Health. The Beaches Mayors are also sponsoring an upcoming panel discussion on the Opioid epidemic. The City supports BEAM, which opened up a new food pantry on Mayport Road and also brings food to Mayport Elementary. We have made contributions to Dial-a-Ride, which takes seniors to appointments and shopping</p>	<p>We need to educate everyone on what is available in an easy way because some people may not want to publicly reach out to local government or neighbors for help. We also can't make the assumption that where someone lives dictates their income level. We also need to understand what their needs are in order to develop a plan - for example, if someone can't make their water / garbage payments on time, is there a special fund? Need more discussion.</p>

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	<p>on demand. Citizens experiencing financial stress can get relief on their water bill, too.</p> <p>All residents benefit from the variety of programming offered through the Recreation Department, including specific outreach to seniors and youth.</p> <p>We have systematically added handicap access across our parks and beach walkovers.</p>	
8. The Interlocal Agreement, first signed in 1982 and amended in 1996, specifies services provided by the City of Jacksonville to the Beach cities. Are there changes you think need to be made to this agreement? Please explain.	<p>Yes.</p> <p>The inter local agreement is over 25 years old, it behooves us to take a hard look at it to ensure it is still serving both Atlantic Beach and Jacksonville equitably.</p>	<p>Yes.</p> <p>The AB interlocal was 1995 and while there have been other agreements in the past, an almost 27-year period seems too long. What our city was like in 1995/1996 is not what we have today. A plan should be in place to review this agreement and others every certain number of years to determine if a renegotiation is needed. We do not get the proper tax \$ that we probably should so that is where we could start as well as assessing all services and speaking with our sister cities of Neptune and Jax Beach.</p>
9. Is there anything else you would like to share with voters?	<p>It has been my great pleasure to serve. Marvelous citizens and dedicated city staff members have combined to make this a great place to live. I would like to serve another term and see to fruition some of the many plans we have put in place.</p>	<p>Thank you for taking the time to read about me but I would love the opportunity to speak with residents about what their concerns are. While we have large priorities, there could be some fixes put in place to help make the quality of life better.</p> <p>I am committed to putting residents first, getting the facts, making informed and swift decisions but also challenge where needed.</p> <p>My webpage is www.JennLagnerForAB.com</p>