

Questions for Candidates for County Commissioner – At Large Post 1:

1. What is the value of a Comprehensive Plan for Glynn County and how do you think it should be used by the BOC? Many of the action plans in the 2008 plan were never implemented – what will be different this time?

J.R. (Mark) Stambaugh (Incumbent):

A ten-year comprehensive plan is a tool for laying out possible direction for the community as a whole. Like Corporate five-year plans, it is designed to offer guidance for the county government in terms of possible direction of the community, including goals to those ends. However, like any such “future plans” it needs to be kept in mind that society, and thus a community, is dynamic in nature. Although planning is a good tool to be proactive, it must be recognized that a certain amount of reaction will also become necessary to take into account the changing dynamics that are inherently going to arise. Socio-economic events or conditions can, and ultimately do, alter the dynamic in ways not foreseen or predicted; thus the assumption that the comprehensive plan should not be altered or adjusted over time, and/or adhered to in stringent fashion can become counter-productive to the equation.

Further, it should be understood that although the county attempts to get as much community input to such planning as it is developed, not every citizen or group of citizens will necessarily agree on direction/goals of the plan. Further, it is unfeasible to expect that any ten year plan could encompass or address every future condition that may arise. Thus, the BOC has the ability, duty and responsibility to deviate from the plan as they feel necessary over the course of time. Elected officials can and do alter it based on the input, concerns and needs of the community and these changing dynamics referenced above. Not doing this, in my opinion, would in effect silence the citizens and nullify any input or influence on the direction of the county based on a smaller segment of the community that ultimately had more input to the Comprehensive Plan construction.

As to “what will be different this time”, that is a question with no real answer. Since 2008 the BOC has changed member commissioners consistently. Thus, a future or even current BOC can alter directions for the reasons stated above. Thus I cannot inform you of what may or may not be followed or brought to fruition over the next ten years.

Jane Fraser:

What Is the Comprehensive Plan?

The Comprehensive Plan is a guide for the future. It provides the public a chance to see that our community has a clearly stated vision for the future growth and development. Interestingly, the VERY FIRST goal as stated by the Department of Community Affairs is as follows :

Clearly encompassed within the plan are objectives to preserve private property rights, that economic development is encouraged and supported and it provides the public a guide as to where the future development will occur and what it will be like.

Ideally, the Comprehensive Plan should be used assiduously by the Board of Commissioners. It should provide the framework within which the BOC exercises its governing authority.

Unfortunately, the 2008 Comprehensive Plan has been virtually ignored.

At this writing, we have not even seen the first DRAFT of the 2016 Comprehensive Plan. Obviously, we must have a document to file with the state of Georgia. Because I believe that the Board of Commissioners have pursued a flawed process, I am not overly confident that we, as citizens, will have a Comprehensive Plan with the desired vision, and consequently, I am not comfortable speculating what will be different this time.

Assuming that we have a Comprehensive Plan that can be adopted by an informed public, I would pledge to be a leader in its effective implementation and that the Comprehensive Plan would be used as it is intended when the concept was originated.

David O'Quinn:

The Comprehensive Plans for St. Simons/Sea Island and the Mainland will provide a framework for the BOC to evaluate the current ordinances and make changes to those ordinances that are in line with the Comprehensive plans while balancing private property rights.

I am not totally aware of why the 2008 action plans were not followed other than the Great Recession occurred, and the focus of the county was to survive the significant economic downturn.

Julian (Puddy) Smith:

I do not believe that any Comprehensive Plan prepared under the direction of the current or any recent Glynn County Board of Commissioners or county staff has any real value.

2. If elected, what would you specifically propose to do about updating current Glynn County ordinances to more accurately reflect citizen views and vision for the County?

Stambaugh:

If I am re-elected what Ordinance changes would I propose to better reflect citizen views and vision for the county? Since you do not delineate which Ordinances, and which "citizens" you are referring to, I can only point to the narrative under question one in regards to citizen input over the course of a commissioner's term. What one segment may consider necessary and beneficial, another may not. Weighing each situation on its merits and public input, and making a decision on behalf of the community as a whole is an essential part of representation. In general however, I do see a need to bring many of our ordinances up to date so to speak, and attempting to clean them up. They are a conglomeration of the initial ordinances, and alterations subsequently implemented over the decades by different commissions. Although each BOC attempts to keep the alterations in sync with each other, ultimately they can become convoluted or even confusing in nature and direction, and even contradict themselves at times. This is an ongoing process, and we see such streamlining of various ordinances. It is impractical to attempt to "update" every ordinance at one time, since as stated, conditions and factors arise consistently that can and do affect these ordinances. For example, we must be cognizant of the fact that "one size fits all" ordinances are not the best course. Different areas

of the county (including SSI) have different issues being faced and those issues should be taken into consideration with any changes. For example, I favor requiring two separate points of egress and ingress for developments based on the number of homes in a development, along with requiring entrance lanes the length of a development property to assist with traffic flow issues. This idea is more relevant to SSI due to the conditions we see developing on SSI versus the mainland. Improvement of daily traffic, and even emergency evacuation conditions are of greater concern on an island, than on the mainland.

Fraser:

Again, assuming that the Comprehensive Plan is a complete and acceptable plan which is embraced by an informed public, I believe that the BOC should immediately take the steps necessary to undertake a thorough study of our ordinances for the purpose of a complete re-write which conforms the ordinances to the Comp Plan.

Due to my lack of faith in our county attorney's office, unfortunately, I would initiate an effort to form a citizen advisory committee to study the current status, estimate the amount of time required in qualified professional man hours, and to make recommendations to the BOC within a six week time frame as to the recommended procedures to be followed in either selecting a qualified consulting firm to complete the task of rewriting our ordinances or what alternatives exist to accomplish the goal.

If, as I suspect, the Comprehensive Plan is not fully embraced and accepted by the public, then I will advocate that the BOC files the Comp Plan with the state of Georgia to ensure compliance with the DCA deadlines. I would further advocate that a new citizens committee is created to critique the Comp Plan that is delivered and we undertake a concurrent plan of revising and amending the Comp Plan at some point in the future and the respective planning commissions should be advised to emphasize the first goal of a Comp Plan as stated above until the amendment process and the new ordinances are crafted. But in the meantime, enforcement of the current ordinances is a must.

Fundamentally, I favor an approach that will achieve the goal of preserving the quality of life into the future.

O'Quinn:

Once the Comprehensive Plans are complete we should hire an independent third party expert in ordinances and property rights law to review the plans and our current ordinances to determine which ones are out of step with the views of the citizens and how best to write new ordinances that are defensible in court and are in step with the Comprehensive Plans.

Smith:

The current Glynn County ordinances require more than "updating"; they need wholesale revision, particularly to prevent spot zoning, to put a reasonable time limit on site plans and planned development texts, to protect existing neighborhoods, to require that developers pay for necessary infrastructure improvements, and much more. In any case, I do not believe it is possible to "accurately reflect citizen views and vision".

3. Would you support a moratorium on any additional development until the Comprehensive Plan and needed ordinance modifications are complete?

Stambaugh:

No, I will not support another moratorium on any building in Glynn County until the Comprehensive Plan is fully implemented, or Building Ordinances altered. As stated, such alterations or updating would take an extended period of time to accomplish, and continuing dynamics can affect them even after they have been altered. Further, what constitutes necessary "changes" to one may not translate to a consensus of every citizen or even the majority of citizens within our community. Regardless, in terms of changes to ordinances, I would submit that a better question and course of action for ordinance changes would be to ask what do citizens desire to be changed or altered in our current ordinances? It is beneficial for elected officials to get this type of input for evaluation and consideration. I do not refer to generalized declarations such as "managed growth" or similar broad undefined statements; but defining what that entails, and what specifically citizens would like to see done in reference to such concepts.

Fraser:

My answer to this question depends on who is elected to the BOC.

Assuming that I am elected, I would have to consult with experts in the field to determine how long the process will take to produce a reliable and effective set of ordinances. If the time required is more than three months, I would strongly consider supporting a moratorium.

If a concerted effort is launched to bring the resources to bear to achieve the goal in under three months, then I would favor the BOC issuing a mandate to the respective planning commissions as I stated above and rely on those bodies to effectively maintain the quality of life through a rigorous examination of EVERY application submitted to the Planning and Zoning Division of our county government.

O'Quinn:

Based on the question, I have to assume it is suggesting a county wide moratorium. A county wide moratorium would have a detrimental effect on our local economy. I do not support a county wide moratorium on development.

Smith:

Yes, I would support such a moratorium until we have a meaningful comprehensive plan and suitably revised ordinances. I assume the question applies to SSI and Sea Island.

4. How would you ensure there is a balance between development and infrastructure / quality of life issues?

Stambaugh:

The commission is currently moving to work on traffic infrastructure issues being faced on SSI, as you well know. I do believe however, we need to take additional actions to assist with elevating the traffic issues being seen there with the ingress and egress of the work force each weekday. I believe we should consider adding additional lanes to the Sea Island Causeway; (or as a minimum adding substantively longer turn lanes at the Sea Island Causeway and Frederica intersection) to assist with traffic flow. I believe we should consider and implement a long term strategy to assist traffic on Frederica as well. Since there is concern about simply adding lanes or using stop lights, we should look to add and utilize “eye brow” lanes at strategic points to allow for through traffic flow. This would work to assist traffic flow and can be accomplished with less impact on removing trees along the road which do add a certain “island feel” to the route. However, at some point we must decide as a community if the traffic situation is detrimental enough to the “ambiance” of the island to warrant such bypass lane expansions to fully alleviate this issue. Such expansion would have a minimal impact on aesthetics compared to a full blown four lane of the road.

Fraser:

Clearly we are seriously deficient in terms of our current infrastructure relative to where we should be given our current population and the influx of non-residents to our area throughout the year.

I believe the JWSC numbers are reasonably accurate with regard to their future needs for both system maintenance at the current level of service and for future capital development. My understanding is management at JWSC has forecast more than \$ 300 million required for the next 10 years. Assuming they are wrong by half still leaves a number that could only be achieved by a federal grant or a series of dedicated SPLOST referendums.

The BOC could dedicate SPLOST revenue to the JWSC through inter-governmental agreements. Assuming that the community has realistic projects that are genuine “Special Purpose” needs, it may not be reasonable for the BOC to complete such an effort.

A SPLOST can only be relied upon to produce approximately \$ 20 to \$ 21 Million a year from a penny tax. Obviously that source of funding is, at best, a partial solution for the JWSC needs, and that is BEFORE we even consider the streets and roads.

With tap fees set at the current amounts, the most that can be expected from that source of revenue is approximately 2 to 3 million dollars per year which is clearly not an adequate source to fund the future capital needs.

Glynn County receives approximately \$ 1 Million per year from the state in Local Maintenance and Improvements Grants (typically referred to as LMIG).

Historically county management has depended on SPLOST revenue for the bulk of the major road improvements undertaken in the past 25 or 30 years. The obvious question, therefore, is what will the county do about roads if SPLOST is dedicated to JWSC ?

When elected, I will approach our local delegation to the General Assembly and the City of Brunswick leadership for a Infrastructure Summit for the purpose of beginning to address these long ignored issues.

Unfortunately our prior elected leaders and our salaried bureaucrats have failed to properly address these problems.

I understand that your question anticipates that I (and presumably the other candidates) will be capable of providing a plan to "...ensure there is a balance between development and infrastructure, but I don't believe a credible answer is possible given what we know at the present time.

O'Quinn:

I see quality of life issues for St. Simons/Sea Island as different from the quality of life issues on the Mainland. On SSI/Sea Island the BOC must recognize the limited capacity of infrastructure that currently exists and balance it with property rights. We should recognize the barrier islands unique ecological and economic characteristics and protect them. I see quality of life issues for the Mainland revolving around economic growth and development. We should recognize this and not squelch economic growth and development by implementing ordinances that hamper economic growth and development on the Mainland.

Smith:

There is no way that one county commissioner can ensure such a balance nor is "balance" necessarily a good thing. At the risk of sounding unbalanced, I believe county commissioners and planning commissioners should pay more attention to the "Preamble and Enactment Clause" of our Zoning Ordinance. By the way: the word "balance" is not to be found in that clause.

5. What do you see as the County Commission's role in solving the water/sewer and traffic issues that exist in Glynn County today?

Stambaugh:

The JWSC is an autonomous Authority. It is not subject to the BOC in terms of action, financial expenditure or future planning. Political pressure can be, and has been applied to them, but to expect the commission to have direct authority over them is not feasible, and political influence can only do so much. For clarities sake, the future costs estimates have ranged from \$600M to \$400M over the last year or so. At a presentation by the JWSC those of us that attended were given a total figure for the mainland and SSI of \$318M for future maintenance, upgrades, and expansion. These cost estimates were broken down into two phases, the next 20 years, and then over 40+ years, including a new sewage treatment facility at some point in the future (\$30 million). One thing that needs to be kept in mind about these numbers, is the fact that the JWSC seems to neglect to acknowledge that the maintenance and upkeep of the system is an ongoing process, that they are currently engaged in. To take these numbers and keep them constant does tend to confuse the issue as to where we were, and where we actually are now.

Now, with that said, the county does have authority under the current legislation that formed the JWSC to obtain bonds on their behalf to assist with water and sewer projects as requested. In addition, some have advocated for the utilization of "Impact Fees" to fund such expansions. However, keep in mind that such programs are monitored by the State of Georgia. There are only eleven counties utilizing them due to costs of implementation and the monitoring that comes with them. Such funds must be allocated to a variety of facets of the program as constructed by the county and monitored by the State. One of these areas is traffic/transportation. Impact fees could off-set such things as water and sewer expansion, but also would be looked at for roadway expansions. I am hesitant over the costs to administer this type of program, as well as concerned about what form of expansion would come along with this type of state monitoring. For example, the widening of the bike paths along Kings Way was a grant from the State. The six year lead time to accomplish the upgrade wasn't due to incompetence, but rather to the fact the GDOT kept demanding all the live oak trees along the road be cut down, since they were "too close to the roadway"... it took appeal after appeal to finally get them to give up that demand and release the grant monies.

SPLOST are also a good tool for the improvements of infrastructure, and I support that concept for road/traffic improvements. I do not currently support the use of such funding for the JWSC since I am still concerned about their priorities and their fiscal austerity. As an example of this concern, in September of 2017 at their facility meeting, they were considering utilizing \$800,000.00 and proceeds from the property sales in downtown Brunswick to convert an old building in an emergency operations center. The County has a state of the art facility for that, and I feel such considerations demonstrate a lack of priority in the infrastructure improvements the community needs, over something they "would like to have". If however, they can show such austerity, I would be willing to work with them for future SPLOST funding, but would also demand the county has some input and oversight of how the funds are spent, since they are an autonomous Authority, and not answerable to the taxpayers. I would also support the concept of privatizing the management functions of the JWSC should that produce a greater degree of accountability to the residents, and better financial direction for the customer base and the community.

Further, I currently support their program of working with developers to pay for infrastructure improvements to accommodate their needs and even for future expansions and then recouping the future expansion costs through credits/payments over several years. That is a good concept and program to assist with future needs as well, and seems to be palatable to all sides.

Fraser:

I believe that the BOC MUST play an integral role in marshalling the resources necessary to begin the search for a solution to these problems.

For more detail, please refer to the previous answer to Question 4

O'Quinn:

I see the Water and Sewer and traffic issues as separate problems. The Water and Sewer problems are now the responsibility of the Joint Water and Sewer Authority. This Utility was set up to handle the Water and Sewer issues. Having said that, I believe it is the BOC's right and role to have frank discussions with the JWSC and help hold them accountable. There must be

a prioritization of projects, and sound cost figures provided to the citizens of this county. If the BOC has to come up with more money to help with repairs of the water and sewer system or if the Utility enters into more debt to accomplish these repairs, then the BOC should demand and receive more detailed updates of JWSC plans and actions so that BOC can more diligently hold them accountable for the use of the money.

Traffic congestion such as found on St. Simons , Hwy 341, Hwy 303 and Hwy 17 will require the BOC to look for short term and long term solutions. Long term traffic planning is a must for the continue growth and health of the county.

Smith:

The County Commission cannot solve “issues” nor can it solve many of the problems caused by current and earlier Commissions. It can, should, and MUST stop making problems worse by continuing to appoint poorly qualified individuals to the two planning commissions.

6. What do you feel can be done to achieve needed economic growth and industry diversification (beyond tourism) in Glynn County while maintaining the quality of life desired by its citizens?

Stambaugh:

This is a major concern of mine, and it is obvious that currently, all substantive economic growth outside the tourism industry has been made possible by the BOC versus the Economic Development Authority. We currently spend \$800,000.00 annually on the EDA, and yet we see little to no productive results for the expenditure. I submit we need to look at restructuring/reorganizing the current EDA and support the BOC to continue to be directly involved in business/industry development here in Glynn County. On an administrative front, we as a County need to continue to work to alter, modify and/or change our internal policies/procedures to assist in industrial style business development here in Glynn County. Streamlining procedures to reduce time frames would be a major benefit to industry style businesses in deciding on where to construct future plants/facilities.

Fraser:

Obviously this question will hopefully be answered in conjunction with a credible Comprehensive Plan.

However, as I have stated previously, I am not confident that the current effort to produce a Comprehensive Plan is going to achieve the ordinary goals. Therefore, I will offer a couple of thoughts that I believe are essential before Question 6. can be competently answered.

I believe that the ONLY commercial development possible on St Simons Island is on land currently owned by Glynn County at McKinnon Airport. However, the Airport Commission seems insistent on building yet another hotel on the only remaining space that has potential for future industrial and commercial development on all of SSI.

Absent some intervention by the BOC, the Development Authority supervised Airport Commission will likely continue on the path of consuming the remaining space at the airport for more “tourism and hospitality” development, and as a consequence, jobs.

The only other opportunity for diversification would, therefore, be on the mainland.

The current situation on the mainland is that the JWSC does not have existing capacity to attract new corporate employers of significant size. I believe that JWSC currently has a couple of SPLOST funded projects which may alleviate the problem somewhat in the next year, but the leadership of the Development Authority has indicated that their efforts are stymied at the current time due to the lack of available public water and sewer.

O’Quinn:

We need to become more business friendly. Entrepreneurs and small business owners are the key to economic growth and diversification. I hear constant complaints that Glynn County government makes it difficult to start new businesses. Additionally, we must work to attract larger business and industry to the area. The EDA ,which the BOC helps fund, must work diligently to identify and attract these opportunities. These type businesses require time to recruit and sign. The BOC must continue to support the EDA through funding and support by being available to meet upon request by the EDA with prospective businesses.

Smith:

Please do not ask me what I “feel”. Ask me what I know, think, or suspect. And tell me what you mean by “needed economic growth” as opposed to the “unneeded” variety and why the County Commission should be expected to “maintain the quality of life desired by its citizens” when many if not the majority of our citizens in Glynn County do not have a desirable quality of life to maintain. And what are we going to do about those citizens who desire to maintain their quality of life at the expense of other citizens and the community at large?

7. Glynn County has experienced several severe weather-related problems in the past two years. What needs to be done to improve the safety/security of the citizens of Glynn County should similar events occur in the future?

Stambaugh:

I am not sure it is the responsibility of the County Government to “make people safer”... it is our responsibility to put out as much information as is available as timely as possible so citizens can make informed decisions about their welfare and the risks they may or may not be taking in the face of such severe weather events. Glynn County currently uses several social media tools for such notifications in conjunction with local media outlets to facilitate this information dissemination. I also believe we need to keep publicizing these outlets in an effort to get as many people as possible aware of there availability and to utilize them on a regular basis.

With that said, I do acknowledge the county can assist us with safety in terms of organization and mandates to our first responders. I have insisted that since the leadership change of the GCPD that our officers be “more engaged” during such events. Previously, our officers were

simply “monitoring” traffic flows with the evacuations and I believe that they need to be more engaged and assist our residents in moving as quickly and efficiently as possible. This new directive, in conjunction with working in coordination with our other law enforcement departments will assist in helping avoid issues and move traffic at a much quicker and efficient pace. Naturally, the continued support of our medical responders also plays a role in safety by keeping them well trained and equipped to deal with various emergency situations during such events.

Fraser:

I believe that Glynn County should designate several shelters on the mainland for future use in the severe weather situations in the future.

I believe that the new Brunswick High School other BOE sites such as Jane Macon Middle School could be designated in the case of a severe need. Clearly some discussion must be initiated between the Emergency Management team and the Board of Education to determine the feasibility of the use of BOE properties as shelters.

An additional consideration could be some of the facilities at FLETC, though I don't currently have an extensive knowledge of the available buildings at the training center.

I do not believe a meaningful answer can be formulated beyond providing shelters because of the reasoning that has been articulated above.

In other words, the seriously limited situation with the two lane arterial roads (Demere and Frederica) on SSI and the limits of the capacity of the Torras Causeway are realities that must be solved before any further meaningful discussion can be undertaken with regard to evacuation and a return to our homes in the event of a severe storm.

O'Quinn:

The two weather events are hopefully 100 year events that happened back to back. Because we have had so few events of this magnitude, we have not been as prepared as we should have been. I believe that the BOC and Glynn County have learned a lot from these two events, and are looking for ways to improve how they are handled. The BOC is ultimately responsible for how the county responds to these type events, and it should make sure that what has been learned from our storms and from other communities are implemented in policy in handling them. During the last storm I felt that the BOC should have done more to communicate what was happening in regards to evaluation and cleanup after the storm. Additionally, there seemed to be a lot of “leaks” before official determinations were made. I believe that the BOC should be sure that it is the one communicating to the citizens. Finally, I did not agree with opening the causeway while those who evacuated could not get back into the county. I believe that in the future the SSI causeway should be blocked and monitored by law enforcement to only allow those that live or work on St. Simons/Sea Island onto the islands until it is open for all to return.

Smith:

If by “several severe weather-related problems in the past two years” you mean hurricanes or storm surges and floods, those problems are not “weather-related” but are related to decisions by humans who choose to live on low land on the edge of the ocean, marshes, and rivers; humans who choose to permit, build, sell, insure, or finance homes and businesses in areas where hurricanes and floods will occur in the future. Please do not ask me “what needs to be done . . . should similar events occur in the future?” Instead, ask me what needs to be done to prepare for future hurricanes and floods. The County Commission cannot “improve the safety/security of citizens” in this county, but it can stop putting more humans in peril by refusing to approve further development on the islands and in low-lying areas and by preparing for future hurricanes and floods by doing more than relying on “mandatory evacuation”. If you REALLY want to know why I believe there is much we must do, ask me in person.