



Clean Water Coalition

CWC

of Indian River County, Inc.

2021 Sebastian City Council Candidate Questions

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. (Formatting was unified.) The answers below are the words of the candidates and we hope that their positions on various issues help you to know them better. Candidate answers are listed in alphabetical order.

The city has had a moratorium in place that has banned the use of glyphosate herbicide spraying since November, 2019. Monsanto says that their glyphosate products will be removed from the store shelves next year because they are a likely cause of cancer. As a city council member will you vote to retain the moratorium on glyphosate spraying? Will you vote to ban the city's use of other toxic synthetic chemicals on public property such as the canals and the stormwater retention ponds? If not, what is your plan to deal with pollution and damages caused to our environment by chemical spraying?

Gilliams: I was raised on the Lagoon: boating, fishing, crabbing, and clamping. I'm against all toxic synthetic chemicals being used anywhere. I will vote to ban the use on public property, ESPECIALLY canals and retention ponds. All canals lead to the Lagoon. I'm for the use of natural solutions even if they cost more than the "easy" hazardous solutions. We live in one of the most incredible natural landscapes in the country and along the nation's first wildlife preserve. We should be on the bleeding edge and leading the state with the most sophisticated solutions. We should be partnering with advanced research facilities at local and state universities. I've seen the beauty of zeroscaping done right. I would be in favor of grants to Sebastian residents and business owners to encourage them to maintain their own properties with safer alternatives.

Jones: Our city is leading the way when it comes to intergrated Pest Management. Thanks to our Natural Resources Board and all who worked so hard on our IPM Plan. Our Intergrated Pest Management Plan has been approved by the entire city council and is available to all.

Matthews: As a city council member I will continue to vote against the use of glyphosate spraying. Other cities, counties, and states have banned the use of glyphosate-based products. It is time for Sebastian to join them. Although Aquatic Vegetation Control has managed to contain vegetation growth without the use of glyphosate products, they are using other synthetic chemicals that are just as harmful. The state

offers more than 60 other, safer means of controlling aquatic invasive plants. Are we looking into these other options or is it easier to use the hazardous, life-threatening chemicals. Just because they are approved by the USEPA does not necessarily mean they are safe for people's health or the environment. My plan would be to allow the experts to continue to steer the city through the healthiest and safest integrated pest management plans and actions.

McPartlan: Great question. Having served on Sebastian City Council for 9 years the City has done a tremendous job. There was much more spraying when I started on Council in 2011 to today. We have reduced the amount of spraying tremendously as well as recently approved the Integrated Pest Management plan. The plan was several years in the making due to compiling of information and workshopping with citizens who were informed and offered a lot of knowledge to the implementation of the plan. I believe members of your organization were involved in this. Sebastian implemented a fertilizer ordinance before many of our neighboring cities and counties. Sebastian has always been a leader considering environmental issues pertaining to the Indian River. Even with the IPM plan their will be a need for some spraying and I will do my best to ensure it is the least toxic to the environment and our citizens. I'd also like to reference I was on the Council when IRC did not want to accept the seat offered by the Lagoon Council. I recommended Sebastian take the seat for \$50,000 per year and we reached out to the other municipalities. Sebastian, Vero Beach, and Fellsmere split that \$50,000 a year and represented for several years until the IRC Commission had a change in their board and we relinquished it to them. I take the threats of cancer harm extremely seriously and when notified by certain individuals that there were cancer clusters in Sebastian and other neighboring counties I made contact with several people who run the Departments of Health in IRC and surrounding counties based on my relationships with them through participating with them on their Community Health Improvement Plans (CHIP) and numerous other boards. They explained to me how clusters are detected and I verified this with my own physician. There were no cancer clusters. Feel free to contact me for any further information.

Nunn: Currently, there is no moratorium on spraying of any chemical in Sebastian. With that being said, the City worked very hard to create an IPM plan that handles how to deal with vegetation in our canals, ponds and other water ways within our City. I will rely on the professionals that are on staff and the professionals that helped design this wonderful document. The IPM plan for land-based pests has already received a lot of positive attention from Cities all over the US, I suspect the water based IPM plan will as well.

Phipps: "As a city council member will you vote to retain the moratorium on glyphosate spraying?" Yes. "Will you vote to ban the city's use of other toxic synthetic chemicals on public property such as the canals and the stormwater retention ponds?" Yes. I frown upon the use of Poisonous Chemicals. We have wild life such as Sandhill cranes that I am concerned about that feed in these areas. On a side Note. I feel the growth of the Vegetation is also promoted by the high content of Nitrogen in the ground water.

We expect the Graves Bros. will be back to the city council in the future. Will you as a city council member ensure that there is a fully transparent review

process for any new proposals? Will you advocate for the city and the developer to follow the county's New Town rules and designate half of the annexation property for conservation and open space protection as has been done in other large annexations, like in Fellsmere?

Gilliams: I'm not against annexation done properly. If we don't annex it, we don't have control over how it will be developed. We need more housing. People who work here can't afford to live here. However, these new lands need to keep the environment in mind, as well as our public facilities, and property values. If they plan on expanding our population, they need to build public facilities to accommodate their new residents. A city comprehensive plan needs to be worked out so that our residents' best interests are prioritized. The developer should absolutely be required to have at least half of the annexed property to be preserved for conservation and open space protection.

Jones: Yes

Matthews: I believe in proactive disclosure, which is voluntarily making information available. As a city council member, the residents have entrusted me with the power to speak on their political behalf, represent their interests and ensure decisions made reflect the entire community. My commonsense approach to growth would allow residents to be involved in developmental decisions building a strong sense of place. I will always be a strong advocate for following the rules!

McPartlan: I supported the Graves Bros. annexation in 2019 and would support it in the future. What is transparency? There were several meetings to discuss it. I will ensure the opportunities for workshops are held. My initial thought when voting for annexation was to give the people a month or so to digest the information; however if you recall the meeting the majority of people who spoke stated that all of the homes would be on septic and pollute the environment which was absolutely "false". My decision to vote for the annexation that night was that it didn't matter if I gave them a month, 6 months, or a year there was no changing their minds. In hindsight workshops should have been conducted and I support that. The majority of the people who were against the annexation are currently in favor of it knowing all of the facts. I am in favor of conservation and open space protection; however am also in favor of affordable housing and would love to see a portion of the property devoted to that.

Nunn: The City already follows the open space protection standards for green spaces and conservation land. Our City standards are actually more stringent than the county's rules. We will work with the county in the Graves Brothers comes back to the table. We will advocate for what's best for our City and work with the Developer so their investment is successful. In the city we will not allow any new developments with septic tanks, they must all be sewer. The county actually recently approved a 40 acre development on the St Sebastian River with the homes being on septic tanks.

Phipps: Absolutely, Sebastian is a special place and I am determined to keep it this way

What will you do as a city council member to improve relations with the county administration? For example, will you support that the city and Graves Bros. meet regularly with the county to discuss annexation plans and insist that the city comply with its own comprehensive plan with regard to improving relations with the county and neighboring administrations?

Gilliams: I support the idea of the city and Graves brothers meeting regularly to discuss annexation plans. I insist they comply with a city comprehensive plan. I support that the county, Fellsmere, and Wabasso also be included as our direct neighbors. As one united community, we need to ensure this property is developed properly to protect the environment and city assets. We don't want to be in competition with the county or anyone else, we need to work together. We need to avoid an "if you don't let us develop it, then we will get annexed by someone else." The city and the county should always be in good relations and communicate regularly.

Jones: I have a relationship with 3 of the county commissioners that goes back a long way. I believe a good working relationship benefits all of our citizens. It's important to build and maintain a healthy, collaborative relationship with all.

Matthews: As a city council member I will continue to comply with city plans, rules, etc. I collaborated with attorneys, city managers, code enforcement, planning and development, non-profit organizations, and served on committees and groups throughout my career. These connections would benefit the city when working with the county administration. My ability to work with all parties to reach a common understanding, regardless of the issue, is unparalleled.

McPartlan: I have a terrific relationship with the County and most of the commissioners. I would suggest you reach out to the County and inquire as to their opinion of myself and other elected officials. Having served on the Council for 9 years I have been on the MPO board that entire time and served several stints as Chairman. I sit on several boards with many of the commissioners outside of anything doing with city business and have fostered these relationships. Juvenile Justice Advisory Board, IRC Executive Roundtable, IRC Childrens Services Advisory Committee and recent involvement with the Children's Trust initiative. My relationship with the newest commissioners; ie: Laura Moss goes back to when she served on the Vero City Council and my relationship with Joe Earman may be in its' infancy; however we serve also on the Transportation Disadvantaged Local Committee Board. I have always gotten along with Jason Brown and Dylan Reingold. The County was extremely helpful to me when I had to run the emergency disaster food stamp program after a recent hurricane which occurred at the IRC fairgrounds over a 4 day period which ultimately put \$15 million back into our community. Do we always get agree, no! I would guess that we agree over 80% of the time and we get those projects done. The other 20% we can debate and discuss civilly. I have no problem whatsoever getting County input regarding annexation and discussing just remember that there is a thing known as Home Rule and I'm a staunch supporter of that.

Nunn: We already comply with our comprehensive plan, I have worked on creating relationships with our local Commission representative and a few other Commissioners. Good relationships are important to any local government and the County they are located.

Phipps: This is why I believe annexation. We as a city will have control of the annexation.

The city is investing \$600,000 in a new stormwater management plan. This is just the consultant's cost for drafting the plan. There may be many controversial recommendations in this plan. So far, the city has done very little to explain this plan to residents to get their views and support. In due course the city will be spending millions of dollars on projects to improve stormwater management. As a council member what will you do to improve public transparency, to gather public input on expensive projects that will impact people's lives and homes?

Gilliams: Stormwater Management is one of our highest priority items. It's a complex issue which is why the city has spent so many years and so many hundreds of thousands of dollars researching it. We've spent so much money on reports that I'm sure we can rebudget some of it to hire someone qualified to explain it to us if the current city staff cannot. I'd like to see educational videos played on the community channel explaining the plan leading up to discussions with the public. If necessary, special meetings could be held by an appointed committee to educate and explain it to the public. The committee could report to the city council with a summary and people could still speak on it during public input at council meetings. The citizens should always have the opportunity for a transparent understanding of and public input in all major decisions.

Jones: I strongly believe transparency and having public input on all matters like this. My position has been and always will be to take public input before making a decision on expensive projects.

Matthews: As a city council member, my first question is why is the city investing in another plan (\$700,000)? Why is the 2018 plan inadequate? The city invested in a stormwater management plan in 1998, and updates in 2004, 2013, 2018 and now in 2021. When do we start moving forward? Decisions about projects and priorities touch people's lives daily - their homes, health, schools, taxes we pay, daily commute, our environment around us, economic growth, and opportunities to achieve their dreams and goals. I would advocate for residents and business owners to be involved in expensive project decisions.

McPartlan: Having voted in support of having the plan done I stated that I am not going to support a plan that would sit on the shelf it needs to be implemented. I would envision this would lead to many workshops with the public for ideas and suggestions with an eye on any potential State/Federal grants which could offset the cost to the City. The relationships I have with local State and Federal officials would continue to be leveraged for anything which could benefit our area.

Nunn: Until the plan is completed, I am not sure how you could explain a plan in the draft phase. Once the plan is completed, I will push for workshops to help get feedback and educate the public.

Phipps: I am a strong advocate for a safe and clean city without affecting a standard of living many have come to enjoy and have worked so hard to achieve. I just don't talk the talk, I walk the walk. I will physically talk to people and post on applicable face book pages to make people aware. Unlike current council members who seem to be silent.

Do you as a candidate have a handle on the city budget -- for example, do you as a candidate know what the city's major expenses and revenue sources are?

Do you know how much is included in the capital budget? Do you know how much is spent on public safety, parks and road maintenance?

Gilliams: I'm familiar with where the city's major expenses and revenue comes from and I'm interested in reducing expenses and maximizing revenue. I'm never afraid to admit when I need to do more research. I have briefed the city budget but need to spend more time with it on a line by line basis. If I'm elected, I will be spending lots of time with the city financial director making sure I understand every penny of it. I am familiar with that the city always seems to be incorrect with their capital budget and over spending. They've routinely set a budget, and then moved money around after it's been agreed upon. Why have an agreed upon budget when you change it under the consent agenda without transparency. I will propose and vote that the consent agenda always be required to be read aloud before voting on any expenses. Voting to approve items A-F is an unacceptable and clearly untransparent process that keeps the public from knowing where their hard earned tax money is going. I can confidently say they aren't spending enough on public safety, parks, or road maintenance. We have potholes in the 512 - US1 intersection and in many of our residential streets. We've seen street signs down and garbage on US1 for weeks at a time. We've seen ladders on our boat docks broken and falling into the water. We've seen far too many flooded streets. Our tax dollars are being spent on fancy new city facilities, with out-of-town contractors, that the taxpayers who are paying for it aren't even allowed access to. As a city councilperson, I will advocate for a transparent budget that has our community's best interests in mind.

Jones: Yes and it's all public records.

Matthews: With complete confidence yes, I can handle the budget. My experience in working with over a \$45 million dollar budget affords me the comfort of monitoring the City's \$28.7 million dollar. I have closely followed the 2020-2021 annual budget and currently I am keeping a watchful eye on the 2021-2022 budget as it reaches its final stages for approval. The General Fund is the city's main operating fund. It pays for core services such as public safety, parks and recreation, and roads and maintenance. Major revenue sources are taxes (property tax, discretionary sales tax, and utility service tax), state - shared revenues and grants, and charges for services mainly from enterprise activity. Other general fund revenue sources include fine and forfeits, license and permits and investment income. The largest component of the budget is employee services, which includes all payroll costs and related benefits. The budget is not just an accounting document, it is a management and planning tool. This planning tool provides statistics regarding fiscal stability, economic strength, public safety, and quality of life for all

residents. I will maintain transparency while making informed decisions regarding spending and the most effective use of our tax dollar. I will incorporate smart spending to improve our quality of living, maintaining Sebastian's attractive, small-town flavor.

McPartlan: Having spent 9 years on the Council I have a firm grasp on the budget and its' expenses. We will be looking for more grant opportunities especially concerning stormwater and getting residents off of septic keeping in mind that free money is not always free. Sebastian is extremely fortunate to have Ken Kilgore who is our CFO and a robust Citizens Budget Review Committee who have done a remarkable job in my tenure.

Nunn: The City gets the majority of its revenue from a few Tax sources, AD Valorem taxes is the largest, with utility service taxes and ½ cent local sales tax coming in after that. We also receive franchise fees for electric, water and solid waste. The cities biggest expenses are the police department, road maintenance, but there are others as well. Our city has been very fortunate to have funded many projects using Federal and other grants. The roads and maintenance division has budget of around 1.1 million. The budget for our public safety dept has a budget of roughly 6.7 million. The leisure services dept has a overall budget of roughly 1.2 million. Our overall capital budget is roughly 20 million, with about half of that in grants

Phipps: I am aware