



I am very impressed with your engagement  
and your desire to represent us.

These are some of the hardest  
qualities to find in our candidates.

You get representation

-Garrett Ramy

**1)How do you plan to involve residents in the decision making process in our town? Can you identify any of the current issues with the deliberate disconnection between citizens and leadership?**

As a candidate for the at-large seat for county commissioner, I am committed to bridging the gap between our community and its leadership.

1. Regular Town Hall Meetings and Virtual Forums: I will host regular town hall meetings and virtual forums to ensure everyone has the opportunity to participate, regardless of their schedule or location.

2. Community Advisory Boards: I will listen and learn from community advisory boards to provide direct input on key issues and ensure all voices are heard.

3. Enhanced Communication: I will utilize a mix of traditional and digital communication channels to keep residents informed and engaged, including social media, newsletters, and local media.

4. Participatory Budgeting: I will implement participatory budgeting, allowing residents to have a direct say in how a portion of the county's budget is spent on community projects.

Current Issues and Solutions:

- Transparency: I will improve transparency by publishing detailed reports and explanations for decisions.
- Accessibility: I will make it easier for residents to reach me through open office hours and community events.
- Feedback: I will create effective feedback mechanisms to ensure resident input is considered and acted upon.

By addressing these issues and fostering a more inclusive environment, we can build a stronger, more connected community.

**2) What is your resume history of activism in our county? How many times have you come before the county commissioners identifying citizen issues?**

I am not an activist or a politician; I am a concerned citizen who decided to run for office to bring attention to important issues. Although I don't have a long history of formal activism, my commitment to our community is unwavering. My activism is that I am running for the County Commission.

Recently, I attended a special meeting on illegal immigration in Manatee County. I was so frustrated by the misinformation being spread that I chose to remain silent, letting their own words speak to their overreach. Additionally, I voiced my concerns at a meeting about the vulnerability of our utility systems to cyber threats, imagine the potential danger of disrupted water and electricity services. As an IT and cybersecurity subject

matter expert, I emphasize the importance of taking the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) advisory seriously.

I understand the challenges of running as a Democrat in Manatee County, but I believe in doing the right thing. I am dedicated to listening, learning, and, if given the opportunity, leading with integrity. I am here to fight for what is right, even when it's difficult.

3) How do you feel about the transportation options currently available in our county? Can all of our residents affordably get where they need to go? If not, what will you do to improve transportation in our city? Do we have citizens paying for transportation and not being offered through their mileage taxes?

Manatee County faces significant challenges when it comes to transportation. Having grown up in a country with a reliable public transportation system, I recognize the stark lack of such options here in Florida, particularly in our county. Many residents struggle to affordably get where they need to go, and our current system is not meeting their needs.

We must take advantage of opportunities like the Bipartisan Infrastructure Act, which provides funding to improve our infrastructure. Here are a few steps I plan to advocate for:

1. Expand Public Transportation: We need to invest in expanding our public transportation network, making it more reliable and accessible for all residents. This includes increasing bus routes and frequency.
2. Explore Future Options: While a light rail system might not be feasible immediately, we can start by studying its potential and planning for long-term solutions that may include light rail or other advanced transit options.
3. Smart Traffic Management Systems: Implementing smart traffic management systems can help reduce congestion and improve traffic flow, making commutes quicker and less stressful.
4. Infrastructure Improvements: Utilize funds from the Bipartisan infrastructure Act to build and improve transportation infrastructure without passing costs onto users. This includes better road maintenance, bike lanes, and pedestrian-friendly pathways.
5. Affordable Options: Ensure that transportation options remain affordable by subsidizing costs where necessary and providing discounts for low-income residents.
6. Community Engagement: Engage with the community to understand their specific transportation needs and preferences, ensuring that solutions are tailored to meet those needs.

It's crucial to have leaders who will make smart, forward-thinking decisions about how to utilize available resources to build a transportation system that works for everyone.

#### Current Use of Millage Funds:

Many residents feel that despite paying property taxes, which include allocations for transportation, they do not see adequate transportation services in return. As a candidate for county commissioner, I am committed to ensuring that these funds are used effectively to improve our transportation system.

Here's how I plan to address this issue:

1. **Transparency and Accountability:** I will ensure that the use of millage funds is transparent, with detailed reports on how the money is being spent on transportation projects.
2. **Efficient Use of Funds:** I will advocate for prioritizing transportation projects that have the most significant impact on our community, ensuring that our tax dollars are used effectively.
3. **Public Involvement:** I will engage residents in the budgeting process, allowing them to have a say in how transportation funds are allocated and spent.
4. **Regular Audits:** I will support regular audits of transportation spending to ensure accountability and identify areas for improvement.

By taking these steps, we can ensure that the millage funds are used to provide the transportation services our residents need and deserve

4) Some people in our community say that we have traffic problems. What do you think? How would you mitigate those concerns or change the situation?  
Traffic congestion is a significant problem in our community, and I share the frustration of many residents. Here are several steps I propose to mitigate these concerns and improve the situation:

1. **Smart Traffic Management Systems:** Implement advanced traffic management technologies to optimize traffic flow, reduce congestion, and improve commute times. This includes synchronized traffic signals and real-time traffic monitoring.
2. **Public Transportation Expansion:** Invest in expanding and improving our public transportation network. More reliable and frequent bus services, along with exploring future options like light rail, can reduce the number of cars on the road.

3. Infrastructure Improvements: Use funds from initiatives like the Bipartisan Jobs Act to upgrade our infrastructure. This includes widening key roads, improving intersections, and creating dedicated lanes for buses and bicycles.

4. Promote Alternative Transportation: Encourage the use of alternative transportation methods such as biking, walking, and carpooling. Developing safe and accessible bike lanes and pedestrian pathways will support this goal.

5. Community Involvement: Engage with the community to gather feedback and suggestions on traffic issues. Regular town hall meetings and surveys can help us understand specific problem areas and develop targeted solutions.

By taking a comprehensive and proactive approach, we can significantly improve traffic conditions in our community, making our roads safer and commutes more efficient for everyone.

5) If you could change one thing in our zoning code, what would it be and why?

If I could change one thing in our zoning code, it would be to strengthen protections for our agricultural areas to prevent further development. Preserving these lands is crucial for maintaining our local food supply, supporting the agricultural economy, and protecting the rural character of our community.

By focusing on higher-density mixed-use developments in already urbanized areas, we can accommodate growth without encroaching on our vital agricultural lands. This approach would also support public transportation expansion, reduce traffic congestion through smart traffic management systems, and create more affordable housing options.

Additionally, leveraging funds from initiatives like the Bipartisan Jobs Act, we can improve our infrastructure and invest in smart growth strategies that benefit all residents. This ensures a balanced approach to development, safeguarding our agricultural heritage while addressing current needs and future growth.

Preserving agricultural areas and promoting sustainable urban development go hand in hand in building a stronger, more resilient Manatee County.

6) How do you feel about breaking through our FDAB (Future Development Area Boundary) 19 years prematurely with no other boundaries to control our future growth?

I am strongly opposed to breaking through our Future Development Area Boundary (FDAB). Doing so without other boundaries to control our growth would lead to unchecked urban sprawl, the loss of valuable agricultural land, and increased strain on our infrastructure. Preserving our agricultural areas is essential for maintaining our local food supply and supporting the rural character of our community.

Recent legislative changes, such as Senate Bill 540 signed by Governor DeSantis, make it more difficult for citizens to challenge changes to the comprehensive plan. This bill allows the prevailing party in such challenges to recover attorney fees, which can discourage residents from speaking out against inappropriate developments due to the risk of incurring high legal costs if they lose.

Additionally, House Bill 359 restricts local governments from making their comprehensive plans stricter than the original, effectively giving too much control to the state and limiting our ability to enforce more stringent development controls and protect our community's interests.

These legislative changes significantly hinder our ability to manage growth responsibly and protect our community. The state is attempting to control local governance, which undermines our long-term planning strategies and local autonomy.

Instead of expanding outward, we should focus on smart growth strategies such as higher-density mixed-use developments in already urbanized areas. This approach promotes more sustainable development, reduces traffic congestion through smart traffic management systems, and supports the expansion of public transportation. Utilizing resources like the Biden Jobs Act, we can improve our existing infrastructure and invest in technologies that make our growth more manageable and efficient.

Maintaining the integrity of our comprehensive plan and FDAB is crucial for the long-term sustainability and quality of life in Manatee County.

7) If elected what is your position with Mosaic phosphate mining and have you seen the other side of this industry within the locally filmed documentary PhosFate?

I have seen the documentary PhosFate, and it deeply frustrates me that such environmental damage continues to occur. I understand the fear and impact firsthand, living less than a mile from Piney Point. On March 25, 2021, I received a text message to evacuate immediately because a stack holding toxic wastewater from phosphate mining was leaking. I envisioned a tsunami of toxic water flooding our neighborhood. Although this did not happen, over 200 million gallons of toxic water were pumped into Tampa Bay, leading to severe red tide events, dead fish washing ashore, and economic impacts on our community. Now, they are drilling to inject the wastewater underground, posing another environmental crisis.

Regarding Mosaic phosphate mining, I am deeply concerned about the environmental and health impacts on our communities. The situation at Piney Point is a stark reminder of the potential dangers of phosphate mining. We need stronger oversight and accountability to ensure that such incidents do not happen again.

While Mosaic is a powerful entity in our county and state, we must prioritize the health and safety of our residents and the environment. My approach includes:

1. Strict Enforcement of Environmental Regulations: Advocate for rigorous enforcement of existing environmental regulations and push for stronger protections where gaps exist.
2. Community Monitoring and Reporting: Establish independent community monitoring programs to report any violations or concerns related to phosphate mining operations.
3. Transparency and Accountability: Ensure that Mosaic and other companies are transparent about their operations and are held accountable for any environmental damage they cause.
4. Investment in Safe Alternatives: Encourage research and investment in safer and more sustainable alternatives to current phosphate mining practices.

By taking these steps, we can better protect our environment and community from the harmful effects of phosphate mining. It's essential to bring awareness to these issues without compromising property values, ensuring that companies like Mosaic are held responsible for their impact on nature and our community.

8) As a County Commissioner what would you do to ensure the protection and safety of our County staff whistleblowers? We have witnessed several whistleblowers come forward and the issues swept under the rug with even more favoritism implemented.

To effectively address the protection and safety of whistleblowers within our county staff, it is essential to implement robust measures and demonstrate a commitment to transparency and accountability.

#### 1. Implement Strong Whistleblower Protections:

- Advocate for policies that protect whistleblowers from retaliation, ensuring their anonymity and job security. The Florida Public Whistleblower Act provides a framework, but stricter local policies can reinforce these protections.

#### 2. Independent Oversight:

- Establish an independent oversight body to handle whistleblower reports impartially. This body would be separate from county leadership to prevent conflicts of interest and ensure unbiased investigations.

#### 3. Anonymous Reporting Mechanisms:

- Create secure channels for anonymous reporting, such as hotlines and online portals managed by third-party services. This ensures that employees can report misconduct without fear of being identified or retaliated against.

#### 4. Transparency and Accountability:

- Mandate that all whistleblower complaints are thoroughly investigated, and the findings are publicly reported while safeguarding the whistleblower's identity. This approach helps build public trust and demonstrates a commitment to addressing issues transparently.

#### 5. Training and Awareness:

- Provide regular training sessions for county employees on their rights and the whistleblower reporting process. Emphasize the importance of reporting wrongdoing and the protections available to support them.

#### 6. Zero Tolerance for Retaliation:

- Enforce a strict zero-tolerance policy for retaliation against whistleblowers. Any retaliation should result in significant disciplinary actions, up to and including termination of those responsible.

#### 7. Support Systems:

- Offer support services, such as counseling and legal assistance, for whistleblowers to help them navigate the process and manage any personal or professional challenges.

These measures, informed by the Myakka situation where whistleblower Tonya Shaw faced retaliation despite exposing corruption within the county's code enforcement department, are crucial. Shaw's experience highlights the need for stronger protections and a cultural shift within the county to support whistleblowers and ensure accountability.

By implementing these steps, we can foster a culture of integrity and accountability within our county government, ensuring that whistleblowers are protected and their concerns are appropriately addressed.

Our current body of County Commissioners maintain voting records of serving special interests, What will your voting record look like over 4 years of service?

If elected, my voting record over four years will reflect a steadfast commitment to the residents of Manatee County, not special interests. I will prioritize transparency, accountability, and the well-being of our community in every decision I make. Here's what you can expect from my voting record:

1. Community First: I will always prioritize the needs and interests of our residents over special interests, ensuring that my decisions benefit the community as a whole.

2. Transparency: I will advocate for open and transparent decision-making processes, making it easy for residents to see how and why decisions are made. My votes will be accompanied by clear explanations of my reasoning.

3. Sustainable Development: I will support smart growth strategies that promote sustainable development, protect our environment, and preserve our agricultural lands.

4. Public Safety and Health: I will vote to enhance public safety, improve infrastructure physical and digital and ensure access to quality healthcare and services for all residents.

5. Economic Opportunity: I will focus on creating economic opportunities that benefit everyone, including supporting local businesses, workforce development, and equitable growth.

6. Accountability: I will hold myself and others accountable, ensuring that all actions taken by the County Commission are in the best interests of our community. I will lead by example

7. Engagement: I will actively engage with residents, seeking their input and feedback on key issues to ensure that my votes reflect the will of the people I serve.

However, it takes more than one person with this mindset to create meaningful change. The community should advocate for each Democratic candidate to be elected to the Board of County Commissioners. The current commissioners are all Republicans, which does not provide the balance needed to make decisions that truly reflect our diverse community. People should think deeply about voting in their best interests rather than along party lines. We are in this mess because of greed, and one person alone cannot bring the change needed. The entire BCC needs an overhaul by electing new options that represent the true interests of the community.

My goal is to build a stronger, more connected, and more resilient Manatee County by making decisions that are ethical, informed, and aligned with the long-term well-being of our community.

10) Without collecting 100% impact fees, what will you do to ensure that the citizens are not left to pick up the tab for this new big government, crumbling infrastructure and consequential environmental issues that come with this type of favoritism? How are these conservative principles?

Ensuring our community thrives without placing undue financial burdens on our citizens is a top priority.

1. Maximize Federal Funding: We finally have the Bipartisan Infrastructure Act, which provides significant opportunities for infrastructure investment. By thoroughly investigating all options, we can secure federal funds to benefit our community. This includes environmental projects, digital infrastructure, and physical infrastructure improvements. We must ensure that these funds are spent correctly and transparently, focusing on community needs rather than personal gains.

2. Accountability and Transparency: I will push for strict accountability measures to ensure that funds are used effectively and ethically. This includes regular audits and public reporting on how funds are allocated and spent, preventing misuse and ensuring every dollar benefits the community.



3. Public-Private Partnerships: Explore partnerships with private entities to fund and implement infrastructure projects. These collaborations can leverage private investment to supplement public funding, ensuring that necessary projects are completed without overburdening taxpayers.

4. Innovative Financing Solutions: Look into alternative financing solutions such as municipal bonds or state and federal grants specifically targeted for infrastructure development. This can provide additional funding without solely relying on impact fees.

5. Efficient Use of Resources: Advocate for the efficient use of existing resources. This includes prioritizing projects that offer the greatest benefit to the community and ensuring that maintenance of current infrastructure is not neglected.

6. Community Involvement: Engage the community in planning and decision-making processes to ensure that projects meet real needs and priorities. This grassroots approach ensures that investments reflect the interests of the residents, not special interests.

We must advocate for using available federal resources for the benefit of our community, regardless of political differences.

If we elect leaders who prioritize the community's best interests, we can effectively utilize available funds and address our infrastructure needs without leaving future generations to bear the burden. It's about making practical, ethical decisions that enhance our community's quality of life and ensure long-term sustainability.

While I am not a conservative, many of these principles align with conservative values, such as fiscal responsibility, transparency, and community focus. My grandfather, who owned several grocery stores, taught me that compassion and profitability can go hand in hand. He always showed that doing the right thing for the community and being successful in business are not mutually exclusive.

Bonus question for our candidates and incumbents

11) Have you ever been to the mansion of Carlos Beruff, Pat Neal or any other rockstar developers in our area?

I've never been to the mansions of Carlos Beruff, Pat Neal, or any other rockstar developers in our area. In fact, I don't think I'd ever make the guest list! But that's okay – I prefer spending my time with regular folks, working on solutions that benefit everyone in our community, not just the VIPs.