

EXHIBIT Q



2025 Gulfport Mayoral Elections: Meet the Candidates

January 23, 2025 by Rachel Rubin



Get to know the candidates for the 2025 Gulfport mayoral election.

Graphic via Pixabay

Every three years, Gulfport elects a new mayor. This year, incumbent Sam Henderson — who has been mayor since 2013 — faces two challengers: Karen Love, a frequent and outspoken attendee at the City's twice-monthly council meetings, and John Liccione, who lost his 2024 primary bid to Whitney Fox (who ran unsuccessfully against Anna Paulina Luna for Florida's 13th Congressional District).

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Here's what they told us.

Why did you choose to run for Gulfport mayor?



Sam Henderson hopes to hold his mayor seat in the 2025 Gulfport mayoral election.

Photo courtesy of Sam Henderson

Sam Henderson

My answer to this question today is the same as it was 16 years ago when I started my first term on Council. I want to protect, preserve, and strengthen Gulfport. This is a special place and small towns face big challenges. I have served you with integrity and compassion since 2009, and I am proud of what we have accomplished. We still have much to do, and I am dedicated to helping us navigate the difficulties we face. I don't claim to have all the answers, but I'll always be honest with you and I will not give up.

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John Liccione wants to be the next mayor of Gulfport.
Photo via John Liccione

John Liccione

I wish to place myself in the service of the citizens of Gulfport. I have an eclectic mix of technical and people skills that are tailor-made to address the challenges Gulfport is facing in the aftermath of two hurricanes, and the recent disclosures of the exploitation of vulnerabilities in our city's internal financial controls. Now is the time for serious reform. I bring an unmatched sense of urgency to this mission. I love Gulfport and have made it my home. After a long career in industry, it's time to give back. Not doing so was not an option.



Karen Love also hopes to become the next mayor of Gulfport.

Photo courtesy of Karen Love

Karen Love

I chose to run for office because there's currently a huge need for transparency, open communication, and problem solving. That is my background. I have attended most meetings for the last 12 years and have learned the strengths and weaknesses of the council. It is my intention to have presentations given routinely to the council and residents regarding options for recovery and restoration. None of us have all the answers but brainstorming together and working as a team can only advance our great city.

What are the three main focuses of your campaign?

JL: Prosperity, urgency, and recovery. My overarching focus at this stage of the campaign is to articulate my vision and methodology for turning around underperforming City departments, for measuring, re-imagining, and re-engineering a culture of continuous improvement in citizen and business services, and by capturing the federal, state, and county funding for the investments necessary to execute my recovery plan. Financially speaking, our City seems to be lacking in state-of-the-art internal financial controls, so detecting and eliminating fraud, waste, and abuse is high on my list of priorities.

KL: A transparent council working through collaboration with each other and the residents, attacking the real problems created by the hurricanes. Arranging, through the city manager, a sit-down with the Community Development department and listening to what they think they need to function in our residents best interest. The attitude needs to be "whatever it takes, let's solve this ongoing issue." Getting the marina up and running ASAP to start collecting revenue for our city.

Publisher's Note: The marina never stopped collecting slip rent, even while closed and the boat lifts were without power.

SH: Helping our residents, businesses, and property owners through the minefield of hurricane recovery is number one. Navigating the multiple agencies and convoluted processes to which we are beholden has been one of the greatest challenges this community has faced. I am committed to seeing us through this dark time. Secondly, we must maintain our level of service to residents. The autonomy of having our own city departments enables us to have a greater level of home rule and gives us the ability to better serve our people. Lastly, combatting gentrification and keeping Gulfport a vibrant, inclusive, Old-Florida community.

What sets you apart from your opponents?

KL: I've been a good listener during 12 years of meetings. When I recap the meetings on social media I have shown two things. First I've shown that I can condense a meeting of one-three hours into a five-minute read for the folks who haven't attended. Secondly, I have done these recaps keeping my opinions out of it. I have been a city advocate, civil servant, and fundraiser for Gulfport. I have a track record for getting things done in Gulfport. See community involvement on my [website](#).

Publisher's Note: Merriam-Webster defines "civil servant" as "a member of a civil service or a member of the administrative staff of an international agency." There is no evidence of Love serving as a civil servant in Gulfport.

SH: Experience. Since 2009 I have been finding creative solutions and charting a path forward for Gulfport. During my time in office, I have forged strong relationships with City staff and represented us beyond our municipal borders. Through times of crisis — such as the aftermath of the 2008 market crash, COVID, Deepwater Horizon, and multiple storms — I have learned the parameters of what this job requires and the pitfalls to avoid. I worked my way up, from the ordinance review committee to Mayor, and gained a unique and practical understanding of how this City works along the way.

Publisher's Note: Although Henderson was not in office in 2008, he did take office in 2009, when then-Governor Crist mandated 10% budget cuts for Florida municipalities.

Vote in the 2025 Gulfport Mayoral Election

The 2025 Gulfport city election will take place on Tuesday, March 11. The last day to register to vote is Monday, Feb. 10. To vote by mail, contact the Pinellas County Supervisor of Elections Office at [727-464-8683](tel:727-464-8683) or visit votepinellas.org. The last day to request a mail ballot is Feb. 27 at 5 p.m.

JL: I'm a proven change agent with leadership experience in military and civilian public service, as well as my success as a high-tech executive and businessman. I've specialized in disaster recovery systems, cybersecurity, cloud technology, and software. I've turned around struggling organizations, departments, and systems with a hands-on, results-driven approach. Gulfport needs leadership that can build trust, solve real problems, and create sustainable growth. I'm passionate about seeing Gulfport thrive as a community where everyone is valued and protected. I'm ready to use these skills to lead us toward a prosperous future.

What's right with Gulfport? What needs to be fixed?

JL: The ideal of Gulfport as a "hate-free zone" and all those who strive to walk that talk every day. Police, fire, and rescue are working reasonably well, but they need more resources.

We have a management problem needing urgent fixing: complacency, lack of urgency in certain functions, clinging to the status quo, [and] resistance to change. Our council cannot be rubber stamps for the resolutions the City Manager and the City Attorney present. Large dollar no-bid procurements in IT are placed on the consent agenda with missing contract dollar amounts. The inability to solve the permitting problem is a crisis.

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KL: Fortunately the majority of our City staff have a helpful attitude. My own interactions with Justin Shea, Tom Nicholls, and David Mather have shown them to have the “can do” spirit to solve whatever issue I have presented to them. The relationship between the City council and the City Manager needs to be fixed. As an observer for 12 years, I feel like the City Manager is not receiving direction from the council, as outlined in Gulfport’s founding charter, but instead is directing the city council. We need a more proactive City council.

SH: There are many things right with Gulfport. We are far better off than most cities in Florida of comparable size. We have a reasonable millage rate that has been steady for over a decade, we have the vast majority of our city services in-house, and while we have become a popular destination we manage to maintain the “soul” of Gulfport. Our biggest challenges, not unlike the rest of our nation, are environmental resiliency, divisive politics, rising costs on everything from groceries to homes, coping with the influence of outside money and surviving government over-reach from the state and federal level.

What is the biggest challenge that you believe the average Gulfport resident faces? What about the average business? How do you feel you can help with these issues?

SH: Aside from those devastated by the hurricane, the cost of living is a constant struggle for most of the people I know, from residents to business owners. Expenses increase faster than income: rent, healthcare, insurance, utilities. Many of these challenges are beyond our control at the local level, but I strive to ease this burden where we are able. Creating an environment conducive to business, keeping our utility and millage rates as competitive as possible, complying with federal requirements to protect our homeowner’s insurance rates, and keeping our service fees affordable to better serve our residents.

JL: Rising expenses for the basics, housing, insurance, utilities, compounded by the catastrophic losses just suffered in the hurricanes. We reduce household and business expenses by targeting the lowest hanging fruit first, such as capture federal funding for homeowner/business solar energy subsidies/rebates. These can reduce electricity bills drastically. The money is just sitting there in the treasury.

For businesses, lack of revenue growth and shrinking profits are putting some out of business. I’ll work to reduce government regulation strangulation. A mayor must be an effective ‘Promoter-in-Chief’ for Gulfport as a tourism destination and great place to live. I’ll deliver on that.

The Gabber Newspaper? We Go There

In 1968, our founder, George Brann, started *The Gabber Newspaper*, then called the *Gulfport Gabber*, to hold [Gulfport City Council](#) accountable. [Read more of our city council coverage](#), and [learn about our policies on reporting, fact-checking, and funding](#).

KL: Regarding the residents, it is the cost of housing and insurance costs. I feel like the City's attitude towards illegal short term rentals (STRs) and auxiliary dwelling units (ADUs) must change. The City council must put pressure on our State legislators to address insurance costs. Regarding businesses, this is where the newly formed Midtown Business Collective and established Gulfport Merchants Chamber need to take the lead in more promotion of our businesses outside of Gulfport. The City needs to be more helpful when new businesses apply for permits and produce a clear outline of code requirements all at one time.

Publisher's Note: [John Liccione](#) is currently suing The Gabber Newspaper for \$10 million.

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by Rachel Rubin

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