

HOLDEN BEACH PROPERTY OWNERS ASSOCIATION

MEET THE CANDIDATES

Following are the written answers to questions asked at Meet the Candidates Night held on Friday, October 18, 2013. All candidates participated in the event. The four incumbents and the one new candidate for Town Commissioner sent written responses. Incumbent Mayor Alan Holden, running unopposed, did not send a written response to the questions.

At the request of HBPOA, candidates provided a brief written response to the questions they answered in more detail at the meeting. Some candidates provided their written response a week or more after answering the questions at the meeting. Other candidates gave us a copy of their notes originally written for their own use but provided to us as a courtesy prior to the beginning of the meeting. Because these were notes written for their own use, there are incomplete sentences and sentence fragments that the candidate used as a reminder when answering the questions. These have remained unaltered. However, these notes and answers do reflect the candidates' views on the questions asked.

We are grateful to all candidates who participated in this informative event and for their help in making the information available to those who could not attend.

Donna Aycock
Chairman, Meet the Candidates Committee

Questions and Answers from Candidates Running for Town Commissioner

INFRASTRUCTURE

1. Do you think we have adequate reserves for our infrastructure including water system, sewer system and roads and sidewalks? If not, what would you recommend we do to increase reserves for major capital outlays?

Dennis Harrington:

Two areas require constant monitoring to insure we are prepared for the future.

Water System – based on the information given after testing our main water pipe, I propose we establish a fund by increasing water rates to cover the future cost of pipe replacement. Based on strength of current pipes will determine length of time to build the fund. Expect minimal increase over the next 20 years.

B' Part Fund – We need to vigil to insure there are adequate funds to address a major storm damage to repair the beach. We currently have 5 million in the fund; however several projects in the future will have a heavy drain on the fund.

Those projects area: Water Tower Park and transit marine base \$700,000. Terminal Groin 1-2 million, Lockwood Folly dredging \$600,000. Total 3.3 million. Leaving a balance of 1.7 million. We currently grow the fund by about 250,000 per year.

Ken Kyser:

The water and sewer are enterprise funds and must pay for them selves. We are limited what we can charge and collect. The sewer system is okay at this time and after the analysis that will take place on the oldest sections of the water system we can determine when we will need to replace it and the cost. Since this is an enterprise budget item we will have to raise water rates. Town roads have been surveyed and do not require paving at this time although Brunswick Ave is very wavy it would cost 1 to 1 ½ million to repair and would require ad valorem tax money. OBW is a DOT road.

Regina Martin:

I am concerned about the age of our water system and the possibility of a major break in the middle of our rental season. I feel we are ahead of the game in that we are preparing to do test sections that will be sent off for testing and evaluation/ I am due to its age

Sandy Miller:

I believe our reserves are adequate for the present so I do not support any increase at this time.

Sheila Young:

After we gather more info on H2O system from new meters & testing of areas of pipes- need amt of additional \$\$\$ to collect from h2O/S bills.

BUDGET

1. What items in the budget do you think could be considered for reduction in the future?

Dennis Harrington:

Yes, last year I addressed several items in the budget and proposed reductions. This year I insisted we have a neutral budget that would not take any money from the general fund. Everything except the mortgages and sewer costs are subject for reduction. The amount of money saved would be negligible and would not

Ken Kyser:

Over the last 6 years with the addition of the EOC and new town hall things have been removed from the budget and we have not raised taxes even with the new debt payments and increased cost of everything that we use. To reduce the budget further we will have to reduce the services that the town provides such as reduced police protection, less frequent garbage collection, less frequent billing, Reduced inspection department hours, and town hall being closed for several days during the week. Of course this would mean that many employees would quit causing many new problems. I would not recommend any reduction in services.

Regina Martin:

The Budget was gone through line by line and I feel it is a bare bones budget that was well prepared.

Sandy Miller:

The current budget is a "bare bones" budget with every item considered prior to its passing. As for the 2013-2014 future budgets, there will be several budget workshops next year. Hopefully, the public will come and give us their input.

Sheila Young:

Must pay required debt payments – Town Hall/EOC. Look at all other items & new requests (i.e. Vehicles)

2. Have you proposed any budget items for reduction?

Dennis Harrington:

No written answer provided

Ken Kyser:

Yes I recommended that we refinanced the sewer loans to reduce our interest rate by several percent which on millions of dollars was a big savings

Regina Martin:

I was not a Commissioner Last year.

Sandy Miller:

Not at this time. Reduction proposals will come during the next budget workshops.

Sheila Young:

Consider some cost sharing w/staff on Health Ins. – need a study.

GENERAL MANAGEMENT

1. Do you think we provide a competitive employee compensation package? If not, what are your recommendations?

Dennis Harrington:

Based on information I have we are on an equal basis with most other beach towns. I think an exception would be the minimum hire in for police officers, which should be increased by a couple of thousand. Of concern to me is the benefit package awarded to all employees which is far above private industry averages. We need to keep in mind that town is not complicated as towns go. We don't manage fire employees, schools or a large retail population. On a scale with other towns we would be considered very basic in responsibilities. Given the population of the town we are very small.

Ken Kyser:

I think that we are close but on the low end of what the other towns pay there employees. I think that we need to do a comparison study to see where we stand before any decision is made. We need to stay competitive with employers pay in the area or risk loosing our best and most talented employees to others which in the long run will end up costing us more..

Regina Martin:

I believe from discussions I have heard that the Town employee's pay scale is somewhat depressed. The benefits are good. Many of the employees have been with the town for years and take pride in serving our community.

Sandy Miller:

We have FINALLY provided a competitive employee compensation package. The last few years, employees were given a bonus at the end of the year but no increase in their salary. This put Holden Beach behind the other beach communities. This is now slowly being resolved by a salary increase instead of a bonus. I believe we have the best and most loyal employees of any of the neighboring communities.

Sheila Young:

Yes we do – During last budget development; I suggested adjustment of certain job categories instead of across the board raises.

2. Is the town doing too much or not enough with regards to recycling? Would you like to see recycle bins mandatory and the recycle center removed? If so, how would you pay for this?

Dennis Harrington:

Recycling is a volunteer effort now. To mandate recycling for everyone would increase the costs to the homeowners to about \$100,000. Plus, not everyone would like to have it mandated. If the town picked up the costs of recycling then it would cost the town about \$70,000 annually once the current recycling drop off area was eliminated. \$70,000 additional costs would require a tax increase. That does not include extra costs for weekly pickups on Ocean Blvd.

Ken Kyser:

I think that we are doing enough. I do not want to see recycle bins mandatory. Requiring every one to have recycle bins in the rental homes will require pickup the same as our trash schedule and most of the homes would require more than 1 can and all this would increase the cost greatly from \$75 a year I now pay. I think that the expense would have to be paid for by the home owners since homes will require different numbers of cans so the cost will vary from house to house and my tax dollars should not be used to subsidize a rental business expense and it is not a tourist related expense.

Regina Martin:

I would not like to see recycling bins mandatory. The small number of homeowners signing up for services speaks for itself

Sandy Miller:

I believe in recycling and I pay for my recycling container; however, I am very much opposed to making recycling mandatory for all homeowners.

Sheila Young:

Need public input

Idea – share \$50 yr w/prop owner – 50/50 spend \$55,000 BUT save \$22,000 (2011-12yr) to \$28,000 2012-13 yr) from center

Plus – might REDUCE garbage bins – reduce extra \$\$\$ for prop owner.

Might need ordinance change

3. Are you in favor of the town continuing to work with Holden Beach Beautification Club to landscape the public areas on the island?

Dennis Harrington:

Yes! The Beautification club has made significant improvements on the island. I wish the causeway could be improved as well.

Ken Kyser:

Yes we do not give them any money directly. They help to come up with Ideas like the island side bridge access and the pond at the pageant garden and Jordan Street Beautification. These things are done by the town staff to beautify the town at little cost.

Regina Martin:

I am very much in favor of the town continuing to work with the Beautification Club. Our Island looks great! The Beautification Club has added great value to our Island.

Sandy Miller:

Absolutely. The areas at the bridge, stage and the firehouse are beautiful and great welcome signs for our visitors. The public works guys continue to do a great job.

Sheila Young:

Thank HBBC for work they do.

Suggest that NEW projects be reviewed by Pks & Rec Bd & Town Bd first

4. What is your vision for use of the recently purchased land in the 800 block along OBW?

Dennis Harrington:

I would put this property under the label of “Long Range “planning. We have enough projects under way at the present time. Looking to the future, I think we could develop additional parking spaces and possible restrooms in the area. The value of the property is in the acreage to use for spoils deposit from canal dredging.

Ken Kyser:

I think that parking and dredging spoils would be the use at this time. Survey first.

Regina Martin:

IT was a great purchase. Town got a lot of land for not a lot of money. It is already saving us money on the upcoming dredging product and could in the future provide some parking and possible bathroom facilities.

Sandy Miller:

This area could be used for additional parking on OBW, a dredge spoilage site at the ICW or maybe we could sell it once the economy improves.

Sheila Young:

Additional parking & simple restroom

PUBLIC SAFETY

1. In what ways would you consider adjusting staffing to respond to seasonal increase in work and do you think we would be better served by having temporary seasonal employee beach patrol or code enforcement teams?

Dennis Harrington:

I have always advocated the use of part time personnel to help patrol the beach strand. Currently we have one officer patrolling the beach and not everyday during the 100 days of summer. Other islands use part time employees to patrol the beach and enforce town ordinances. Ocena Isle will use EMT's this next year in addition to part time personnel to have an impact on beach safety. With good training I believe we can be effective and provide a good relationship with tourists.

Ken Kyser:

The police department is the only group that could possibly benefit from this and it takes about 4 months to qualify and train someone and then we would have to equip them. They would work for 4 months then be unemployed. During the next 4 months they may find a job and we would have to start again. I believe that the people doing this need to be trained and qualified since they represent the town and need to be able to enforce the laws which the courtesy patrols could not. If they can't enforce the laws why have them.

Regina Martin:

No

Sandy Miller:

Chief Layne has made it very clear that he does not support hiring extra support staff during the summer. Only police thoroughly familiar with the Holden Beach laws and ordinances would be an asset.

Sheila Young:

Need some improvements.

Send topic to Pks & Rec Bd for recommendation to Town Bd

Additional personnel need training

2. Do you feel we have adequate beach safety? If not, how do you think this should be addressed?

Dennis Harrington:

Other than using EMT's to help patrol the beach we are doing a good job of informing tourists of ripe tide currents. It's impossible to save everyone, and at some point people have to be responsible for themselves.

Ken Kyser:

Yes I realize that we had two drowning this year and feel sorrow for the family involved but they had 4 drowning to the south of us on beaches that had paid life guards and that didn't help. We may be able to have the police beach patrol make announcements warning of dangerous rip current conditions when they exist.

Regina Martin:

Yes

Sandy Miller:

Yes. It was unfortunate we had two visitors drown this past summer but sometimes accidents cannot be avoided. The distribution of the rip current magnets will help educate visitors and residents alike. I am not in favor of hiring lifeguards.

Sheila Young:

More signs

Education efforts

Fire house staffing in summer is a good addition

PLANNING AND ZONING

1. Does the town notify the property owners associations on the island of active permit requests? If not, do you approve of a notification process?

Dennis Harrington:

I understand this action is against the law.

Ken Kyser:

No! The property owners associations have no legal standing in the permitting process and we have many different homeowners associations. It is against the law to deny a building permit based on objections from a homeowners association. If anyone wants to know what is being permitted they should contact town hall for info since it is a matter of public record.

Regina Martin:

No and No

Sandy Miller:

The town does not notify POAs about permit requests and I don't believe it would be legal to do so. If a POA wants this information, all CAMA permit requests are published in the Beacon every week.

Sheila Young:

Not aware of any notice

Not sure what is being requested or needed

2. How do you feel about the changes in the character and family atmosphere of our beach that the construction of the "mega structures" has brought about? Would you want one of these houses built next to your property, and what is your position on changing our ordinances to prohibit additional dwellings of this type?

Dennis Harrington:

I would ask the P&Z committee to look into what can be changed in the ordinances to minimize the effects of Mega structures. At some point these large houses become a commercial establishment. Where the line is I'm not sure, and would therefore refer this issue to many others for discussion and solutions. Not sure there is one; however I would not like to be next door to one.

Ken Kyser:

I do not feel that this one structure changed the family atmosphere of our town. Personally I do not like the mega structure and no I would not like one built next to me but the lot size where I live would not allow this. I do not feel that we could legally restrict the # of bedrooms a house can have without facing many law suits that we would loose since there was no restrictions when they bought the property and that kind of change would devalue greatly there property and potential future income over many years. The west end where that home was built had restrictions and a design review committee that didn't preclude it from being built. There restrictions did not restrict the size and number of bedrooms. If they don't want more being built they need to put restrictions on the property prior to it being sold. We may want to look at requiring adequate parking on site for all future houses (All houses over 5 bedrooms should require 2 to 3 additional parking spaces per bedroom for all bedrooms over five to ensure adequate on site parking).

Regina Martin:

I would not want one of these next to my property. However, I do not feel it has changed the FAMILY character of our Beach. I have asked and there have been not problems at the MEGA structure, no noise or fighting complaints. The major problem has been parking complaints.

Sandy Miller:

No, I probably would not want huge house built next door and fortunately for me, the only close empty lot is not large enough to support a “mega”house. This discussion can easily become a “slippery slope.” When we depended on septic tanks, the number of bedrooms allowed was limited. The switch to sewer removed that restriction. Now, height limit and lot coverage provide the limitations. Rental houses are required to provide two trashcans for every two bedrooms and one parking space for each bedroom. Changing the parking requirement to 1 1/2 space per bedroom might cut down on the size of the house. I could support a public hearing on the parking space issue.

Sheila Young:

“Mega structures” seem like commercial development
I would object if built next to me
Pkg., traffic, garbage problems
Neighbors wouldn’t like me to run a “car rental” next to them
Years ago Clubhouse stopped in residential area
Send to P&Z for study & recommendation

RECREATION

1. What are your thoughts on conducting summer activities at the water tower site to include basketball, pickle ball, bocce ball, etc.?

Dennis Harrington:

Maybe once or twice a year have a town organized activity, maybe during “day at the docks” etc. Other than that people can organize their own activities.

Ken Kyser:

I think that it is a good idea and these are some of what we have in the design for the site.

Regina Martin:

Think this would be a great idea

Sandy Miller:

Once the storm water issue is resolved, I am very much in favor of more activities at the water tower site. Town Hall has started offering duplicate bridge on Tuesday morning and last Tuesday there were six tables filled. Amanda is planning to add two more tables in the near future.

Sheila Young:

Have equipment available
Keep informal unless a tournament is organized by Pks & Rec

2. Do you think we have done enough to make beach usage accessible? If not, what changes would you like to see?

Dennis Harrington:

The town is constantly looking to add more public beach accesses. Our best effort is someone who donates a piece of land for access.

Ken Kyser:

I think that we need to continue looking for beach accesses where the location makes sense and should encourage private access way owners to give the access to the town like Deal Street and then the town would maintain the walkway to code and in good repair. I have also identified several streets on the town platting maps on the ocean side of OBW that look like vacant lots that the P&Z are looking at to recommend parking and beach access locations.

Regina Martin:

The Planning and Zoning Board is currently reviewing the beach accesses and parking. I believe the accesses are adequate would like to see them marked better and more parking.

Sandy Miller:

We recently had an additional beach access donated to the town. Adding more accesses is not a pressing issue to me at this time. We do not have the money to purchase more accesses. I do believe it is fairly convenient for residents and visitors to get to the beach quickly.

Sheila Young:

Keep trying to add some public accesses as available
Review parking study when completed by P&Z

3. Do you think we have adequate parking, rest rooms and amenities? If not, what changes would you recommend?

Dennis Harrington:

I would recommend we look into adding restrooms at the two major beach accesses along with more parking. A few urnals and showers would be satisfactory.

Ken Kyser:

No! I think that we need a restroom on the east end and one in the parking area in the 800 block and more public showers.

Regina Martin:

See above. Anxious to see report from P and Z.

Sandy Miller:

I believe we have adequate parking for visitors. Additional rest rooms are part of the plan for water tower site.

Sheila Young:

Add simple restrooms at east end
Review parking study when completed by P&Z