



Margaret Blank &lt;margaret.h.blank@gmail.com&gt;

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## Emergency Services Surtax public information request

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**Margaret Blank** <margaret.h.blank@gmail.com>

Fri, Feb 12, 2016 at 1:17 PM

To: Shillinger-Bob &lt;Shillinger-Bob@monroecounty-fl.gov&gt;

Cc: Kolhage-Danny &lt;Kolhage-Danny@monroecounty-fl.gov&gt;, BOCCDIS2 &lt;boccdi2@monroecounty-fl.gov&gt;, BOCCDIS3 &lt;BOCCDIS3@monroecounty-fl.gov&gt;, BOCCDIS4 &lt;BOCCDIS4@monroecounty-fl.gov&gt;, BOCCDIS5 &lt;BOCCDIS5@monroecounty-fl.gov&gt;, Madok-Kevin &lt;Madok-Kevin@monroecounty-fl.gov&gt;

Thank you.

Good grief.

On Fri, Feb 12, 2016 at 1:15 PM, Shillinger-Bob &lt;Shillinger-Bob@monroecounty-fl.gov&gt; wrote:

Here's two.



Bob Shillinger

County Attorney

Monroe County Attorney's Office

1111 12th Street, Suite 408

Key West, FL 33040

(305) 292-3470

(305) 292-3516 (fax)

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**From:** Margaret Blank [mailto:margaret.h.blank@gmail.com]**Sent:** Friday, February 12, 2016 1:15 PM**To:** Shillinger-Bob**Cc:** Kolhage-Danny; BOCCDIS2; BOCCDIS3; BOCCDIS4; BOCCDIS5; Madok-Kevin**Subject:** Re: Emergency Services Surtax public information request

I still have no documentation supporting the claims made. That is the bottom line. Very revealing.

On Fri, Feb 12, 2016 at 1:12 PM, Shillinger-Bob <[Shillinger-Bob@monroecounty-fl.gov](mailto:Shillinger-Bob@monroecounty-fl.gov)> wrote:

No. I gave you a statement of the law. You took that statement, inserted your own assumptions, then jumped to your own conclusions.



Bob Shillinger  
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**From:** Margaret Blank [<mailto:margaret.h.blank@gmail.com>]

**Sent:** Friday, February 12, 2016 1:00 PM

**To:** Shillinger-Bob

**Cc:** Kolhage-Danny; BOCCDIS2; BOCCDIS3; BOCCDIS4; BOCCDIS5; Madok-Kevin

**Subject:** Re: Emergency Services Surtax public information request

Yes, you did. You basically said if the documentation does not exist then you are under no obligation to provide it. Fair enough. But that also means there is no documentation to support the numbers thrown around in the "tax shift" proposal. You can't have it both ways.

If the public is going to be able to evaluate the true impact of this "tax shift" then they need access to the numbers used to justify it. Where did those numbers come from? How reliable are they? Can they be confirmed? This is how good decisions are made. It is especially important because of the BOCC's history of negligently mishandling other issues - most notably the wastewater projects.

Perhaps if the BOCC ever takes this issue up again, they will insist that documentation be provided to support the claims being made. That would be the responsible thing to do - especially on something as significant as this "tax shift".

I've got lots more questions about this issue, but they'll have to wait until another time.

Happy weekend.

On Fri, Feb 12, 2016 at 11:01 AM, Shillinger-Bob <[Shillinger-Bob@monroecounty-fl.gov](mailto:Shillinger-Bob@monroecounty-fl.gov)> wrote:

I did not say that.



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County Attorney  
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**From:** Margaret Blank [<mailto:margaret.h.blank@gmail.com>]  
**Sent:** Friday, February 12, 2016 10:58 AM  
**To:** Shillinger-Bob  
**Cc:** Kolhage-Danny; BOCCDIS2; BOCCDIS3; BOCCDIS4; BOCCDIS5; Madok-Kevin  
**Subject:** Re: Emergency Services Surtax public information request

So what you're telling me is that there are no documents available to support the claims made in the "white paper". My goodness, that's quite an admission. What else have you all lied about? Never mind. I've got a whole blog devoted to that.

The 40%/60% sales tax split was pulled out of thin air. And obviously so was the claim that locals pay 100% of the property taxes. The free-floating \$125 figure cannot be reconciled to the mathematically supported \$417 figure. And there is nothing to justify the excessive cost of fire services the county provides to the Lower and Middle Keys.

For shame. This is low even for you all.

On Fri, Feb 12, 2016 at 9:36 AM, Shillinger-Bob <Shillinger-Bob@monroecounty-fl.gov> wrote:

Margaret:

To the extent records that are responsive to your request already exist, we will provide them. To be clear, the Public Records Act does not impose any duty or obligation to create records or to respond questions posed.



Bob Shillinger  
County Attorney  
Monroe County Attorney's Office  
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**From:** Margaret Blank [mailto:margaret.h.blank@gmail.com]  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 11, 2016 3:39 PM  
**To:** Kolhage-Danny; BOCCDIS2; BOCCDIS3; BOCCDIS4; BOCCDIS5  
**Cc:** Madok-Kevin; Shillinger-Bob  
**Subject:** Fwd: Emergency Services Surtax public information request

Hello;

This is my second request for the following information about the proposed Emergency Services Surtax. Please consider this a formal public information request.

1. Your "white paper" claims that non-residents pay zero property taxes. This is clearly false. There are hundreds of hotel properties in the Keys, and thousands of residential properties used for seasonal/vacation purposes. Please provide data to back-up your statement.

2. Please substantiate your claim that tourists pay 60% of the sales tax.
  
3. You claim that Keys families will only pay \$125 more per year because of the additional sales tax. But the math, using numbers provided in the "white paper", clearly indicates that they will pay over \$400 more per year. Please explain the contradiction.
  
4. Please provide more information on the "insurance discount". How much is it? How much more will a property owner pay if they are more than 5 miles from a fire station? Do all property owners in the Keys receive this discount? Were more fire stations built beyond what is necessary for safety in order to secure this discount? If so, why should these property owners receive additional subsidies from county-wide taxpayers?
  
5. The cost of operating Lower and Middle Keys fire/rescue is far higher than any similar entity in the Keys. Why is that exactly? And why should taxpayers Keys-wide subsidize this through the sales tax? What cost-saving measures have been considered?

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Margaret Blank** <margaret.h.blank@gmail.com>

Date: Fri, Feb 5, 2016 at 8:07 AM

Subject: Emergency Services Surtax public information request

To: Danny Kolhage <boccdis1@monroecounty-fl.gov>, George Neugent <boccdis2@monroecounty-fl.gov>, boccdis3@monroecounty-fl.gov, boccdis4@monroecounty-fl.gov, boccdis5@monroecounty-fl.gov

Cc: "Madok, Kevin" <Madok-Kevin@monroecounty-fl.gov>, "Shillinger, Bob" <Shillinger-Bob@monroecounty-fl.gov>

Dear Commissioners;

I reviewed the documentation supporting the Emergency Services Surtax proposal. It was extremely misleading - to put it in the politest possible terms.

1. The claim that locals pay 100% of the property taxes is blatantly false. Hotels, motels, time shares, vacation rentals, and seasonal homes are all occupied by visitors.
  
2. Your claim that tourists pay 60% of the sales tax needs to be substantiated. Where did this number come from? How was it calculated?
  
3. Your claim that the increased sales tax burden on local families will only amount to \$125 per year makes no sense. The "white paper" says that \$34 million will be collected from this additional sales tax. If tourists pay 60% and locals pay 40%, that means that \$13.6 million will come from local families. According to the census bureau, there are 32,629 households in Monroe County. That amounts to an additional sales tax burden of \$417 per year.
  
4. A review of financial documents indicates that the Lower & Middle Keys Fire and Rescue District 1 has the highest costs by far of any entity in the Keys. The "white paper" claims this is because of geography and "insurance discounts". Please explain the "insurance discount". How much is it? Who benefits?

5. Have you reviewed the cost of the Lower & Middle Keys Fire District to determine why costs are so much higher? Excessive staffing levels? Excessive compensation? Waste? Fraud? Inefficiency? If not, why not?

I've already written about the subject and plan to write more.

<https://therealpoop.org/2016/02/05/emergency-sales-surtax-white-paper/>

<https://therealpoop.org/2016/02/03/emergency-services-who-where-and-how-much/>

<https://therealpoop.org/2016/01/21/monkey-math-emergency-services-surtax/>