

## Candidate Questions

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

Candidate's Name: Tom Simmons

District: 4

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:

County commissioners have minimal impact on road funding and repairs. However, my role as a county commissioner would be to work closely with our state and congressional representatives to secure funding to upgrade those roads that are currently over capacity. As to public utilities, I would support a study of the existing water and sewer lines to determine those line which are at capacity or over capacity. I would work with state and federal agencies to secure grant funding for upgrades. I would work with the members of the state General Assembly to establish a develop fee per unit built. This fee would be used to invest in future upgrades to the utilities infrastructure.

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:

YES. Over development has put the county infrastructure in a crisis situation. Major roads are at capacity or exceeds capacity. Over the past several months, untreated water has leaked into our streams and river. To continue building and adding more units to an inadequate system will cause harm to the environment and cause health issues.

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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 would research counties similar to Brunswick in size and population to learn how they are addressing public safety concerns. Input from county mayors would provide information as to where the greatest concerns are. Working with mayors, county fire and rescue and developers, a plan could be put in place to ensure that public safety keeps pace with that growth.

**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:

- #1. The county UDO must be updated and minimum standards must be raised for development approval.
- #2. Blueprint Brunswick 2024 must be implemented without further delay and with full BOC support.
- #3. As a member of the BOC, I will work to establish a citizen advisory committee to work with the Planning Department and the consultant hired to recommend amendments to the outdated UDO.

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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:

Attending the BOC meetings, I have observed that while citizens are making comments during the public address, commissioners seem not to be focused on the issues being presented. This causes citizens to feel they are not being heard. I have been told that when an issue is presented to the BOC, rarely does a commissioner follow up with a response. I plan to meet with county mayors on a regular bases to ensure citizens concerns are being heard. I will follow up with individuals when a request has been submitted to the BOC. I will never agree to a “closed door” meeting with developers to hear their concerns.

**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:

Brunswick County is rapidly becoming a county where the middle class citizen can not afford to live. The role of a county commissioner is to advocate for all citizens, not just their big campaign donors and developers. An important component of that role is to ensure affordable housing is available to citizens. I would like to bring in a developer who would commit to build affordable, energy efficient homes.

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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:

YES. This will be my first order of business when elected. The Planning Board members are appointed by the commissioners. Board members are not accountable to anyone except the commissioner who appointed them. The Planning Board should only recommend development approval and the final decision should be the responsibility of the BOC, who is accountable to the citizens. The BOC likes the current process because they can hide behind the excuse, "we had nothing to do with this, it was the Planning Board's decision". It is time to change the Planning Board's role and how they are appointed.

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)