

Candidate name

Heather Herndon

1. Describe your previous experience with Alaska tourism. Do you have any prior employment in the industry?

Yes in my development experience, to which I'd rather use our own general contractors for the value-add above the downtown parking garage. A good portion of my Alaskan family runs tourism in downtown Ketchikan. I will add regalia back to downtown Anchorage. My business experience is across several industries, not just one, to which I've written business plans or private placements for funding.

2. Visit Anchorage ensures our community remains top-of-mind with visitors, meeting planners, and travel trade professionals. The work distinguishes our destination in a crowded, competitive landscape. Do you support Visit Anchorage's mission? Please explain your position.

It use to be better when I was a child here in Anchorage. There are a number of items I will be adding with revenue which to pay for it without creating new taxes. I have whole speaking engagements planned across industries and cultures should I become Mayor.

3. Anchorage's 12% room tax supports municipal services in three ways: one-third goes to the Municipality of Anchorage (MOA) general fund; one-third goes to support operations and pay the bond debt for the Anchorage Convention Centers; and one-third goes to the MOA's destination marketing contract (currently held by Visit Anchorage). Do you support the current three-way allocation of Anchorage room tax revenues? Please explain your position.

I support what the majority of Anchorage locals think is fair. Putting funds into the general fund as unrestricted has just lead to further increases of general debt. Not once has anyone in office pursued equity, as I would as Mayor. Is it fair? I'd only know once I had the internal general ledger and the CAFRs to drill down into the numbers not available to the public.

4. In Anchorage, the visitor economy is already a significant contributor. Prior to COVID, the industry generated \$297 million in visitor-related spending and \$38 million in municipal hotel and rental car taxes. In addition to the taxes paid by visitors, tourism created one in nine jobs locally. Do you support additional taxes levied on the tourism industry and/or customers? If yes, please explain the type of taxes you believe would be most appropriate, and also how you believe those funds would be spent. If no, please explain your position.

No. I do not support new taxes. Neither do the majority of Anchorage locals. My goal is to increase middle-class, which in turn creates jobs. Taxes are contrary to a healthy middle-class.

5. COVID has fundamentally affected leisure and convention travel, and a complete recovery may be several years away. How would you work to aid local businesses and individuals – particularly those reliant on tourism and travel – so that they can survive and flourish?

I advise a tax abatement in addition to finding out where our \$20 million dollar property tax refund disappeared once the prior Mayor took office. I understand that there are issues being held up because of certain political influence at each level. I would also add unique experience to upgrade Anchorage and perhaps achieve Michelin Star restaurant by employing one of Alaska's very own who has been to the White House and won several tv competitions in culinary arts.

6. Do you have priorities that would make the municipality a more travel-friendly destination? If yes, please provide details.

Anchorage seems easy enough to be transported around the city as a tourist. As a local, I'm considering engaging local engineers to perhaps decrease bus size and decrease wait times.

7. What do you see as the mayor's role in Anchorage's visitor industry, destination marketing, and community development?

As Mayor, I will be working on vacancies and bringing new non-overlap business to Anchorage in addition to pushing through local construction projects including Veterans Housing and homeless shelters. I will be upgrading the businesses we have, speaking conferences from some of the best minds in the world who have decades of experience in their fields or culture and bring back the spirit that is missing in Anchorage, setting it apart from just another American city.

8. What are your overall priorities for the municipality?

Ending mandates immediately and going right into construction to put an estimated 20,000 people back to work.

9. What do you see as the greatest threat to Anchorage's future success? What about the greatest opportunity for the community?

Lack of disposable income because of taxes. Dependent industries closing their doors because of new regulations. Job loss and becoming homeless. Crime rising because of all these factors. I have other industries to negotiate potentially coming to Anchorage, which is the greatest opportunity.

10. Would you be interested in a follow-up meeting with Visit Anchorage?

Yes. Any time you'd like to speak with me, I'll be there. As Mayor I have no intention of sitting in an office. I will be signing insurance waivers to be on any and every commercial property to speak with people directly. Quick meetings of consensus are the order of the day, not drug out committees.