



Vero Beach City Council Candidate Questions Bob McCabe's Answers

The following questions were sent to all the candidates and each candidate confirmed receipt of them. The answers are unedited by the IRNA and CWC and copied directly from the text of the document that we received back. (Some candidates sent their own PDFs.) The answers below are the words of the candidates and we hope that their positions on various issues help you to know them better.

The city of Vero Beach has established a Stormwater Utility to generate \$1M/year to build flood control and water quality improvement projects. So far, it has been funded by CARES Act money which will no longer be available in 2023.

- A. Will you vote to fund the Stormwater Utility at the previously approved ERU rate?**
- B. If you are opposed to the Stormwater Utility, please provide your reasons for your position.**

Yes, will vote to fund through non advalorem assessments to the extent other sources of funds are not available. As I strongly supported the formation of the Stormwater Utility, I envisioned that it would encourage property owners to invest in projects to contain stormwater on their properties: however, as it has been implemented to date it has had the opposite effect. Council needs to work with the City administration and the Utility Commission to revise the method of determining the permeable / impermeable surface areas and most importantly to provide fee relief incentives to those property owners making stormwater containment investments. The primary goal must be to reduce stormwater runoff – not to collect fees.

Referendum on Charter protected property restrictions

- A. Should the marina area be included as a Charter restricted property?**
- B. Should Charter properties expansion of a certain size be subject to a public vote?**

Yes, the entire Marina Enterprise area should be included as Charter protected; however, there may be complications in doing so because it is an Enterprise Fund which needs to be studied.

No, the second part of the Preservation Alliance's referendum is absurd.

Three Corners

A. Do you support the Three Corner Commission's recommended plan for the old power plant site?

B. If not, what would you like to see happen at the three corners?

C. How will you make your vision a reality? (Please be as specific as possible.)

D. Do you support the referendum on the Three Corners? (former power plant property)

No, I do not support the Commission's recommendations and do not support the City's referendum. Specifically, I strongly oppose any residential uses for this publicly-owned property, especially a hotel or condominiums noting that 86% of voters in 2007 put this site under Charter to keep it from being commercially developed.

I would support a future referendum for establishing a restaurant on the property overlooking the lagoon, but all the other activities on the site which I could support are public uses under our Charter and would not require a referendum – such as a riverwalk, an entertainment stage, a skate park, walking trail, etc. Furthermore, I believe after some seven years the dilapidated power plant should be demolished as soon as practicable.

Research has proven that septic systems are one of the main culprits for the polluted state of the Indian River Lagoon, the demise of the seagrass beds and resulting starvation of the manatees. The STEP System can provide connection to sewer for homes and businesses throughout the City.

A. What do you think the city can do to increase the speed of adoption of the STEP system?

B. Will you support mandatory STEP connection for septic systems on the barrier island? The mainland? C. How would you aid those homeowners in neighborhoods that are economically constrained?

The City should again incentivize home owners to convert to the STEP system. I understand there may be some concerns from those who made the investment since the previous incentives expired but we all live with expired retail store coupons every day. The City should also promote among homeowners that they can fund the City's portion of expenses with a lien and repayment through the IRC Tax Collector's office.

We already have mandatory connections when the septic systems fail inspections, which inspections are now required more frequently. I would support further acceleration but would want to explore financial assistance for those who may have difficulty making the investment. I make no distinction between the barrier island and the mainland – pollution is pollution.

There have been several environmental and quality of life issues raised regarding the expansion/improvement of the Marina. How would you engage the citizenry more effectively to build consensus around the project?

Regarding the environmental issues, I view the investments planned for the marina as an opportunity to address these concerns and create state-of-the art facilities – maybe even LEED qualifying.

I have met with the Alliance’s leaders on many occasions, including at the marina and I believed the modest dry storage expansion approved by City Council was a fair compromise. Actually, on behalf of those who signed the Alliance’s original petition, I felt betrayed by the added second part of the petition they submitted.

Once the legal actions have been settled, I would be glad to meet with anyone including the marina’s neighbors, as we move forward with all the phases of the marina modernization.

Recently Low Impact and other sustainable development incentives have been brought up in the city.

A. What is your take on these?

B. What kinds of incentives would you like to see implemented, if any?

As it relates to stormwater management , the establishment of the City’s Stormwater Utility is a great first step in low impact, sustainable development. This Utility needs to be maintained and supported by future City Councils. I’ve noted above some improvements I would like to see in the process.

A large portion of Vero Beach is located in a high hazard flood area.

A. What, if anything, do you think Vero Beach needs to do to mitigate sea level rise?

B. What kinds of projects/plans do you want to see the city undertake?

C. How might our building regulations be updated to prepare for sea level rise?

Working with the County and other governmental agencies at both the state and federal levels, the City should undertake a study of alternative actions. Having lived in Europe and visited the Netherlands numerous times, that country has written the manual on how people can live, work and even farm below sea level. There are lessons to be learned from their experiences and we should pursue these lessons as part of a larger consortium.

In the short term, the City need to address the rainfall related flooding which occurs regularly on some of our streets. Investments in Stormwater Utility capital projects may well be focused on these problems as well as updating our building codes.

City ordinances that regulate fertilizer applications, require a containment barrier at construction sites, require a plant barrier in front of water bodies, etc. were enacted to prevent further run off pollution but are rarely enforced. How do you propose better enforcement?

I would like to see a review of best practices from other municipalities in this area. Another specific area of my concern – many of our housing developments were designed with swales adjacent to the roadways which in many cases have been filled-in / covered-over. Some standards should be developed on how we expect our code enforcement officers to enforce these requirements and then City Council needs to support their efforts.

What do you think are the three most urgent, far reaching, and challenging policy issues facing the City of Vero beach over the next 5 years?

The environmental health of the Indian River Lagoon.

The annexation of South Beach into the City.

The relationship with our neighbors, including the County.