

LCREC Candidate Questions
Responses from Chris Berardi

Why are you running for this office?

My motivation for seeking to serve as your representative for Cape Coral City Council, District #7 is simple. I love living in Cape Coral, and believe I can make a difference. Our community is at a crossroads, and a time when our government will be making decisions that will not only affect our current residents, but also generations to come. For many of these issues, we will have only one opportunity to "Get It Right".

In my brief time as an appointed Councilmember I have demonstrated that I am a fiscal conservative and a strong supporter of economic development.

(Incumbent Question)

What are 3 significant things you have accomplished in your term(s) in office?
If re-elected, what will be the main 3 things you will focus on?

Although I am technically considered the "incumbent" in this race, I have only been a member of our city council for 8 months. During this short time, however, I believe that I have accomplished some notable goals. These three accomplishments were:

- 1) Passing the first budget in Cape Coral's history that was lower than the previous year's budget.
- 2) Passing an ordinance that will reduce the length of time to mow/improve overgrown properties cited by our code enforcement department from an average of 52 days to an average of 19 days.
- 3) Approving the Cape Villagio development. This will be the first mixed use development constructed in the Community Redevelopment Area that incorporates the new zoning and use requirements of the CRA and will begin the transformation of Cape Coral's downtown.

I have many goals for the next four years, however the top three are; increasing economic development, reducing the cost of government and beautifying our city.

(Challenger Question)

What are 3 significant things you have accomplished in the private sector?
If elected, what will be the main 3 things you will focus on?

Describe what being fiscally conservative means to you. Do you consider yourself fiscally conservative?

I do consider myself to be a fiscal conservative. My definition would be that a fiscal conservative believes in the principles of **Lower Taxes, Less Spending and Smaller Government**. It is the belief that government cannot and should not be all things to all people. We must separate needs from desires and clarify which are the responsibility of

the government. We must realize that government does little as effectively or efficiently as the private sector. As a party, we must get back to the core issue of fiscal responsibility if we have any hope of keeping/regaining control at the federal level.

How do you suggest Government live within its means? Please offer specifics?

Specific examples of living within our means can be found in this year's city budget. Our city is facing difficult financial times and our spending habits must be adjusted accordingly. In this year's budget, our police department extended the life cycle of its vehicles for a cost savings of almost 1 million dollars. Positions were eliminated from the Department of Community Development due to the decline in permits issued in Cape Coral. Finally, all Capital improvement projects that were not already started have been delayed (eliminated in some cases) until economic conditions improve.

What is your definition of Smart Growth? How do you think it can be achieved given the conflicting pressures here in southwest Florida?

Smart growth is a term used to describe the art of balancing environmental and urban sprawl concerns with the need for development due to Florida's increasing population. Some ways of addressing this issue in Cape Coral are through Commercial Activity Centers and the Development of the CRA. Both of these concepts will create mixed use developments. Mixed use creates a situation where residents can live, work, dine and shop in a "neighborhood" environment. This reduces the sprawl effect that is so detrimental to our state.

In short, increasing density in some areas, while limiting density in more environmentally sensitive areas is the best way to foster "Smart Growth".

Recently the News Press reported that from 2002 to 2006, population rose 23% yet property taxes rose 83%. So taxes rose about 4 times the rate of population growth. Please explain how you will address run-away tax growth?

In the 8 months that I have been a member of the Cape Coral City Council, I have made reducing the cost of government, lowering taxes, and cutting spending my top issues.

I voted for, and was an integral part of passing the first budget in city history that was lower than the previous year's budget.

I have twice sponsored ordinances that would have; capped spending, carried over surplus funds from one budget year to the next, and limited the amount of our undesignated reserve fund.

I have voted against every rate and fee increase that has come before council, and next week I will be voting to reduce the cost of the Utility Expansion Program by over \$2,000 per home.

