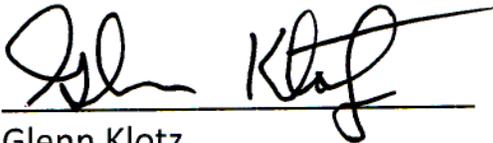
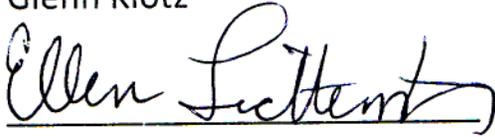


**The Margate Boardwalk Committee's  
Response to Margate City's  
Administrative Staff Report  
of Oct. 19, 2019**

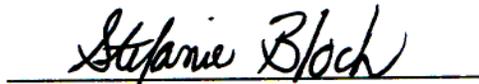
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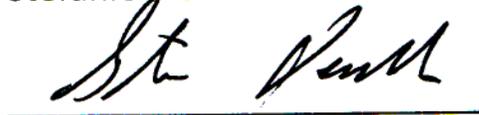
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Ellen Lichtenstein



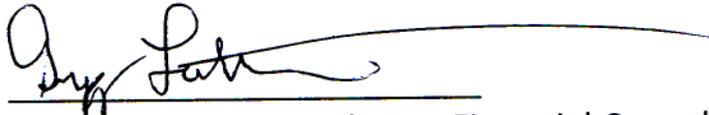
Stefanie Bloch



Steve Davidson



Calvin Tesler



Gregg Lichtenstein, Ph.D. – Financial Consultant

February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2020

## Executive Summary

The Margate Boardwalk Committee's proposal to build a Boardwalk is a response to the problems created for our citizens by the dune project implemented by the state of New Jersey. We have lost Access to the Beach, Views of the Ocean and the Physical as well as Social Connections that make us a beach community. We believe that a Boardwalk is the missing piece of a puzzle that reconnects the beaches to the rest of Margate and restores our place as a first-class resort town.

The question of whether or not to build a Boardwalk is simply too big and too important to be left to the Commissioners. **We want the people to decide.**

In the on-going discussion of this question, this particular document contains the Margate Boardwalk Committee's response to the City Administrative Staff's review of our original report. They raise several legitimate concerns and we thank them for their effort. Many of the issues raised by the City (e.g., the storm drainage system, access points to the beach, etc.), are minor and can easily be addressed in the design of the Boardwalk. However, overall we are deeply disappointed that:

- The city fails to recognize the needs of our community for Access, Views and Connections that have driven this demand for a Boardwalk; nor do they offer alternative ways to meet those needs. In so doing, they are ignoring their responsibilities to their citizens.
- So many of the City's "conclusions" contradict the experience of other municipalities that actually have Boardwalks, it appears they simply made answers up.
- The City resorts to using fear tactics to try to convince people that a Boardwalk is not feasible – fear of fire, of crime, and of wild and unrestrained increase in costs for what we believe are totally unnecessary and inflated expenditures.

This leads us to wonder whether the City is making a good faith effort to have an honest dialogue, or are merely looking for ways to dismiss the idea.

Despite this, the answer to the question that matters most – what is the Boardwalk going to cost me – remains the same: ***The average taxpayer that owns a home worth \$534,800 will have to pay \$220 in taxes annually for a Boardwalk (as represented by the mid-range version – the Current Ventnor Boardwalk) for a period of 15 years. This is equivalent to \$.60 / day.***

If the city's tax base continues to increase (as it consistently has done in the past and will continue to do in the foreseeable future), and the city's excellent grant writing team is able to raise grant funding or attract private endowments from the considerable number of sources that exist (and are enumerated in our Report), **the amount taxpayers pay for the Boardwalk will be lower.**

The ability to fund the Boardwalk is a matter of choice – how we want to spend our money as taxpayers. Are the homeowners in Margate willing to spend \$220 to invest in a Boardwalk that will last for 45 years, be a source of pleasure to family, friends and our community and bring back what made Margate special?

## Introduction

This document is a response to the City Administration's written comments on our Committee's report entitled A Margate Boardwalk for the 21st Century (July 1, 2019). We want to thank the Commissioners and the City administrative staff for their work.

Although prepared by the professional staff, we are taking their responses as reflecting the opinion of our elected officials (the Commissioners), given the way this document was publicly distributed, and not just used internally to inform the Commissioners.

Before examining the issues raised, several observations are in order:

1. Since the city, by its own admission, has not done **any** research to support its claims,<sup>1</sup> the comments made in their response represent *opinions*, and should carry no more weight than any other opinion *when they lack the support of the facts*. We will show below that the city, had they done any research at all on these questions, would have been forced to reach conclusions which are at odds with their stated *opinions*.
2. In many cases, the city ignores the considerable research that our Committee has already performed on the question of the feasibility of constructing a Boardwalk in Margate.<sup>2</sup>
3. By explicitly taking "no position on the merits of this proposal [for the Boardwalk]"<sup>3</sup>, the city dismisses the problems and needs that have motivated the desire for a Boardwalk in the first place. *If the state of New Jersey had not implemented the dune project, no one in the entire city would be proposing a Boardwalk. It is in response to the problems that this change created for the people of Margate (problems of beach Access, the loss of Views and broken social Connections), that the demand for the Boardwalk has arisen. By failing to acknowledge this fact, the city is telling us that it has NO obligation to take its own citizens' needs into account.* A decision on the Boardwalk should indeed be made on its merits – and its primary merit consists of the fact that it successfully addresses the problems created by the dune project for the people of Margate.

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<sup>1</sup> This is a direct quote from the second paragraph of the City's response: "No significant attempt has been made to independently verify information within the citizen boardwalk report nor to use outside resources to prepare an independent response."

<sup>2</sup> E.g., the solicitation of bids from actual construction companies and the data as well judgment of highly credentialed experts in such areas as security. All of this information is cited in detail in our original report, which has been available online since July 7, 2019.

<sup>3</sup> "This response will not address the first one third of the Boardwalk Committee Report which begins with the opinion that the dune project caused great harm which can be overcome by building a boardwalk."

## Financial Considerations

The city of Margate made two substantive changes<sup>4</sup> to the approach that the Boardwalk Committee used to calculate a Bond Amortization Schedule for the most expensive of the three Boardwalk options we presented:

1. They limited the bond financing period to 15 years (we used 20 years)
2. They applied a 3% interest rate (we used a 4% interest rate)

We agree with both of these changes (our explanation of the reasons for them appear below), but we must point out how these changes **benefit** the taxpayers – ***by shortening the bond payback period from 20 years to 15 years and reducing the interest rate to 3%, the additional cost of the Boardwalk in taxes to the average homeowner is reduced by 16%!<sup>5</sup>***

And for 15 years of bond payments, we will get at least 45 years of useful life out of the Boardwalk!

We do take issue with the fact that **the city only estimated the financing costs for the most expensive of the 3 Boardwalk options we were proposing**, without specifically identifying their choice as the *most expensive option*. To accurately represent the financing costs of ALL of the Boardwalk options, these new changes to calculating a Bond Amortization Schedule must be applied to *each* option (we do this in Table 2 below).

But before examining the financing costs for all of the Boardwalk options, we would like to introduce a fourth Boardwalk option for Margate voters and taxpayers to consider – the Margate Basic (represented in the 3<sup>rd</sup> column in Table 1).

**Table 1: Design Specs for 4 Different Versions of the Boardwalk**

	Ventnor Basic	Ventnor Current	Margate Basic	Margate Premium
<b>Length</b>	8,500 feet	8,500 feet	8,500 feet	8,500 feet
<b>Width</b>	20' feet	20' feet	20' – 27' feet	20' – 27' feet
<b>Bike Path</b>	No	No	Yes	Yes
<b>Ramps</b>	25- 30 10' Wide 1 – 2 vehicle ramps	30 – 35 10' Wide 1 – 2 vehicle ramps	30 – 35 10' Wide 2 – 3 vehicle ramps	35 – 40 10' Wide 2 – 3 vehicle ramps
<b>Pavilions</b>	0	0	2	4

<sup>4</sup> Under the Financial Considerations section, pg. 9

<sup>5</sup> While the city's annual costs of \$271 per year looks higher than our original calculation of \$190 / year, theirs is based on a 15-year payment period and ours was based on a 20-year payment period. The total costs of \$271 for 15 years is 16% less than our costs of \$190 for 20 years.

<b>Restrooms</b>	0	0	0	2
<b>Outdoor Water</b>	No	No	Water Fountains	Showers and Fountains
<b>Railings</b>	Y	Y	Y	Y
<b>Benches</b>	Y	Y	Y	Y
<b>Lighting</b>	Basic LED	Basic LED	Basic LED	Solar-powered LED
<b>Security Cameras</b>	No	No	No	Yes

Detailed in Table 2 is our Committee’s revised analysis of the possible future costs for various types of Boardwalk Projects and estimates of the taxes involved.

**Table 2. Costs for Each Boardwalk Version**

<b>Boardwalk Type:</b>	<b>Ventnor Basic</b>	<b>Ventnor Current</b>	<b>Margate Basic</b>	<b>Margate Premium</b>
<b>Financial Element:</b>				
<b>Est. Construction Costs</b>	\$14mm	\$19mm	\$22mm	\$24mm
<b>Interest Rate</b>	3%	3%	3%	3%
<b>Bond Term</b>	15 years	15 years	15 years	15 years
<b>Down Payment (5%)</b>	\$700,000	\$950,000	\$1.1mm	\$1.2mm
<b>Amount to be Financed</b>	\$13.3mm	\$18.05mm	\$20.9mm	\$22.8mm
<b>Financing Costs (Interest Payments)</b>	\$3,411,433	\$4,629,802	\$5,360,823	\$5,848,171
<b>Total Costs / Payments</b>	\$16,711,433	\$22,679,802	\$26,260,823	\$28,648,171
<b>Annual Debt Payments<sup>6</sup></b>	\$1,114,096	\$1,511,987	\$1,750,722	\$1,909,878
<b>Tax Rate Per \$100 of Assessed Property<sup>7</sup></b>	0.0303	0.0411	0.0476	0.052
<b>Annual Tax on Property Assessed at \$534,800</b>	\$162	\$220	\$255	\$278
<b>Soft Costs (2%)<sup>8</sup></b>	\$280,000	\$380,000	\$440,000	\$480,000

<sup>6</sup> As noted before, this figure is calculated for simplicity’s purposes by using straight line method.

<sup>7</sup> These rates (as well as the ones used by the city in their response) are based on Margate’s tax rates as of 2018, found on the cover page of a municipalities Annual Financial Statement - [https://www.marqate-nj.com/sites/marqatenj/files/uploads/2018\\_afs.pdf](https://www.marqate-nj.com/sites/marqatenj/files/uploads/2018_afs.pdf). The 2018 rate amount is being used for the entire projection when Margate has seen substantial increases in rates over the past several years. **A realistic projection would recognize a modest increase in the rate base over the bond period, meaning the cost of the Boardwalk for the average taxpayers should decline.**

<sup>8</sup> Estimated as a percentage of construction costs.

## Technical Aspects of Boardwalk Financing

Although there are other, technical differences in the method the city staff used in calculating their Amortization schedule (as compared to the method we used in our Report and continue to use here), they produce no difference in actual cost to the taxpayer – it only makes a difference to the timing of their payments.<sup>9</sup>

Although the reasons for these choices (about payback period and interest rates) were not explained in the city’s document, our research indicates the following:

- Bond financing for structures like boardwalks are limited to 15 years in New Jersey. Although not specifically named in the statute, boardwalks fall into a class of assets (e.g., Marine Improvements, such as Bulkheads) whose maximum useful life for financing purposes is estimated at 15 years (see N.J.S.A. 40A:2 - The Local Bond Law, Section 40A:2-22, [https://www.nj.gov/dca/divisions/dlgs/resources/misc\\_docs/local\\_bond\\_qualified\\_bond\\_11-09.pdf](https://www.nj.gov/dca/divisions/dlgs/resources/misc_docs/local_bond_qualified_bond_11-09.pdf)). While we agree with this change in calculating a bond amortization schedule for a Margate Boardwalk (for financial and statutory reasons), *this in no way means that we accept the idea that the useful life of the Boardwalk is 15 years*. In fact, using the Ventnor and Atlantic City Boardwalks as appropriate references (since the climate and surf conditions are the same), **the experience of our sister cities suggest that the lifespan of our boardwalk will be between 30 to 45 years** (requiring only minor repairs during that period). This is particularly likely given the long-lasting materials we are recommending for its construction.
- The choice of the 3% interest rate (instead of our use of 4%), more accurately reflects the conditions in the bond market right now (rates are at historical lows right now). **This lower interest rate makes the entire Boardwalk project less expensive to finance**. In fact, it is likely that interest rates, which can vary in some circumstances across the life of the bond, will in actuality, be even lower. The city did not take this possibility into account, when applying the same interest rate across the entire 15-year period.

### What Everyone Wants to Know: What’s it going to cost me?

The bottom line remains the same: If the city’s tax base does not increase, and the city is unable to raise any additional funding for the Boardwalk from the considerable number of sources that exist (and are enumerated in our Report), ***the average taxpayer that owns a home worth \$534,800 will have to pay \$220 in taxes annually for a Boardwalk (as represented by the mid-range version – the Current Ventnor Boardwalk) for a period of 15 years. This is equivalent to \$.60 / day.***

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<sup>9</sup> The city is using the effective rate for calculating annual interest costs, as well as a step-up function (these are not the only options available); for simplicity, we have used a straight line function. The differences these two methods yield in terms of total interest costs is insignificant; in the end, the exact payment schedule will be determined by the finance institution (and cannot be known this far in advance).

If the city's tax base continues to increase (as it consistently has done in the past and will continue to do in the foreseeable future), and the city's excellent grant writing team is able to raise grant funding or attract private endowments, the amount taxpayers will have to pay will decrease. The evidence, which is what we should use to evaluate these questions, suggests that both outcomes (an increased tax base and that we will attract grant funding) are highly likely.

The ability and willingness to fund the Boardwalk are a function of choices; how we want to spend our money as taxpayers. Are the homeowners in Margate willing to spend \$220 to invest in a Boardwalk that will last for 45 years and be a permanent source of pleasure to family, friends and their community?

Let's put this question to a vote. We live in a democracy – let the community decide. We want to know what they want – and believe that city representatives should too.

### **The City Grossly Overestimates Maintenance Costs**

The experience other municipalities who have built and manage Boardwalks (e.g., Atlantic City, Ventnor which is 57 years old and has a similar Boardwalk width, Belmar which is 7 years old and has a similar Boardwalk length, etc.) do not support ANY of the city's claims regarding maintenance, which they make without providing any data.

Our research shows that municipalities around the country are using materials that are not expensive and are not environmentally controversial (e.g., domestically grown and sustainable black locust), while achieving life spans of 30 – 45 years, without re-decking and with limited maintenance.

Not only will a new Boardwalk require limited maintenance (as per our conversation with the Belmar City Administration), any necessary work could easily be performed on an as-needed basis by a subcontractor with carpentry skills. ***The city seriously overestimates the maintenance required; no additional employees will be necessary.*** Ventnor's Public Works Dept. has NO permanent staff dedicated to their Boardwalk.

### **Material**

The choice of the right materials to deck the Boardwalk will extend its lifespan and reduce maintenance costs. We recommend the use of domestically grown and sustainable black locust that would extend the life of the Boardwalk well past ones that use less durable materials like yellow pine (a wood we do not recommend for many reasons). Black Locust is the best choice, is readily available and if bought with proper inspection and guarantees beforehand, is an excellent sustainable, highly durable domestically grown and sustainable product. We can

provide the city with a long list of recent cases where Black Locust was used for decking in large public and private infrastructure projects.<sup>10</sup>

There is still a conversation to be had about materials. Belmar, NJ built its new Boardwalk in 2013 using Trex (an artificial wood product) for its decking and is getting extremely good reviews for it. There is IPE as well and other tropical hardwoods, although we do not recommend them for sustainability reasons. Both AC and Ventnor have chosen IPE while considering the environmental impact. Their logic was that using these woods lowered the environmental impact because they would require far less use of resources that also damage the environment like the extra logging and its massive effects on the land, water and air. For these reasons, using yellow pine instead of a tropical hardwood is not without its own serious environmental impacts. Frankly, it is difficult to say which option is environmentally better.

### **Safety Concerns – Policing**

The City agrees with Dr. Marissa Levy’s (March 16th, 2019) letter to the Margate Boardwalk Committee that a Margate Boardwalk would increase informal surveillance of the beach district. However, they then state “...that safety would not necessarily improve. Formal surveillance would be significantly better for [preventing] individuals wanting to commit crimes.” No reasons are given; not a single fact, nor statistic or proof of this *opinion* is provided.

Sadly, the City then goes on to invoke an old bugaboo designed to strike fear in the hearts of Margate residents – the case of petty thefts of bicycles from “suspects [who] are *transients* from larger urban areas of Atlantic City.” Again, without any facts, only the use of innuendo, suspicion and bias against certain groups, they argue that a Boardwalk would grant easier access to perpetrators of petty theft into the area. The city chooses to ignore:

1. The fact that any potential criminal can already access Margate via the existing roadways, streets and or sidewalks today. A Boardwalk will provide both formal and informal surveillance of the beach block from a currently non-existent direction.
2. That according to Dr. Levy (who the city agrees with in one breath and then contradicts without evidence in another), informal surveillance from the Boardwalk will “act as a protective factor against burglaries to those houses directly on the beach as well as on the beach blocks.”
3. That a Boardwalk will introduce lighting to the deck and to the Dead Zone – and it’s a well-known fact that lighting an area *reduces* crime.
4. That our Boardwalk will have NO commercial businesses on it, and that fact removes a major attractor to criminals.

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<sup>10</sup> There was an issue with Black Locust many years ago when the market for this product was new. The issues regarding quality have been remedied and we stand by this recommendation.

5. That currently anyone walking on the beach during the off-season is essentially cut off from any help should they need it.

Finally, the City fails to offer any ideas that might enhance any weaknesses in security they believe exists. At a recent meeting, a retired police officer recommended that we add a camera surveillance system to our Boardwalk, similar to ones already used in Boardwalks all over the country.<sup>11</sup> We have added this option to our design specifications.

All of this, according to Dr. Levy, who has studied this issue professionally in many locations around the country, WILL RESULT IN VASTLY IMPROVED SECURITY!

### **Staffing**

The City Report states that "...Margate (police officers currently patrol the beach on all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) during the summer season." The City staff then argues it would need to increase its staff by four more officers if Margate had a Boardwalk.

Why not simply split the number of officers that currently patrol the beach in the summer months, placing half of them on the beach and half of them on the Boardwalk? From the Boardwalk a police patrol will easily be able to patrol the largely empty beach behind the existing dune as well as the Boardwalk itself. In the off season a Boardwalk patrol would be required, but such a patrol would provide better surveillance of the beach blocks as well as off-season patrols of the beach itself.

### **Fire Prevention**

According to our Civil Engineer, a recently retired Senior Engineer for the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, the City is overinflating the dangers of fire on a non-commercial wooden Boardwalk. The Ventnor City Fire Dept. told us the same thing in November of last year (2019). They said that in the entire history of the Ventnor Boardwalk there has never been a recorded fire. They felt that since **no significant source of fire would exist on the proposed Boardwalk**, the chance of a fire was extremely unlikely. They also felt the materials involved in building such a structure lessened the danger of a fire. In a phone conversation they said, "You could take a blow torch to Ventnor's Boardwalk and it still would be hard to get it to burn."

The City then argues that it will be necessary to "install a water hydrant system along the entire length of the Boardwalk ....in excess of \$2.5mm."

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<sup>11</sup> A camera already exists at the Decatur Ave. Lifeguard headquarters for on-line weather systems not surveillance. We propose adding cameras to certain areas like the Library, Lucy & The Greenhouse, the zone where the Boardwalk comes closest to the bulkhead at Kenyon to Nassau and the city border with Ventnor border at Fredericksburg Ave.

This is simply ridiculous. There are ample hydrants on Margate's beach blocks and on Atlantic Avenue, well within the 1,000 ft. range of the hoses that all Fire Departments in New Jersey are required to carry. This is how the Ventnor City Fire Department handles the situation and it has worked for them.

### **The Storm Drainage System**

According to our Civil Engineer, the Boardwalk will NOT impact the existing drainage system.<sup>12</sup> He assured us that for most of the proposed route, a Boardwalk could be offset from the new Storm drainage system. (Examples of this exist in the southern end of the Atlantic City Boardwalk where such a drainage system was installed after the Boardwalk was built.) He closely examined the one area where a Boardwalk would need to come directly over the system from Osborne Avenue to Kenyon Avenue. Even there, he saw no problem, as long as access to the manhole covers were engineered into the Boardwalk itself, which he saw as a minor design issue.

In addition, engineering openings for beach maintenance equipment through a new Boardwalk shouldn't present much of an engineering challenge given that such openings exist on every existing Boardwalk in New Jersey and elsewhere along coastal beaches.

In the final analysis, he saw no major engineering issues that would stand in the way of such a Boardwalk project.

### **Beach Patrol Operations**

Although, the lifeguard shacks would be on the other side of the Boardwalk from the ocean beaches, it's our belief, based upon similar situations along Ventnor and Atlantic City's Boardwalk that this wouldn't impede the lifeguards from using them. The shack at Osborne Ave, however, would probably have to be moved. The rest do not appear to be in the proposed route of our Boardwalk.

### **The Boardwalk Substructure**

The City argues that our proposed Boardwalk dimensions "...are not conducive to motor vehicle traffic such as police ... or fire dept. ambulances." This statement is simply untrue! For evidence, one only has to look at Ventnor as anyone who has ever walked on the Ventnor Boardwalk can attest. Ventnor's 57 yr. old 20' wide Boardwalk provides daily access to full sized

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<sup>12</sup> In January of this year (2020), we asked our Engineer to do a site survey of the existing situation on the Margate Beach as regards the Army Corp. Beach Project and the new Storm Drainage system built as a result of the Project. He specifically looked at the drawings we have of the Storm Drainage system supplied to us by the NJDEP, mapping out where the system now exists. He walked the entire length of the Project with one of our Committee members, Mr. Klotz before making his analysis.

Police, Emergency and Maintenance vehicles. Our report proposed either a 20' wide (a Ventnor style Boardwalk) or a 27' wide (Margate style Boardwalk).

As for the City's contention that we would require some special kind of substructure to support the Boardwalk, we dispute this as there are many examples of standard Boardwalks today that are built with 100% treated heavy construction grade lumber and stainless-steel bolts and braces. Ventnor's Boardwalk is just such an example; it easily carries full sized Police, Emergency and repair vehicles upon it daily.

The City also states that Margate currently has four vehicle access points from the street to the beach. They state that three of these access ramps can handle large oversized equipment. Our engineer tells us that all four of these access points can be readily converted to access ramps that are structurally designed to cross a Boardwalk to access the ocean beaches.

The City's failure to do even the most minimal amount of research, such as contacting their sister officials in the Ventnor Police and Fire Depts. (as we did), leads us to seriously question their credibility and intention in their responses to our Report.

## **Parking**

As for the contention that because Atlantic Ave. now has parking and four lanes and a bike lane, a Boardwalk could be considered non-essential, we disagree.

It could be argued that not allowing beach block parking at least on one side of the street ONLY during the summer also took hundreds of possible legal parking spots away from people looking for parking. These were certainly some of the reasons parking in Margate today during the summer months is such an issue.

A new Boardwalk, in our opinion, will not increase this problem with parking. Rather, it will decrease it by **providing a safer path for bikers and pedestrians to transit the town** by moving them away from vehicles. We believe our residents would be less likely to get into their vehicles: to visit with friends, go to the beach, go out for a meal, go shopping, go to the Library or visit Lucy, etc.

Weather permitting and most certainly, during the summer months when the streets are overcrowded and parking is scarce, people would utilize the well-lit Boardwalk and walk back and forth, to and from, their planned destinations. Not only would they get to once again enjoy the beautiful ocean views (totally absent now from the streets because of the dune project), they would also reap the benefits of healthy exercise, without the added stress of looking for parking.

## Biking

As for the bike lanes on Atlantic Ave., they are an improvement, but bikers are still far more at risk riding next to automobiles than they would be on a new boardwalk with a dedicated bike lane.

## Insurance

While we agree that a new Boardwalk might involve some added expense as regards Margate's general liability Insurance, we believe the increase would be minor.

A Boardwalk would likely lower the number of accidents, on the city streets, especially involving bikes, pedestrians and cars. We believe a new Boardwalk would lower, not raise, Margate's liability exposure.

## Legal Issues

We agree with the city that there will be legal costs incurred in constructing the Boardwalk (which is why we have included an estimate of these "soft" costs at 2% of the total construction in last line of Table 2 above). However, **we believe that most of the legal work has already been done** as part of the Dune Project. By using OPRA (Open Public Records Act) to obtain that research from the state of New Jersey, the city can save the cost of having to duplicate it.

We also believe that when we get to the stage of applying for the State permitting, most, if not all of the 12 known riparian claims would be given to the city without any need to condemn and take the properties.

## Final Comments

We are deeply disappointed in the City's response to our Report, and our efforts to explore the possibility of constructing a Boardwalk in Margate. As this document explains, the City has:

- 1. Ignored any discussion of the needs of our citizens for Access, Views of the Ocean and Social Connections on the Beach, to which the Boardwalk is a promising solution. It is also our contention that a new Boardwalk is the missing piece of the Project puzzle that reconnects the ocean beaches to the rest of the town. A Boardwalk would remedy this physical and psychological division visited on us by the ex. Governor of the State of New Jersey against our explicitly expressed will in two elections. If the city rejects this solution, the needs which gave rise to this proposal will still exist and need to be addressed.**

2. Required us to follow a process that is sharply different (and more difficult) than city-initiated projects such as the Boardwalk / Promenade Project along the new bulkhead on Amherst Ave. That project, which was not in response to citizen interest but rather city conceived, was pushed forward with deliberate speed, marshalling the city's resources, and without timely citizen input. By contrast, the Boardwalk Committee has been asked to do and pay for all of the research needed to come to a decision about whether to build a Boardwalk or not. We cannot help but suspect that this behavior is intentional and that roadblocks are being set up to our being able to answer this question – do the voters and taxpayers of Margate want a boardwalk? Is the city acting as a source of resistance or as a fair and honest judge of whether particular ideas are in the best interest of the city's voters and taxpayers? This leads good people to wonder – who is the City working for?
3. Done NO research and only engaged in speculation, which is inappropriate for questions of such importance. We consider this to be an abdication of a public servant's responsibilities.
4. Seemed eager to find or even invent reasons to dismiss a Boardwalk. It's almost as if the city staff were instructed to come up with as many reasons as possible to denigrate the idea of a boardwalk, and if they can't come up with any, to make objections up (i.e., that emergency vehicles will somehow not fit on the Boardwalk with the dimensions we gave, while they obviously do on Ventnor's, which has the same dimensions). This kind of behavior smells of back-room politics.
5. Chose an adversarial strategy of discounting the Boardwalk, rather than offering any ideas that might address what the City sees as weaknesses in our proposal, or to offer alternative ways to meet the needs of our community that the Boardwalk is designed to address.
6. Grossly and inaccurately inflated the costs associated with a Boardwalk (see the specific incidents of this described throughout this document). In addition, the City only evaluated the most expensive Boardwalk option, rather than all of the choices we presented.

Over the last few weeks, a number of voters we have spoken to have been deeply suspicious about the costs of a Boardwalk. When we explored further and explained that our costs were based on actual bids submitted to us by construction companies with experience in building boardwalks, *they told us it wasn't our numbers they were skeptical about, but rather what will happen to the costs when the City gets ahold of the project.* Even if our numbers were right, they did not believe that the City could be trusted to build a Boardwalk that met those numbers. They pointed to too many government projects with cost-overruns, and appropriation bills (in Congress, for example) with spending riders that have nothing to do with the project at hand. In other words, it's not us (the Boardwalk Committee) that they don't trust; it's the City.

The exaggerated costs in the City's response to our Report only reinforces voters' lack of trust in the government. This kind of behavior and the lack of transparency causes people to question the integrity of the City and wonder who they are working for.

7. Resorted to using fear tactics – fear of fire, of crime, or wild and unrestrained increases in costs for what we believe are unnecessary and inflated expenditures – rather than engaging in an honest dialogue.

## **Where Do We Go from Here?**

It is time to move to a vote to determine whether the residents and the taxpayers of Margate want a Boardwalk or not. Given that we live in a democracy, this is not a choice that should be made by 3 commissioners, but by the community as a whole.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> We hope, that if the voters approve of a Boardwalk in a nonbinding referendum, approval will be sought from the planning board by the City Commissioner. And that they would also request the City masterplan be changed to include such a structure. That it's not been mentioned in any of the past master plans is easy to explain. The recent idea for building such a Boardwalk only arose from a media article by one of our Committee members (Mr. Klotz) in late March of 2018 and all the master plans pre-date it by years. The same is true with the City capitol plan and the pedestrian and bicycle studies.