

Greater Pensacola Chamber 2024 Candidate Forum

County Commission

Candidate: Ashlee Hofberger

District: 4

Homelessness and panhandling continue to be significant problems in Escambia County. What are your solutions to this pressing problem that impacts the business community?

Being homeless in Escambia County should not be an option. Being homeless in an unfortunate situation for anyone and we can not just let people stay there. As a community, we need to come alongside these folks and move them to their next step in life. For some, that is job skills training, for some it's connecting them to mental health resources, and for some it's drug or alcohol rehab. Whatever that next step is, we have to get them there, remaining to live in unsanitary brownfield locations is not an option. We need a clear path to independence and model similar to Tallahassee and Leon County would work well and is a proven way to significantly reduce our homeless population. It should be noted that we currently have 1,168 homeless people in Escambia, The average burden of a chronically homeless person in the state of Florida is \$31,000.

What role should the County Commission play in addressing the shortage of workforce housing in Escambia County?

We need an overall on the land developing code (LDC) so we have clear areas of opportunity for workforce housing. The next step to providing more workforce housing is making it less expensive to build. As a previous owner of a construction company, we have a percentage we have to make in order to pay our employees and keep the lights on. Most jobs are materials + labor + a set profit margin percentage. When labor went up and materials went up, our profit margin percentage did not. YES, contractors made a higher dollar, but like everyone else, our power bills also went up a huge amount, as did everything else, so our net profit was less. As a county, we can help that by reducing the holding cost of property by providing more automation and less bureaucracy around permitting and zoning. (Something I have declared as my top 3 issues since I filled to run on 2/1/24) Impact fees are a hard no. it just makes the home less affordable. As a county we need to focus on concurrency to make the most of our resources and eliminate overlap on projects from the county and utility providers. We need to plan for future infrastructure based on the LDC. We need to consider how insurance rates (which effect

your monthly payment) are impacted based on your distance from a fire station- how they can be over 20% higher if your more than 5 miles from a fire station.

What would your Five-Year Plan for Escambia County look like?

Over the next five years, my vision for community and economic development includes a thriving ecosystem of small businesses, fostering innovation and local job creation. I aim to significantly bolster the number of first responders, ensuring rapid and effective emergency services for all residents. Enhanced planning and zoning practices will be prioritized to create well-organized, sustainable, and attractive community spaces. A streamlined and efficient local government will be pursued to reduce bureaucracy and improve service delivery. Schools will see substantial improvements, with a focus on quality education and resources to prepare our children for the future. Investment in infrastructure will support growth and connectivity, facilitating economic opportunities. Community engagement will be a cornerstone, ensuring that development reflects the diverse needs and aspirations of residents. Partnerships with local businesses and organizations will drive innovation and economic resilience. Together, these efforts will build a robust, resilient, and prosperous inclusive community for all.

What role should county government take in attracting new businesses to the area? What types of jobs would you like to see growing in Escambia County? Be specific.

It's the government's responsibility to make our community a business friendly environment. The mentality among leadership and county employees should be, "How do we provide needed amenities for our community and how to we foster responsible growth?" I can say from experience, that is not the culture of the county, it feels more like, "What problems do we see with this project, and how do we block it?" You saw it when we lost Amazon, Cheney Brothers and Novelis. You see it by comparison to Baldwin County AL. Baldwin County is now creating more high paying jobs than Escambia County. Your seeing almost daily in PNJ with OLF 8. If you were a Fortune 500 company looking to expand, and Googled "OLF 8 " you would run. Everything about the way we have handled that piece of property screams we don't want your businesses, we don't want your homes, and our community doesn't want you. We need to focus on creating jobs for individuals with all types of skill sets. For example, workforce development beginning in high school focusing on not only technically advanced jobs, but also, service industry jobs- check out Baldwin County Preparatory Academy. They provide the groundwork ranging from cybersecurity to HVAC. I'd like to see more jobs that provide a career path from entry level to C-Suite. Examples, logistics, aviation, military contracting and high end manufacturing. Once we change the culture to

welcoming and ready to do business, we need a concerted effort to bring new companies here.

Candidate: Jesse Casey

District: 1

Homelessness and panhandling continue to be significant problems in Escambia County. What are your solutions to this pressing problem that impacts the business community?

Nobody is above the law, we have laws that we all have to abide by and should be enforced for the safety of all. Look for new ways to help them to get back on track to be productive citizens.

What role should the County Commission play in addressing the shortage of workforce housing in Escambia County?

We're closer with the organizations involved in workforce housing in helping people in need and have checks and balances for anyone trying to abuse the system

What would your Five-Year Plan for Escambia County look like?

My lifetime goal is to help people not just a five-year plan but as long as I'm alive, it's all I wanna do is help people.

What role should county government take in attracting new businesses to the area? What types of jobs would you like to see growing in Escambia County? Be specific.

Tax break for creating jobs. Distribution centers and Manufacturing companies, employees a lot of people, good health plans, retirement programs etc

Candidate: Jeff Bergosh

District: 1

Homelessness and panhandling continue to be significant problems in Escambia County. What are your solutions to this pressing problem that impacts the business community?

We have to balance humility, respect, and empathy with a firm commitment to upholding the law and not allowing the dysfunctional life choices of some to upend communities and diminish the excellent quality of life in Escambia County. The homeless situation is complex; there are roughly 1/3 of this population that are quite content and are just where they want to be. Another 1/3 are suffering from untreated/un diagnosed mental health/addiction issues. and the final 1/3 require help. I want to and I have as a commissioner supported policies to assist the 1/3 that are truly in need of help and want help. I have and continue to support strong legislation that disallows folks that comprise the 1/3 of homeless folks that are content in their situation from panhandling in streets--where this activity creates massive safety issues for citizens. And I support and will actively help the 1/3 of citizens who, for whatever reason, are suffering from addiction and/or untreated mental illness. We have implemented project reconnect in the county and have provided one-way transportation to nearly 300 homeless in Escambia---back to their hometowns where they have support systems, family, or other wrap around services. For any homeless individual who breaks the law, I simply say nobody--not even a homeless camper---is above the law. So for anyone who breaks the law I support swift intervention of law enforcement.

What role should the County Commission play in addressing the shortage of workforce housing in Escambia County?

We need to support economic development which assists all citizens in achieving a good job and the potential to own a home and live the American dream. When folks move up the ladder to home ownership--the cascade effect of this is MORE housing choices being made available at lower cost points. So the facilitation of policies that improve the economy, lower unemployment rates, and facilitate business creation/operation in our area is one of my biggest focus areas going forward.

What would your Five-Year Plan for Escambia County look like?

It looks like the strategic plan I have written, built on input from D1 citizens, for the year 2024 forward. The plan is called '24Forward Escambia and can be found at my website, www.jeffbergosh.com.

What role should county government take in attracting new businesses to the area? What types of jobs would you like to see growing in Escambia County? Be specific.

We need to keep economic development at the forefront of what we do--alongside public safety and infrastructure upgrades---because without a strong economy and jobs base--- the citizens of our community will have to bear the burden of higher costs to run our local government as compared to a situation where we have more citizens making higher salaries contributing to supporting our government, our public safety, and infrastructure expenditures.

Candidate: Buck Mitchell

District: 4

Homelessness and panhandling continue to be significant problems in Escambia County. What are your solutions to this pressing problem that impacts the business community?

Addressing homelessness and panhandling in Escambia County, are complex issues that require a multi-faceted approach that involves collaboration between local government, businesses, non-profit organizations, and the community.

1. Housing First: The most effective way to combat homelessness is to provide people with stable housing. This approach prioritizes getting people into permanent housing and then providing additional support services, such as mental health care, substance abuse treatment, and job training.

2. Support Social Services: Offering support services to mental health care and substance abuse treatment, as well as access to basic necessities like food and healthcare, can help address the root causes of homelessness.

3. Employment and Economic Opportunities: Providing job training and employment opportunities can help people become self-sufficient and reduce the need for panhandling.

Encourage local businesses to participate in job training and hiring programs for homeless individuals, possibly incentivized by tax breaks or other benefits.

4. Public Awareness Campaigns: Educate the public about homelessness and panhandling, reducing stigma and encouraging community support.

5. Enforcement of Existing Laws:

Implement clear and fair ordinances that address panhandling without criminalizing homelessness, ensuring they focus on connecting individuals to services rather than punitive measures.

While providing support is important, it's also necessary to enforce existing laws to ensure that public spaces remain safe and accessible for everyone.

It is important to approach this issue with compassion and a focus on finding sustainable solutions that address the root causes of homelessness and panhandling.

Ultimately, addressing homelessness and panhandling requires political will and a commitment to finding long-term solutions.

What role should the County Commission play in addressing the shortage of workforce housing in Escambia County?

The County Commission should play a proactive role in addressing the shortage of workforce housing in Escambia County. There are several key roles they could assume:

1. Public Awareness and Engagement:

Conduct public awareness campaigns to educate the community and highlight the importance and benefits of workforce housing.

Engage the community through public hearings, workshops, and forums to gather input and build support for housing initiatives.

2. Policy Development and Zoning Changes:

Implement and amend zoning regulations to allow for higher-density housing, mixed-use developments, and affordable housing projects.

Encourage the inclusion of affordable units in new developments through inclusionary zoning policies.

3. Incentives for Developers:

Offer tax incentives, expedited permitting processes, and reduced fees for developers who commit to building workforce housing.

Create public-private partnerships to leverage private investment in affordable housing projects.

4. Funding and Resources:

Allocate county funds or establish a housing trust fund dedicated to workforce housing development and maintenance.

Apply for state and federal grants to support local housing initiatives.

5. Regulation and Code Reform:

Review and revise building codes and regulations to reduce construction costs while ensuring safety and quality.

Streamline regulatory processes to make it easier and faster for developers to build workforce housing.

6. Advocacy and Collaboration:

Advocate for state and federal policies that support affordable housing development.

Collaborate with neighboring counties, local municipalities, non-profits, and community organizations to create regional solutions to housing challenges.

7. Monitoring and Evaluation:

Establish metrics and regularly monitor the progress of workforce housing initiatives.

Evaluate the effectiveness of policies and programs and make necessary adjustments based on outcomes and feedback.

Escambia County Commission should be the catalyst for change, as a visionary leader, I will inspire and motivate everyone involved to work towards a common goal: ensuring that everyone in Escambia County has a safe, affordable place to call home.

What would your Five-Year Plan for Escambia County look like?

Creating a Five-Year Plan for Escambia County, would involve a comprehensive approach to address the county's unique needs and potential opportunities. My plan would include the following key components:

1. Public Safety and Security:

Increase funding and resources for the Sheriff's Office and Fire Department's, to hire more personnel, and provide advanced training focusing on community policing and de-escalation techniques to ensure a safe environment for all residents.

Develop and regularly update disaster preparedness plans, especially for hurricanes and other natural disasters.

2. Economic Development and Job Creation:

Partner with local industries to create jobs, particularly in technology, healthcare, and renewable energy sectors.

Enhance Tourism development and marketing efforts to promote Escambia County's attractions, including beaches, historic sites, and cultural events.

Work closely with our local Military partners to ensure the needs of the men and women, and their families are met. Focusing on first class educational facilities and spousal job opportunities.

3. Infrastructure Improvement:

Invest in public transportation, road maintenance, and expansion projects to reduce traffic congestion and improve connectivity.

Promote smart infrastructure projects like parks, bike lanes, and renewable energy projects.

4. Environmental Conservation and

Coastal Protection: Implement measures to protect and restore coastal areas, including beach nourishment and wetlands restoration.

5. Community Engagement:

Increase transparency and communication in local government through regular public forums, accessible online resources, and open data initiatives.

The goal is to create a safe, secure, and resilient community through a balanced approach of enforcement, engagement, technology, and policy.

My plan would aim to build a safe and more prosperous, sustainable, and inclusive Escambia County over the next five years, addressing both immediate needs and long-term goals.

What role should county government take in attracting new businesses to the area? What types of jobs would you like to see growing in Escambia County? Be specific.

Escambia County government can play a pivotal role in attracting new businesses to the area by implementing several strategies:

1. **Economic Incentives:** Offering tax breaks, grants, and subsidies to businesses willing to bring their businesses to Escambia County.
2. **Infrastructure Development:** Investing in transportation, utilities, and high-speed internet to make the area more attractive for businesses.
3. **Workforce Development:** Partnering with local educational institutions to create competitive and high paying jobs for our local college graduates and to ensure a skilled labor force is available, offering training programs tailored to the needs of potential employers.
4. **Business-Friendly Policies:** Streamlining the permitting process, reducing bureaucratic red tape, and providing support services for startups and small businesses.
5. **Marketing and Promotion:** Actively promoting Escambia County as a great place to do business through marketing campaigns, participation in trade shows, and direct outreach to potential investors.

In terms of the types of jobs that would be beneficial for Escambia County, consider the following specific areas:

1. **Technology and IT:** Attracting tech firms could create high-paying jobs and foster innovation. Positions such as software developers, IT support specialists, and cybersecurity experts would be valuable.
2. **Healthcare:** Expanding healthcare services can provide stable employment. Roles like nurses, medical technicians, and administrative staff are crucial.
3. **Advanced Manufacturing:** Jobs in advanced manufacturing, such as robotics technicians, quality control inspectors, and production managers can stimulate economic growth.
4. **Renewable Energy:** Investing in renewable energy projects can create jobs such as solar panel installers, wind turbine technicians, and energy analysts.
5. **Tourism and Hospitality:** Given Pensacola's appeal as a tourist destination, enhancing the tourism sector can provide a range of jobs from hotel management to tour guides.

6. Education and Training: Expanding educational services, including vocational training centers and higher education institutions, can create teaching and administrative positions.

By focusing on these sectors, Escambia County can diversify its economy, provide high-quality jobs, and ensure sustainable growth for the future.

Candidate: Walker Wilson

District: 4

Homelessness and panhandling continue to be significant problems in Escambia County. What are your solutions to this pressing problem that impacts the business community?

Homelessness and panhandling are complex issues that require a multifaceted approach. As County Commissioner in Escambia County, I will work to do the following:

1. Collaborative Partnerships: I believe in fostering partnerships between local governments, nonprofit organizations, faith-based groups, and businesses to coordinate efforts and leverage resources effectively. By working together, we can pool resources, share best practices, and create more impactful solutions without providing duplicative services that would otherwise compete against one another.
2. Supportive Housing Initiatives: Providing stable housing is crucial to addressing homelessness. I will support initiatives prioritizing supportive housing models, which combine affordable housing with access to wraparound services such as mental health care, addiction treatment, and job training programs. This can be accomplished through a low-barrier shelter as the front door to help individuals looking for help and a willingness to work towards permanent housing.
3. Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services: Many individuals experiencing homelessness face mental health challenges and substance abuse issues. I will advocate for increased funding and improved access to mental health services, substance abuse treatment programs, and crisis intervention services to be wrapped into a low-barrier shelter so we can meet these individuals where they are.
4. Job Training and Employment Opportunities: Economic stability is key to reducing homelessness. I will work to expand job training programs and collaborate with local businesses to create employment opportunities for individuals experiencing homelessness. Supporting initiatives that connect homeless individuals with job readiness skills and employment placements can provide a pathway to self-sufficiency.
5. Addressing Panhandling through Outreach and Support: Panhandling is often a symptom of deeper socioeconomic challenges. I support outreach efforts that connect

panhandlers with social services, housing assistance, and employment opportunities. Effective outreach programs can help redirect individuals away from panhandling and towards supportive resources. On the other hand, habitual or aggressive panhandling should not be tolerated and the county should make every legal effort to curb this habit.

6. Public Safety and Quality of Life: Addressing homelessness and panhandling also involves ensuring public safety and maintaining the quality of life for residents and businesses. I will work with law enforcement and community stakeholders to develop strategies that balance compassion with enforcement, ensuring public spaces remain safe and welcoming for all.

7. Education and Awareness Campaigns: Educating the public about homelessness, its causes, and effective ways to help can reduce stigma and foster community support for initiatives aimed at addressing homelessness and panhandling.

I am committed to implementing practical, compassionate, and collaborative solutions to reduce homelessness and panhandling. By focusing on supportive housing, access to services, employment opportunities, and community engagement, we can improve outcomes for individuals in need while supporting a thriving business environment.

What role should the County Commission play in addressing the shortage of workforce housing in Escambia County?

The County Commission can review and revise zoning ordinances and regulatory policies to encourage the development of workforce housing. This includes streamlining permitting processes, reducing regulatory barriers, and providing incentives for developers to build affordable housing units. The County should also foster relationships with private developers, nonprofit organizations, and financial institutions to leverage resources and expertise in developing workforce housing projects. This can include exploring opportunities for joint ventures, tax incentives, or subsidies that make development financially viable.

Implementing a strategic land use plan that designates areas suitable for workforce housing development. The County should identify underutilized or redeveloped areas where workforce housing projects can be prioritized without compromising community integrity or quality of life. This could include incentives such as density bonuses, expedited permitting, or fee waivers for developers who include workforce housing in their projects. Encouraging mixed-income developments can help integrate affordable housing seamlessly into the community.

Also, you must establish a mechanism to monitor the impact of workforce housing initiatives and evaluate their effectiveness regularly. This allows for adjustments to strategies based on data and feedback from stakeholders. Without a way to measure a program's success, there is no sense in rolling out a program just to leave it unattended.

What would your Five-Year Plan for Escambia County look like?

1. Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness:

- Goal: Ensure the safety and security of residents through effective public safety measures.
- Strengthen community policing initiatives and support law enforcement with necessary resources by supporting a 4-year deal with the Sheriff's office and giving deputies a sense of comfort in their future with Escambia County;
- Enhance emergency response by investing in training, equipment upgrades, and local healthcare providers.

2. Economic Development and Job Creation:

- Goal: Stimulate economic growth and diversification to create more job opportunities.
- Attract new industries and businesses through targeted incentives and streamlined permitting processes.
- Support local entrepreneurship with small business development programs and access to capital.
- Invest in infrastructure improvements that enhance connectivity and support business expansion.
- Foster partnerships with UWF, PSC, & Escambia County School District to align workforce training programs with industry needs.

3. Housing and Community Development:

- Goal: Address the housing shortage and improve community infrastructure.
- Expand affordable housing options through zoning reforms, public-private partnerships, and incentives for developers. The demand is outpacing our inventory and we must work to increase our inventory of housing options.
- Revitalize neighborhoods by investing in infrastructure, parks, and public spaces.
- Enhance access to healthcare, education, and social services to improve the quality of life for residents.

4. Good Governance and Fiscal Responsibility:

- Goal: Ensure transparent, accountable, and efficient governance.
- Improve fiscal management through budgetary reforms and strategic resource allocation.
- Enhance transparency and public engagement through open data initiatives and community forums.
- Strengthen ethics and integrity standards for public officials and employees.
- Evaluate and optimize county services to ensure they meet the needs of residents effectively.

5. Community Engagement and Collaboration:

- Goal: Foster a culture of inclusivity, collaboration, and civic participation.
- Engage residents, businesses, nonprofits, and community organizations in decision-making processes by keeping an open line of communication with groups like the chamber during my time in office
- Support volunteerism and civic education programs to empower residents to contribute to community development.

6. Monitoring and Evaluation:

- Goal: Regularly monitor progress and adjust strategies to achieve goals efficiently and effectively.
- Strategies:
 - Work with the County Administrator to establish performance metrics and benchmarks for each department director.
 - Conduct periodic evaluations and solicit feedback from stakeholders.
 - Use data-driven insights to make informed decisions and prioritize initiatives with the greatest impact on our community.

What role should county government take in attracting new businesses to the area? What types of jobs would you like to see growing in Escambia County? Be specific.

Business-Friendly Policies: The County should be implementing policies that reduce bureaucratic hurdles, streamline permitting processes, and provide incentives such as tax breaks or grants for new businesses.

Infrastructure Investment: Improving infrastructure like roads, utilities, and broadband connectivity to support business operations and expansion.

Workforce Development: Partnering with UWF, PSC George Stone, and E.C.S.D. to ensure a skilled workforce that meets the needs of incoming businesses.

Promotion and Marketing: Actively marketing the county's assets, including its workforce, quality of life, and business opportunities, to potential investors and businesses.

Growth in the following sectors would be my priority:

Advanced Manufacturing: Encouraging industries that specialize in advanced

manufacturing processes, such as aerospace components, electronics, and precision machinery. These industries often provide high-skilled jobs with competitive wages.

Technology and Innovation: Fostering a technology hub that attracts software development firms, IT services, cybersecurity companies, and startups. These sectors create well-paying jobs and contribute to economic diversification and innovation.

Healthcare and Biotechnology: Expanding healthcare facilities and attracting biotechnology companies focused on research and development, medical devices, and pharmaceuticals. These sectors provide a wide range of jobs from medical professionals to technicians and researchers.

Tourism and Hospitality: Enhancing tourism infrastructure to support growth in hospitality jobs such as hotels, restaurants, entertainment venues, and eco-tourism initiatives. These sectors capitalize on Escambia County's natural beauty and cultural heritage.

Renewable Energy: Promoting renewable energy projects including solar, wind, and energy storage facilities. These initiatives create jobs in installation, maintenance, and engineering while contributing to sustainable development goals.

Below are more specific examples of what we could look forward to in Escambia County.

- Partner with the City of Pensacola by incentivizing a tech startup incubator in downtown Pensacola to attract software developers and IT professionals. This would create jobs in software engineering, data analysis, and digital marketing.
- Attracting a biotechnology research firm to set up a research and development center focused on developing new medical technologies. This initiative would create jobs in biomedical research, clinical trial management, and regulatory affairs.

By focusing on these strategic sectors and implementing supportive policies, Escambia County can attract new businesses, create high-quality jobs, and foster sustainable economic growth for the benefit of all residents.

Candidate: Joshua Roberson

District: 5

Homelessness and panhandling continue to be significant problems in Escambia County. What are your solutions to this pressing problem that impacts the business community?

This is a difficult question worded in a simple format. If I had solutions as stated in the question I would have shared them with the world already and no one would be homeless. There are money issues, health issues, family issues, mental health issues, drug issues, alcohol issues, lengthy run of bad choices, and those that chose to be homeless or in their eyes totally free. To approach this issue with a blanket view is how we have and will always fail.

-Provide information/education on health and mental health.

-Look into low cost tiny home housing or rooms within tiny homes.

-AA support

-Drug counseling

Different approaches for different cases. Help and assistance should be provided. Laws and enforcement of those laws should be made against panhandling. Business owners should not have to pay (taxes) then depend on citizens entering their establishments to cover the owners bills and the county not have any reinforcement for their tax dollars.

What role should the County Commission play in addressing the shortage of workforce housing in Escambia County?

I feel smart/manageable growth is how we need to proceed no matter the housing. In the case of addressing the shortage of workforce housing:

-Adopting inclusionary zoning which would allow lower priced affordable housing. This

would involve eliminating some land use restrictions zoning codes. However not to for the benefit of super multimillion dollar developments and land scalping.

-Approving building plans and land plots from local builders with tax incentives to Build lower cost homes, still profitable for the contractor/builder, however affordable by those who are considered "workforce". The protectors, providers, and pillar's of our county.

What would your Five-Year Plan for Escambia County look like?

- Every District would have enough community centers so the leaders of yesterday and the leaders of tomorrow had safe and easy accessible places to go and socialize. Drainage and runoff channeled properly to collection ponds and/or away from roadways and homes. Created protected woodlands/wetlands around the county to preserve environmental stability. More areas for youth activities North of Nine Mile rd. (parks, community centers, county fishing pond, soccer field-Brat and Century area). Agriculture land is not encroached upon, farmers have rights we should support all working people not just the land grab for development and money. Our county is just as diverse as it is now, just better informed, better traveled, safer during the rain/storm season with flooding, happier youth, more involved youth.

What role should county government take in attracting new businesses to the area? What types of jobs would you like to see growing in Escambia County? Be specific.

Listen closely to the hotels in Pensacola Beach. Provide employs to keep the beaches free of trash, traffic flowing, high presence of law enforcement for safety, life guards in abundance for water safety. Continue the tourism. With that, assist Century in road repairs, development, and future planning. This all provides more jobs on the North and South end of the county. Focus on Oceanography more, seek and attract major work for the Gulf of Mexico. Warm water, diverse aquatic life, seabed is ripe with natural resources. As Florida/Escambia County population continues to grow, budget more for first responders, teachers, law enforcement/correctional officers, and fire fighters. If the area is attractive and providing great training, competitive pay and benefits packages our citizens (all of them) would be safe, our kids would have and keep the best teachers available. In short make Escambia County attractive for any and all business. We are a great area with some diversity to offer we should be turning away offers.

Candidate: Ron Helms

District: 4

Homelessness and panhandling continue to be significant problems in Escambia County. What are your solutions to this pressing problem that impacts the business community?

The issue of homelessness will seemingly be with us for an unknown time. As a business owner myself, I have great compassion and frequent frustration with respect to the homeless. We need to assure that our response is both reasonable and in compliance with current laws. We must assure that we have both mental health and community resources to help educate and provide guidance on potential violations. I believe we need stronger ordinances with clear enforcement guidance for law enforcement along with penalties for repeat offenses. I am glad that we have some very recent Supreme Court guidance for dealing with the homeless relative to homeless camps. With respect to panhandling, I am in total support of strong actions to make it illegal in Escambia County.

What role should the County Commission play in addressing the shortage of workforce housing in Escambia County?

The County Commission needs to spearhead a broad effort both public and private to address these needs. We must continue to work consistently on Affordable/Workforce and Tiny Homes. I am very hopeful that the utilization of the former Baptist Hospital property will help meet some of these needs. I am open to county incentives to help with mixed use communities.

What would your Five-Year Plan for Escambia County look like?

As County Commissioner, I will serve on the County Commission as being a voice on the issues that matter to the residents of District 4.

I believe we can be much better stewards of Public Tax Dollars by utilizing them for actual services that matter to District 4 and our community.

Public Safety is Paramount! I believe we must focus more on Crime and Gun Violence! I will work to increase additional funding for Public Safety. We must support the Pensacola Police Department and Escambia County Sheriff's Department by gaining additional resources to enable them to help reduce crime and gun violence.

The County Commission needs to spearhead a broader effort both public and private to address our housing needs. We must continue to work consistently on Affordable/Workforce and Tiny Homes. I am very hopeful that the utilization of the former Baptist Hospital property will help meet some of these needs. I am open to county incentives to help with mixed use communities.

We must find more ways to secure funding for Pensacola Beach renourishment. I will strongly consider appointing a Lease Holder to Santa Rosa Island Authority board.

Insurance Rates are out of control across the State of Florida. I will work with our State Delegation and local officials to find more ways to decrease costs for homeowners. I will never vote to raise year over year property taxes.

I will work with the other commissioners and city officials and City Council to create task forces as needed to work on these initiatives to continue to make Pensacola a destination that attracts people to vacation as well as move to our city. Tourism is our revenue jewel!

What role should county government take in attracting new businesses to the area? What types of jobs would you like to see growing in Escambia County? Be specific.

The County Commission should, with public input and stakeholder leadership, facilitate putting together a 5-to-10-year plan to address unmet job/skill needs at every level. We need people specifically with trade school skills to help accommodate our growing construction needs. We also need mechanical skills people for such places like ST Engineering. We must strive to attract large businesses and or corporate offices. We fall short on management and executive employers who earn top salaries.

