

**From:** [Charles Burkett](mailto:Charles.Burkett@surfside-must-not-be-sold@googlegroups.com)  
**To:** [surfside-must-not-be-sold@googlegroups.com](mailto:surfside-must-not-be-sold@googlegroups.com)  
**Subject:** RE: Responses to your questions.  
**Date:** Sunday, February 9, 2020 12:58:00 PM

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Below Commissioner Karukin had replied to Ben's astute questions about important issues in Town. I think his answers are important and instructive.

Karukin's answers are beautifully written and are likely indicative of the sentiment of our elected officials.

They are however often misleading - or only tell part of the story – the nice part, the part meant to convince Surfside voters that all is well in Town – that there's nothing to see here – that voters should return the crew in office for another term and that all will continue to be well.

In order to inform & contrast Mr. Karukin's "view" of the state of our Town with the *full* reality - I've added the part of the story I believe he forgot to tell next to his comments in CAPS (below in this email) - where appropriate.

With this additional information, voters can make a more informed decision at election time with the *full story* being told, rather than just hearing a slice of information – the only slice that politicians in power want voters to hear.

Charles

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**“Save** our small-town way of life in **Surfside”**

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**What is your position on development in Surfside?**

I don't believe this issue is as black and white as it has been made out to be. **WRONG. AFTER 10 YEARS OF NON-STOP OVERDEVELOPMENT THE ISSUE IS BLACK & WHITE.** No development means stagnation and decay and it should not have to be an all or none proposition. **WRONG. OUR TOWN CAN CONTINUE TO RENOVATE, RESTORE, IMPROVE & ADJUST TO CHANGING TIMES. HAVING TO CHOOSE EITHER “ NO DEVELOPMENT OR STAGNATION” IS A FALSE CHOICE CONCEPT PEDDLED BY DEVELOPERS AND THEIR DEVOTEES.** And there are state level legislative issues that play into this whole concept as well. **WRONG. THERE ARE NOT “LEGISLATIVE ISSUES AT PLAY”, THIS IS JUST ANOTHER RIDICULOUS TERM CONCOCTED BY POLITICIANS PROTECTING DEVELOPERS. REMEMBER, IF DEVELOPERS AREN'T ENDLESSLY DEVELOPING (WHETHER NEEDED OR NOT), THEY GO OUT OF BUSINESS.**

I should point out that development in our town has contributed to a tripling of the city's total taxable valuation over the past 10 years going from about 900 million to over 3 billion. I'm sure there are many happy home owners out there. **THE FACT OF THE MATTER IS, OVER THE MAJORITY OF THE LAST 10 YEARS, SINCE BEFORE MESSER'S KARUKIN AND DIETCH CAME TO POWER AND DURING THEIR TIME IN OFFICE, THE PROPERTY TAX RATE HAS BEEN VASTLY HIGHER FOR RESIDENTS THAN IT WAS UNDER THE LAST ADMINISTRATION. MOREOVER, SURFSIDE RESIDENTS HAVE LITTLE TO SHOW FOR THE INCREASES IN THE TAXABLE VALUATION THAT'S BEING CELEBRATED – DEVELOPERS ON THE CONTRARY HAVE MUCH TO SHOW FOR IT.**

Even so, there will always be a well-deserved concern about over-development. Over development by definition, means building to the maximums allowed. **FALSE. WITH THIS SELF-SERVING DEFINITION, IS ONE TO BELIEVE THAT UNTIL EVERY PARCEL IS BUILT OUT TO THE MAXIMUM THAT THERE IS NO**

OVERDEVELOPMENT? OF COURSE NOT, BUT THAT'S THE VIEW OF ONE WHO NEEDS TO ARGUE AGAINST OUR EFFORTS TO SAVE OUR TOWN . The good news is, when you look at our numbers, that has not happened in Surfside. THIS IS NOT GOOD NEWS. ON COLLINS AVENUE ALONE, THERE ARE 68% MORE DWELLING UNITS THAN THERE WERE IN 2000 – THAT MEANS THOUSANDS MORE PEOPLE JAMMED INTO OUR TOWN, OUR BEACHES, OUR PARKING & OUR ROADS. Although I am totally aware that it can seem that way for many people. But the number of units approved for the last 9 projects has 52% fewer units than what could have been permitted. THIS IS A HUGE PIECE OF PROPAGANDA. THE TRUTH IS, IF WE DIDN'T HAVE THE "NEW" BUILDING CODE, BROUGHT TO US BY DIETCH, KARUKIN & CO., WE WOULDN'T BE TOLD TO FEEL BETTER ABOUT THE FACT THAT HUGE NUMBERS OF UNITS *COULD HAVE BEEN BUILT*, BUT LUCKILY HAVEN'T BEEN. For example: take a look at the Surf Club and the Chateau. If Surf Club wanted to, they could have built over 700 units but they ended up with less than 285 units. The Chateau could have built 325 units but ended up building only 55 units. These are good outcomes compared to what could have been. AGAIN, FALSE PREMISE. HAD THE NEW CODE NOT BEEN PUT INTO PLACE BY OUR ELECTED OFFICIALS, THE SURF CLUB DEVELOPMENT COULD NOT HAVE BEEN BUILT AS IT IS.

So, the reality is we can't stop development in its tracks but we can be smart about it. WRONG. ISN'T IT IRONIC THAT THE ONES WHO BROUGHT OUR TOWN SUCH DEVASTATING OVER DEVELOPMENT, NOW TELL US IT CAN'T BE STOPPED? – AND WORSE, THAT "WE" HAVE TO BE SMART ABOUT IT?.

Development can and should be sustainable, equitable, and compatible with our community. Overall, we will strive for projects that are aligned with the small-scale character of Surfside on both sides of A1A. SIMPLE, MEANINGLESS PLATITUDES. THERE HAS BEEN ZERO CONCERN ABOUT SUSTAINABLE, EQUITABLE OR COMPATIBLE DEVELOPMENT FOR OUR TOWN. THE PROJECTS THAT HAVE BEEN SUPPORTED ARE MASSIVE, AND ANYTHING BUT, "SMALL-SCALE".

#### **What is your position on P3 Developments and Town Assets?**

It depends on the situation. Not all P3s are bad, they can be a lifeline for towns that do not have the resources to make necessary infrastructure upgrades. Large infrastructure projects have benefited from P3's such as the Port of Miami Tunnel and portions of I-595. And projects like downtown's Museum Park, the Arsht Center, and the Miami Beach Convention Center have all been structured with elements of a P3. NOTE THE JUSTIFICATION FOR P3'S? THE TOWN OF SURFSIDE HAS NO RELATIONSHIP WITH ANY OF THE AFOREMENTIONED EXAMPLES CITED, NOR DID SURFSIDE NEED AN INFRASTRUCTURE "LIFELINE".

But not all P3 projects are good either. Unsolicited proposals do have to have an evaluation by law. We found that out the hard way. With that in mind, I would mention that I am the one who put forth the ordinance to stop all further discussion on the Town Hall P3 project. I listened to all sides. It became too divisive so I concluded that it was not in the best interest of the city as a whole because there was no compelling need and I was not going to give a 99-year lease to anyone. THE P3 WAS PURPOSELY HIDDEN FROM RESIDENTS. ALL ELECTED OFFICIALS THOUGHT IT WAS A GREAT IDEA. ALL VOTED FOR IT. ALL SHOWED HORRIBLE JUDGEMENT. IT WASN'T UNTIL ELECTED OFFICIALS WERE CAUGHT THAT SOME BEGAN TO REVERSE THEMSELVES. THE 99 YEAR LEASE COMPONENT WAS ALWAYS A KEY PART OF THE PROPOSAL AND WAS EMBRACED BY EVERY ELECTED OFFICIAL.

But the reality is, I cannot close the door on a P3 if a parking structure becomes a necessity using existing town assets such as one of the existing parking lots. If it does, the key questions to ask: is there a need? is the project economically attractive from the perspective of the city as a whole? Is the project financially feasible? and What are the benefits and risks to the residents? The devil is in the details. THE "REALITY" IS THAT SURFSIDE RESIDENTS CANNOT TRUST THE JUDGEMENT – OR CLEVER EXCUSES OF THEIR ELECTED OFFICIALS – REGARDLESS OF WHAT THOSE ELECTED OFFICIALS "NOW" SAY - AS THEY RUN FOR RE-ELECTION.

#### **What is your position on Traffic?**

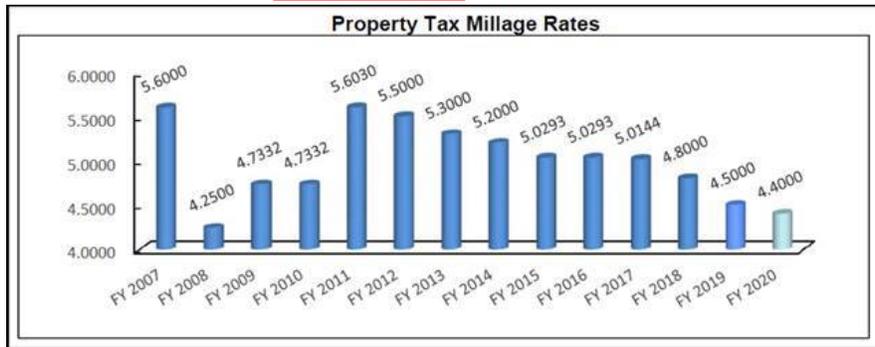
Traffic is a real concern that many communities, not just ours, are dealing with. The main road in our town is technically a highway (State Road A1A) so we are limited in what we can do and these roads are already designed to accommodate high traffic volume. And we all know what happened when we tried an experiment with one way streets. It didn't go very well to say the least. But my point is we did respond to residents' request to try something. We listened to the community. We took a vote. We took some kind of action. We didn't just stand by and do nothing and when it didn't work out we took it down. Again, there are no easy solutions. TRAFFIC COMES FROM OUR NORTH AND SOUTH. OUR ELECTED OFFICIALS HAVE MADE A LARGE CONTRIBUTION TO THE TRAFFIC PROBLEM WITH THE HUGE INCREASE IN HOUSING UNITS IN TOWN. NOW IT COMES FROM BOTH SIDES OF TOWN – AND FROM SURFSIDE. THIS DID NOT HAPPEN BY ACCIDENT.

**What is your position with the Beach?**

The beach is public and should be able to be enjoyed by all. **THE “PUBLIC” BEACH USED TO BE ENJOYED ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY BY THE “SURFSIDE PUBLIC”. THANKS TO OUR ELECTED OFFICIALS OUR BEACHES ARE NOW ENJOYED BY NOT ONLY RESIDENTS, BUT BY THE THOUSANDS OF NEW TOURISTS OUR LEADERS HAVE BROUGHT INTO OUR COMMUNITY.** I would like to remind folks that I was the one who secured the language in our Beach Management Policy that got rid of overnight storage of beach furniture. **I WOULD “REMIN” RESIDENTS THAT MR. KARUKIN “WAS THE ONE WHO SECURED” ALL OF THE NEW HOTELS IN OUR TOWN AND THAT THE “STORAGE” ISSUE IS JUST ONE OF THE MANY AWFUL RESULTS OF ALLOWING THAT EXPLOSION OF HOTELS TO HAPPEN.**

**What is your position on Tax?**

Well if you mean property tax, Surfside’s portion is only about 25 percent of your total tax bill. We lowered millage rates every year and still managed to build up cash reserves from 1.9 million to 13 million or from 24 percent to 79 percent of the general fund expenditures. That number is a key indicator of the financial health of our city. Surfside finances are strong despite what you may have heard from other candidates. **THE STATEMENT THAT IT’S “ONLY ABOUT 25 PERCENT” OF THE TOTAL TAX BILL IS COMPLETELY MISLEADING. IT’S 100% OF THE TAXES CHARGED TO RESIDENTS BY SURFSIDE. UPON GETTING ELECTED, MR. KARUKIN SUPPORTED PROPERTY TAXES FOR RESIDENTS BEING RAISED BY 18% AND THOSE RATES DID NOT RETURN TO THE 2010 LEVEL UNTIL 8 YEARS LATER – JUST IN TIME THIS ELECTION.**



**What is your position on water?**

For drinking water, I would say thank you to the South Florida Water Management District <https://www.sfwmd.gov/> and Federal Department of Interior <https://www.doi.gov/>. These professionals do amazing work managing the complex water systems that make up our drinking water.

**What is your position on Utilities?**

If you are referring to powerlines, then remember undergrounding our 23 miles of power and cable lines will protect you from wind events but not from flood events. It will cost over 30 million dollars and every third house (you or your neighbors) will have a 3x3 green box within the 5-foot right of way. Actually, FPL wanted to have access to about 15 feet into everyone’s front yard with an easement (different from the right of way). The alternative and less expensive option is a re-wired, hardened above ground system. And at the end of the day it might not even be up to us. That said, if a project like this passes a referendum, and I am still in office, it will be my job to enable the process and make it happen if that is the will of the people.

**What is your opinion of separation of Church and State?**

I believe in the separation of church and state.

**What is your position on how we spend money on studies?**

Studies are a valuable source of objective information when it comes to dealing with issues where we do not have the expertise or when something requires significant research to explore options. I do know that the cost of these studies is a concern to many, and it is something that should be looked at but we cannot make thoughtful educated decisions on many of the important topics that come up for a vote without information from subject matter experts. **RATHER THAN BEING A “VALUABLE SOURCE” OF INFORMATION, STUDIES, PARKING STUDIES SPECIFICALLY, HAVE ONLY BEEN A “VALUABLE” SOURCE (OF HUGE REVENUE) FOR THIS**

COMMISSION'S CONSULTANT FRIENDS – SEE HERE: <https://surfside2020.com/f/mayor-dietch-spent-a-fortune-on-parking-studies-got-zero-results>.

**What is your position on the focus on tourist tax?**

We are restricted in terms of what that money can be used for by the state. We are allowed to build and operate tourist facilities, art centers, pay for tourism enhancement activities, and community center operations as long as we allow hotel guests to use the facilities. Remember, only 3 cities can charge a resort tax and keep the money (not send it to Tallahassee): Miami Beach, Surfside, and Bal Harbour.

At present the revenue growth is at unprecedented levels increasing from about \$250,000 per year prior to 2007 to over 3 million dollars per year today and growing. People should know that it pays for the community center. **RESIDENTS HAVE BEEN SACRIFICED ON THE ALTAR OF HIGHER REVENUE BY OUR ELECTED OFFICIALS. WE NEVER NEEDED "TOURIST" TAX DOLLARS TO PAY FOR OUR COMMUNITY CENTER. THIS DECEPTION IS ONLY PUT FORTH TO JUSTIFY THE EXPLOSION OF HOTELS & TOURISTS IN SURFSIDE – AND THE DECLINE IN THE QUALITY OF LIFE OUR RESIDENTS HAVE EXPERIENCED. THERE IS LITTLE MEANINGFUL BENEFIT THAT RESIDENTS HAVE RECEIVED FROM MORE TOURIST TAXES , OTHER THAN BARELY NOTICEABLE DECREASES IN THE PROPERTY TAX RATE.**



To more transparently show how that money is spent, about 2 years ago I suggested we change the way the budget book presents the resort tax funds. Now it is crystal clear down to the general ledger number where that money goes. Thirty-four percent goes to the Tourist Board budget by statute and the remaining dollars funds community center operations as well as much of the programming enjoyed by town residents and visitors. **THE RESULTS OF NOT HAVING TO USE RESIDENT FUNDING FOR THE COMMUNITY CENTER IS THAT THE SAVINGS WAS SPENT ON 25% MORE EMPLOYEES IN OUR TOWN, EXCLUDING POLICE FROM 2011 TO 2018. THERE ARE TENS OF MILLIONS IN NEW DEBT THAT MUST BE PAID OFF. OUR ELECTED OFFICIALS HAVE RUN UP THE COST OF OPERATING OUR TOWN BY 90% IN THE LAST 10 YEARS. OR IN OTHER WORDS, OUR TOWN IS NOW, BECAUSE OF THE FINANCIAL DECISIONS MADE BY OUR ELECTED OFFICIALS, A HOSTAGE TO THE TOURIST TAX. HERE'S THE FULL STORY:** <https://surfside2020.com/f/mayor-burkett-2009-vs-mayor-dietch-2018-by-the-towns-numbers>

**What is your position on residential benefits like parks and other amenities?**

I would like to remind residents that I am the commissioner who got the renovation of the 96<sup>th</sup> park listed in the capital improvement plan to the tune of 2.5 million dollars. And if done right, we may be able to use resort tax money to pay for another life guard stand and support the funding of the renovation. **AFTER 10 YEARS, THE ONLY PROGRESS REPORTABLE BY AN ELECTED OFFICIAL RUNNING FOR OFFICE IS THAT HE GOT A PARK "LISTED" FOR IMPROVEMENT - FOR SOMETIME IN THE FUTURE? ASK THOSE WHO HAVE SAT ON THE PARKS COMMITTEE FOR YEARS AND BEGGED FOR FUNDS TO FIX OUR PARKS, HOW THEY'VE BEEN CONTINUALLY TOLD TO BE PATIENT, WHILE MILLIONS ARE FUNNELED TO DEVELOPERS. THIS ADMISSION THAT NOTHING HAS BEEN DONE – SAYS..IT..ALL.**

**What's the issue you are concerned about?**

Putting aside my issues with massing and the foot print of buildings (residential or non-residential) one issue I am concerned about is our debt management policy. The Commission has been approached or is considering some potential big-ticket items that could be tacked onto existing debt in some way shape or form. However, I believe our current debt management policy is too permissive. Other benchmarks can be used according to the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA). Therefore, I would support a process that provides the commission with recommendations and options on what I believe should be a more restrictive debt management policy than the one currently on the books.

**What is your position on our Business District?**

Rents are too high, but we don't own the properties. I am interested in learning more about commissioner Paul's idea regarding a vacancy tax.

**What is your position on Parking?**

It gets tight mostly on a time of day, time of year basis and it may get worse after certain projects are completed. We may not have a big problem now but that can change. If we do need to add a parking structure somewhere in town, I have always said the post office lot is the best location with minimal impact to the residents. And if that is the selected location, a P3 (that includes a referendum) should not be ruled out.

**What is your position on Zoning and Variances?**

I am tired of them. But I can see the focus of concern shifting a bit from the Collins/Harding corridor to the single family home districts. This is because of the pressure to build larger homes for larger families and the realities of flooding and sea level rise. All of this puts pressure on the city to take another look at the building and zoning codes for single family homes. The planning and zoning board and the entire community will undoubtedly be completely engaged in upcoming debates on this issue.

**What is your position on flooding?**

We have a few low-lying areas that still flood during intense rain events. But everyone I talk to says we are doing much better than surrounding areas. **THIS IS A CLEAR ADMISSION THAT OUR ELECTED OFFICIALS DO NOT TAKE THE FLOODING PROBLEM IN TOWN SERIOUSLY.** That being said, we are still trying to see what else can be done for the homes adversely affected. **THOSE RESIDENTS THAT ARE "ADVERSELY EFFECTED" ARE REPORTING 8" OF WATER IN THEIR HOMES EVERY TIME THERE IS A HEAVY RAIN. RESIDENTS WITH 8" OF WATER IN THEIR HOMES MOST LIKELY CONSIDER MR. KARUKIN'S CHARACTERIZATION THAT THEY ARE "ADVERSELY AFFECTED" AS UNIFORMED AT BEST AND MOST LIKELY INSULTING.** The solutions presented so far have been incredibly expensive for minimal impact. **ANOTHER ADMISSION THAT NOTHING HAS BEEN DONE AND THAT "SOLUTIONS" ARE TOO EXPENSIVE.** The drainage rate would go from 2 hours to 1.5 hours during an intense rain event. I would like to see a solution that has greater impact and is more cost effective. I am looking forward to the results of a Master Stormwater Drainage study that will list town wide options and recommendations. **IN OFFICE FOR TEN YEARS AND THE ONLY RESPONSE FOR RESIDENTS SUFFERING FROM DEVASTATING FLOODING IN THEIR HOMES IS THAT THE POLITICIAN IS GOING TO KEEP "LOOKING" FOR A CHEAP SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM? THE TRUTH IS, SURFSIDE'S ELECTED OFFICIALS HAVE DONE VIRTUALLY NOTHING TO HELP FLOODED RESIDENTS. HERE'S THE PROOF:** <https://surfside2020.com/f/mayor-dietchs-own-2018-comp-plan-says-town-flooding-is-fixed>

**From:** Benjamin Acquario <[btacquario@gmail.com](mailto:btacquario@gmail.com)>

**Sent:** Friday, February 7, 2020 7:01 AM

**To:** Michael Karukin <[mkarukin@yahoo.com](mailto:mkarukin@yahoo.com)>

**Subject:** Re: Responses to your questions.

Sounds good.

On Fri, Feb 7, 2020 at 2:14 AM Michael Karukin <[mkarukin@yahoo.com](mailto:mkarukin@yahoo.com)> wrote:

Hi Benjamin.

Michael Karukin here. I completed my responses and will send to you tomorrow (Friday) at this email address.

I'll leave distribution up you you.

I want to give it one more proof read when I wake up and will send over in the morning.

Thank you again for an excellent set of questions.

Michael.

Sent from my iPhone. Pardon brevity and syntax.

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