

2010 CITY COUNCIL CANDIDATES INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
Prepared by the Virginia Beach Roundtable

CANDIDATE: Rita Sweet-Bellitto

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- 1) What do you believe to be the top three most pressing concerns to the business community in Virginia Beach?
 - Current state of the economy.
 - Light Rail
 - Positioning city to take advantage of new investments – strategic growth areas, infrastructure.

- 2) For incumbents, do you think the votes you have taken during your service on Council have addressed or contributed to those concerns? Please give examples.
 - Part of coalition that told City Manager to balance budget without tax increase.
 - Approved purchase of Norfolk Southern Right-of-Way.

- 3) Do you support or oppose the use of public–private partnerships such as those created to develop Town Center, the Sandbridge Beach restoration, the 31st Street Hotel and as have been suggested for future projects in strategic growth areas? If yes, what public financing options do you feel appropriate for such projects? Financing tools might include: Tax Increment Financing, Special Service Districts, Enterprise Zones, Innovation Zones (technology) and BID's?
 - I do support public private partnerships. Clearly to get to next level Virginia Beach needs public-private.
 - Town Center great success.
 - Likes TIF.
 - Owns property in Sandbridge, is okay with extra tax.

- 4) What do you believe should be the City's transportation priorities for the near term and assuming the General Assembly's continued unwillingness to provide sufficient funding resources for these projects, how do you suggest the City fund critical transportation needs?
 - Approach we are taking – handful of projects we have funds to complete. There are projects in the pipeline over the next two years. Water bill increase funds paving and water infrastructure.
 - Better to have a few completed projects and consolidate funds as city has been doing. Only so much that city can do without state funding support.
 - City staff got grants for internal road improvements.

- 5) Should Virginia Beach continue to participate in the regional economic development alliance to increase our ability to reach out to national and international companies?
- Yes. Regionalism is important. If we do not promote regionalism, we are in trouble.
- 6) How important is regional cooperation to the future of Virginia Beach and do you support participation in such regional initiatives as workforce development (Opportunity, Inc.), military infrastructure (HR Military and Federal Facilities Alliance), regional policy development (Hampton Roads Partnership), and regional planning (Hampton Roads Planning District Commission/MPO)?
- Yes, all of those groups address specific issues. Commands, while based elsewhere, have impact on Virginia Beach.
 - Need to work regionally to maintain military.
 - Worked on Lake Gaston for 12 year, things better now.
- 7) What are the most important steps the City can take to enhance its relationship and communication with the military and ensure retention of military commands in Hampton Roads?
- Referenced Mayors efforts – the more we can work this with unified voice, the better we will be, get federal representatives to work in same direction.
 - JFCOM will not be left as it is. Our federal officials are so junior. This is hurting us.
 - As wife of retired Captain, I have an insight on senior military.
- 8) Is the extension of the light rail system from the planned terminus at Newtown Road east to the Beach District a priority and how should it be financed?
- Very important to get study, wants to see data.
 - Not a fan of referendum. Believes Lake Gaston would have failed a referendum.
 - Using federal process sets federal funding.
 - In near term, light rail can boost economic development.
 - Base connection is critical.
 - Was willing to put in local \$ to finish financing of EIS.
- 9) Do you believe the city's budget process ought to budget expenses to meet revenue goals or adjust revenues to meet budget and spending priorities?
- Being forced to budget based on existing revenues is forcing us to be more efficient.
 - Good to budget to revenues.
 - Police should not be cut again.
 - Does not support across the board cuts that does not support core services.

10) Should the General Assembly empower localities to: provide defined contribution plans in lieu of defined benefit plans, give flexibility to modify retirement service and age qualifications, and to require employee participation in benefit packages as may be deemed appropriate by the local governing body? Why or why not?

- Would like to see General Assembly give options.
- Clearly it is not sustainable.
- Hugely expensive, cannot afford this.
- Would like local options, defined benefit plan can't continue the same way.
- Would urge delegates to give flexibility.

11) Do you feel there is waste in the city budget? If so, please site specific areas where you would reduce funding.

- Believes there are items that could be cut. Could make cuts without affecting core services.
- Would like to see office of program evaluation in auditor's office. School Board had this and it was very useful.
- Country Club memberships.
- Find strategic places to cut.

12) Do you concur with the recommendation of the City's Blue Ribbon Tax, Fee and Spending Task Force that a "City Budget Study Commission" should be established to assist in the development of the annual budget? If yes, what should be its composition and mission?

- Referenced Bob Dyer, believes this makes sense.
- People with expertise in budgeting, colleges and universities.
- Council receives recommendations and has responsibility to act.
- Makes sense because of budget complexity.

13) Do you believe business is fairly taxed in the City? If not, what specifically would you change?

- Have not had the opportunity to look at this so cannot fairly address at present.
- Has heard about BPOL tax being unfair.

14) What is your opinion of the City Manager and the job he is doing?

- Has known City Manager for a long time. Believes he is doing a good job. Not sure why some on City Council believe differently.
- He has led city a couple of levels higher.
- Feels spore feels it is time to go.
- Believes Jim Spore is smart and loves the city as much as the Mayor.
- Good focus on economic development.

15) Do you support City Council's outright ban on all LED signs for future consideration or use by private business, schools, churches, non-profits and others?

- No, I did not vote for ban. I believe in limited government.
- Frustrated that plan discussed in work session was not brought up in formal session.
- If ordinance was good enough for public, it should also apply to the city.