

D.C. Reeves – Mayorall 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.**

As a small business owner in the city, I would say between Fair and Good. I have less issues with the regulations themselves, but moreso with the need to better streamline the rules and regulations, communicate those regulations effectively to our taxpayers and make the experience more efficient to do business, pull permits and invest in our community. Overall, I plan to push forward with a business owner mindset towards doing business to make this a place to work with. Having experience as an entrepreneur here will give me the unique ability to understand both sides of business-related issues and make the best decision for Pensacola.

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

I believe our wholistic regulation/process of building and development in the city has opportunity for improvement. Not to change rules, but to better streamline and make the process easier for the end user. I'll expand on this later, but I also believe it's time to adapt and look at regulations on the books as it relates to land use, parking minimums and the ability to have safe pedestrian and biking access for all corners of our city.

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

1. A comprehensive review of our city's land development code in order to help our housing shortage. We have to enhance our ability to create revenue and increase the inventory in our community.
2. Reviewing archaic policies that hurt our ability for safe pedestrian and biking access across all parts of our city. This is part of building a sense of place that attracts talented people to live and work here, and we are behind.
3. Roll back restricted use ordinance of Plaza Ferdinand to a certain extent in order to continue the activation of downtown.

- 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 believe with the need for affordable housing quickly, it's a city-wide effort.

We have to look at any and all opportunities to grow smart and grow to enhance the city's ability to provide great service to the taxpayer. We are less than 40 square miles, and we must get out of

a 'separationist' mentality about which council district gets what. We're too small of a footprint for that.

What's good for the city is good for downtown and vice versa. If more people live in our city, it supports downtown. If more people live downtown, they work and play in other parts of our city. It's more about putting our best foot forward and showing investors that we value their investment in our city and putting in steps to ensure their interaction with the city goes well.

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?

With any city/county government situation like Escambia we can always identify some version of duplicity.

I believe any city mayor's primary focus should be to further enhance the services we do offer. We have to set the value it is for city residents to pay more tax. That means their parks are taken care of, their garbage is picked up on time, their customer service at the gas company is good and most importantly our police and fire response times remain strong.

Down the road, we should always be open to conversations about consolidation of some services but that ROI would need to make sense for the city.

In addition, we would look at any opportunities for voluntary annexation in the city to help further fund our city services and grow our city's population, which in turn could attract more attention from businesses and young talent in the workforce.

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?

This is a topic that deserves its own questionnaire. I've been close to this issue on every side. My mother, Connie Bookman, chairs the city's homeless reduction task force. She has been part of the solution for the homeless since I was born here 38 years ago.

I am also a downtown business owner and have dealt with some negative impacts. The reality is that we as a city are currently spending upwards of \$3 million to help reduce homelessness in our area, and we haven't had enough runway yet to see if that has worked or it hasn't. As mayor we will have runway by the end of the year to see if those initiatives have helped, then go from there.

At the end of the day, we're trying to best separate the people who need help in our community and the ones that are homeless who are not seeking help. These steps are helping highlight those groups and they are making headway. In the end, it's important to have a compassionate heart for those in need AND it's important to ensure that we will not give up the vibrancy of our city of 55,000 for a small number of people no matter who they are.

There is a way to do both and no one is better positioned to understand this issue - and not talk in absolutes, but actionable items - than I am given my upbringing, my familiarity with the issues and the ability to understand how to best reduce homelessness long term. I plan on taking action quickly to support this process and keep our city safe and vibrant.

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

This is a trick question; data shows that no city in America has sufficient resources to support its infrastructure. Not one. When this infrastructure was built, no one accounted for its replacement 30, 40, 50 years later. That still happens as we build large highways, roads out to subdivisions, urban sprawl, etc. In fact, the large federal infrastructure bill coming from Washington D.C. doesn't even have enough money to fix 20% of the nation's bridges that are in immediate need of improvement.

So what now? We hustle to find solutions. Our 10 largest stormwater projects needed in Pensacola would take a combined \$160 million (and counting) to fix. We don't have that money.

We will make an unprecedented effort to go get these infrastructure dollars coming from the federal and state level by creating the first-ever City of Pensacola Grants Office. Other cities our size are doing this. This office will be tasked with ensuring that not one more grant opportunity gets by us. They will work with each and every department head to maximize our return. At the same time, we will discourage sprawl in code and planning while in turn helping encourage urban infill in order to limit the city's liability for additional infrastructure maintenance in the future.

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 Infrastructure and Coastal Resiliency as discussed above.

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.)?

It's the duty of the mayor and the duty of council members to improve their relationship with one another. It's not about me. Or us. It's about doing what's best for the taxpayer. That means being able to disagree on an issue civilly and move on to the next thing. That means having short memories about disagreements, then getting together for another city improvement the next day.

It's not about ego or who's right or wrong, it's about making this the best city we can make it, together.

As far as meetings go, we have to navigate the balance of connection/communication and impeding the council's ability to do its job. I believe the mayor should be prepared to attend every meeting, especially if it's a proposal/recommendation I would bring to the council, etc. But the mayor has to have enough trust in his administration to explain issues and be accessible, all while not slowing the already typically slow wheels of government.

All of this comes down to this: It takes good, solid, ego-free communication between the mayor and council, which I believe to be one of the mayor's primary roles. To have good government that works for all citizens, you must be a great communicator.

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

A plan of any scale will focus on these issues: Public Safety, Affordable Housing and Job creation/Economic Development.

I've met with all department heads and others, almost 30 people on the city's leadership chart, all city council members and all city administration over these past nine months as a candidate and I've learned a lot in this process. I'm as prepared as anyone to come in and know the issues we face and the things we are doing well.

If we are talking a tactical plan, I'm more of a believer in the 1-2-3 year plan. (Who had COVID in their five-year plan? Who had Hurricane Sally?)

My plan for large-scale planning would be this: I would have a short-range plan to make some changes and improvements to the city, and within that would be fixing a major need for our city - having an overall strategic plan for where we - the mayor, the citizens, the council - want Pensacola to go. We are missing that desperately and I believe that's one of the major causes of inconsistency in being able to predict what passes and what fails, what's considered "good" for the community and what's not.

As Ed McMahon of the Urban Land Institute said at CivicCon: "When you have no plan, everything fits it."

Other cities do this and do it well. Let's have a vision, a strategic and comprehensive plan for the direction of Pensacola, then establish Key Performance Indicators for how we get there. You can't fix what is not measured.

Economic Development Issues

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

An increased role than we have before. Today is a new day in economic development, one that is focused on the battlefield of winning the "talent war."

It's less about shovel-ready land and more about getting talented people to move home or move to Pensacola for the first time. That has a cascading effect on our existing small businesses and our ability to attract new business to town. Everyone can find land, but if you don't have the employees to hire, that business can't move. This is a fight we need to join to say competitive in business in the South.

A big part of that is investing in our city and creating a sense of place - things like walkability, home inventory, park beautification, tree canopy, ADA accessibility.

A second part is intentionality at the city. I have a plan to create an economic development liaison position at the city who can help foster growth and help people who want to invest in our city as well as with our other economic development partners in the region.

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

We should improve the process of investing in our city. We have demand but we can become a better place to invest in with a more clear, streamlined process as our neighboring communities have.

With job sectors, we should focus on health care administration, cybersecurity, and most of all a real workforce development/career academy strategy that helps us cultivate talent in Pensacola.

The mayor is also the salesman of the city and should be constantly working with economic development partners to attract any business to not only the city but to the region because Pensacola would still see a reverberating impact.

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 primary focus of any excess property, including county-owned property in the city limits, should be to help our affordable housing efforts. Those are underway, but we should be intentional about using this asset to bridge the gap between housing costs and affordability. Our 93 parks should not be considered excess property. As mayor I will conduct a park master plan for Pensacola to help us better understand what we have and what our opportunities for improvement are.

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?

I spent four years on the board at Visit Pensacola including one as the chairman, so between that experience and as a craft brewery owner, I understand the tourist experience as it relates to our city and am looking forward to the opportunity to continue to build it.

1) Public Safety. If we don't have a safe community, no tourists will come into Pensacola. That's the bottom line. We can't start anywhere on a positive tourist experience without always starting here.

2) Improving the connection between the beach and our city. About 85% of our tourism to this county comes here primarily for the beach. At the moment, if we'd like those tourists to visit downtown, they can take a ferry or they have to Uber. We should explore public private partnerships to increase the connectivity of the beach and our city. We have to make our city more accessible if we would like to see additional benefits of tourism.

3) Aid in solutions for getting access to the Naval Aviation Museum. The largest tourist attraction at its peak - about 900,000 visits a year - continues to be closed to the public. I am already involved in helping look at all options to change that, and ones that have minimal interference with the mission onboard Pensacola NAS. That said, accessibility to the museum, although not located in the city limits, brings more tourism in and through our city and there's no doubt the positive economic impacts of an open museum would mean significant aid to Pensacola. We will be intentional in helping create solutions proposed to get the museum reopened.

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 like the direction of continued activation on the waterfront, something we've been missing for too long. Cities would do anything to have what we have here, but our waterfront has remained hardscaped for decades.

The day use marina construction will be underway soon, which certainly helps with our beach/tourist accessibility. The first phase of Bruce Beach, a project I have been intimately involved in for more than 4 years, will finally help us interact with the only beach left in Downtown as well as honor the history of that beach to our local African American Community. Those are things I worked on while gathering feedback more than 450 citizens during the process of Bruce Beach coming to life. We have future opportunity at Wayside Park as well as the "hashtag project" that will increase connectivity and safety for a downtown that really feels like downtown at human scale.

I believe the hybrid approach outlined in the 2019 Port Study is sound. Our port has impacts on our economy that are important - and it could be a necessity for future businesses relocating here. That said, we also should figure out the best way to maximize underutilized port property for the betterment of our city. After all, we have a historic port, and one that happens to be located in the heart of our commercial downtown. That's why the hybrid outlined in the study I believe is a good one.