

## Candidate Questions

Please respond to the following questions in 250 in words or less

Candidate's Name: Jonathan Damico

District: 5

Question One:

One of the major consequences of the rapid pace of development in Brunswick County is the impact on the infrastructure (such as roads and public utilities) required to support that development. What measures would you propose to ensure that infrastructure investments in the county keep pace with development?

**Response:**

**This has multiple facets to it. First, acknowledging we cannot continue down the path we have been on must occur. We need leaders who advocate on issues that they have less control of (NCDOT/roads) and be willing to change the direction on things they have more control over (water/sewer, utilities.) According to a Brunswick County Comprehensive Transportation Plan, our main roadways were identified in 2017 (base year for study) as "near capacity" or "over capacity." One can imagine they are now certainly over capacity. We have been dumping massive amounts of untreated water into our rivers and streams (nearly 1M gallons in recent weeks) with a finger pointing to hurricane Debby. Unfortunately dumps were occurring even before Debby, and this is hardly an excuse. Hurricanes and storms will happen, we know this. Capacity must grow. This plays into our growing public health crisis (along with a still poisoned water supply) and simply must be addressed. We cannot continue to build out without acknowledging we need to build up infrastructure capabilities. And we need an aggressive clean water for every resident plan immediately. We also need an updated UDO with appropriate Traffic Impact study with clarity on the time for it to be performed.**

Conversely, the pace of development could be tied to the ability of the county to provide adequate infrastructure. Do you support a slowing of development to match infrastructure enhancements? Please provide the reasoning behind your point of view.

**Response:**

**Absolutely. Speed is not efficiency. Our current commissioners have consistently derided any updates or improvements to our Unified Development Ordinance (for example) as business or job killers or damaging to the economy, when in reality it's simply an attempt to do things right or better the first time. Businesses and people want to be here for the same reason we all do- Brunswick County is beautiful and a great place to live work and play. However it seems the voices of neighbors have become far less important than the voices of developers who are clearly not interested in the neighborhood (as recently noted in a commissioners meeting by Commissioner Thompson, "in our community, it's development first and the citizens second.") It's time to fix that and make sure we are making decisions that benefit every one of our neighbors. I would support slowing development as a process improvement tool.**

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**Question Two:** Population growth brings increased demands on public safety agencies such as Sheriff's office and fire districts. Fire districts are of particular concern not only for their ability to respond in an emergency but also the impact of low fire ratings on homeowners' insurance premiums. What specific steps would you take to ensure that public safety concerns are addressed as the county grows?

**Response:**

**I am a resident of Leland who, recently accomplished an incredible goal of achieving a top fire rating which will lower every Leland resident's home owners insurance. That is something to be applauded and I know I'm appreciative of it! They put a plan together and followed it. The hard part of that, is that they had to raise taxes to achieve that goal to support purchasing of more fire equipment and growing staffing, etc. The unfortunate reality to ignoring these needs in our county that come with growing is that they don't go away, they get bigger. I think Brunswick county can keep our taxes low but we will need to do some hard work to make sure our communities are safe. We will need more firemen, police, EMS, teachers, staff in social services, expanded services for an expanding community- all of these things will need to be addressed.**

**Question Three:** In 2023 the Board of Commissioners adopted Blueprint Brunswick 2040. Appendix G of that document outlines an implementation schedule with no specific implementation dates. What three specific steps would you like to see the Commission take during the next two years to implement Blueprint Brunswick?

**Response: In my time being around our county I have noted there is a seemingly well thought out ability to point fingers- it's planing board, it's NCDOT, it's reps in Raleigh, it's \_\_\_\_\_. It's wearisome. Leaders should take responsibility and get these things done. Let's set a timeline to get the UDO updated as well as the goals in appendix G. This is the work of leadership.**

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**Question Four:** The ABCPOA perceives that there is a prevailing concern among citizens that the interests of real estate developers take precedence over the interests of the public at large. How would you address this concern?

**Response:** It is definitely felt, as everywhere we go and speak to folks they feel unheard and that their voice does not matter. It's time to put the people of Brunswick County first. Appendix C of Blueprint Brunswick 2040 is a thorough community survey which clarifies all the things that we continue to hear from our neighbors- better protect the environment, wetlands, and trees that protect us, end the practice of clearcutting, update the UDO and make sure people have a voice in their government. This isn't a democrat/republican/unaffiliated thing- this is about the neighborhood and what we want to see for our community and our future.

**Question Five:** The bulk of residential development in the county over the past 8-10 years has focused on housing for predominantly upscale and older population groups. How would you perceive the role of the County Commissioners addressing the residential needs of a broader population?

**Response:**

America is facing a housing crisis and Brunswick county is not immune to that. A common call to "build build build" our way to bring down costs cannot be the only tool in the toolbox because it would require market saturation for prices to level out. That simply will not happen on its own, and it's not hard to see who the beneficiary of that plan would be (it's not our neighbors.) As we grow and build out all the things mentioned above, we will need teachers, emts/paramedics, nurses, first responders, daycare providers etc. We do not have appropriate housing for these folks. Recent housing data shows that to afford living above the poverty line a person would need to earn approx \$21/hr. Additionally, census data shows that workers in BrunsCo drive approx 25minutes to work. AAA recently reported that average cost of car ownership is 12k/yr. Do you see how quickly these stats add up? It's time to activate some more tools for housing, if we want to not just attract the new talent we will need but also keep them here- I would propose within the UDO requirement that any new housing plans must offer 10-15% workforce housing. I would also seek out ways the county can look to provide housing opportunities for our essential workers and people we need to recruit to keep our community thriving. We don't have to reinvent the wheel, others are doing this, but we do need to try some new things, which we can work with friends throughout the state also dealing with this issue and create a better way forward.

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Question Six: Article 3.3 of the current Uniform Development Ordinance, UDO, vests final approval for Subdivisions and Planned Developments in the appointed Planning Board. Would you support changing the process so that approval of Subdivisions and Planned Developments rests with the elected County Commissioners? Please provide the reasoning behind your point of view.

**Response:100%. There is a reason individuals are elected by the people; they hold and carry a responsibility, and they should hold that final say. The planning board should make recommendations, and the Commissioners should make the decisions.**

**Thank You for your participation in this survey.  
Please save and send your responses by September 20 to:  
[presidentabcpoa@gmail.com](mailto:presidentabcpoa@gmail.com)**