

Greater Pensacola Chamber Candidate Forum

ECUA

Candidate: Chase Anderson "Andy" Romagnano

District: 3

Escambia County Business and consumers continue to absorb pricing increases for utilities services. What would you do to contain costs while maintaining adequate services?

I honestly believe that there is a way to provide free service without affecting service quality and it is called new sources of revenue. I will point out that Pensacola Energy is the main budgetary item of the City of Pensacola and over \$50 million a year are derived thereto from natural gas sales outside of our market. Retirement Systems of Alabama primarily funds public employee pensions through investments in private business, to derive the profits thereof back to the pensions, it is the world's 20th largest pension fund, and compare that to how many state employees and retirees there are in Alabama. It is not dissimilar from the Teamster's Union pension fund, which funds pensions in part on private sector real estate investments. RSA owns 55 Water Street in Manhattan and there is some truth without RSA, there is no RSA building in Montgomery or Mobile, they own Riverview Plaza and then the previous tallest building in Mobile. Where RSA has erred is not perhaps appreciating in terms of high rise development in Alabama that over 70% of new high rise construction and renovation has been residential this century. Ultimately I believe through ownership of businesses, including out of the area, where the profits go to cover fees, you can provide free service and fund all new infrastructure needs, these can include franchise restaurants, etc, where there is no corporate class to enrich, the fees go to fund the fees, I would point out IPSCO began as a crown corporation of the Province of Saskatchewan and the first railroads in Georgia began authorized by the city government of Savannah, which sold stock, even as it owned it, in the 1830s, and that was standard Whiggism of the time. But there is a way to cover fees, and of course, waste to energy plants, with smokestacks that scrub out pollution and carbon emissions, can allow us to sell electricity, where we have a shortage of power plants regionally, and where of course, in ECUA territory, more natural gas sales can be made, to then help lower bills with a goal of free service, ECUA far from being folded into the county commission, can be an economic development engine. The vision of Senate

President Childers when he got ECUA passed was a board that the common man could be elected to, to help give government experience and include more people, this should be honored, ECUA should remain its own independent special district.

Recycling has been discontinued by the City and the County. Residents want it and at least two local businesses believe they can provide recycling at a profit. Why can't ECUA provide the service to consumers?

I believe ECUA should provide recycling and I will vote to establish it in the county and if the city will not provide it, our recycling program will be provided to city residents.

There have been reports that the old ECUA sewer infrastructure and treatment plant downtown are causing contamination of stormwater runoff. How should ECUA be addressing this to maintain a healthy environment for businesses and residents?

First there should be a study conducted, and determine where the issues are. Figure out what it costs to fix it, and then do so. I cannot hide I once lived in Mobile and a decade ago I was publicly known to oppose MAWSS takeover of Prichard Water because my view then was it would take hundreds of millions of dollars to fix Prichard Water infrastructure, where even a portion of incorporated Prichard, still votes for Mayor and Council in Prichard, but is under water service from Kushla Water District. I was fine with them seceding and forming their own system, but it would be a financial hole to take over for MAWSS. Ultimately Prichard Water has to be a bailout from the federal government, I argue because of the industrial past and because of nearby military installations, it is a national security issue and thusly the solvency bailout is appropriately put in NDAA as anti-terrorism funding. I reference Prichard, because ultimately, everything in Pensacola is national security related, a vast majority of new Seaman recruits and then Naval pilot trainees are here, and we have had a terrorist attack, anti-terrorism funding, brownfield funding, etc, are all apart of the fundraising package where we have a stronger hand in Washington to get this funding, because of all we provide to the military even as they give back, we are due this funding because of our relationship as a county to the U.S. military for over two centuries, remember, Cantonment is called that as it began as a military installation even before Governor Jackson was elected President in 1828.

Candidate: James "Jim" Faxlanger

District: 1

Escambia County Business and consumers continue to absorb pricing increases for utilities services. What would you do to contain costs while maintaining adequate services?

I would lead in the creation of an atmosphere within the ECUA leadership that fosters cost savings and efficiencies. This would include a bonus structure for budget performance as well as a negative impact on merit raises for those who fail to achieve.

Recycling has been discontinued by the City and the County. Residents want it and at least two local businesses believe they can provide recycling at a profit. Why can't ECUA provide the service to consumers?

I am a firm believer that we all must be good stewards of our environment and believe in a well run, and sustainable method for disposal and reuse of waste. Unfortunately, recycling has been a struggle across the world. In order to make recycling sustainable, governments would be forced to subsidize. If there are local businesses that believe they can provide the service, I would divest ECUA from it. The answer to cost effective recycling is to move away from single stream collection. states and municipalities that utilize multi-stream collection avoid the high cost of sorting and removing contamination from the stream.

There have been reports that the old ECUA sewer infrastructure and treatment plant downtown are causing contamination of stormwater runoff. How should ECUA be addressing this to maintain a healthy environment for businesses and residents?

12 years ago, ECUA created a 12 year reparation plan that was intended to deal with this issue. They have collected a significant amount of revenue from the ratepayers in the form of rate increases, capital improvement fees, and sewer improvement

fees that provided funds to tackle this issue. The current leadership has failed to correct it even though their CAFR shows that they have improved their net cash by 125% over that period. These flat rate fees are referred to as a Regressive tax. Direct involvement with leadership is what is needed to correct the ongoing inflow issue.

Thank you

Candidate: Vicki Campbell

District: 1

Escambia County Business and consumers continue to absorb pricing increases for utilities services. What would you do to contain costs while maintaining adequate services?

The Utility was created by the City of Pensacola and Escambia County in 1981 to handle the Water and Sewer but the Utility was given no funding source for your infrastructure improvements. The utility has done a good job during my time on the board of improving your infrastructure all while keeping the increases at or below CPI for Water and Sewer. In other counties that have no Utility Authority these infrastructure fees are found on your tax bill. Here in Escambia County, they are on your water bill.

This question could read "What have I done". I will continue to make sure your system is maintained all while also keeping those rate hikes below CPI and making sure any fees for Capital Improvements have an expiration date on them. The most recent fee for \$1 for the transfer station I refused to vote "for" unless it had a printed expiration date. It is a MUCH-needed piece of infrastructure for this growing county and that fee will now expire in 2034. I also am not afraid to ask our Legislators for help with these costs. We were able to secure \$3,000,000 from Legislators for this new improvement in my district. We also sued 3M for allowing dangerous PFOA and PFOS to leak into your wells. Under my watch we were successful in that lawsuit which resulted in up to or over 30 million dollars coming back to the Utility to pay for the expensive GAC Filters that we have already added to most wells and will be on all wells by the end of 2025.

My second year on the board the ECUA addressed a DEP Consent Order with a 16-year Capital Improvement Plan. Since then, we have spent hundreds of millions of dollars improving and hardening your system. The pipes under your county if laid

end to end would reach Canada. Again, it is my desire to keep rate hikes at or below CPI always. But it is equally important and just good business to maintain your infrastructure adequately. Given these two competing goals it is imperative to keep ECUA's own house in order by trimming the fat, revisiting benefits, keeping a vibrant workforce and streamlining operations. As a successful business owner, I know how to do the job and appreciate the voters understanding I know their needs and will continue to represent them well.

Recycling has been discontinued by the City and the County. Residents want it and at least two local businesses believe they can provide recycling at a profit. Why can't ECUA provide the service to consumers?

First off, the ECUA has not discontinued recycling in the County. As a Chamber Member I would hope you are giving your members correct information. The ECUA has 65,000 customers recycling in Escambia County Florida. The City of Pensacola ceased their recycling model because it was not profitable due to the Contamination which was upwards of 60%. I think now they will be using a third party for those wanting to recycle. ECUA has given at least one of their new vendors a quote to continue taking their recycling at the ECUA Material Recycle Facility. The problem with the City's recycling in my opinion is it was mandatory. ECUA recycling has always been voluntary. I think now that the city is going to a voluntary recycle like the ECUA's model they will be successful. The only difference is in the ECUA model recycle is part of your base rate and the cities new model will be a subscription rate. I am a proponent of recycle which is not a money maker but a cost avoidance. Everything we recycle we do not bury in the County's landfill which cost our ratepayers \$45 per ton. But I do not want to subsidize recycling so as long as I'm on the board I will keep a close eye on those figures. Change is always inevitable. Change often means we are evolving. I'm not afraid to change anything that is not working for those I serve.

There have been reports that the old ECUA sewer infrastructure and treatment plant downtown are causing contamination of stormwater runoff. How should ECUA be addressing this to maintain a healthy environment for businesses and residents?

I'm not sure of your information source and I'm happy to look at your report that says otherwise but there is not any infrastructure at all on the old treatment plant site downtown which was sold and no longer belongs to ECUA. The ECUA does own

the property across the street which houses their back up pumps and they keep up with the flow in downtown. The ECUA did also recently make some improvements in the Spring Street Area to their system that should prove helpful to the downtown area.

The ECUA does not have anything to do with stormwater. Stormwater is still handled by the City of Pensacola or Escambia County. When it comes to water the ECUA handles only Drinking Water and Sewer.

The City of Pensacola is doing an important stormwater project very soon along Garden Street and the ECUA will work with the city to move their utilities for that project. This is a long overdue project that the ECUA is excited to work on with the city. It is important that these government entities work together to provide the best for the citizens we all serve. I work well with City, County, State and Federal leaders to serve our citizens.

Lastly, it is important to keep rates low but equally important to keep our most precious asset clean drinking water safe! As a successful business owner, I understand how to contain costs while maintaining adequate services and I look forward to serving the citizens four more years.