[https://fbexternal-a.akamaihd.net/safe_image.php?d=AQAhc4w2Vv2w2xDf&w=155&h=114&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.sun-sentinel.com%2Fimages%2Fthirdpartylogo.gif](http://elections.sun-sentinel.com/2012/august/results/?id=130)

**2014 Broward County Commission Candidate Questionnaire**

Your name: Chip LaMarca

Age: 46

Address: 2605 NE 24th Street, Lighthouse Point, FL 33064

Occupation: County Commissioner/Business Owner

Family status: Married – 19 years

Military service: None

Education: Broward College – AA Degree

Boston University, College of Engineering

Florida Atlantic University, Information Systems

Website: [www.ElectChip.com](http://www.ElectChip.com)

Party affiliation: Republican

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Also, please include a photo when you return this questionnaire by email.

1. If you’re a challenger in this race, why are you running and what makes you qualified? If you’re an incumbent, why do you deserve re-election?

I am the current county commissioner for District 4.

I believe that I should be re-elected because I have served all of the people of District 4 as their public servant, putting their needs first, always advocating for the best interests of my district. I have built consensus throughout the district on the issues that are important to our community.

1. Have you ever been arrested or involved in a criminal proceeding or civil suit?

Have you ever filed bankruptcy or have been foreclosed upon? If so, please explain.

In 1989, at the age of 21 years old, I was charged with a DUI in Broward County. This was a mistake that I made and although I am not proud of it, I learned a great deal about responsibility and the role we play in the safety of others.

During the recent economic downturn, my construction business experienced a devastating loss of all of our current projects as they were cancelled, one by one. I maintained my employees for six to twelve months as I was convinced that things would turn around and I put their families first. As we know now, the economy did not turn and I was forced to make the necessary cuts for my own family to survive.

We are currently in the foreclosure process with the bank holding our business equity line of credit. However, we are working through the process and I am happy to say that we are close to a resolution to put this behind us. Throughout the process, we have never missed a mortgage payment to our primary lender and plan to stay in our house. This has been a very trying time for our family, but just like many Broward County families, and businesses, we have had to work through it and make some very difficult decisions.

1. Name the three key issues facing Broward County that need immediate and sustained attention.

The most important issue facing our county is rebuilding our economy. The one thing that each and every person of working age wants more than anything is a good job and we must work to provide the economic conditions that make that possible. We have seen our hard work bring unemployment down by more than half, but we must maintain this trend for the growing workforce in Broward County. We must also work to bring new businesses to our county and assist the businesses that call Broward County home.

We must maintain clean, healthy beaches throughout our county. Our beaches provide many benefits to our community, but they also provide a destination for our number one industry and that is tourism. 13.4 million people visited Broward County last year, spending nearly $11 billion. Almost two thirds of our tourists visited our beaches. Our beaches are also the first line of defense for our coastal buildings and infrastructure. This was seen after Hurricane Sandy nearly washed away a section of A1A in Fort Lauderdale.

With nearly two million people in Broward County today, we must work together to find ways to improve our transportation system. The current local gas tax funding model is unsustainable with the decreasing funding source due to the increase in the fuel economy of today’s automobiles. Broward is a donor county and Florida is a donor state, so we should advocate for more federal transportation dollars. We must work together as a community, to find a better and more efficient ways to move people throughout our county. Transportation is important to all of us living in Broward County.

4. How might we grow Broward’s economy and diversify its job base?

We have seen a strong return on our investment with the Greater Fort Lauderdale Alliance, our economic development organization. This public/private organization has worked to bring new businesses to Broward County from qualified targeted industries, such as technology (cloud computing/networking), aerospace manufacturing and medical devices. Many of these businesses have relocated from states with higher tax rates and state income taxes for their employees. They have seen that they can experience a “Life Less Taxing” running their businesses in Broward County. I would recommend that we increase our public side investment in this organization to further increase our return on investment to the taxpayers, thus creating more job opportunities for our workforce.

5. Given the growth in property values, should Broward lower its tax rate, either this year or next?

There is no question that we should lower our tax rate. Earlier this year our expected property value increase was 3.8%. This was the first measurable increase in many years and our county and constitutional officers prepared their budgets based on that number. When the property value increase was revised to 4.6% then ultimately 7.24% a few months later, some people wanted to revise their budgets and allocate those dollars to their offices. I believe that this additional money is not the property of our local government. It is the property of the taxpaying homeowners of Broward County. Because our budgets were created in early 2014, the county should stick with those numbers and return the 3.44% difference in the property value increase back to the people.

6. Should Broward fight to keep its hotel bed tax at 5 percent?

We should maintain the current bed tax for the current programs, such as marketing and advertising for our destination. However, with a much-needed convention center expansion and beach renourishment being critical issues for our tourism economy, we must look at what we can do to maintain and protect these programs.

It is estimated that we lose between $60 and $65 million per year in convention and visitor business. This is due to the lack of a convention center hotel and the lack of additional space and break out rooms at our existing convention center. Our bed tax rate is one of the lowest in the country and we should look at the return on the remaining one cent as it relates to a dedicated funding source for all future beach renourishment projects and keeping our convention center current with today’s demanding business.

7. Do you support the Florida Panthers request for more bed tax dollars?

NO. The county has hired a consultant to analyze the financial viability of the building and operation with and without a professional sports team. I look forward to the results of this report.

8. What are the challenges facing Broward with beach renourishment?

As stated above, we need a dedicated funding source that does not force us to rely 100% on Tallahassee and Washington, DC. Although our state and federal partners should remain in the funding model, due to the return on investment that they receive, we must be able to fund these projects prior to reimbursement and in the case that the federal government decides not continue to fund future projects.

The good news is through my efforts with our county staff we have secured $6.8 million in state funding of our beach projects by working with the legislature and the FDEP. We will continue to advocate for additional funding from Tallahassee with the current funding model. By working closely with our federal partners, we also received $10.1 million in federal reimbursements.

9. What would you do to address traffic congestion in Broward?

We have seen significant successes in moving automobiles throughout Broward County with the “Green Lights” program. This synchronization of the traffic signal system has made improvements on the major traffic arteries. We continue to improve the reliability that program with the installation of cellular and digital technology. The addition of more efficient public transportation through BCT will allow us to move more people throughout the county and achieve better interaction with the driving public. We must continue to work with the MPO on the long range plan that includes additional public transportation opportunities through rail and bus options.

10. Would you be willing to let voters decide whether to raise taxes for public transportation?

I would always be willing to let the voters decide how they want to spend their hard-earned tax dollars, especially on an issue that affects nearly everyone.

11. Do you see any improvements that could be made in the contracts with public employee unions? Please explain.

Broward County has had good success in working with the public employee unions throughout the recent economic downturn. I would recommend that we continue to find efficiencies in their agreements that benefit the taxpayers of Broward County without creating a hardship for the employees.

12. What works well on the county commission, and what could work better?

We work well together and agree on the big issues that face our county, such as the airport runway, beach renourishment and the expansion at Port Everglades. However, when we have issues that could tend to divide the commission, I would recommend that we set these issues for a real workshop or possibly a retreat where we are able to think and speak openly. I believe that communication and open thought is the key to success, but the tendency for some elected officials to give a speech about everything is not an effective process. We have a good base, but it could use some work to be better.

13. Describe the tension between the county and its cities, and what might be done to improve relations.

In recent months there have been issues that have divided the cities and the county. Most, if not all, of these issues have revolved around money. The consolidation of the EMS dispatch system was a perfect example of this point. I was on the task force that looked at the three areas of this process: operation, governance and funding. The group agreed almost unanimously on the operation and governance, but became strongly divided on the funding of the system. In the end, the taxpayers in most of the participating cities got stuck with the bill.

As district commissioners, we should work closely with our cities to find common ground before either party takes the legal path of a lawsuit. We all serve the same residents and we should work to serve them together.

14. How would you describe the performance of the county administrator?

The county administrator has a difficult job in working with the nine members of the county commission to find common ground on the many projects and programs being administered by her department. The administrator should be a person who looks out for the financial health of our community, by working to reach consensus with the commission.

I believe that our county administrator’s performance meets the requirements of the job, but she could do better when communicating with the cities in Broward County.

15. How do you see the role of lobbyists at county center?

I have a strict “No Lobbyists” policy in my office, so I do not meet with lobbyists as a County Commissioner. However, I believe that they have an important role in getting an individual or client’s voice heard at the governmental center. My office works with each and every registered county lobbyist to secure an appointment directly with their clients and I always take meetings with their clients. I find that it works better to meet with the person or company that is looking to work with Broward County.

16. Does Broward need a county mayor?

I believe that the county should have a countywide elected mayor. There must be a person with whom the buck stops. Appointing a mayor from the nine-member commission is not the same as the people choosing the person to lead their county.

I also believe that this position should be non-partisan.

17. How hands-on should commissioners be in the workings of the airport, the seaport and the administration of county government?

Commissioners should be hands-on in selecting the airport and seaport directors because they will work closely with those directors on important projects that benefit all of the residents. However, after that selection, commissioners should not interfere with the day to day operations of the two enterprise operations. These directors have proven their leadership skills with their life’s work and there is not one county commissioner, myself included, who has their level of expertise.

As for the administration, we do work closely with our county administrator, but I believe that once we give a directive, we should allow the administrator to perform the tasks.

18. How should Broward balance the funding requests of the sheriff’s office with competing needs?

The Sheriff has requested that we allow him to use unspent reserves to cover his additional priority issues. In the future, if there are no reserves, I would continue to place public safety as a top priority, but we must have a list of priorities from the sheriff’s office before determining any additional funding levels.

19. What can be done to resolve the waste resource recovery dispute?

The resolution is simple…meet in the middle and move on. The overwhelming majority of the unused dollars was given back to the cities when the RRB was concluded. The cities received over $125 million in distributions. The remaining assets are some unused revenues and land assets that are owned by the taxpayers of Broward County. We must plan for the future and our growing density. This can be achieved and I believe that we are close to a resolution.

20. What more can Broward do to address the challenge of homelessness?

We must address the chronic homeless and mental illness issues to achieve any success with this important issue. The lives of these people and the economic vitality of our community depends on this. The government cannot fix this problem by themselves. The private sector and the faith-based communities must work with us to achieve real success.

21. How would you balance the tensions between developers and neighborhood associations?

There is a process of “right project – right place” and both parties should take this into account. There should be strong communication and community involvement from the beginning for any project to succeed. The developers can make accommodations for the surrounding community because they will be their eventual neighbors.

22. Do you support the creation of an ethics commission in Broward?

I normally do not support the expansion of government, but I would be supportive of an advisory board similar to the task force that created the ethics ordinance in 2010. It is clear that ethics will continue to be an issue in our county until people realize that they are in elected office to serve, not to be served.

23. How could Broward have a stronger voice in Tallahassee?

The first thing that we could do as a community is stop bashing or insulting the lawmakers in Tallahassee every time we have an opportunity. I understand that there are issues where our community and some lawmakers just do not see eye to eye with the legislature or the governor. However, personal attacks will never build a better relationship and they do hear these attacks. When I travel to Tallahassee to meet with the governor or cabinet members or legislators from around the state of both parties, they comment on the exact conversations that take place on the Broward County dais.

If we want to advocate for better support in beach funding or Port Everglades investment, then we need to build a bridge with the leaders in Tallahassee. This last year Broward Days decided not to go to Tallahassee, but to bring the leaders from our Capitol to Broward County. This decision proved to be a success and we were able to show the Chairman of Appropriations in the State Senate why we need additional funding for our beach renourishment projects. When it came time to increase the statewide funding to a level that would support our county’s request, that senator made the decision to raise the level and include Broward. I will continue to advocate for our community in Tallahassee and look to encourage my colleagues to do the same.

24. What has prepared you to be a county commissioner?

My six years on the Lighthouse Point City Commission and the many boards and committees gave me the parliamentary knowledge and the experience to work with agendas and other elected officials, but my business and family experiences gave me the education on how to deal with the personalities of people. Both my government and life experiences have been invaluable in my first four years on the county commission.

25. Why should voters choose you over your opponent?

It is clear why the voters should choose me over my opponent, because they have the unique perspective of having seen both of us work for four years.

The voters should choose me over my opponent because I have always put them first. I show up and I work hard for them every day. When I take a vote, I think of them first and sometimes it causes me to think deeply about my personal beliefs. I remain principled, but I always do what is best for the people in my district and in Broward County.

The other reason that makes this decision clear is that I always show up. I have brought people of all backgrounds from all around my district on board with my mission to serve them by just showing up and listening to them. After all, we are not here to serve ourselves…we are here to serve the people.