

# Citizens for Ponce Inlet NEWSLETTER



*Improving the Quality of Life in the Town of Ponce Inlet*



## Citizens for Ponce Inlet (C4Pi)

For over 36 years, Citizens for Ponce Inlet (C4Pi) has been committed to keeping our community informed about Town Council candidates. Through our C4Pi Newsletters and annual Candidates Forum at the Ponce Inlet Community Center, we provide essential insights to empower voters.

We are delighted to announce the return of our Special Election Edition. This initiative underscores our dedication to providing valuable services to our community members.

Your ongoing support of the Citizens for Ponce Inlet Organization is greatly appreciated.

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**Editor's Note: All of the information and answers to the questions were printed exactly as submitted by the candidates.**

# Ponce Inlet 2024 Candidates Forum

In the upcoming 2024 election, one Town Council seat is contested.

## **Seat 4 Candidates:**

Jair Kessler

Joe Villanella

Bill Milano is unopposed for **Seat 2**.

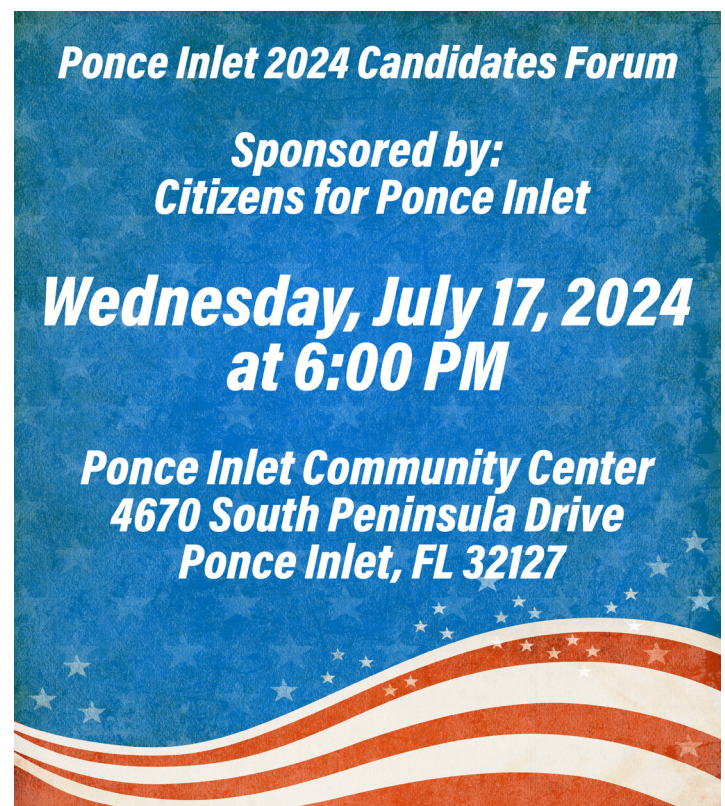
Following the introduction, the candidates for Seat 4 in alphabetical order will each have three minutes to introduce themselves and highlight key issues for voters to consider.

Subsequently, candidates for Seat 4 will be allotted three minutes to address the following questions:

1. Volunteerism has long been considered the “heart and soul” of Ponce Inlet. Please describe your involvement in our community and how you have worked to make our community closer.
2. The council recently moved its meeting time to 2:00 p.m., resulting in increased attendance and citizen participation. What are your ideas on how we can further increase citizen involvement?

Lastly, candidates for Seat 4 will field questions from the audience, with each candidate allotted two minutes to respond. Audience members are invited to submit their questions upon arrival using provided forms, ensuring each question is signed by its submitter. Questions will be directed to the candidates as specified.

Following the Q&A session, candidates will have two minutes each for closing remarks.



After the formal session, voters will have the opportunity to meet with the candidates, ask questions, and enjoy light refreshments.

# Live Streaming of the Candidates Forum

Citizens for Ponce Inlet will be live streaming the Candidates Forum.

If you are unable to attend in person live streaming will begin a few minutes prior to the forum.

Be sure to tune in on the website at [www.c4pi.org](http://www.c4pi.org) on

**Wednesday, July 17, 2024 at 6:00 PM**



Vote By Mail Requests are available by calling the Supervisor of Elections Office at (386)-736-5930 or send your request by email to [VoteByMail@volusia.org](mailto:VoteByMail@volusia.org)

The deadline to request your mail-in ballot is August 8th.

## PONCE INLET ELECTION 2024

Each candidate was invited to provide a photo, contact information, and a statement of 450 words or less. They will be presented in alphabetical order by seat number. Additionally, the candidates for contested Seat 4 were given the opportunity to respond to three questions each one limited to 300 words or less for the newsletter as follows:

- 1. What is the most significant problem you believe will be faced by the town in the next five years, and what is your proposal to address it?**
- 2. Over time, the subject of short-term rentals has been a recurring topic. What is your position on the current rental policy in Ponce Inlet?**
- 3. What skills and leadership qualities do you bring to the table that would make you the best candidate for this seat?**

# Meet the Candidates

## *Seat 2 - Bill Milano*

### Bill Milano

4779 S. Atlantic Avenue C-1  
Ponce Inlet, FL 32127

### Phone Number:

(386) 795-2452

### Email Address:

[bradyspa@yahoo.com](mailto:bradyspa@yahoo.com)



Since 2012 I have been a member of the Ponce Inlet town council Previous to my time on the council I was on the planning board for over 2 years.

Patty and I moved to Ponce and became full time residents in 2002. We both spend 38 years as educators in Broward County. I was a mathematics teacher, a guidance counselor and director, an assistant principal and a high school principal for 16 years. I, also, worked in the Human Resources and Facilities department. I developed the educational specifications for the educational facilities that were to be built in Broward County beginning in the early 2000's.

I hold a Bachelor's degree in Mathematics Education, a Master in Guidance and Counseling, and an Educational Specialist in Administration, Leadership and Counseling.

I have been honored for my service to my school and community. I was the Principal of the Year in the United States and was, also, honored as the Principal of the Year in Florida by the International Thespians and the Florida Thespian Societies.

I was selected by Broward Community College now Broward State college as the Distinguished Alumnus of the year for my community service

Three separate occasions I was selected by the Florida Athletic Association to be the meet referee for the Florida State Swimming High School Championships. For fourteen years I presented at the Broward County College Night "The College bound athletic and national collegiate athletic association scholarship program". I, also, developed a county program called "At Risk and the Invisible Student." The program assisted students that had to drop out of high school because of family situations. They were given the opportunity to participate in their home school activities and earn a high school diploma from their school.

I am currently the HOA President of our townhouse development and have been a board member of the First Step Homeless Shelter the past 6 years and Treasurer for the last 5.

Being part of the Ponce Inlet Town Council has been a privilege. I feel I have continued to work on "keeping our small town lifestyle where people feel safe" our small town qualities, respecting all citizens and listening to their concerns, and making decisions on what is best for our community.

As a High School Principal my decisions were based on what was right for the student and the community. I have tried to bring those beliefs to our town and my time on the council.

# Meet the Candidates

## Seat 4 - *Jair Kessler*

Jair Kessler

Visit my Facebook page  
@kessler.for.ponce.inlet  
.town.council



Why I am running for Town Council Member.

I first came to Ponce Inlet in 2005 and fell in love with the place. I became a part time resident in 2008 and moved here full-time in 2020. I have visited many coastal towns, yet this is the first place I could imagine calling home. What was it that hooked me on 'Paradise' as Ponce is known? I loved the quiet of the town. I loved that Ponce doesn't try to be a commercial magnet for visitors, but instead allows its nature and beaches to speak for themselves. I love the way locals look out for one another. This small town is a haven for those of us who cherish privacy and a close-knit community feel.

I have always been aware of the very diverse groups that visit and live in Ponce Inlet, and that also made me want to live here. From retirees to snowbirds, from boaters to bikers, from gardeners to golfers, from surfers to swimmers, from fishermen to furry friend lovers, our residents are a diverse group of ages and peoples. I want to be a voice for all of them.

I know that one of the major issues for this community is an increase in property taxes and in-service rates. I too share

this concern! One of my major goals is to question budget items and investigate where we can make savings to maintain our current rates. The most important thing as a council member is to be accountable and transparent to our citizens.

Ponce Inlet was badly hurt after the two major hurricanes of 2022. I was impressed by the way the town kept its citizens informed before, during and after the hurricanes; and how it dealt with the challenges of storm water drainage. As a Town Council Member, another of my major goals is to support environmental steps to shore up our town's future by focusing on the following:

- Support and encourage local green businesses, such as the Farmers Market of which I am a founder and manager. Not only does the Farmers Market support local farms and businesses, but it is a gathering place for locals thereby building community.
- Continue to work closely with Volusia County and champion beach sustainability, and particularly the cultivation of our native dune plants.
- Prioritize the Ponce Inlet Watershed Master Plan, which addresses the issues affecting our water resource goals. The plan is a tool to assess and provide management for a geographically defined drained land area.
- Initiate a Green Streets Program to reduce and control the flow of stormwater directly at the source, from the nearby roadway, by collecting runoff in the intentionally designed swales so that it can be slowed down and absorbed before transmitted to the larger stormwater management system.

# PONCE INLET CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE 2024

## Jair Kessler - SEAT 4

**1. What is the most significant problem you believe will be faced by the town in the next five years, and what is your proposal to address it?**

### **Coastal flooding and the funds necessary for mitigation.**

Sea levels in Florida are predicted to rise 10 to 12 inches on average in the next 30 years (according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration), so significant flooding is a real risk in the next 5 years. It is hard to imagine how a small community like ours can keep property taxes down and prevent land development, and, at the same time create more revenues. Our mayor recently attended the American Flood Coalition Conference in D.C. and reported that there are grants to be obtained from both the federal and state levels for this very problem. We need to expand revenue sources beyond the property tax, and this is a positive initiative I support.

I also support setting up a future reserve fund dedicated for disaster relief. These monies would not be used for any regular budget items such as purchases, services or operational expenses.

**2. Over time, the subject of short-term rentals has been a recurring topic. What is your position on the current rental policy in Ponce Inlet?**

I fully support the existing short-term rental policy and the addition of new personnel since December 2021 to enforce it.

I am very glad that we do not allow short-term rentals which would bring a constant turnover in overnight visitors. Some towns have had to implement drastic solutions to protect their residents and beaches from spring break visitors or large groups of visitors who just want to party. Our policy helps preserve the special character of Ponce.

### **3. What skills and leadership qualities do you bring to the table that would make you the best candidate for this seat?**

In my professional career as a Top Administrator at New York University, one of my major positions was to support NYU faculty and doctoral candidates conducting research abroad at NYU Academic Institutes (Athens, Berlin, Florence, London, Madrid, Paris, Prague, Shanghai and Tel Aviv). I managed these Institutes and was also responsible for an annual budget of several million dollars. I am well experienced in ensuring fiscal discipline and responsible budgetary policies.

On a purely voluntary basis, I am one of the founders and managers of the Ponce inlet Farmers Market. I also volunteer my service to the Cultural Services, Historic Preservation and Tree Advisory Board. I additionally volunteer and work at the Marine Science Center, where I am surrounded by dedicated colleagues who teach me something new every day. I am committed to continuing to serve this community and feel that my qualifications, skills and experience in this position will benefit Ponce Inlet.



# Meet the Candidates

## *Seat 4 - Joe Villanella*

**Joe Villanella**

46 Jana Drive  
Ponce Inlet, FL 32127

**Phone Number:**

(386) 788-4617



It has been an honor and a privilege to serve on the Ponce Inlet Town Council these past two years, which included multiple historic achievements and accomplishments. Working with my fellow Councilmembers, we have brought in more than \$10 million dollars in appropriations and grant funding, hired a lobbyist and worked with grant writers to bring in our fair share of Florida's \$116 billion dollar budget. We know that every dollar we bring in is a dollar in savings for our taxpayers.

Our relationships at the County, State and Federal Levels have never been stronger. Due to our foresight and careful planning, Ponce Inlet is now regarded amongst Florida municipalities as a leader in the field of resilience. My campaign theme "Focused On Our Future" is not just an aspirational catch phrase. We are hard at work setting practical, realistic goals and proving we can deliver for the community. I hope to build on my track record and to continue my work with our staff, our Mayor, and my fellow Councilmembers and to add to all we have accomplished these past two years. I sincerely believe that the best is yet to come.

My vision for Ponce Inlet is to retain the charm, character and serene lifestyle that attracted so many of us to this community.

### **About Me:**

I have lived in Ponce Inlet since 1991. Married to my beloved wife Diana, we are the parents of one daughter and one son. We have been blessed with four wonderful grandchildren. I attended college in New York and majored in Business Administration, with Business Law and Psychology.

### **My Professional Career:**

I enjoyed a long and successful career with a public, multinational Office Products Corporation. During my tenure with the company, I managed a \$37,000,000 budget and almost 300 employees.

### **Transforming Seagull Landing:**

In 2006, I was persuaded by several owners to run for a seat on our Homeowners Association (HOA) Board of Directors. At our first meeting I was selected to be President of the Sea Gull Landing HOA, a position I held for 13 years. I am still involved with the HOA and provide advice and assistance as needed.

### **My Role as Chair of the Code Enforcement Board and TPO:**

Out of a desire to become more involved with the future of our community, I joined the Code Enforcement Board in 2010. I was appointed by my fellow board members as their Chair in 2011, a position I held for 11 years until I was elected to Council in 2022.

# PONCE INLET CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE 2024

## Joe Villanella - SEAT 4

### **1. What is the most significant problem you believe will be faced by the town in the next five years, and what is your proposal to address it?**

As we move forward together as a community, we are united in our desire to build a safe, secure, and resilient Ponce Inlet. Having laid all the groundwork, we are entering a new chapter in our collective history. We completed our Vulnerability Assessment, our Watershed Master Plan and are working on our Adaptation Action Plan. In doing so, we have surveyed every square foot of this Town. We know exactly what we need to do. What we need now is funding.

Since the time I was sworn in during November of 2022, I have worked with my fellow Councilmembers as a team to bring in more than ten million dollars of appropriations and grant funding to Ponce Inlet. For the first time in our history, we have a lobbyist and are working with grant writers. The total budget of the State of Florida is more than 116 billion dollars. The time has come to claim our fair share. Our staff, our Mayor and our entire Council have been working tirelessly to achieve these goals. Every dollar we bring in is a dollar saved for our residents.

So in answer to the question, the biggest challenge before us right now is funding. Funding for resiliency, public safety and infrastructure. Ponce Inlet's reputation for natural beauty and a casual lifestyle has made us not just a residential haven, but a tourism destination. Our community strongly supports our Police, Firefighters, Public Works and our entire Town Staff. We want to make sure they have the resources, equipment and training they need to protect us and perform their duties.

Our voices are being heard from Tallahassee to Washington DC. Along with my fellow Councilmembers, I hope to continue to bring back as many of your tax dollars as we can and always remain "Focused On Our Future."

### **2. Over time, the subject of short-term rentals has been a recurring topic. What is your position on the current rental policy in Ponce Inlet?**

As stated in our visioning statement, Ponce Inlet is a residential haven. People live here to enjoy a tranquil and quiet life in our beautiful natural environment by the sea. More than 15 years ago, our Council had the foresight and good judgement to draft and adopt codes and ordinances that would protect us from the proliferation of short-term rentals (STRs) that would eventually bring dramatic changes to communities throughout the State of Florida. STRs can be very profitable and as you might expect, our legislators in Tallahassee

are under constant pressure from lobbyists to liberalize these laws and open up as many Air BNBs and VRBOs as possible. While Ponce Inlet continues to be protected for the time being, should Council liberalize changes to the codes pertaining to STRs, we will immediately lose our “grandfather” status. Any Councilmember (or any candidate) that supports changing these ordinances is (in reality) advocating for an adverse and irreversible change to our way of life. I stand with those who want to protect and preserve the Ponce Inlet we call home. Accordingly, I stand firmly against any changes to our STR regulations.

As many of you know, we do have several condominium properties in Town that are zoned for and do allow weekly rentals within their bylaws. To protect our grandfather status, these properties will continue to operate as they currently do. I understand that communities such as New Smyrna Beach and Daytona Beach Shores allow STRs. I do not believe our residents want the character and charm of our Town to undergo the kind of change that would come from liberalizing our STR regulations. The Council has heard from more than enough property owners about late night parties, noise, trash and traffic when the residence next door to them is used as a STR.

### **3. What skills and leadership qualities do you bring to the table that would make you the best candidate for this seat?**

With our cumulative property value now at an all-time high and the legislative environment growing more complex each year, our residents have come to rely on experienced Councilmembers that are Focused on Our Future. I have lived in Ponce Inlet since 1991. 2024 marks my 14th year of involvement in our Town Government and our Community.

Prior to being elected in November of 2022, I served as the Chair of our Code Enforcement Board for 11 years. In 2015 I was appointed to represent Ponce Inlet on the River-to-Sea Transportation Planning Organization’s (TPO’s) Citizens Action Committee. I also served simultaneously on the TPO Bicycle and Pedestrian Action Committee for 3 years. I believe in giving back to our community and am actively involved in several Ministries at Epiphany Catholic Church in Port Orange. I’ve recently accepted a position on the Board of Directors of The Family Renew Foundation, dedicated to helping young families in need.

I have drawn upon all the training and procedural experience I gained during my years as the Code Board Chair. When residents come before us for variances, lien abatements and a list of other Quasi-Judicial proceedings, they have an expectation that the Councilmembers hearing their cases are well versed in our codes and ordinances. Those of us who have served on both the Code and Planning Boards received ongoing training on how to evaluate the applications that come before us, which reduces the potential cost of future litigation.

Our residents are united in their desire to protect and preserve all that is special about Ponce Inlet. Our Land Use and Development Codes and our ordinances are the tools that Council uses to codify these protections. I am well versed and experienced with the use and application of these critical tools.



## *"Our Mission is to Educate and Preserve"*

The Citizens For Ponce Inlet Website compiles and organizes all of the relevant and critical information you need into one single, easy to navigate information portal. It's like having the entire town at your fingertips. With just 1-2 clicks on your smartphone or desktop, you can access:

*Join  
Today!*

- Monthly Police & Fire Activity Reports
- How Your Council & Board Members Voted
- Agendas & Minutes for All Meetings
- Extensive Library of Past Meetings
- Participate in our Surveys
- Live Streaming
- News Alerts
- Town News & Events
- Campaign Reports
- Quarterly Newsletters

Ponce Inlet's most informed citizens turn to C4Pi.org to obtain the information they need to be informed on town business, town events and town department activity.

Membership is free. Get informed. Join today.

***Promoting and Improving the Quality of Life in the Town of Ponce Inlet***

**info@C4Pi.org**

**www.C4Pi.org**

We are a non-profit, all volunteer organization that has been serving the community since 1980.

If you have found this printed Election Edition helpful, please consider supporting our efforts by making a donation.

Donations may be made directly on the C4Pi.org website or by mailing a check made payable to:

**Citizens for Ponce Inlet, Inc.  
4670 S. Peninsula Drive  
Ponce Inlet, FL 32127**

If you are not already a member, please join us so that you will receive all future information. It's free.