

# GUAM ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS QUESTIONNAIRE

Tina Muña Barnes Response to GAR Questionnaire  
September 30, 2020

## **A. REAL ESTATE INDUSTRY RELATED**

1. The Governor's office has upgraded the classification of the real estate industry as an *essential service* during COVID-19 "Condition of Readiness" operating restrictions. However, Government of Guam agencies that are part and parcel of the real estate industry remain either closed or inactive. (*The real estate industry encompasses private sector real estate activities as well as Government of Guam agencies that are involved in the processing of real estate transactions including taxation, recordation, land management interaction, construction and land use permitting, building inspections, building occupancy and document recordation.*).

Will you support the preparation and passage of legislation to classify the whole of the real estate industry encompassing both the private sector and related Government of Guam agencies as TRUE ESSENTIAL SERVICES?

*A: Do I support passing and introducing legislation to allow the entire Real Estate industry to operate at 100 % - YES, I did so with Bill 385-35.*

*This Bill is a pilot program to allow for automation within the Department of Revenue and Taxation - allowing for most of these services to be done virtually. Currently, I am working closely with a few tech stakeholders to implement and allow for Robotic Process Automation (RPA) within the entire Government of Guam. Based on the meetings we have had, we are currently identifying chokepoints within the Government of Guam, where we can deploy RPA technology to automate most of these services. Some of the areas we are looking at include DPW's One-Stop Center, DOA, DLM, and GSA. This process has proven results at GPA regarding the meter switch out and is also showing successes in Singapore and South Korea.*

2. The Guam Land Use Commission (GLUC) application processing system has been rendered inactive by GovGuam COVID restrictions since March 2020 with no apparent urgency to restore the system to full operation. The estimated value of development projects currently awaiting Department of Land Management and GLUC-related action since March is nearly \$2 billion. Will you support the classification of the GLUC application processing system (*critical to improving Guam's economic well-being*) as an essential service during the COVID-19 Condition of Readiness operating restrictions?

*A: Again, as we live in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a majority of these services can be done more effectively and also virtually. Unfortunately, the Administrations of the past have failed to bring us up to speed - leaving us with technology that is no longer supported! By improving the software we use in the Government of Guam, I intend to make our Government of Guam more efficient for our employees and more accessible for our People. What a GovGuam employee spends hours processing, with technology, we hope to make their jobs less tedious and more productive.*

## **B. GENERAL GOVERNMENT**

1. Will you support the creation, introduction and passage of a bill to change the operation of the Guam Legislature from full time to part time?

*A: I can look back at this term alone, and I have the record to prove that I have made strides at making the lives of our People of Guam better. To introduce substantive legislation, it truly takes hours of research and meeting with stakeholders before it's even introduced. While I have been blessed with an incredible staff who can ensure that we never have more than a couple of bills in our committee at any given time, I know that some Committees have dozens of bills that are waiting to be heard. When I started as a*

*policymaker, I was a mother of four and faced the same challenges every hardworking Guamanian faces. By creating a part-time legislature, this would allow only elitists to run for office - something I am not, something that the People I represent are not. For the reasons mentioned above, I believe this would be another obstacle to the legislative process.*

2. Will you support the repeal of the 1% increase in the Business Privilege Tax/Gross Receipt Tax rate, i.e. restoring the BPT/GRT rate to 4%?

*A: Under this democratic majority, we have reduced the BPT for small businesses to 0-3%. Big businesses already received a tax cut from the Trump Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. Under the Calvo Administration, we put the burden on the backbone of our economy - our small businesses. I will continue to ensure that hardworking Guamanians get a chance at achieving their dreams and big businesses pay their fair share.*

3. Are you in favor of increasing taxes and/fees to deal with Government of Guam revenue shortfall caused by COVID-19 imposed restrictions on private sector business operations?

*A: Absolutely not. As reports have indicated, federal resources have been able to keep our economy afloat. I have been working closely with the White House and other national stakeholders to ensure that our People's needs are taken care of. Simply put, our People cannot afford to singlehandedly bear the burden of the impact of COVID-19, and as I have always stated, we will overcome this, but we can only do so TOGETHER.*

4. Will you support a significant reduction in Government of Guam expenditures including payroll during COVID-19 lockdown and PCOR2 periods in order to keep the Government solvent?

*A: As I have stated, federal resources are able to keep our economy afloat. As this survey has indicated, there is a backlog in Government services that are essential to our economy and the livelihoods of many. I will prioritize, ensuring that these needs are met. I do believe that we need to streamline government, and that is something I will continue doing. I have also been a lifelong proponent of public-private partnerships. These have proven to be more efficient and effective - our People deserve better, and we need to explore all options, leaving no stone unturned.*

5. Are you in favor of increasing the local minimum wage and Why?

*A: Many of our local residents have to work two to three jobs to pay their bills and put food on the table. I have always been a proponent of establishing a living wage on Guam - and the only way to truly achieve this is to ensure that our private sector flourishes. I will continue to advocate for the strengthening of our economy, especially our small business. They need help, and we need to do better.*

6. Are you in favor of reducing taxes and fees to assist in the start of small businesses and in maintaining their viability?

*A: Again, under this Democratic Majority, we ran on a promise to put PEOPLE first. We delivered on that promise by reducing the BPT for small businesses to 0-3%. I genuinely believe that they are the backbone of our economy, and yes, we need to do better for them. Doing better means more than cutting taxes; it means deregulating government to help them get up on their feet. I had introduced a measure to allow for deregulation for micro-businesses; unfortunately, I am still waiting for the action to be reported out of committee.*

7. What functions of the Government of Guam do you believe should be privatized?

*A: This term, I had introduced a measure to allow for a public private partnership for the stamping of cigarettes. As data has shown, consumers are paying their share of sin taxes, but distributors have failed to do their part to fund the Healthy Futures Fund. My measure would allow for a private entity to stamp cigarettes before they are put on shelves, holding big businesses accountable. DRT has stated on the record, that they don't have the capacity to undertake this mandate. Another partnership that I envision would support our economy is using a private entity as a dozen states do, regulating bed and breakfasts. DRT simply does not have the resources to regulate these entities, and GVB cannot ensure that these entities embody the Hafa Adai Spirit to our visitors. Once our tourism industry flourishes again, we can ensure fly-by-night operators pay their taxes, making it an even playing field for those who want to do business honestly on Guam.*

8. Are you in support of the impending military buildup and the Marine relocation?

*A: As a wife of an Air Force Vet, and a prouder mother of an Airman, I support the military. As a daughter of Guam, I am grateful that we are protected from the emerging threat of North Korea and China; on the same token, I believe we must work together to ensure that our natural resources are protected. We can come together at the same table and continue the four pillars in place for the strategy of the military build-up, which are One Guam, Green Guam, Cultural Sensitivity, and "Net negative" DoD footprint. I reflect on a speech given by Admiral Menoni when he took charge of Joint Region Marianas; he mentioned that just a few blocks away from the Gymnasium where he assumed his command, was Naval Hospital Guam, where his child was born. As the Oversight Chairwoman on the Guam Buildup, I am grateful to have a partner in this initiative, one who answers the tough questions and listens to my concerns. For me, it's always been about People - he committed to me a better partnership, and I have been able to hold him accountable. Whether it be early morning on a Sunday or countless phone calls to get to the bottom of an issue, we have been able to adapt, improvise, and overcome whatever obstacles come our way. Just as my approach to overcoming this economic downturn, we can only overcome this together. Just recently, it was brought to my attention that \$8 billion and taxes on construction, gave Guam nearly \$320 million in revenues. Admiral Menoni understands that we must take a ONE GUAM approach, and we continue to achieve this goal!*