



Associated Builders and Contractors of North Florida
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Associated Builders and Contractors of North Florida Local Government Candidate Questionnaire

Purpose: This questionnaire provides candidates with background information on key construction, workforce, and business issues impacting the Associated Builders and Contractors of North Florida (ABC). Candidates are asked to review the information below and respond to the questions that follow.

Candidate Information

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Candidate Questions

Building Departments & Permitting

Local governments enforce the Florida Building Code through Building Departments and may charge reasonable fees limited to the actual cost of providing services. Recently, some Building Departments have required copies of private construction contracts prior to issuing permits and have used contract values or material choices to influence permit and inspection fees. ABC believes private contract information is proprietary and oversight costs should not increase based on material value.

- 1. Would you support a public records exemption to protect proprietary construction contract information? Please explain.**

Under current Florida law, local governments must enforce the Florida Building Code through their

building departments and may charge fees that are reasonable and limited to the actual cost of providing permitting and inspection services. Fee schedules should reflect the level of service required—not the value of a private contract or the cost of materials. Florida law also already addresses the contract-copy issue directly. Local governments may not require an applicant to submit a private construction contract, copies of the contract, or related documents (including breakdowns such as material costs, labor, overhead, or profit) as a condition of applying for or receiving a building permit.

My position is straightforward: I support protecting proprietary private construction contract information, and I would support a public records exemption if it is narrowly tailored. That means it should protect confidential, proprietary terms in purely private projects while still preserving transparency and accountability—especially where public dollars are involved—and it must not interfere with law enforcement, auditors, or legitimate government oversight. As County Commissioner, I will also advocate for clear, consistent permitting practices: enforce the cost-based fee requirements in state law and ensure our local process does not use contract values or material choices to drive up fees beyond the actual cost of service.

2. Do you support basing permit and inspection fees on factors other than construction cost (e.g., square footage, building type, or complexity)?

My position is yes: I support fee structures that rely on objective, workload-based factors (square footage, occupancy/building type, and complexity) so long as fees remain limited to the actual cost of providing the service and are not used as a backdoor tax. Florida law allows local governments to adopt a schedule of reasonable fees, but it requires that fee revenue be used solely for code enforcement responsibilities and remain tied to cost-of-service principles.

At the same time, I do not support basing fees on proprietary private contract values, profit margins, or material selections as a way to increase fees. Florida law also makes clear that local governments may not require private construction contracts (or related cost documents) as a condition of receiving a permit.

Importantly, I do not believe the current fee structure is broken—and I’m not interested in “fixing” what isn’t broken. My focus is on keeping the system fair, predictable, and efficient, and only making adjustments when there is clear evidence they are needed to reflect actual service demands and documented costs.

As County Commissioner, I would support a fee approach that is:

- Cost-based and transparent, with documentation showing how fees relate to staffing, plan review, inspections, and administrative costs;
- Workload-driven, using objective measures that reflect the time and expertise required; and
- Accountable, including regular review and reporting before significant fee changes.

In short, I support a practical, cost-based approach that protects taxpayers and permit applicants alike—while keeping our local system stable and avoiding unnecessary changes.

Payment on Public Projects

Florida operates under a pay-when-paid framework. While public owners (such as school districts, cities, counties) are subject to payment timelines, delays are common and create significant cash-flow challenges for contractors, subcontractors, and suppliers.

3. If elected, would you work with ABC to ensure timely payment to contractors and subcontractors on public projects?

Florida already has prompt payment requirements for public owners, including cities and counties. In general, public entities are required to make payment within specified timelines after receiving a proper invoice, and late payments can accrue interest. The law also requires timely written notice when an invoice is rejected or disputed, rather than allowing delays without explanation. My position is clear: public projects should not become a financing mechanism on the backs of small businesses. I support prompt, predictable payment practices that ensure undisputed work is paid on time and that payments flow efficiently through the contracting chain to subcontractors and suppliers. As County Commissioner, I would support practical, accountability-focused steps that we can implement locally, including:

- Strengthening internal County procedures to ensure invoices are processed and approved on time;
- Requiring disputes to be specific and itemized so that undisputed portions are paid promptly;
- Ensuring County contracts include clear pass-through expectations so subcontractors and suppliers are paid quickly once the prime contractor is paid for undisputed work; and
- Preventing retainage from being used as an unnecessary cash-management tool by keeping it within lawful limits and supporting fair release when work is completed and accepted.

We can protect taxpayers while also protecting the local businesses that build and maintain our community. On-time payment is not only fair—it reduces project risk, stabilizes the workforce, and helps keep bid prices competitive.

Skilled Workforce

Florida faces a severe skilled labor shortage due to retirements, workforce aging, economic downturns, and pandemic-related impacts. Nearly half of the construction workforce is over age 45. Industry-education partnerships and early exposure to the trades are critical to sustaining the workforce pipeline.

4. Do you believe construction trade education has a place in K-12 public schools, such as "Shop Class" for building trades? How would you support industry-education partnerships?

My position is clear: Yes—construction trade education absolutely has a place in K-12 public schools, including modern "shop class" options aligned with safety, employability, and industry-recognized credentials. College is not the only pathway to success, and our schools should help students discover high-demand careers earlier—especially in the skilled trades.

As County Commissioner, I would support strong industry-education partnerships in practical, accountable ways, including:

- Expanding career exploration and early exposure through jobsite tours, guest instructors, skills demonstrations, and career fairs beginning in middle school;
- Strengthening CTE advisory partnerships so local contractors, subcontractors, and suppliers help keep training aligned with real workforce needs;
- Promoting work-based learning opportunities such as internships, pre-apprenticeships, and structured placements that emphasize safety and job readiness;
- Supporting credential-aligned pathways so students can graduate with a real head start through industry certifications and registered apprenticeship connections; and
- Coordinating locally with workforce partners to align training resources, scholarships, and placement efforts with the needs of our local economy.

In short, I support bringing the building trades back into the mainstream of K–12 career education, and I support partnerships that lead to measurable outcomes—credentials earned, apprenticeships started, and local jobs filled.

Local Preference Policies

Local procurement preferences allow local contractors to match or come within a percentage of the lowest bid. ABC opposes these policies, citing reduced competition, increased taxpayer costs, and limited access to qualified talent.

5. Do you support local preference policies on public construction projects? Why or why not?

Escambia County currently has a “local price match option” in its purchasing code for formal sealed bids. In general terms, if the lowest responsive bid is submitted by a non-local firm and a qualified local firm is within a defined percentage, the County may offer the local firm the opportunity to match the lowest bid. Florida’s public works bidding statute generally requires award to the lowest responsive, responsible bidder, and it also provides that it does not preempt local preference ordinances.

My position is this: **I do not support broad price-preference policies that reduce competition and risk increasing costs for taxpayers.** While I want local contractors to succeed and win work here, I believe the best way to protect taxpayers and the integrity of the procurement process is to keep bidding open, competitive, and merit-based.

At the same time, I strongly support **pro-local strategies that strengthen local participation without manipulating bid outcomes**, including:

- Improving pre-bid outreach and bidder education so local firms are better positioned to compete;
- Writing bid scopes clearly and packaging projects in ways that encourage participation by qualified small and mid-sized local contractors;
- Using fair, transparent performance-based qualifications (safety, capacity, past performance) applied consistently to all bidders; and
- Ensuring prompt, predictable payment practices on County projects so local subcontractors and suppliers are not forced to finance delays.

In short, I want Escambia County to be a place where local contractors thrive—through fair opportunity and strong competition—not through policies that can discourage bidders and raise costs over time.

Contracting & Hiring Mandates

Some local governments require contractors on public projects to hire from predetermined labor pools or meet specific hiring quotas, often with extensive reporting requirements. ABC opposes these mandates, which limit employer flexibility and increase administrative burden.

6. Do you support hiring mandates for public construction projects? Please explain.

My position is clear: I do not support hiring mandates or quotas on public construction projects. These requirements reduce employer flexibility, can shrink the pool of qualified bidders, and tend to increase administrative burden and project costs—costs that ultimately fall on taxpayers and delay delivery of needed public improvements.

It is also important to note that Florida law already limits certain local hiring preferences when a public construction solicitation is funded at least 50% by state-appropriated funds. In those cases, a county or municipality may not use local rules that prefer a contractor based on hiring employees or subcontractors from within a particular local jurisdiction.

Rather than mandates, I support workforce solutions that expand opportunity without distorting procurement. As County Commissioner, I would push for:

- Voluntary, performance-based workforce efforts (apprenticeship participation, skills training, and safety programs) that contractors can meet in different ways;
- Industry-education partnerships that grow the pipeline—coordinating with CareerSource Florida and local training providers to connect residents to in-demand trades;
- Streamlined reporting limited to what is genuinely necessary for accountability, not paperwork for paperwork's sake; and
- Fair, open competition so Escambia County gets the best value and the most qualified teams on our public projects.

If a specific project is tied to a grant program that legally requires certain hiring documentation, the County should comply—but we should avoid local mandates and quotas as a standard practice and keep any required reporting as simple and limited as possible.

Economic & Business Climate

Local governments play a vital role in shaping economic growth through zoning, permitting, procurement, and regulatory processes. Streamlined systems and business-friendly policies support job creation and community growth.

7. How would you describe your approach to fostering a strong local business and economic climate?

My approach is straightforward: make it easier to start, operate, expand, and invest in Escambia County—while maintaining clear, consistent standards that protect public health, safety, and neighborhoods. Economic growth happens when government is predictable, responsive, and focused on results rather than red tape.

First, I support streamlining permitting and inspections with a customer-service mindset—clear checklists, reliable timelines, and effective online tools—so builders and business owners can plan with confidence and avoid unnecessary delays. Escambia County already provides Building Services support for permitting and inspections, including online scheduling for inspections, and I will advocate for continuous improvement of these systems.

Second, I support a pro-competition procurement culture that is fair, transparent, and designed to deliver best value for taxpayers. That includes clear scopes of work, consistent evaluation standards, and prompt payment practices that keep small businesses and subcontractors healthy and competitive.

Third, I believe economic development must focus on retaining and expanding existing employers while also recruiting quality new opportunities. Escambia County’s Economic Development efforts and local incentive tools should be used responsibly, with clear performance measures and accountability for job creation and community benefit.

Finally, I will prioritize workforce development partnerships that connect residents to in-demand careers and help local employers fill positions. That means coordinating with organizations like CareerSource Escarosa and regional economic development partners to align training and placement with real employer needs.

In short, my goal is a county government that treats job creators with respect, sets clear rules, moves promptly, and measures success by outcomes—more local jobs, more investment, and a stronger tax base without raising the burden on families.

8. What policies would you support to encourage private-sector growth and job creation?

My approach is to keep local government focused on what it can control: predictable rules, faster turnaround, fair competition, and workforce readiness—so employers can invest with confidence and families can find good jobs here.

First, I would support faster, more predictable permitting and inspections. That includes clearer checklists, firm timelines, better online services, and a customer-service mindset so businesses aren’t losing time and money waiting on avoidable delays. Escambia County already provides Building Services permitting support, and I would push for continuous improvement and measurable service standards.

Second, I would support zoning and land-use policies that encourage responsible growth. When a project fits the comprehensive plan, the process should be straightforward and timely. I support reducing unnecessary hurdles for expansions, redevelopment, and job-producing projects—while still protecting neighborhoods and public safety.

Third, I would support fair, open, competitive procurement—paired with prompt payment. Lower costs come from strong competition and clear scopes of work. I also support procurement and payment practices that keep small businesses and subcontractors healthy, because that strengthens our local economy and keeps bid prices competitive over time.

Fourth, I would support performance-based incentives with real accountability. Escambia County already has local tools—such as its economic development cash incentive program and other incentive mechanisms—to help attract or expand employers. I support using incentives only when they are transparent, performance-based, and tied to measurable outcomes like job creation and capital investment.

