



QUESTIONS FOR COUNTY COMMISSION CANDIDATES:

1. Is there any language in our comprehensive plan or land development code that you believe negatively impacts agriculture and should be changed? Are there any safeguards you would want in place in our comprehensive plan to preserve some of our agricultural and rural lands?
2. Solar fields are popping up across our county and state, most of them encroaching rural lands. Is this cause for concern? And if so, is it something you believe could (or should) be addressed at the local level?
3. Are you concerned about the future access and availability of water from our aquifers, lakes, and reservoirs—for agricultural and residential use—in our county? If so, what, if anything, do you think should be done locally or regionally to address future water concerns? Do you believe residents in eastern Manatee County are right to be concerned their wells may run dry?
4. What do you believe are the biggest threats to our county's agricultural industry and what can/would you do, as one of our commissioners, to address it?

1. Comprehensive Plan and Agricultural Impact:

Our comprehensive plan currently leans too heavily toward urban expansion, threatening our valuable agricultural lands. We need to introduce/ enforce urban growth boundaries to restrict sprawl and strengthen zoning laws to protect these areas. I'll push for incentives for farmers and conservation easements to preserve our agricultural heritage and ensure long-term sustainability. Having grown up in a rural area surrounded by farms, I deeply appreciate the importance of respecting where our food comes from and the need to protect our agricultural lands.

2. Solar Fields and Rural Lands:

The encroachment of solar fields on rural lands is indeed a concern. While renewable energy is essential, it must be balanced with the preservation of agricultural lands. Local regulations could be updated to ensure that solar projects are sited on less productive lands or integrated into areas with minimal agricultural impact. One promising solution is repurposing contaminated lands, for solar fields. Successful examples from around the world demonstrate that solar installations on reclaimed mining sites can provide renewable energy while avoiding the use of valuable agricultural land. Additionally, combining solar fields with agrovoltaics—growing crops under solar panels—can enhance land use efficiency and environmental restoration, turning liabilities into assets for a sustainable future. Let's explore these possibilities and transform our community for the better.

3. Water Access and Availability:

Water scarcity is a pressing issue. To address future concerns, I propose implementing stricter water management practices to ensure sustainable use of our aquifers, lakes, and reservoirs. We should invest in advanced irrigation technologies to enhance water efficiency in agriculture, promote water conservation initiatives among residents, and collaborate with regional authorities to develop comprehensive water management strategies. The concerns of eastern Manatee County residents about their wells running dry are valid and should be a priority in our water management policies. Additionally, we must protect our water utilities from potential cyber incidents by hardening our systems, ensuring their resilience and security.

4. Threats to Agricultural Industry:

The biggest threats to our agricultural industry are urban sprawl, inadequate water resources, and insufficient support for farmers. As a commissioner, I'll work to implement policies that protect agricultural lands, secure water resources, and provide financial and technical support to our farmers. This includes hardening our water utilities against potential cyber incidents to safeguard our critical infrastructure.