

KEY COLONY BEACH COMMISSION CANDIDATES TALK PROPERTY TAXES AND COMMUNITY BEAUTY

By **Alex Rickert** - August 14, 2026



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Leading up to the November general election, the Keys Weekly is committed to helping our community learn more about the candidates running to represent them. In the Gem of the Florida Keys this fall, two seated Key Colony Beach commissioners – Mayor Freddie Foster and commissioner Kirk Diehl – will square off with Lynne Benton for two open seats on the dais.

The following answers are printed exactly as submitted by candidates, with responses limited to 400 words.

QUESTIONS:



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1. Property tax reduction/elimination is arguably the most consequential referendum on November's ballot. Should the plan pass, what items do you believe can/should be cut from Key Colony Beach's budget and/or what new funding sources do you propose to compensate for lost property tax revenue?
2. How do you believe the City of Key Colony Beach can best balance between personal property rights and the high beautification standards the city is known for?

LYNNE BENTON

1. If the referendum passes, we need a thoughtful, not reactive, response. I would first look for inefficiencies, reduce discretionary and unnecessary spending, and protect public safety and essential infrastructure before considering new revenue sources. We should also learn from other communities and actively seek citizen input, using our citizen-driven Master Plan once developed, to prioritize spending. Regardless of available funding, every taxpayer dollar should be spent wisely.
2. Property rights and community standards should complement one another. A citizen-driven Master Plan can define our shared vision, followed by clear, consistently applied ordinances that protect both private property rights and the unique character of Key Colony Beach. Good governance doesn't force residents to choose between protecting property rights and preserving our community's character — we can and should do both.

KIRK DIEHL

1. If Florida's amendment 3 passes, because of our limited homestead properties in Key Colony Beach, it appears that the impact will be minimal to our City. However, our goal will be to continue to focus on the protection of our vital public safety and infrastructure while pursuing non-ad valorem revenues like tourist driven fees and state infrastructure grants.
2. By not imposing overreaching mandates on the residents who invest their hard earned money into our community. Maintaining this equilibrium ensures that KCB remains both breathtakingly beautiful and a welcoming, respectful place to live.

FREDDIE FOSTER



1. The amount of property tax itself is less concerning than the restrictions that may be placed on the use of ad valorem taxes. The city will need to carefully evaluate how essential services, including parks and recreation, can continue to be funded while maintaining fiscal responsibility.
2. To my knowledge, this has not been a significant issue. Key Colony Beach has maintained an attractive appearance while respecting property owners' rights. We should continue to apply our standards fairly and consistently to preserve the community's character.

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ALEX RICKERT



Alex Rickert made the perfectly natural career progression from dolphin trainer to newspaper editor in 2021 after freelancing for Keys Weekly while working full time at Dolphin Research Center. A resident of Marathon since 2015, he fell in love with the Florida Keys community by helping multiple organizations and friends rebuild in the wake of Hurricane Irma. An avid runner, actor, and spearfisherman, he spends as much of his time outside of work on or under the sea having civil disagreements with sharks.

