



Candidate Profile - City Commission

Name Sara Roberts McCarley

Office Seeking Lakeland City Commission SW District C

Do you currently reside in the district?

Years lived in Lakeland? 22 total, 18 consecutively

Campaign Address POBox 2591
Lakeland, FL, 33806

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Campaign Website sararobertsmccarley.com

Party Affiliation Republican

Education
Bachelor of Science, Mass Commuications, Florida Southern College
Post-graduate work, Public Administration, Univeristy of Central Florida

Occupation Non-profit Executive

Employer City of Lakeland, Commissioner

Have you attended a Public Leadership Institute/Political Leadership Institute (hosted by a Chamber of Commerce or Economic Development Council)?

Have you ever run for office before?

a. If yes, what office? Lakeland City Commission SW District C

b. Did you win?

Describe your civic involvement:
Harrison School for the Arts Parents Association
Harrison Philanthropy Committee
Harrison Advisory Board

First United Methodist Church Altar Guild
Lakeland Area Cotillion Council
Lakeland High School Lacrosse Boosters
Randy Roberts Foundation
Davenport Historical Society
Junior League of Gretaer Lakeland Sustaining Advisor

List any Boards on which you serve, including positions of leadership

Bonnet Springs Park, Arts & Culture Chair
Mayors Council on the Arts
Lakeland Vision, Education Chair & Community Unity Committee
Polk Transportation Planning Organization
Lakeland Area Mass Transit/Citrus Connection, Chair
Randy Roberts Foundation, Founder/Chair
HSA, President Elect
Tourism Development, Arts, Culture, Heritage Committee
PlasmaSaves.org

Describe your political involvement:

Through my work in global, state and local non-profit agencies, I have assisted with lobbying efforts for funding and awareness throughout my career. Part of my DNA is in civic engagement which can lead to political involvement. My parents both served as council members and my father as Mayor of Davenport. Then when my late husband died, I started the Randy Roberts Foundation. Our mission is to cultivate Florida's future leaders through public service, civic engagement and scholarships. That work has heightened my engagement with political officials and the processes locally, statewide and federally. Finally, as the former Executive Director for Polk Vision, I worked as a support to the Board of County Commission, and all 17 municipalities throughout Polk. All of these activities are peripheral to political involvement, but provide hands on experience with both officials and policies. In 2018, I decided to run in the special election for the Lakeland City Commission to serve the community that I so deeply love.

Why are you running for office?

Lakeland is my home and the community in which I am raising my family. I believe this is the best city in Florida and want to be on the frontline of how we handle growth in our rapidly changing landscape. I want to ensure that our community is safe. And, I want Lakeland to continue to be a place where companies big and small, can build a foundation and thrive. Since elected in 2019, I have worked to bring transparency to city government and to break down archaic systems that hinder how we serve residents and businesses. I also want a return to common sense leadership that is not polarizing, but finds the best solutions to the issues we face now and may face in the future.

What do you consider to be the top three (3) issues facing the City (listing in order of importance)? If elected, when would you plan to address these issues and hope to see them accomplished?

I.
Public Safety. We have a great LPD and Fire Department. We need to support their efforts and make sure they have the staff and tools they need to keep us all safe.

II.
Customer Service. This is an area where I receive the most feedback from the community. Continually, businesses and residents who are trying to follow the rules within permitting or other service areas, find that once one requirement is complete there are 5 more requirements. We have to provide all the requirements to our constituents up front so that they can better navigate the system. There seems to be a culture of no first, then a maybe, then a yes. It makes starting a business difficult, or building a house or renovating or even just adding something to your home like shutters. I understand our need for code and structure, but the prolonging of projects for homes or businesses costs the customer

time and expense.

III.

Infrastructure. With Florida receiving more and more new residents every day, Lakeland too is growing exponentially. We have to get our infrastructure to a place where it supports current needs but it can also handle the impacts of this rapid growth. We have to consider how to move people, goods and services better without necessarily building new roads. Even if we expanded roads to serve our needs now, those will never catch up to the growth we are experiencing. We need connectivity for people to use other modes of transportation.

Rank the following as you see their current order of importance for the City of Lakeland:

1: Reducing taxes and government spending

2: Improving public safety

3: Improving roads and infrastructure

4: Improving parks and recreational facilities

a. Other:

Customer Service

During an economic downturn, how should the Lakeland City Commission handle increasing and decreasing City tax revenues caused by the normal economic cycle? You may check more than one choice. Depending on your choice/choices, please state what you would cut and what you would increase.

Cut Spending

Depending on your choice/choices above, please state what you would cut and what you would increase.

Financial transparency is what we need at City Hall. Cutting spending is vital to all business and the community during an economic downturn. We all must tighten our belts and readjust our budgets when faced with uncertainty. I would love the opportunity to continue to serve on the commission to push this issue further. The city has to make some hard choices and I believe that this is imperative to building a bright future for Lakeland. We do not need to be spending the community's tax dollars if it is not warranted. RP Funding is an area where we must cut back. We need to consider other areas of spending too.

What do you believe are the main issues facing Lakeland's downtown urban core?

Connectivity, variety of retail and empty storefronts/buildings. We need to connect via multi-modal transportation and walkability. To make the core sustainable, we need a variety of daily retail options that people access. With Mirrorton, the Joinery, and downtown bringing in new residents and visitors, the ability to leave your car parked and walk around is crucial. We also need to insure that the infrastructure downtown is sufficient to support all types of businesses. Finally, there are still some buildings that are empty and in disrepair. We need the building owners to step up and consider selling or upgrading those buildings so that we have a cohesive core.

How are some ways government can encourage and support entrepreneurship?

Cutting red tape. We should make every effort to understand the vision of the entrepreneur so that we

can help navigate launching that business.

What is your opinion on government providing incentives to businesses?

Government's role is to provide public safety and infrastructure to its citizenry. I believe those are the cornerstones of leading a community. Without those two pillars, people and businesses will not be safe enough to build or invest in their idea. If the government has the opportunity to provide incentives, I think they should be working within our own government budget to see where supports can be made. In a time like we have now, I think the city partnering with the Chamber to push our ARPA funds to those who need it most is helpful.

How can the City of Lakeland help attract and retain a vibrant and talented workforce?

We need to create pipelines educationally to retain the talent we already have here in Lakeland. One of my efforts during this term, was to have year round internship opportunities at the city. We have so many colleges and universities here and those students need internships and we need people wanting to work in public service. It is a natural fit and one that has not occurred as often as it should. Additionally, as we build businesses and encourage entrepreneurs, we are attracting outside talent too. If we can continue to provide great quality of life, we as a city will attract and retain the workforce we need.

*This document will be published on the BusinessVoice Inc. website for public disclosure.