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Group Two candidates have long record of volunteering - A newcomer and a longtime resident are in the race for the Group Two seat on the South Miami City Commission.

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Author: *Rebecca Burton* , rburton@MiamiHerald.com

Josh Liebman, a 37-year-old marathon runner and businessman is running against Sally Philips, a 68-year old retiree, for the Group Two seat on the City Commission..

Josh Liebman

This 37 year old who is about to run his 100th marathon, says he is going into this commission race with no agenda.

"I've always been a free-thinker," Liebman said. "And with any issue that arises, I'm going to make sure I do my homework.

Liebman, a Miami native, is a businessman who got his master's in business administration at the University of Florida. Although he did not grow up in South Miami, he has lived there two and a half years and said the close sense of community in the city is what made him move in.

"I like the fact that I can go out in the evening, walk my dog, and talk to the neighbors who have become my friends," Liebman said.

Liebman is currently executive director for TeamFootWorks training programs and a residential real estate broker. He believes his sense of business is what made him want to run.

"A city is like a business, and I think South Miami needs someone with business sense," Liebman said.

Liebman said he favors annexing nearby areas, but says anything done would be in the interest of the residents.

"I don't believe South Miami should expand all the way to Tropical Park," Liebman said. "But expanding the city would be a smart business move, providing more taxes and jobs."

Liebman also said that annexation would be up to the residents in the outer areas surrounding South Miami.

"I'm not coming with any agenda other than a voice with my constituents," Liebman said. "It's not a matter of forcing the issue, the residents in that area have to want to become part of South Miami. I do still want to preserve a small town character. I don't want to lose control of

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my city.”

One thing Liebman does have plans to do if he gets elected is to have a community track built. He wishes to use \$100,000 of private money to install a track in order to couple academics with sports. He has named the program “Stay on Track.”

Liebman said that the idea came from the fact that South Miami needs some kind of recreation for the community, and since a swimming pool would cost too much to maintain, a track would be the next best thing.

“There used to be a youth center, now there’s nothing,” Liebman said. “Kids are smoking marijuana, getting into trouble and watching too much TV. I want to give kids something to do and running is an inexpensive sport.”

He says that with a limited political agenda, he has the drive to listen to residents and businesses alike and come up with smart solutions for the city.

“I’m not 24, but I’m not old. With energy and new ideas, I know I would bring a positive impact to the city of South Miami,” Liebman said. “I will maintain a healthy balance between the public and the private sector. I will maintain our small town quality of life while keeping our taxes low.”

Sally Philips

Philips is a 14-year resident of South Miami who has served on multiple city boards. She believes she has the ability to help South Miami work with a workable balanced budget.

Philips also believes that South Miami is being threatened by inappropriate development and that the small town feel is what makes the city unique. She does believe that certain types of businesses will create jobs without the congestion seeping in from neighboring areas.

“Healthy retail and commercial businesses are essential to a thriving city,” Philips said. “But, one thing I do not want is to see is tall buildings.”

Philips also believes that when new investors are thinking of creating a new business in the city, many factors should be considered.

“The city should require that developers make a strong case for how their ventures will benefit and improve the city,” Philips said. “It should demand proper assurances as to viability and soundness of a building project so that no project is left abandoned, empty or in need of rescue funding. The city should give preference to projects that will employ and train a significant number of South Miami residents.”

When asked about annexation, Philips said that she would support if the residents of the outer communities were willing, and if funds proved sufficient.

Community togetherness, through properly funded events, is also part of Philips’ agenda.

“Community events are part of South Miami’s identity,” Philips said. “Providing these events are inclusive, and safe I would support these events and propose new ones.”

Philips currently works as a crisis support consultant and retired from directing the Employee Assistance Program at the University of Miami in 2007.

Philips says with her time now she wishes to “spend energy to serve people where my impact will be significant and sustain South Miami as a beautiful, park-like, human-scale city.”

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