



2026 Candidate Questionnaire

The Greater Naples Chamber is committed to fostering a strong local economy and enhancing the quality of life for all who live and work in Collier County.

As part of our commitment to civic engagement and informed decision-making, the Chamber invites candidates seeking public office to complete this questionnaire. Candidate responses will be shared on the Chamber's website, providing members and the broader community with the opportunity to learn more about each candidate's priorities, leadership philosophy and approach to issues impacting our local economy and community. The Chamber does not support or endorse candidates.

Questions are based on the Greater Naples Chamber's public policy priorities, which were developed through member engagement and approved by the Chamber's Board of Directors. **Please limit responses to 250 words per question.**

Please return the completed questionnaire to Stephanie Dixon at stephanie@napleschamber.org by 5 p.m. on June 30, 2026, for inclusion.

Candidate Information

Name:

Bill Poteet

Office Sought:

State Representative District 82

Occupation:

Realtor

Website:

Votebillpoteet.com

Biographical

1. Please provide a brief overview of your background, qualifications and reasons for seeking office?

I'm Bill Poteet, a long-time Naples resident, small business owner, and community leader running for the Florida House to bring practical, local experience to state government. As the owner-broker of a full-service real estate firm, I've spent decades working in residential and commercial real estate, property management, and development, dealing every day with the real-world impacts of Florida's housing, insurance, and growth policies. As a civic and community leader I have been engaged with schools, conservation, youth programs, political organizations, homelessness, professional business groups, transportation, taxation, and civic engagement. Let's just say I had my fingers in a lot of pies.

2. What experiences have best prepared you to serve in this role, and how will they influence and inform your approach to leadership and decision-making?

I've served as President of the Naples Area Board of Realtors and was honored as its Realtor of the Year, and I've been leadership positions in organizations like the Boy Scouts, Collier County Junior Deputies League, Golden Gate Area Civic Association, Conservation Collier, Greater Naples Chamber of Commerce, and my parish, St. Elizabeth Seton. On a state level I serve on Florida Realtors Public Policy Committee which provides hands on experience with legislative issues. These experiences have taught me how to listen, build consensus, and solve problems while keeping taxpayers in mind.

I am running for State Representative to strengthen public safety, improve affordability, protect our natural resources, and ensure that Collier and Hendry counties have a strong, conservative voice in Tallahassee that understands both our neighborhoods and our economy.

3. What do you believe should be Collier County's top priorities over the next decade and how would you work to advance them?

The most important challenges facing Southwest Florida are making our state affordable again for working families and safeguarding our water, environment, and infrastructure against growing climate and disaster risks. Rapidly rising home prices, insurance premium spikes, and infrastructure demands to match our continued growth are the challenges. We must protect our natural resources so we maintain our quality of life that led us to Southwest Florida. We need to build more housing with a variety of styles, pricepoints, development footprints, and sizes that match our community needs and follow Smart Growth principles. We need roads, water systems, and public utilities to match our rate of growth. The State and local governments need to work together to find funding and solutions to our affordability issues.

Economic Opportunity

4. A strong local economy depends on the success of businesses of all sizes. What policies, investments or strategies would you support to encourage job creation, entrepreneurship and long-term economic opportunity in Collier County?

There are a number of things we can do to improve our local business economy. Expand support for innovation zones and business parks, particularly in areas like Immokalee and eastern Collier, so we have sites ready for light industrial, logistics, and tech firms that bring year-round jobs. Streamline permitting and regulatory processes for businesses that create good local jobs, while keeping standards clear and predictable so employers know what to expect. Advocate for state transportation and infrastructure dollars that support job centers, industrial areas, and economic-development corridors, especially in eastern Collier, Immokalee, and Hendry County. Support our tourism industry by supporting Visit Florida, and similar programs. We need to continue supporting the changes the legislature made with property insurance because it is working. 20 new insurers have entered the Florida market and premiums are stabilizing and should go lower as a more competitive insurance market is created.

Education & Workforce Development

5. Employers throughout our region continue to report challenges attracting and retaining qualified workers. What do you see as the biggest workforce challenge facing Collier County and what strategies would you support to strengthen the talent pipeline and prepare residents for future career opportunities?

The biggest workforce challenge in Collier County is aligning our local talent with higher-paying careers that can support families in a high-cost community. We need clearer pathways from early childhood through college, trades, and apprenticeships that match real employer needs. I support expanding workforce and technical education for high-wage fields—such as healthcare, skilled trades, logistics, and technology—so residents can build skills that attract and grow new industries. Our colleges and universities should focus more on career-oriented programs, stackable credentials, and strong partnerships with local employers so graduates can move directly into good local jobs. I also support increasing medical residency opportunities so more of our best and brightest doctors stay in Florida, strengthening both our healthcare system and our economy.

We must invest earlier, too. High-quality Pre-K that weaves reading, math, and science into age-appropriate learning has been shown to dramatically improve student achievement. Focusing on strong early childhood programs and aligned, career-focused education will help build a robust talent pipeline and prepare Collier County residents for future opportunities.

Workforce Housing

6. Access to affordable housing remains a top concern for employers throughout our community. What policies or strategies would you support to housing options for working families, essential workers and seniors in Collier County?

Access to affordable housing is one of the biggest challenges facing our community and a top concern for employers. If we want a strong workforce, we must make it realistic for working families, essential workers, and seniors to live close to where they work. I support expanding the range of housing options by allowing more smaller units and appropriate higher-density projects, which lowers per-unit costs and brings more homes to market. I also back continued, reliable funding for SHIP and SAIL, Live Local, Hometown Heroes, and similar initiatives that help create and preserve homes at a variety of price points and sizes. Workforce housing should be treated as essential economic infrastructure, not an afterthought. Location matters, too. I-75 already carries tens of thousands of commuters a day; simply widening roads is not a sustainable workforce strategy. We need policies that encourage housing near major job centers, so nurses, teachers, deputies, hospitality workers, and others are not forced into long, expensive commutes. For seniors, the rising cost of assisted living is squeezing middle-income adults who do not qualify for indigent support. I would support targeted incentives, partnerships, and regulatory flexibility to create more moderately priced senior housing so older residents can age in place with dignity.

Infrastructure & Resiliency

7. As Collier County continues to grow, what infrastructure investments and planning strategies are needed to support economic growth, maintain quality of life and strengthen resilience before and after natural disasters?

Collier County and Hendry County needs targeted infrastructure and planning investments that keep pace with growth while reducing disaster risk. Some of these items we are already doing. Priority projects include expanding and hardening water, wastewater, and stormwater systems to improve capacity, reduce flooding, and protect water quality. Transportation upgrades—roads, transit, sidewalks, and evacuation routes—should support new job centers in eastern Collier and ensure safe, efficient hurricane evacuations. The county should also strengthen power, broadband, and communications networks to maintain operations and information access during and after storms. On the planning side, smart land use policies should steer growth away from high risk flood and storm surge areas, preserve natural buffers like wetlands, and apply strong building codes for elevation and wind resistance. Finally, integrating disaster preparedness, mental health support, and protection for vulnerable residents into comprehensive and post disaster plans will help maintain quality of life and speed recovery. Fortunately, our Collier County Emergency Management is one of the best in the country and it needs our continued support both locally and at the state level.

Environmental Stewardship

9. Collier County's natural resources are central to our economy and quality of life. How should local leaders balance environmental stewardship, future growth and economic opportunity when making policy decisions?

Local leaders need a science-based, long-range approach that treats conservation, growth, and jobs as interdependent. With 20 years on Conservation Collier and 17 as chairman, I've seen that protecting wetlands, panther habitat, and recharge areas is core economic infrastructure, supporting tourism, property values, storm resilience, and experiences like Boy Scouts camping. The massive discharges of algae from Lake Okeechobee in 2016 clearly demonstrated the health risks and negative consequences to the local economy that come from poor stewardship. That's why we must prioritize the highest-value conservation lands, steer compact growth to appropriate areas with existing infrastructure, rely on independent data before loosening protections, and insist that major projects measurably improve water quality, wildlife corridors, and public access to nature. I am proud to say there are 19 preserves in Collier County that have my fingerprints on them. During Covid, they were the only public outdoor areas open to the public. This kind of legacy work benefits everyone.

Healthcare

10. Access to affordable, high-quality healthcare is important to residents, employers and the local workforce. What do you see as the most pressing healthcare challenges facing Collier County and what strategies would you support to address them?

Access, affordability, and mental health are the most pressing healthcare challenges in Collier County, especially for working families, seniors, and low-income residents. Too many people still use the emergency room as their primary care provider because they lack insurance or a regular doctor. I believe we should deliberately shift that care to community health centers, Federally Qualified Health Centers, and clinics that can provide ongoing primary and preventive care to indigent and uninsured patients at a fraction of the cost. That means investing in community clinics and mobile units, expanding hours, and making sure people can actually get there with better transportation options. It also means recruiting and retaining more nurses, primary care doctors, and mental health professionals, and integrating behavioral health into primary care. If we do that, ERs can focus on true emergencies, costs will come down, and our residents will get more consistent, compassionate care. Additionally we need to expand our medical residency programs in Florida. The majority of our state medical school graduates do their residencies outside of our state and many never return. We could include our Community Healthcare Centers as part of expanding residency opportunities so we keep our best and brightest here in Florida.

Tourism

11. Tourism remains a key driver in Collier County's local economy and supports businesses throughout the community. How should the community strengthen this industry while also preserving the quality of life and community character that make Collier County unique?

Tourism is vital to our economy, but we have to grow it in a way that keeps Collier livable for the people who make it work. A core challenge is the lack of workforce housing; many hospitality workers commute long distances because they cannot afford to live here, which strains families, employers, and our transportation system. Other pressures include congestion in peak season, water-quality risks, and the need to keep attracting higher-spending visitors even as some international travel has softened. I would support using tourism taxes, public-private partnerships, and targeted zoning to produce more workforce housing close to jobs, while enforcing sensible rules, ie noise, parking, littering, on vacation rentals so neighborhoods remain stable. We should pair strong destination marketing—leveraging VISIT FLORIDA and the county's own brand—with firm protections for beaches, water quality, and conservation lands, because those natural assets are what visitors and residents value most. Investing in walkable town centers, year-round cultural and eco-tourism experiences, and better transit will help support local businesses, reduce congestion, and protect the community character that makes Collier and Hendry Counties unique. I also will work against using TDC dollars to offset local revenue needs should Governor

Leadership & Governance

12. Public officials are often asked to balance competing economic, environmental and community priorities. How do you approach these decisions and what principles guide your decision-making?

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13. What role would should collaboration between business leaders, educators, nonprofit organizations and government agencies play in addressing community challenges and how would you foster those partnerships if elected?

Collier County's biggest challenges are too complex for any one sector to solve alone, so collaboration has to be a core part of the job, not an afterthought. Through my leadership experience on the Naples Board of Realtors, the Greater Naples Chamber of Commerce, and the Golden Gate Area Civic Association, I've seen how much better projects turn out when business leaders, nonprofits, educators, and local government plan together from the start instead of reacting to each other at the end. If elected, I'd convene regular, issue-focused working groups—on housing, workforce, water quality, and healthcare—that include employers, school and college leaders, frontline nonprofits, and neighborhood voices. I'd insist on clear, shared goals (like specific workforce housing or childcare targets), transparent data, and public reporting so everyone can see what's working. My role would be to listen first, connect the dots across sectors, and then use policy, zoning, and budget decisions to support partnerships that deliver measurable results for residents, not just headlines.

14. County residents often support lower taxes, but local government must also fund infrastructure, public facilities, environmental initiatives and essential services. If revenues fall short of community needs, what spending reductions, efficiencies or new revenue sources would you support to close the funding gap while preserving essential services and long-term investments?

I'm a fiscal conservative, so my first instinct is to control spending, find efficiencies, and protect essential services before creating new taxes or fees. If revenues fall short, I would start by tightening administrative overhead, delaying "nice-to-have" projects, and making sure every capital dollar clearly advances core priorities like public safety, infrastructure, and long-term resilience. Where it makes sense, departments such as Human Resources across agencies and county or city departments could be consolidated to save money without reducing service. One thing we know for sure: we must be prepared for change, because something is always changing. As the old saying goes, "We can't control the wind, but we can adjust our sails" — and responsible budgeting is how local government adjusts its sails for the future.

15. In November, Florida voters will be asked to consider a constitutional amendment that would substantially expand Florida's homestead exemption and reduce property tax revenue available to local governments. Do you support the amendment? Please explain your position and how the benefits and potential impacts should be balanced against local government's ability to fund infrastructure, public safety and other essential services?

The proposed Constitutional Amendment to significantly increase the Homestead Exemption will give many homeowners relief, but it will also reduce local revenue and likely shift more of the tax burden onto small businesses, renters, and newer residents. I generally support tax relief and expect this amendment will pass; what matters most is what happens afterward. Its passage will create pressure to raise commercial rates or rely more on fees, which can hurt employers and raise housing costs. I want to find other ways to offset the deficit. One idea is a local sales tax, which has merit because roughly a third of the revenue would come from tourists, but I'd need time and expert input to be sure it's the right tool. My approach is to protect law enforcement, fire/EMS, and basic infrastructure first, pursue shared services and technology to cut costs, and be transparent with residents and businesses about trade-offs before shifting more burden onto working families.