



## 2020 Commissioner Candidates Survey Questions

Candidates were asked to respond in 75 words or less to 5 questions. Below are responses from 3 of 8 candidates. Whether you work and/or live in the Collier County, the survey responses will give you insight into matters of importance to our community and industry.

### 1. What is your position on growth in Collier County? Please also share your opinion on the Rural Lands Stewardship Area. Please be specific.

#### **Mark Batchelor, Republican - District 1:**

The RSLA was created in 2002 to balance development of agriculture, building and our fragile environment. Collier will grow in the next few decades to a level that is double the population we currently have now. We must understand that people up north want to live in our great climate of Southwest Florida for its clean water and beaches. Trying to balance these critical issues of agriculture, environment and building will be challenging to say the least. There have been amendments passed by the commissioners that had a few environmentalists to oppose, this credit system is very complex and can be changed by our commissioners. It's important that our commissioners understand the impact of their decisions. The RSLA has preserved land already at no cost to taxpayers. Its goal is designed to incentivize preservation of the most important environmental lands. However, I believe we can build and protect our environment simultaneously. We can't afford to lose our fragile environment, so we must work in unison with the guidelines of RSLA.

#### **William Douglass, Republican - District 1:**

We must demand smart growth and protect the resident's quality of life. Development is going to happen; however, assessment of all projects approved, in review or planned must be taken into consideration including environmental preservation, agricultural preservation and smart growth development, which are the key aspects to the RSLA.

The governing rules must be followed, further reviewed often and if undesired outcomes are present, then rules must be changed. Infrastructure that will have to accommodate this growth has yet to be built, presenting a significant opportunity to review the plans for expansion in an efficient and equitable manner that contributes to managing growth and it must be fiscally neutral.

#### **Bill McDaniel, Republican - District 5:**

When our community is growing, our economy is expanding. Right economic recovery should be our top priority.

I support growth and my record on the County Commission proves it. I believe as a county we need to grow intelligently to ensure our infrastructure can accommodate the growth and we need to be conscientious of protecting our environment.

The RSLA is 15 years past its 5-year review period and those recommendations need to be added to enhance an already award-winning land use plan.

**2. We know there will be an impact from COVID-19 in the amount collected from impact fees. What is your position on this issue?**

**Mark Batchelor, Republican - District 1:**

There is federal money coming for the CAREs program and should provide any possible shortfall on any fees and taxes collected. Impact fees are a tax. However, this is a perfect time to reevaluate our high cost Impact fees that are the highest of 67 counties. Impact fees should be a priority for our county to establish a commission of outsiders to study and improve our high cost impact fees.

**William Douglass, Republican - District 1:**

We really don't know the full impact yet of COVID19 and when we do it will probably have to be addressed by a combination of funding sources. Otherwise, we will face massive layoffs of essential service personnel. We must all share in preventing this to happen by doing what's necessary.

Sales of new homes continue, and it is not a reality that impact fees will be diminished. Even if impact fee collection is reduced, I do not feel it is appropriate to increase impact fees further, as it brings up the costs of housing for those least able to afford it. Collier County has held neutral on the millage rate for a several years; and I commit to maintaining our low tax rate.

**Bill McDaniel, Republican - District 5:**

COVID-19 will affect much more than our collection of impact fees. It will also affect revenues generated by sales tax, collection of gas taxes, and literally every revenue stream the county has. I do not support raising impact fees and putting a greater financial burden on individuals looking to build homes and businesses, especially in these tough times.

Rather than attempting to tax (and fee) our way back to prosperity, I believe we need to reduce taxes and fees to help stimulate economic growth by allowing the consumers to keep more of their hard earned money. They will in-turn spend that money in our community and begin the cycle of economic growth.

**3. Redevelopment will become more important as time progresses and structures age. What are your thoughts on the creation of a "redevelopment code" to aid in the feasibility of redevelopment efforts? A one size fits all code may not be the best answer.**

**Mark Batchelor, Republican - District 1:**

I agree that one size doesn't fit all, but the question is who develops this code? It should be different groups builders, realtors, environmentalist so there is agreement on how this can be managed and implemented. These boards can make recommendations to the commissioners based on historical and scientific data that can provide information to make informed decisions.

**William Douglass, Republican - District 1:**

One size does not fit all. The individual redevelopment/development planning process is occurring in several Collier County communities. It is important as these plans take a look into the future.

The plan will analyze development conditions and propose scenarios to guide development that may be anticipated in the future. By having these plans specific to each neighborhood it will address various needs by community, which will yield better existing facilities, services, assets, and planned improvements.

**Bill McDaniel, Republican - District 5:**

Redevelopment is very important as it helps modernize our community, upgrade infrastructure, and prevent urban sprawl. I support any code or law that responsibly aids in the betterment of our community. Our codes need to be flexible as there is never a one size fits all solution to complex

development projects. We need to keep government out of the way of businesses, not hinder their growth and job creation.

**4. Currently the State of Florida provides a drop program for county staff, as such there is a shortage of county experienced staff who are retiring or soon to be retiring in the Collier County Growth Management Division. What is your opinion for ways this can be rectified?**

**Mark Batchelor, Republican - District 1:**

Attrition is a normal part of every business. As I have dealt with these issues in the past at corporations such as Xerox, we would have people prepared to replace our outgoing personnel, through training and mentoring. It is important to note that after they are trained and mentored that these replacements have values and different experiences and opinions that adds to the quality of these individuals. These replacements can maintain that experience and skills, and in most cases, improve the current staff that are retiring.

**William Douglass, Republican - District 1:**

I experienced this in the fire service multiple times. It is always important to have depth on the bench in any situation. Similar to this, the fire training needed was specific and life/safety depended upon the right people.

Even more important is to ensure that a change of employees does not increase the timeline in the application process, so over hiring for those positions prior to retirement may also be beneficial.

If the employee adds value, retirement- age workers could be contracted to assist in the training of newer employees, assist in review of projects and offer professional guidance on more complex projects.

Adding retired or local niche professionals part-time until the replacement staff are trained would also provide some confidence to newly hired staff and the community.

Improving efficiency in the Department would also go a long way to help, like utilization of drones for inspections, online processes can provide 24-hour access and information to residents. These efforts in turn help keep our taxes low and attract visitors, businesses, and residents here. Most importantly allow for responsible building to continue.

**Bill McDaniel, Republican - District 5:**

Eliminate the drop program. Move more of building services out to the private sector.

**5. What is your opinion on affordable housing in Collier County and what remedies, if any, would you propose?**

**Mark Batchelor, Republican - District 1:**

I oppose any subsidies for any housing, but I believe builders can be encouraged to build homes more affordably. Example, builders can be building homes such as neighborhoods and not amenity-rich walled developments. Our high impact fees combined with these types of developments have taken many potential homebuyers out of the affordability housing in Collier. Builders can maintain the same profit margin with no-amenity style homes as well as the amenity-rich style that currently get built here in Collier. Simultaneously, Collier must address the highest impact fees in the county.

**William Douglass, Republican - District 1:**

Workforce housing is a real need in Collier County. I support workforce housing and encourage all efforts and recommendations on how to help service these needs. One of the biggest needs in

workforce housing is to have units available throughout the county. We currently have a higher proportional share in District 1 than most of the County. It is important to ensure it is made available throughout the county to limit travel and gridlock on our roads.

Anything we do must be done with a focus on maintaining the quality of life and safety for residents and ensure that the efforts are contiguous with the surrounding development. If we are going to be successful in these efforts, we must make serious efforts to reevaluate how we issue density bonuses, as well as parts of the LDC to accommodate the higher density pockets. Such efforts can include mixed used buildings and developments as well

**Bill McDaniel, Republican - District 5:**

Let the free market reign.

Supply and demand should be the deciding factor in the housing market. I would prefer that government stay out of the housing world, but when we have I have put restrictions that have enhanced the expenditure of tax dollars.

The hold period for affordable housing density bonuses now is 30 years, and was only 15.

On any housing projects that Collier County is directly involved we/I have imposed perpetual deed restrictions that reduce the windfall to the private sector from taxpayer monies.