



## **Vero Beach City Council Candidate Questions Honey Minuse'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.

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**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.**

I fully support the Stormwater Utility. This matter is vital to our health, safety and welfare. Future funding will be challenging due to the fact we have now exhausted funds from the Cares Act and the Glide Path (funds which were appropriated after the sale of the Vero Beach Electric Utility).

However, with the Stormwater Utility established, we are now qualified to seek grants on the regional, state and federal levels.

It is speculation at this point to specifically apply the ERU as presented in 2022 to the 2023 budget based on the possibility of grants and fine-tuning the fees this coming year. Funding must continue and my decisions, in light of the foretated, will be made accordingly should I have the honor of continuing my public service.

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### **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?**

The citizen (Marina) Referendum produced by the Vero Beach Preservation Alliance, and which is on the ballot, is before a Judge at this time to determine whether the votes should or should not be counted. City Council made the decision to bring this matter to the Court due to the fact

there was much confusion in the community about the separate issues, as well as possible impacts, resulting from the ballot language.

Pursuant to Sunshine Law I cannot discuss this matter.

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### **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)**

The Three Corners referendum is the product of several years of work by a renowned consultant followed by a citizen's steering committee resulting in a proposed plan for mixed use development of that property. I voted with Council to place that proposed plan before the citizens, as required by our Charter because it represents a change of land use. This November election will determine whether the proposed plan will either proceed or fail. Should it fail by the specific vote of the citizens a plan to determine its future use will face major financial challenges.

It needs to be understood this plan is only a proposal for consideration, it not final. Should the citizens vote to pass this Referendum the process will then seek formal proposals from interested parties, the potential developers of that property, and finally a developer will be selected. Work to develop a site plan will then proceed and will include coordinating with regulatory agencies for oversight, permitting, etc. Eventually, the completed site plan created by the selected developer will be brought forward at which time more public input will be sought before final approval is considered by Council.

The potential benefit for our citizens and positive economic impact for our city directed my support for the Referendum and why I voted to bring it to the citizens for their ultimate decision.

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**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?**

Thank you for outlining the consequence of pollution to our Lagoon attributed to septic systems. These septic systems should be completely eliminated and the sooner the better.

Educational outreach, grants, liens, mandatory inspections have all proven effective to help convert septic systems to sewer. Of course, there is more to be done and these efforts need to be "stepped-up". Representing our city regionally and on the state level provides increased opportunity for me to explore additional solutions to this problem.

A new community initiative appears to be gaining good support for assisting financially stressed neighborhoods. I support such an effort.

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**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?**

The Marina Master Plan was years in the making and was a public process throughout. It recently became a political issue, resulting in a referendum put forward by a citizen alliance. This matter is before a Judge now.

As stated previously, pursuant to Sunshine Law, I cannot discuss this matter.

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**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?**

I am in favor of incentives to encourage low impact sustainable development as it applies to stormwater. The city has little undeveloped property, so this is something to be particularly encouraged when in-fill is considered as well as the re-vitalization of various areas and the rebuilding-rehabilitation of older structures. Incentives which the city could offer would have financial benefit such as off-setting fees for permits, etc.

There is also consideration about "green initiatives" such as rain gardens, cisterns. This needs further public education and conversation.

As mentioned above there is also consideration for fine-tuning the fees associated with the Stormwater Utility. Low impact incentives would be appropriate for this fine-tuning consideration.

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**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?**

FEMA and FDEP have been regulating coastal construction to address this problem referring often to the "100 Year Storm Event". A coastal construction line identifies the necessary elevation of a structure along with various requirements for pilings, design, etc. The Comprehensive Land Use Plan, Coastal Management Element, updates to comply as these regulations change.

Erosion of our beaches and dunes, leading to flooding, has been problematic for a long time and the more recent, local solution determined on the county level, has been to restore them by using upland sand to replace sand which has been washed away. Education and action related to sea turtle nesting and dune protection has also had a positive effect. But much more needs to be done.

Stormwater systems in identified high hazard flood areas, such as we have here, and which are impacted by sea level rise, need constant attention, including updating aging infrastructure and enforcement of prohibition of landscape debris from entering streets and clogging the drainage systems. However, the long-term solution may require reversing that flow of stormwater to a facility or land capable of restoring it for human and environmental needs.

Sea level rise and flooding has the concern and attention of governments throughout our state. Solutions and funding for the long term must be adopted. I serve on the Florida League of Cities Advocacy Committee and will be addressing this issue.

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**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?**

Our Code Enforcement officers work in the Police Department and are very dedicated personnel. The issues cited may be significantly avoided if they are addressed before the

violation occurs, such as when building permits are issued, in language clearly stating a stern penalty for non-compliance.

Policy direction may be required to increase compliance and enforcement of fertilizer run-off. If the solution is a matter of additional personnel, this will be an item for budget consideration.

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**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?**

1. Fiscal responsibility is paramount.
2. Depending on the outcome of the legal issues, planning for the Three Corners and Marina needs to continue
3. Protecting Home Rule, as established in our City Charter, which powers are not to be pre-empted by the Legislature.