

2020 Mayoral Debate 10.7.20

Thank you for joining the ECA General Meeting.

Due to time constraints we were unable to present all questions to the candidates.

Please see the responses below from Mayor Dean Trantalis and Kenneth Cooper.

(Questions were summarized and shortened for clarity)

- **Can you address the affordable housing issues in Fort Lauderdale, especially for seniors. There are many new projects that people with a fixed income cannot afford.**

- **Mr. Trantalis:** We must do all we can as a city to ensure an available supply of affordable housing so that people of all incomes can live here. Nurses, teachers, restaurant servers, bank tellers, seniors on fixed incomes and recent graduates should not be priced out of making Fort Lauderdale their home.

Over the past three years, the city has made tremendous strides in expanding housing opportunities for those who earn middle and lower incomes. We have approved numerous affordable housing projects, often encouraging their construction with the use of community redevelopment money and incentives allowed in our land-use regulations.

The city's own Housing Authority is expanding its portfolio, including doubling Suncrest Court, building Sailboat Bend II for low-income seniors and planning the 113-unit Poinciana Crossing project. We are working with the Housing Authority to build up to 500 units of affordable housing on city-owned property in Broadview Park.

The city has offered incentives for construction of Six13 with 142 workforce units, The Adderley with 45 affordable housing units and a project at Mount Hermon that includes 100 affordable senior units. We also approved Village View, a 100-unit affordable housing development for seniors.

- **Mr. Cooper:** Thank you again so much for having us last night and for giving us a platform to meet some of our city's community members. Here are the answers to the questions that I think clearly could be answered by Ken. Affordable housing must be "carefully" implemented gradually with due regard for the infrastructure's impact. There must be specific guidelines on a person's ability to pay.

- **Are developers being asked to pay infrastructure fees to help with costs?** (directed at Mr. Trantalis)
 - **Mr. Trantalis:** Yes. Developers are required to pay impact fees on any new project so the city can make needed improvements to the water and sewer systems. It was this commission that adjusted the impacts fees to ensure developers are indeed paying their fair share. The new rate structure went into effect last December and is the first adjustment made in 15 years. And, they will be paying the highest amount permitted under state law.
- **What is each candidate's plan for the future of our police force?**
 - **Mr. Trantalis:** We are proud of the men and women who work hard each day to keep our community safe. Our crime rate per capita is the lowest it's been since 1972, and we are taking steps to ensure this trend continues.

We recently employed new technology so we can respond faster when a gun is fired in our community and so we can locate its source. We are building the new police station that voters approved so the police force has a headquarters equipped for their 21st century needs rather than remaining in cramped, out-dated confines that could not withstand a major hurricane.

The death of George Floyd in Minneapolis shocked the world, and we are moving to address the difficult issues surrounding race and law enforcement. We can do better at ensuring everyone is treated fairly and equally with full transparency.

The city manager is bringing new leadership to the Police Department. We want the Citizen Police Review Board to have more oversight ability regarding complaints. Our body camera program became fully operational in the past year. And, critical policies are being updated, such as a duty for officers to intervene if they see a colleague behaving badly.

- **Mr. Cooper:** I disagree with defunding the police in favor of continuously training officers in the correct use of force. We should require new training of all officers in de-escalation techniques. Enforce by-standing officers to intervene if another officer violates any policies and body cameras on every police officer that CANNOT be turned off.

- **Why did we not take the first few months of quarantine to make infrastructure repairs?** *(directed at Mr. Trantalis)*

- **Mr. Trantalis:** COVID-19 never stopped our work on our infrastructure programs. We have been rapidly moving forward with infrastructure work across the city during COVID-19.

We have some 150 projects underway to bring our water and sewer systems up to date. The work to replace the 50-year-old sewer main in our city's core has been moving at a particularly rapid pace and has reached the half-way mark.

Here are just some examples:

New lines have been installed in Victoria Park and Coral Ridge. Sewers in Dorsey Riverbend and Flagler Village are being rehabilitated. Work is underway on Las Olas. A new lift station has been built downtown to address growth. Improvements are nearing completion in Bermuda Riviera and Victoria Park.

Construction of a nine-acre stormwater retention area in the River Oaks community is nearing completion as part of the climate resiliency push underway. A new seawall on Isle of Palms has been completed, and another on Cordova Road is underway.

- **How would you test water quality and announce it? How often?**

- **Mr. Trantalis:** The City Commission earmarked money in the budget for the new fiscal year to start regular testing of waterway cleanliness. Our hope is to do the testing at critical locations regularly, as often as twice a month, and post the results conveniently for the public to review. We recognize that this information is valuable to boaters, fishermen and water sport enthusiasts
- **Mr. Cooper:** The water needs to be tested accurately. There are rumors that the city took its water test from the most favorable spots in our city. Private persons have hired water companies that tested the water samples from established protocols. We believe the city's water test may not be accurate. If elected Mayor, I would make absolutely sure the water is being tested monthly and accurately.

- **Why have the roads in downtown Fort Lauderdale not been repaired? It is a challenge driving down Broward each day.** *(directed at Mr. Trantalis)*
 - **Mr. Trantalis:** Many downtown streets are the responsibility of other governments — the county, the state or the federal government. Broward Blvd. is a county road. As a city, we cannot control their maintenance schedules but can only urge them to take action when we see issues like you do. On city streets, we have a pavement schedule citywide that uses a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers analysis to take politics out of paving and prioritize those streets each year that the analysis recommends. This year, we plan to resurface nine miles of city streets.