

## **Bald Head Island Questions**

As the gateway to the island, I'm sure you agree the marina is a critical part of the island's infrastructure. The Marina Association is responsible for marina maintenance activities, including dredging. The Town Council recently voted not to become a member of the Marina Association or contribute funding to marina maintenance activities, despite the substantial tax revenue received from boat slip owners. What do you believe the role of the Village should be in terms of marina maintenance going forward?

Local media covered the case two years ago of a Bald Head Island Public Safety Officer expressing sexist and racist views in his social media postings. We understand the officer is still employed.

What has the Village done – and what should it do – to assure that everyone living on, working on, or visiting the island, particularly women and minorities, feel welcome visiting the island and can be sure that Public Safety officers will enforce the laws without bias? What limits on public speech and opinion are appropriate for officers of the law?

What is the MOST IMPORTANT issue that the BHI Village Council has and will deal with in representing our islanders and WHY?

The lead headline for the September 13, 2023 issue of the STATE PORT PILOT was: "OKI resolution states: **Time to end Doshier Tax.**" Bald Head Island is in the Smithville Township with Oak Island; should Bald Head Island vote to rescind the Doshier Hospital Tax? Explain your reasoning why this ad valorem tax should be continued or discontinued.

What part should the Village Council play in bringing closure to the sale of the BHI Transportation system to Sharpvue?

The Mayor and Mayor Pro Tem serve as two of the members on the BHITA, and appoint a third member. Is there still a role for the BHITA once the transportation system is sold to Sharpvue?

The Village Council passed a 21.5% tax increase for FY 2023-24, but deferred maintenance for several critical infrastructure updates/expansions. Do you anticipate that there will need to be another large tax increase--perhaps 10% or more--in FY2024-2025 to fund the deferred maintenance?

What are some creative/out of the box solutions to address issues facing Bald Head Island that the Village Council could undertake?

What concrete steps could the Village Council undertake to improve transparency and communication with all Villagers?

The original vision of the island was to have a maximum of 25% of homes be rental homes. Although the exact number of rental houses is unknown, it is estimated that perhaps as many as 60% of houses are now rentals, which has created a series of problems for the Village. Is there anything that the Village Council can do to lower the percentage of rental homes?

The island has a theme of "living in harmony with nature," but what part does the Village Council play in maintaining that theme? It appears that the Village has largely defaulted that responsibility to the Conservancy and to homeowners who recently raised money to develop a now beloved Pollinator Garden. The Village only minimally maintains the two parks that are in their jurisdiction and did a clear cut of land for the new Contractor Building. What can you do as a Councilor to improve the Village's commitment to living in harmony with nature?

Is the Village prepared for a major storm or nuclear accident or fire such as happened at Lahaina, Hawai'i? What has the Village neglected to do that was outlined in the post-fire report of Lighthouse Landing and the Task Force Report after Hurricane Florence in 2018? How would villagers be evacuated and what procedure would be used for residents to return to their homes?

The bathroom facilities for guests to the island, particularly "day trippers," are minimal, and yet the Council elected not to do anything about this problem in the FY 2023-24 budget. Would you address this in the FY24-25 budget; if so, at what level and where would you suggest bathrooms be placed? Also, the number of carts parked at various beach accesses has escalated tremendously in the past few years. What should be done about parking at beach accesses?

Vision for BHI: In their biography statements, several candidates indicate they believe that island growth must be carefully managed to ensure BHI maintains its unique character.

- How do you describe that character?
- What about growth threatens that character?

Legal actions – Ferry: The ferry system's future is at risk and is full of uncertainty right now.

- What are your thoughts about Council actions to date?
- What are your intentions for Council actions going forward?
- Should legal actions be pursued at length to challenge the Sharp Vue purchase at homeowner expense?
- Is there hope that there will be substantive benefit to homeowners of Village legal action commensurate with legal expenses and deferral of Sharp Vue being able to more actively manage and improve the system?

Ferry ticket prices: BHI Limited has stated ticket increases (and infrastructure improvements) are long overdue and have been suspended pending legal arguments.

Is a hold on fare increases merited or should the purportedly overdue increases take place as soon as legally possible? Why?

Commercial and residential growth: After reviewing the commercial growth study, I believe that Village codes do not adequately constrain and guide development to limit congestion and maintain safety, architecture aesthetics consistent with the BHA residential codes and leafy, forested views that "tuck" buildings into the natural landscape and screen parking.

How should Council gather feedback to inform their actions to manage growth and from whom?

How should this feedback be evaluated to ensure it comes from well-informed sources (rather than uninformed, "emotional" sources)? For example, feedback includes a signed statement that the most recent plans have been read.

Candidates indicated the wants and needs of all stakeholders “deserve...consideration and attention” and should be “balanced.” What do “consideration”, “attention” and “balance” mean to you and how will you achieve these? For example, varying the weight of survey answers depending on the respondent.

South Beach (East) renourishment:

- Some candidates indicated that the Council should take action to mitigate “ongoing chronic erosion” in front of the Shoals Club. The last lecture I heard from our renourishment scholarly expert indicated the sands near the point cannot be projected, don’t attend to the dredging efforts of the river and shift primarily in response to storms. The erosion in the area has only been happening in the past few years...for 20 years prior, the point area grew and ebbed with a lake appearing and disappearing.
- What sources / science will you tap to guide spending in this ‘episodic’ area?

Waste Water expansion: I understand various budget and construction options are being explored as we reach waste water treatment capacity.

- What are the critical trade-offs with these options?
- What approach (general or specific) do you advocate? For example, would businesses and homeowners be assessed equally? Would you advocate special assessments to fully fund the project up front? Loans? Bonds? Phased implementation?

Finances and taxes: I have been associated with several organizations which, in the face of inflation and other pressures, have held assessments stable for years. They’ve used innovation, fortitude and rising expectations on staff performance to accomplish this. Are you a candidate who has the creativity and fortitude to commit to serving in a similar manner? If yes, what specific ideas do you have to serve in this way?

Mr. Thomas provided evidence of his service with the Brunswick Electric Membership Corporation which showed “disciplined planning” such that they “haven’t increased member’s rates in year and haven’t increased borrowing to fund exponential growth.” What similar experience in disciplined and creative planning have you demonstrated? What personal attributes or leadership style do you possess that made this experience successful?

Ms. White indicates she does “NOT want to increase property taxes but will vote to do so when necessary to provide the infrastructure and services that owners have come to expect.”

Off-shore wind turbines:

- What is your understanding of this industry and its timing in terms of how it would impact BHI?
- How would you propose the Council engage to influence any negative impacts to BHI and when would this engagement be necessary?

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What is your view of what “owners have come to expect”? Is that minimum needed to serve the island while not increasing taxes? .... continuingly increasing improvements such that tax rates also continuingly increase? .... necessary repairs for safety with additional upgrades when a tax surplus exists?

My question for all candidates at the upcoming BHI Village Council Candidate Forum is: Why are we continuing to pay legal fees to oppose the sale of the ferry system?

If elected, would your votes always be based on the wishes of the majority of citizens.

If elected, would you support stricter tree protection ordinances both during construction and after being purchased/occupied.

What is your position on the Beach Management plans.

If elected, would you agree to recuse yourself from and vote where there is a perceived conflict of interest.

If elected, what would your first action item be.

Thank you for considering these questions and for all you do to make a difference in our community. I would like to learn the following from the candidates:

1. Given that the Village has already spent \$2 million over the last couple of years in legal fees over the ferry and have budgeted a contingency fund approaching \$1 million for this year for legal fees in addition to normal budgeted legal fees, my question is how much more are the candidates willing to spend? Is this truly a bottomless pit, or is there a choke point where we will stop spending taxpayer dollars in continuing to delay the ferry system sale?
2. What ideas do you have for soliciting significant, meaningful input from non-resident property owners (who constitute the MAJORITY of the tax base)?