

Tampa City Council 2023 survey Creative Loafing Tampa Bay (non-incumbent)

Creative Loafing Tampa Bay is beginning to put its voting guide together and would love to get some feedback from you since you're on the ballot. This is a pretty basic form asking you about your background and how you'd vote on certain issues. It includes multiple choice questions and lots of room for you to explain answers in your own words. We'll definitely be reaching back out with follow ups after your initial response. We'd like to hear back from by before Jan. 23 if possible. These responses are all on the record.

Email *

VoteGeorge4Tampa@gmail.com

Your race is non-partisan, but do you care to disclose your party affiliation?

- ☐ Democrat
- ☒ Republican
- ☐ Independent
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Prefer not disclose

Could you give us your quick elevator pitch? *

I am George "The Hunted" Feshev. I'm running for Tampa City Council District 3. In 2019 I was a victim of a violent crime and after recovering, I felt I needed to serve the public and help make some positive changes. I have three primary goals: to make our city safer, to lower taxes, and to restore accountability. Reducing crime, growing the economy, creating more jobs, and making sure our city officials are accessible and accountable will get us directed to prosperity in our pursuit of happiness.

Please feel free to give us a more robust explanation of your background and why you want to be a city councilperson.

I was a victim of a violent crime three years ago when I was shot in the head while having dinner with my teenage daughter. I couldn't just sit by and watch the suffering of our residents. Crimes are up; homelessness is to the levels I haven't seen in every part of the world I've visited; poverty is rampant; taxes are high; political fights are the new normal. So where is that stability and freedom USA was known for? It's starting to look like the place I was born and that is not a good thing. We all want to see America strong and prosperous and our society healthy, peaceful and happy. I want to be a city councilman to ensure the city will get back on the right track.

I was born and raised in a town on the Bulgarian Black Sea coast. After high school, I joined the Military Special Forces. I then graduated from college with a master's degree in management, organizational behavior, and international law. I was a co-founder and vice chair of the regional tourism organization. I did post graduate work in Athens, Greece - in the historic preservation and heritage tourism - a program of EU. I had a chance to fulfill my dream by getting a green card and coming to the US. I became a legal citizen in 2007 and was growing my business and life was good. After being shot, I started working on creating The Hunted Organization to connect other victims of crime to share their experience because society has turned its back on them.

What makes you more qualified than the incumbent or any of your other opponents in the race. We'd like to read specific examples and reasoning.

I am more motivated, educated, open minded, and not afraid to tackle tough problems. I cannot be bought by special inserts. I am motivated to serve to help others, not myself. My international experience, my teamwork skills, my natural leadership makes me more qualified than my opponents. I also possess an entrepreneur spirit, I am non-confrontational, but not afraid to fight for what is right. I'm a good listener, negotiator, successful businessman, and successful car salesman with no fear of rejection.

What do you call someone from Tampa?

- ☐ Tampeño
- ☐ Tampanian
- ☒ Other: I call them my friends.

When it comes to the municipal flag of Tampa, do you stan or would you change it?

- ☐ STAN 100%
- ☐ Reluctantly Stan
- ☒ Needs a redesign

Tampa City Council recently rejected a Harbour Island hotel proposal after loud outcry from residents. As promised, the developer is suing the city for \$6.6 million. How would you have voted on the proposal, given all the context of neighborhood feedback and Tampa's trajectory as an emerging metro?

I would have voted against the hotel to be built. We need to stop overbuilding; we have enough hotels in downtown. Harbor Island has two small bridges making it hard to take the traffic. There are plenty of places to build not far from the investor's targeted spot. We need to negotiate with this company as they may have other solutions. No need to give up on an investment opportunity that would create jobs, especially in the segment this hotel is planned.

Hindsight is 20/20 at this point, but go back to the appointment of former police chief Mary O'Connor. Given the community feedback on Jane Castor's pick, would you have voted to confirm O'Connor for the position? Feel free to explain why or why not.

I would not have voted to confirm O'Connor. I would have done my research, and seen she was not qualified to be the Police Chief. Also, I will not vote to confirm someone for Police Chief unless they can promise to be personally involved in the investigations of all major crimes. There were 21 murders in 2021. We need to fix this. What is a more important job the Police chief has to do? We may still not be like it is in Chicago, but we seem to be headed that way and that needs changed.

Staying on the topic of police. The Tampa PBA recently sent out a candidate survey that ruffled feathers, in part, because it asked about a candidate's support or affiliation with Black Live Matter, but skipped any questions about affiliations with white supremacist groups. From the dais, one city councilman asked the PBA to apologize. How would you have reacted to the survey, had you received it?

I would have written that All lives matter, and it was one-sided to only ask about one terrorist group and not the other.

Would you have voted in support of expanded oversight capability—including subpoena power—for Tampa's police Citizens Review Board? Please feel free to expand on your yes or no answer.

I would have voted NO. Anyone that was not elected should never have oversight or subpoena power.

A year ago, Tampa's Hanna Avenue 'City Center' project faced scrutiny after the public learned that its budget was increased from roughly \$6 million to \$108 million without a public RFP. Did that process trouble you? How would you have handled it if you were on council?

I would have made sure the increase of budget was presented properly to the public and they be allowed to vote. The money collected belongs to the people, not to the officials.

At a March 2022 press conference, Tampa Mayor Jane Castor told reporters that rent stabilization and rent control aren't viable solutions to the housing crisis because the measures would ["kill development."](#) What is your stance on rent control, and how would you have voted last August when council was talked out of putting the issue of rent control on last November's ballot?

The government should never be telling a private business what prices it should charge, max or minimum. I would have voted for no rent control. I would instead have worked to increase rent assistance and affordable housing.

Last Halloween, as council was set to vote on charter amendments, Mayor Jane Castor said, "For more than fifty years, mayors and city councils have worked together for the betterment of our city under its current form of government. This system has served us well and resulted in a stronger, more prosperous city – and today, more than 90 percent of Tampa residents say they trust their city government."

That echoes a sentiment from former Tampa Mayor Bob Buckhorn, but we'd argue that the last 50 years has led to an inflection point where maybe the city should consider not abolishing the strong mayor form of government, but giving council more tools to check the mayor's power.

Especially now after Castor's recent vetoes, what's your take on charter amendments, specifically those that would give council more avenues to balance power in city hall?

I believe the city council needs to be the balancing force to city hall. Charter amendments need to limit the government's power.

If a vote to relocate the Christopher Columbus statue came up, how would you vote? Please answer yes or no, and feel free to explain why.

I would vote to not move it. I believe history cannot be changed but instead should be learned from.

Last September, council members all expressed either doubt or complete disapproval of the administration's PURE wastewater plans as a whole. The Tampa Bay Times recently confirmed environmentalists' concerns and reported that it was actually Tampa lobbyists who helped craft the legislation that will require Tampa to find some other use for the wastewater by 2032. What's your take on the situation? Would you have pushed on with PURE as it was presented?

I do not support PURE.

Please feel free to freestyle and tell us about anything that you didn't get to address above.

I am considering this is a job, to me this is a calling to serve.

This form was created inside of Creative Loafing Tampa.

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