

2018 Election Questionnaire for Fort Lauderdale Candidates

Please return to abreid@sunsentinel.com

Position you are running for: Fort Lauderdale City Commission – District IV

Personal information

Name: Ben Sorensen

Age: 39

Address and how long you have lived there: 701 SE 7 Street, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301. We have lived there since May 2015.

Occupation:

- 1) Leadership and Sales Training Executive – Vice President, Optimum Associates, LLC
- 2) Lieutenant, U.S. Navy Reserve

Work history, at least 15 years back:

Optimum Associates, LLC *Co-Founder and Vice President* Fort Lauderdale, FL. 6/05 – Present

- Facilitate seminars, lead one-on-one coaching, and deliver keynote addresses about improving communication skills, leveraging managerial ability, providing effective feedback, achieving sales growth, delivering excellent customer service, and increasing organizational savvy to corporations, non-profit organizations, government agencies, and students. Train and present to thousands of executives around the world every year. Lead engagements to identify and customize leadership development needs and then formulate management training programs to achieve targeted performance objectives.

United States Navy Reserve *Lieutenant* 2/08 – Present

- Reserve Regional Desk Officer (RRDO) at the National Military Command Center (NMCC) in the Pentagon
- Provide continuous operation monitoring, reporting, training, maintenance management, and coordination for all communications, activities and systems supporting the NMCC while providing the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff with operations, support and information relating to operational capabilities.
- Personal Awards: Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal, Joint Meritorious Unit Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal

First Presbyterian Church of Delray Beach *Youth, College and Young Adults Ministries Director* 10/16 – 8/17

Hobe Sound Community Presbyterian Church *Temporary Supply Pastor* 9/15 – 11/16

First Presbyterian Church of Pompano Beach *Temporary Supply Pastor* 2/15 – 8/15

First Presbyterian Church of Fort Lauderdale *Associate Pastor* 8/08 – 4/14

Inez Tenenbaum for the United States Senate *Finance Associate* Washington, DC 10/03 – 11/04

Office of United States Senator Bob Graham *Educational Policy Intern* Washington, DC 6/03 – 8/03

Archbishop Coleman Carroll High School *American History Teacher* Miami, FL 10/02 – 6/03

Pfizer, Inc *Healthcare Representative* New York, NY 7/01 – 10/02

PricewaterhouseCoopers, LLP *Dispute Analysis Associate* New York, NY 8/00 – 7/01

Education:

Doctor of Ministry <i>Amridge University</i> Montgomery, AL	2013
• Summa Cum Laude	
Master of Science of Strategic Intelligence <i>National Intelligence University</i> Washington, DC	2013
• Specialization: Human Intelligence	
Master of Divinity <i>Amridge University</i> Montgomery, AL	2010
• Cum Laude • Humanities and Philosophy Award	
Juris Doctor <i>Georgetown University Law Center</i> Washington, DC	2007
• London Study Abroad Program	
Master of Arts of Leadership <i>Duquesne University</i> Pittsburgh, PA	2002
• Specialization: Leadership characteristics across the humanities	
Bachelor of Arts <i>Emory University</i> Atlanta, GA	2000
• Double Major: International Studies and Spanish	

Publications: Seldman, Marty, John Futterknecht, and Ben Sorensen. Customer Tells: Delivering World-Class Customer Service by Reading Your Customer's Signs and Signals. New York: Kaplan Publishing, 2007.

Family status: Married to Anna Fornias Sorensen, Associate Director of Development, NSU Art Museum Fort Lauderdale. We have two children, Alexandra (3) and Louise (1), and a rescue dog Lylah.

Have you ever been arrested or charged with a crime? No.

Have you ever been a plaintiff or defendant in a civil action, or in a bankruptcy or foreclosure? No.

Are you a member of any civic groups? If so, please name them:

Guardian Ad Litem *First Responder Volunteer (2015 – Present)*

Fort Lauderdale Police Department *Chaplain (2015 - Present)*

Fort Lauderdale Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors *Member (2017 – 2018)*

Fort Lauderdale Chamber of Commerce Veterans and Community Affairs Committee *Chair (2017 – 2018)*

Fort Lauderdale Chamber of Commerce Downtown Council Board of Directors *Member (2015 – Present)*

Fort Lauderdale Chamber of Commerce Leadership Fort Lauderdale *Class 22 (2016)*

Fort Lauderdale Education Advisory Board *Member (2013 – 2014)*

Fort Lauderdale Navy League *Member (2015 - Present)*

Fort Lauderdale Historical Society, *Sustainer Member (2017 – present)*

Riverwalk Fort Lauderdale, *Member (2015 – Present)*

Rio Vista Civic Association, Inc., *Member (2015 – Present)*

Protect Rio Vista, *Member (2015 – Present)*

Virginia Shuman Young Elementary School PTA, *Member and Class Sponsor (2017 – Present)*

Rotary Club of Fort Lauderdale *Member (2016 – Present)*

NSU Art Museum Fort Lauderdale *Cobra Circle Member (2016 - Present)*

Hollywood Police Department *Chaplain (2015 - Present)*

International Conference of Police Chaplains *Member (2015 – Present)*

Leadership Broward Foundation *Board of Directors (2015 – Present), Class 27 (2009) and Lifetime Member*

Mission United of the United Way of Broward County *Co-Founder and Advisory Council (2012 – Present)*

Broward County Council Navy League *Member (2015 – Present)]*

Broward County Human Rights Board *Member (2013 – Present)*

Broward County Human Rights Board Ad Hoc Committee on Homelessness *Chair (2017 – Present)*

Issues

1. Why are you running for office? I am running because I want the people of District 4 to be in charge for a change. I am running to give the people of District 4 a seat at the table and to be servant advocate who is

going to meet the needs of the residents of District 4. I have knocked on nearly 5,000 doors across District 4 and I want to empower communities and neighbors to shape important decisions affecting them, giving voice to their concerns regarding traffic, infrastructure improvement and development. As I have helped find solutions to our city's homelessness, public safety and sober homes, I regularly convene opposing sides and work to provide constructive, viable solutions that directly benefit our citizens. For example, in 2016, I brought together leaders from the Black Lives Matter Organization, Fort Lauderdale Police Department and other Broward County law enforcement agencies in response to nation-wide protests stemming from police shootings. As a result of these meetings mutual understanding increased dramatically, more consistent communication procedures between the groups was implemented and misperceptions on both sides were dispelled.

2. What are the three biggest issues facing Fort Lauderdale and what should be done about them? The three biggest issues facing Fort Lauderdale in order of importance are 1) our failing infrastructure, 2) traffic, and 3) overdevelopment. Our failing infrastructure is the biggest issue facing Fort Lauderdale. Our infrastructure is in such horrible shape and our City Commission has done so little that we are now under a state consent decree to repair our aging infrastructure. We must aggressively invest in our sewer and stormwater streams, stop shifting ROI from the Enterprise Funds to the General Fund, set aside a fund for capital replacement, upgrade the weakest links of our 589 miles of sewer pipes and improve our storm water system. Traffic is another major issue facing Fort Lauderdale. I have been attending the 17th Street Mobility Task Force meetings with State, County and City officials and will hit the ground running, while bringing much needed neighborhood input to issues such as traffic light synchronization, targeted congestion relief and coordination with ongoing construction projects. As City Commissioner I will push for a fully integrated traffic light synchronization system, increase the limited hours of the current traffic command and control center to a 24-7 staffing, limit truck traffic entering the Port to Eller Drive, seek a parallel, southern route to 17th Street from Federal Highway to Eisenhower. Development is a third significant issue. I do not support unbridled development. We need to take a holistic approach, bearing in mind above and below ground infrastructure capacity, neighborhood impact, and integration into future planning. As City Commissioner, I will say no to projects that negatively impact our quality of life and I support smart development with minimal environmental disturbance. As the City Commissioner, community input will be a primary driver in assessing projects. Current and future density, burdens on infrastructure, traffic, tax income and quality of living must all be taken into account in approving each project. Finally we need to adhere to our master plan.
3. Describe Fort Lauderdale as you would to someone who is thinking of moving to the city or doing business there. For example, what are the city's attributes? What are the city's challenges? How does the city compare to neighboring cities? How would you describe the residents? What do you know about the city that isn't apparent on the surface? Fort Lauderdale's greatest attributes are its world-class beaches, the 2nd busiest seaport in the world, the fantastic weather, wonderful cultural offerings, fantastic cuisine, a world-class boat show, the air and sea show and it embraces diversity. Fort Lauderdale is a city made up of vibrant and varied neighborhoods, each with its own exciting character and offerings. Our downtown provides a professional environment for businesses along with several adjoining areas for first-class dining and entertainment. We strive to be a 'livable' city where families can flourish and our schools and city services serve our communities with pride. Our city provides an oasis of comfort and convenience in an area of south Florida that can get too crowded and hectic sometimes. Fort Lauderdale is no longer a sleepy beach town and is now a world-class destination so how we maintain the qualities that draw so many to live, work and play here yet maintain our robust economic growth and growing international profile is a significant challenge facing our city. Fort Lauderdale stands out among neighboring cities as it maintains a vibrant and international character yet is charming, affordable and removed from the bustle of Miami. Over the past ten years of living, working and serving the community and knocking on 5,000 doors, I have seen many of the pleasant, upbeat, caring and happy people that make our city such a great place to call home. They are proud, informed and cautiously hopeful about the future of Fort Lauderdale. I look forward to working alongside these fine folks in addressing the challenges to make our city even greater. What some may not know about Fort Lauderdale is the numerous individuals and organizations that tirelessly work to improve the lives of all the residents of Fort Lauderdale.

4. How would you assess the performance of the City Commission? What could have been spent on infrastructure.? What are other things that are getting in the way? For too long, our City Commission has supported a development philosophy with little consideration for current and future impact on our infrastructure, traffic, and neighborhoods. The City Commission has failed to take residents' concerns to heart and many of their concerns have gone unattended. The City Commission failed to proactively invest in our failing infrastructure and now we have a \$1.4 billion need to improve our sewer system. Furthermore, the City Commission has failed to work well with the Broward County Commission on critical issues like homelessness and traffic congestion.
5. How would you assess the performance of the city manager? A failure to address our aging infrastructure and unchecked growth setup a situation that now requires \$2.4 billion in sewer and stormwater system improvement. This neglect is the fault of the City Commission and the City Manager. Moreover, the City Manager's and City Commissioners' decision to transfer ROI from the Enterprise Funds to the General Fund must be stopped. The City Commission has the responsibility to put a performance plan in place with clear expectations, deadlines and outcomes for the City Manager.
6. What should be done about the city's sewage pipe problems? We must accelerate our current repairs and replacement of our aging sewer pipes, stop shifting ROI from the Enterprise Funds to the General Fund, set aside a fund for capital replacement, and upgrade the weakest links of our 589 miles of sewer pipes. The City Commission is likely going to approve a \$200 million bond to upgrade our sewage and stormwater systems. This will require rigid oversight by the City Commission to ensure efficient use of taxpayer dollars. In addition, the City's Fiveash Regional Water Treatment Plant is beyond its lifespan and will need to be replaced at the cost of an estimated \$130 million. All the while we are spending \$250,000 a day to pump sewage from one part of the city to another with sewage trucks whose motto is "smells like money".
7. How should the city address traffic congestion and do you support raising the sales tax to pay for transportation improvements? The city should address traffic congestion by implementing with the County a fully integrated traffic light synchronization system, increase the limited hours of the current traffic command and control center to a 24-7 staffing, limit truck traffic entering the Port to Eller Drive, and seek a parallel southern route to 17th Street from Federal Highway to Eisenhower through the Port. This not only impacts our commuter traffic but also the response time of our first responders. I am a Fort Lauderdale Police Chaplain and I am the only candidate to be endorsed by the police and the fire union. By having more efficient traffic flows we are better able to achieve our response time of 6 minutes or less. If there was a thorough plan with significant return to Fort Lauderdale and direct input and oversight by our City, I would consider supporting the sales tax for transportation improvements.
8. What is your view on where things stand with the Wave streetcar? The Wave streetcar is massively over budget with the most recent estimates putting it \$100 million over the expected costs. Revised RFPs have been distributed and the expectation is the new bids will be forthcoming. I do not support the Wave. With current cost estimates, overhead electrical wiring, fixed rail system, and questionable ridership levels, this is a project I cannot support.
9. How should the city address concerns about overdevelopment and gentrification as it seeks to encourage economic development? I do not support unbridled development. We need to take a holistic approach, bearing in mind above and below ground infrastructure capacity, neighborhood impact, and integration into future planning. As City Commissioner, I will say no to projects that negatively impact our quality of life and I support smart development with minimal environmental disturbance. As the City Commissioner, community input will be a primary driver in assessing projects. Current and future density, burdens on infrastructure, traffic, tax income and quality of living must all be taken into account in approving each project. We can both encourage economic development while also preserving our quality of life. In fact, when we have a city with a strong infrastructure with reasonable development we will be even more successful in economic development as individuals and companies assess quality of life, infrastructure and safety in selecting places to work and invest.
10. What should the city do about sea level rise and other threats from climate change?As we upgrade our infrastructure we need to build for future sea level rise. This includes raising streets, adjusting building

codes and elevating existing sea walls. As City Commissioner I will work with our surrounding municipal neighbors to form a strong regional lobbying bloc to work with the state and with the federal government to gain funding to address sea level rise and the resultant impact such as beach erosion. Furthermore, I will form a Sea Level Rise Task Force to provide suggestions to the city while also working to form an annual global conference here in Fort Lauderdale addressing this issue while leveraging the incredible experts we have here from NSU and the marine industry.

11. What are your priorities for spending in the city budget, what city expenses could be reduced and what's your philosophy on taxes? Upgrading our failing infrastructure is priority number one in our city's \$776 million budget. We must eliminate future expenditures on the Wave, eliminate failing Sun Trolley routes, and establish fee for events to utilize our beaches. If we are good stewards of taxpayers' money we should and can keep our taxes low in our economically vibrant city.
12. How would you rate the city's response to Hurricane Irma and what should be done differently during the next storm? The city's response to Hurricane Irma was mediocre. As a result of many lift stations not have generators and mobile generators unable to get to some lift stations, many neighborhoods had sewage flowing in the streets. In addition, as a City Commissioner I will push for Florida Power and Light to do much more to harden our electrical infrastructure. Ninety percent of FPL customers lost power during Hurricane Irma. We must do better. This includes burying electrical lines, having concrete poles replace wood electrical poles and establishing regional command and control centers from which to dispatch repair technicians. Additionally, debris removal went well but there needs to be much better communication between the city and neighbors as to when the debris removal will occur.
13. How could the city better manage the use of taxpayer dollars in the Fort Lauderdale Community Redevelopment Agency? We have several CRAs in the city. In the past the CRAs have been poorly managed but are doing more thorough vetting. This is like investing in a business and the city needs a return. To better manage the CRA trust fund proceeds the following needs to be considered above all else: 1) the project's tax increment (difference between the current property taxes and what would be created), 2) the long term viability of the project, 3) the applicant's personal investment. One example of a positive example is the SIX13. This was a church and now will be a mixed use project with work force housing thus having a 100% tax increment while providing much needed housing to those working in our city.
14. How has the city handled the homeless situation and what could be done to better address that problem? The city has done a horrible job handling the homeless situation. Passing ordinances restricting feeding is not the solution to our massive homelessness problem. Six years ago I co-founded Mission United of the United Way of Broward County with the purpose of helping to end veteran homelessness in Fort Lauderdale and Broward County. Mission United works by bringing together business leaders, community service providers, the legal community, government officials and concerned residents. As a result of working together, we have helped house over 800 veterans, we helped provide 4,500 veterans with free legal service, and through Mission United 400 veterans have found employment. This same model needs to be applied to our broader homeless population in Fort Lauderdale. With approximately 1,800 homeless in Fort Lauderdale we are at a breaking point and we as a city can do much better. We are out of shelter beds in our city. I have been working with the county and business leaders to open the Broward County Stockade and use at least part of it as a short term homeless shelter. As City Commissioner, I will champion this issue and work with the Broward County Commission to find a way to make this much needed resource available. We can no longer write ordinances and hope our homeless problem goes away. We must partner with service providers, the county and business leaders to open the Stockade and provide a starting place for finding homes for our city residents.
15. After concerns about late-night City Commission votes and limited public notice about commission meetings, how could the City Commission be more accommodating to public involvement? Late-night City Commission meetings limit public participation and lead to poor decision-making by all those involved. When was the last Thames anyone made great financial decisions at 3 in the morning? We need to explore starting the City Commission meetings earlier in the day as the Broward County Commission does or have a Cinderella law which many cities have which requires commission meetings to end by 10 or 11 p.m.

Additionally we need far better public notice about commission meetings and committee meetings. We will not have commission meetings immediately before a hurricane which happened this year. I will ensure that the public are informed and the government is a much more transparent one when I am elected because engaged and informed neighbors lead to better decision by policy makers.

The Campaign

How much money have you raised in your campaign? Please include today's date. \$70,864 – 1/1/18.

What do you want us to know about your opponent(s)? Walter Duke is a commercial property appraiser and on his website lists 34 developers that are his clients including the Bahia Mar developer. The clear bias someone who works for developers would have to favor more and more development is not going to be good for our city. Furthermore, his close financial dealings with at least 34 developers would force him to recuse himself from any vote on any development project involving one of his many developer clients thus preventing Mr. Duke from truly representing the people of District 4. As a Dania Beach Commissioner, Mr. Duke quit his term 9 months early among reported difficulties with other commissioners. Warren Sturman has served as the President of the Rio Vista Civic Association but beyond Rio Vista, Dr. Sturman has done very little in the other neighborhoods of District 4.

Why should voters vote for you?

Voters should vote for me because I will put the people of District 4 in charge for a change. I have a proven record of putting the concerns of the people of Fort Lauderdale first. I have knocked on nearly 5,000 doors across District 4 and I want to empower communities and neighbors to shape important decisions affecting them, giving voice to their concerns regarding traffic, infrastructure improvement and development. As I have helped find solutions to our city's homelessness, public safety and sober homes, I regularly convene opposing sides and work to provide constructive, viable solutions that directly benefit our citizens. I bring a powerful skill set to bring to bear in our city's government. My lessons learned and experiences of 12 years of working with Fortune 100 companies to improve their leadership and organizational efficiency will be immediately leveraged as a City Commissioner. Having worked at the second largest accounting firm in the world and at the highest levels of our military, I have an in depth understanding of financial and budgetary matters and of effective fiscal management. I have six degrees including a law degree from Georgetown University Law Center providing a strong understanding of the legal fabric of our community and how to enact change through our legal framework. Finally, I have been resolving issues for our residents by working with our City staff on everything from adjusting traffic lights, to repairing streets, to getting downed trees removed. I will be a workhorse and will put the residents of District 4 in charge.

Instructions:

Please include your completed questionnaire to Andy Reid at abreid@sunsentinel.com at least two days before your scheduled interview. Please write "completed questionnaire" in the subject line.

Also, please include a headshot photo.