

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 you before Jan. 23 if possible. These responses are all on the record.

Email *

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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? *

In my 8 years on Council, I was a strong and consistent leader protecting neighborhoods. I want to represent the citizens again so we can expand transit and housing options and make our city a more just and equitable place to live.

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

Besides my 8 years on Council, I have been in the insurance agency for about 30 years. I currently on the board of Feeding Tampa Bay and the Lions Eye Institute, one of the largest eye banks in the country where I serve as the Treasurer. In addition I was selected for the Thomas Jefferson Hall of Fame in 2020 and have served on the USF Public Administration program where I received my Masters degree.

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.

I've been a leader on issues as diverse as transportation, human trafficking, street safety, and a strong voice in making our city government more efficient and cost effective. No other person in this race has the ability to be proactive and responsive to the needs of our citizens within each of the 70 plus neighborhoods in Tampa.

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?

As you know, land use hearings are quasi-judicial, essentially a legal case. Decisions on land use must meet the standard of the comprehensive plan and the zoning code. I can't opine about this because I do not have the staff report, have not seen the evidence presented by the applicant and the the opposing side.

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.

No. Although she was an Assistant Chief before her retirement, I didn't think she met the high standard we should expect from our Chief. The Mayor can appoint who she wants, but the Council should be deliberative as to whether the applicant is best for our City. The Council made a mistake agreeing to appoint her. She, in my opinion, was the least qualified and with a checkered past not deserving of the highest law officer in the city.

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 would have told the PBA in the questionnaire that the question was inappropriate and would have urged them to remove it.

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.

The Council already has investigative powers AND subpoena power in the Charter but we are even restricted by State law in compelling police officers to answer subpoenas. We have to be very mindful on what we are trying to accomplish; assuring that police officers do their jobs effectively and fairly for ALL citizens.

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 if you were on council?

I would have asked many more questions concerning this project. Council passed it unanimously but never dug into the reasons for the development in the first place. Considering the incredible shortfall in workforce housing throughout the City, I would have asked the Administration to justify this large of an expenditure.

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?

Usually rent control needs willing partners within the county and, especially state government. We have neither in Tampa and it I would not have been supportive of doing something that won't have it's intended effect; to provide more affordable and obtainable housing.

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?

I did not have issue with the amendments passed by the Council. If anyone, a citizen, a Council member or the Mayor, believes it is bad public policy, they should campaign against those amendments. I supported and pushed forward the change in the Charter to allow a review by citizens appointed by the Council and Mayor. In addition, I supported other Charter amendments, such as allowing City Council to ask for audits independent of the Mayor. I think by having Charter review and allowing for some changes periodically doesn't take away power and actually give some options to make the City a better functioning government.

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.

I have not really looked too deeply into this issue.

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?

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

There was an issue with space for the question on PURE. Here is my answer:

No. The Administration has not been able to find a way to release 50 million gallons highly treated wastewater safely. They are too many unanswered questions about the process and whether more dangerous contaminants. In addition, there should have been more transparency with the Council and the citizens about the lobbying process going forward. We can't try and use the Legislature to force our hands on doing the best for the environment.

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