

Tampa City Council 2023 survey Creative Loafing Tampa Bay (non-incumbent)

Creative Loafing Tampa Bay is beginning to put its voting guide together and would love to get some feedback from you since you're on the ballot. This is a pretty basic form asking you about your background and how you'd vote on certain issues. It includes multiple choice questions and lots of room for you to explain answers in your own words. We'll definitely be reaching back out with follow ups after your initial response. We'd like to hear back from by before Jan. 23 if possible. These responses are all on the record.

Email *

sonjabrookins@gmail.com

Your race is non-partisan, but do you care to disclose your party affiliation?

- ☒ Democrat
- ☐ Republican
- ☐ Independent
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Prefer not disclose

Could you give us your quick elevator pitch? *

My name is Dr. Sonja Brookins, I was born and raised right here in Tampa Bay, and I want to serve as your city CouncilWoman. This election is bigger than me. This is about all of us and about doing what's best for our community. It's evident that our City Council is not reflective of our community. I'm running to change that narrative. I'm running to effectuate true change. I'm running because I am not a puppet - i have no problem standing against what's wrong and standing up for the people and what's right.

Please feel free to give us a more robust explanation of your background and why you want to be a city councilperson.

I've had the honor of serving this community as your Soil & Water Conservation Supervisor for the past two years and was able to accomplish SO much in a position that so few knew about prior to me sitting in that seat. My vision for the city would create economic opportunity for all the residents as we give the power back to the residents.

What makes you more qualified than the incumbent or any of your other opponents in the race. We'd like to read specific examples and reasoning.

My education and experience of traveling as a military wife has afforded me many opportunities to learn what works as well as what does not work. I am a solution driven leader who believes in listening with intent to move the trajectory forward. I have been in the community before the election while working on various community efforts and I will continue to be in the community after this election.

What do you call someone from Tampa?

- ☐ Tampeño
- ☒ Tampanian
- ☐ Other:

When it comes to the municipal flag of Tampa, do you stan or would you change it?

- ☐ STAN 100%
- ☐ Reluctantly Stan
- ☒ Needs a redesign

Tampa City Council recently rejected a Harbour Island hotel proposal after loud outcry from residents. As promised, the developer is suing the city for \$6.6 million. How would you have voted on the proposal, given all the context of neighborhood feedback and Tampa's trajectory as an emerging metro?

The residents voices were heard and I would agree with the vote.

Hindsight is 20/20 at this point, but go back to the appointment of former police chief Mary O'Connor. Given the community feedback on Jane Castor's pick, would you have voted to confirm O'Connor for the position? Feel free to explain why or why not.

I would oppose the vote because the community was denied an opportunity to voice their input.

Staying on the topic of police. The Tampa PBA recently sent out a candidate survey that ruffled feathers, in part, because it asked about a candidate's support or affiliation with Black Live Matter, but skipped any questions about affiliations with white supremacist groups. From the dais, one city councilman asked the PBA to apologize. How would you have reacted to the survey, had you received it?

I received the survey and there needs to be a change, don't focus on one group without addressing the Jan 6 incident. I was offended and I felt more voices should speak out against these acts.

Would you have voted in support of expanded oversight capability—including subpoena power—for Tampa's police Citizens Review Board? Please feel free to expand on your yes or no answer.

No answer

A year ago, Tampa's Hanna Avenue 'City Center' project faced scrutiny after the public learned that its budget was increased from roughly \$6 million to \$108 million without a public RFP. Did that process trouble you? How would you have handled it if you were on council?

Yes, it did trouble me because the power of the resident's voices were not considered, make the budget more transparent and allow it to reflect the influx of citizens relocating to the city.

At a March 2022 press conference, Tampa Mayor Jane Castor told reporters that rent stabilization and rent control aren't viable solutions to the housing crisis because the measures would ["kill development."](#) What is your stance on rent control, and how would you have voted last August when council was talked out of putting the issue of rent control on last November's ballot?

We need rent stabilization to help to address our housing concerns, it is not the solution for all but can contribute to the solutions.

Last Halloween, as council was set to vote on charter amendments, Mayor Jane Castor said, "For more than fifty years, mayors and city councils have worked together for the betterment of our city under its current form of government. This system has served us well and resulted in a stronger, more prosperous city – and today, more than 90 percent of Tampa residents say they trust their city government."

That echoes a sentiment from former Tampa Mayor Bob Buckhorn, but we'd argue that the last 50 years has led to an inflection point where maybe the city should consider not abolishing the strong mayor form of government, but giving council more tools to check the mayor's power.

Especially now after Castor's recent vetoes, what's your take on charter amendments, specifically those that would give council more avenues to balance power in city hall?

The council made the right decision on overturning the amendments.

If a vote to relocate the Christopher Columbus statue came up, how would you vote? Please answer yes or no, and feel free to explain why.

Relocate the statue because of a negative narrative that is not reflective of residents.

Last September, council members all expressed either doubt or complete disapproval of the administration's PURE wastewater plans as a whole. The Tampa Bay Times recently confirmed environmentalists' concerns and reported that it was actually Tampa lobbyists who helped craft the legislation that will require Tampa to find some other use for the wastewater by 2032. What's your take on the situation? Would you have pushed on with PURE as it was presented?

I would oppose PURE until further studies are completed to address the impact on the residents.

Please feel free to freestyle and tell us about anything that you didn't get to address above.

This form was created inside of Creative Loafing Tampa.

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