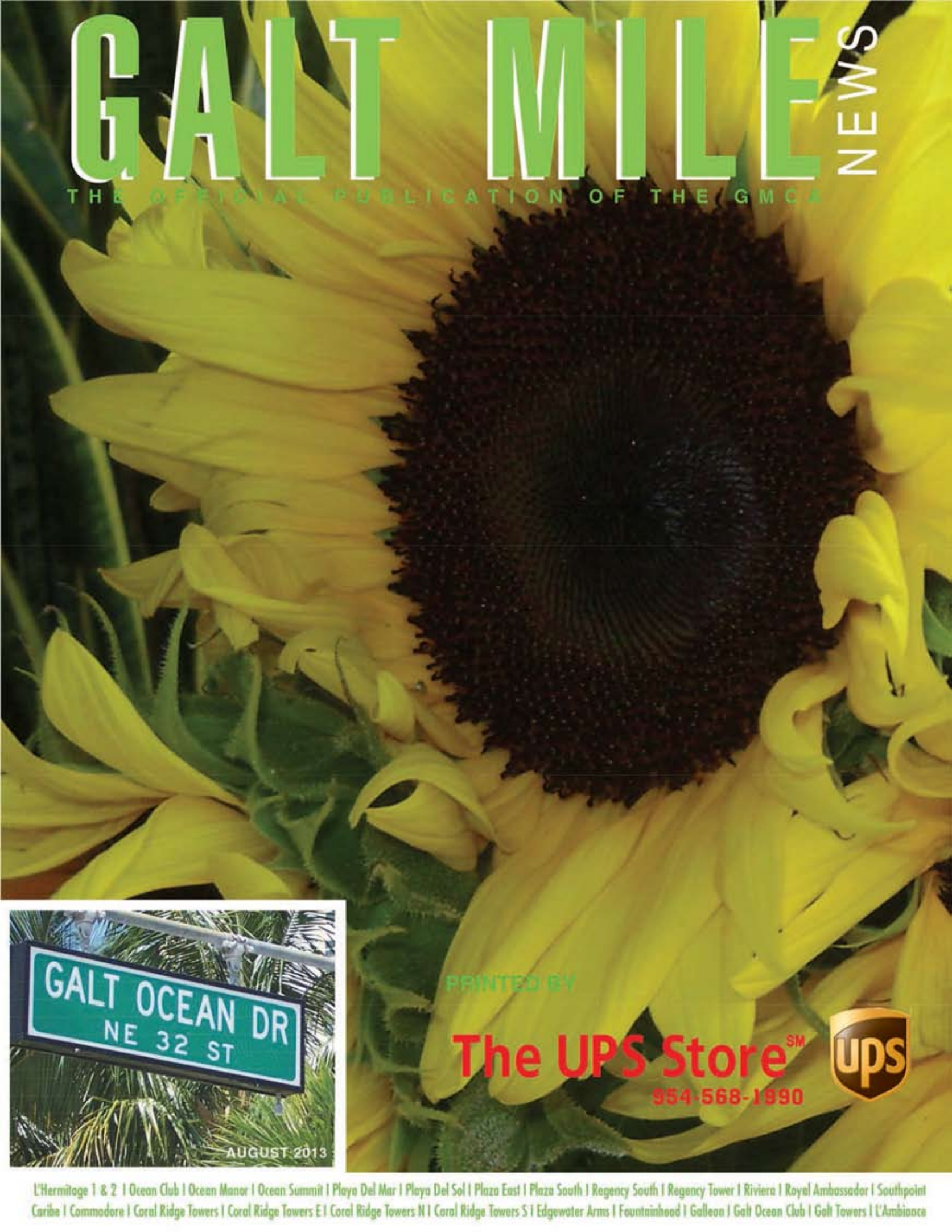


# GALT MILE NEWS

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE GMCA



AUGUST 2013

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# FILLING SOME BIG LEGAL SHOES

By Eric Berkowitz



In January of 2012, Fort Lauderdale Mayor Jack Seiler announced that City Attorney Harry Stewart was cashing in his chips. 400 highly paid employees were offered an Early Retirement Plan that would increase their pension payout by adding up to 32 months of "in" time to their pension calculations. Stewart is one of 131 staffers who snapped up the early retirement buyout offered by the city. The 72 year-old Stewart technically pulled the plug on March 16, 2012 - five months before a contract he signed in 2009 would expire. With a base pay of \$255,403 enhanced with an \$8,609 allowance, healthy pension contributions, a comprehensive health care package plus a \$4,224 kicker called "longevity pay," Stewart annually snagged upwards of \$370,000 (\$382,000 in 2011).

To keep the City's legal machinery humming until an executive level search process could yield a suitable replacement, Commissioners asked the City's highest paid employee to continue managing Fort Lauderdale's legal affairs on a month to month basis at Stewart's current salary - albeit without benefits. Anticipating that the search would bear fruit by the end of 2012, Stewart agreed. Although functionally postponed, his official retirement triggered a \$200,000 payout for accrued unused sick days and vacation time as well as an annual \$93,361 pension income. On completion of a stringent vetting process during which Pinecrest Village City Attorney Cynthia Everett outpaced a field of legal hopefuls for his vacated position, Stewart's eleven-year tenure with the City of Fort Lauderdale finally ended on July 11, 2013.

## The Process

Shortly after Stewart announced his retirement, the City Commission empaneled a Search Committee comprised of six well-known local attorneys and Stewart, who personally nominated the new board's unanimously approved Chair and Vice-Chair at the first meeting. W. George Allen, the Civil Rights advocate whose 1963 lawsuit nuked entrenched segregation in Broward County's public accommodations and public school system, was installed as Chair on June 15, 2012.

Joining Allen as Vice Chair was Deerfield Beach City Attorney Andy Maurodis. To help lure candidates and then cull resumes deemed insufficient, the City retained executive search firm Bob Murray and Associates to serve as consultant.

As months flew by, the Committee grew increasingly disappointed with the lack of impressive candidates among the 40+ responding applicants. At least in part, the reason for the perceived dearth of acceptable applicants was because the legal team lost sight of its mandated objective. Instead of seeking a qualified City Attorney, the Committee was looking for a replacement for Harry Stewart, arguably the most talented City Attorney in the State of Florida. They would have to adjust the bar - and their expectations. At their November 16, 2012 meeting, amid discussions about dumping eligibility constraints - such as a residency requirement - or sweetening the salary, Committee members (and City Commissioners observing the process) realized that Stewart's anticipated departure by year's end was a pipedream.

On February 15, 2013, Bob Murray & Associates Vice President Renée Narloch informed the Committee that despite having considered 15 additional prospects since the last meeting, she would only recommend eight as "the best fit for the City," anticipating that Committee members would nominate some as well. Her 8-candidate list included two lawyers from Stewart's staff, Fort Lauderdale assistant city attorneys Paul Bangel and Robert Duncel. Hoping to adjourn the meeting with a minimum of ten candidates, Committee Chair Allen urged the addition of Pinecrest Village City Attorney Cynthia Everett and Narloch touted Fort Myers Assistant City Attorney Mark Moriarty.

The Search Committee spent April 10 and 11 interviewing the ten recommended aspirants. Along with Everett and Moriarty, vying for the job was Port St. Lucie Senior Assistant City Attorney Pam Booker, Deputy Manatee County Attorney Rodney Wade, Assistant Polk County Attorney Phillip Sherwin, Miami Assistant City Attorney

Continued on page 5

Rafael Suarez-Rivas (who formerly served as a city attorney in Miramar), and former San Antonio Assistant City Attorney Harlene Kennedy (now an associate attorney with Weiss Serota Helfman Pastoriza Cole & Boniske, a South Florida law firm that serves as City Attorney in 13 municipalities). Along with Stewart's in-house staffers Bangel and Dunckel, rounding out the field was Deputy Broward County Attorney Noel Pfeffer.

One week later, each of the seven Committee members selected those applicants they would most like to see advance through the process, narrowing the field to five candidates: Cynthia Everett, Mark Moriarty, Pam Booker, and Stewart's two assistant city attorneys, Paul Bangel and Robert Dunckel. Although Cynthia A. Everett was the only candidate named by all seven Committee members, the voting was close, as Pam Booker received six votes, Dunckel five as Bangel and Moriarty each nailed four. Nonetheless, the handwriting was on the wall.

In a split City Commission vote on May 13, Everett nosed out Dunckel for the job (Seiler, Roberts and DuBose backed Everett while Rogers and Trantalis favored Dunckel). On May 20, Seiler fired the first negotiating salvo with an opening offer of \$175,000, a standard \$390 monthly vehicle allowance, contributions to a 401a retirement plan of an amount equal to 9 percent of her salary, 15 annual vacation days, 12 sick days and a \$500 annual wellness incentive. After a month of negotiations, the City Commission voted on June 18 to hire Everett at a starting salary of \$193,000, the 9 percent of salary city contributions into her individual retirement plan, the usual complement of sick days / vacation days and \$10,000 for moving expenses.

Commissioner Dean Trantalis complained that the July 1 start date would box the city into paying Everett while her time was divided between taking the reins in Fort Lauderdale and closing up shop in Pinecrest. Everett diffused his concern by offering to take unpaid leave when off campus. One of the ten candidates who narrowly missed being included in the list of five finalists, Deputy Broward County Attorney Noel Pfeffer, may have reminded Stewart of when he interviewed for the same job eleven years earlier. Stewart also represented Broward County before coming to Fort Lauderdale. In fact, Pfeffer held Stewart's former County job for a month while the Broward Commission decided who would permanently replace resigning Broward County Attorney Sue Delegal in 1989.

**Harry Comes to Fort Lauderdale**

In 1987, the City of Fort Lauderdale hired Dennis Lyles as a part time City Attorney for \$76,440 a year, medical insurance and a monthly expense allowance of \$340. When legal issues crossed his desk, the City's Risk Management Department and Lyles would assign the cases in house or to one of ten high-priced outside law firms specializing in labor law, environmental law, civil rights, eminent domain and/or other legal fields. From 1990 to 1993, the \$780,295 in fees collected for cases funneled by Lyles to his own firm made Billing, Cochran, Heath, Lyles & Mauro the single biggest beneficiary of this legal outsourcing. As a partner, Lyles shared in those fees.

When Lyles resigned in 2002, the City's growing legal dilemmas convinced the City Commission that Fort Lauderdale would be better served by a full time City Attorney. Irked by a series of high profile case misfires, allegedly fumbled by Lyles or farmed out and bungled, former Mayor Jim Naugle led the growing criticism of costly legal missteps on Lyles' watch. They included several booted developer suits, workplace accusations of buried racial discrimination actions, and getting tagged for violating federal conflict-of-interest rules against doling out money from federal HUDD loans. In 2002, one year before his fairy tale municipal budgets took the City to the brink of Bankruptcy; Floyd Johnson was Fort Lauderdale City Manager. Hired by the City in 1998, Johnson previously served as Broward County Administrator from 1982 to 1987.

Continued on page 6

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Since Harry Stewart also served as the Broward County Attorney from 1976 through 1984, they worked together in Broward for several years before Stewart left to take a position as the Orange County Attorney. One year later, Stewart was hammered by a personal nightmare. His stepson, Ronald Eugene Stewart, was kidnapped by a Colombian drug cartel on May 7, 1985. Presumed dead until a witness reported spotting him in Palm Beach on May 29th; police surmised that the 24-year old Stewart had withheld \$5 million in cocaine from the Colombians, prompting a relentless and brutal campaign to recover their lost drugs. Following Ronald Stewart's disappearance, the enraged drug dealers threatened Harry Stewart and assaulted his parents. After weathering five years of personal turmoil, prosecutors finally dropped pending Felony charges against his stepson in 1990.

During his tenure as County Attorney, Stewart contributed heavily to structuring Broward's impressive growth and its relationship with municipalities. He helped draft the Broward County Comprehensive Land Use Plan, an operational framework of legal boundaries between the County and its cities. As such, Stewart was intimately familiar with Fort Lauderdale issues, and quickly evolved working relationships with the City's movers and shakers. Even during his stay in Orange County, Stewart remained engaged in Broward Politics. He helped business magnate Wayne Huizenga plan his National Car Rental Center (now the BB&T Center) in Sunrise as well as the ill-fated Sunrise Fashion Mall. At various times, Stewart represented the City of Pompano Beach during a petition drive to amend the city's charter, and represented Tamarac in an election dispute.

Hoping to revive his working relationship with Johnson in Fort Lauderdale, Stewart was interviewed by the City Commission for the new full time post of City Attorney on July 21, 2002. Commissioners were delighted by the prospect of landing what former Commissioner Tim Smith called a "legal big dog" for a position burdened by endless legal dilemmas for relatively low pay. While responding to a litany of legal theoreticals posed by the vetting Commissioners, the City's entanglement in numerous lawsuits prompted Tim Smith to ask Stewart "What philosophy do you live by when it comes to litigation; do you settle or do you fight for principle"

Stewart answered "The worst and most expensive way to resolve any matter is through litigation," and advocated the settlement of cases whenever possible. However, to demonstrate a preference for tailoring legal strategy to best realize the municipality's objective, rather than some ideological imperative, Stewart offered an anecdote about a strategy he implemented while serving as Broward County Attorney. To reverse the County's reputation as an easy mark for personal injury scammers, he instituted a policy against blindly settling "slip-and-fall" cases, contradicting a longstanding insurance industry practice of flipping nuisance claims "on the cheap." After two years, the number of those cases dropped dramatically. Grifters who intentionally bounced off the sidewalk for a living would have to travel to Miami or Palm Beach to cash out.

While seeking an attorney with the juice to put its legal house in order, the City Commission was also driven to reduce the City's dependence on costly outside legal help. Their history of blending part-time in-house legal counsel with private sector contract attorneys annually drove legal expenses through the roof. In Fiscal Year 2001, in addition to paying part-timer Lyles' \$96,034 annual salary and \$390 vehicle allowance while budgeting \$2.1 million for a legal department with 10 full-time attorneys and 13 support personnel, the City paid \$2.6 million for outside legal assistance (the equivalent of almost \$3.5 million in 2013 dollars). When Stewart promised to limit their use to cases where they were absolutely necessary, the Commission heard enough.



Recently retired Ft. Lauderdale Attorney Harry Stewart.

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# THE GAIT MILE NEWS

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Stewart was offered a four-year contract with a salary of \$182,249, plus \$539 a month car allowance. From day one, his vacation and longevity pay would be calculated as if he had already logged in 16 years with the city. He also received a term life insurance policy with a payout benefit based on three times his salary. Stewart started his new job on August 19, 2002.

### The Long Retirement

Some residents have questioned the fiduciary wisdom of stretching Stewart's tenure for almost a year and a half past his announced retirement, characterizing him as a solid platinum placeholder and a waste of taxpayer dollars. During those 15 months, Stewart spearheaded a legal campaign by Fort Lauderdale and other Broward municipalities that forced the County to manage and finance a county-wide emergency dispatch system. While the \$8 million projected annual savings will be shared by every Broward taxpayer, Fort Lauderdale residents enjoy an added benefit. A series of unsavory deals for dispatch services entered into by the Broward Sheriff's Office hit Fort Lauderdale taxpayers in the wallet twice each year. In addition to funding the City's dispatch services with their City taxes, County taxes paid by Fort Lauderdale property owners were used to subsidize emergency 911 services for neighboring municipalities - like Pompano Beach.

Could they have done this without Stewart? For eight years, the County ignored a 2002 voter mandate to consolidate a patchwork of poorly connected communication resources into an efficient county-wide dispatch service. Broward municipalities that were double-taxed for dispatch services complained bitterly about the abuse, fueling an annual barrage of largely empty threats leveled at the County Board. City Manager Lee Feldman and Stewart finally presented the County with an immutable "line in the sand" - threatening to create an independent City controlled and financed dispatch service that would permanently deprive the County of future contributions to its own crazy quilt of emergency services while pursuing litigation with the County for restitution. Since one third of the County's municipalities planned to follow Fort Lauderdale's lead and Stewart's insurrectional roadmap, the County Commission raised a white flag. On May 7, 2013, the County Board voted 5-4 to pick up the tab for a unified county-wide service, leveling the playing field for all of its municipalities.

For those Fort Lauderdale residents more responsive to "quality of life" issues, within days of informing Jack Seiler of his intention to retire, City Commissioners beset by complaints about aggressive panhandlers who bed down in City Parks after dark asked Stewart to craft an ordinance forbidding solicitation in the downtown business area - duplicating the "no soliciting" zone that has shielded the beach since 1993.

Given the inherent First Amendment pitfalls, simply criminalizing requests for money would trigger the constitutional dogma that could judicially void the ordinance. While researching case law, Stewart harvested local anti-panhandling laws that repeatedly survived constitutional challenges, such as those prohibiting aggressive panhandling, or soliciting people at bank machines, in line at public transportation or at outdoor restaurants. To conceptually unify these widely divergent prohibited zones, no-panhandling status was also ascribed to areas where people are unable to avoid attempted solicitation, "like when you are on a bus," explained Stewart. By stitching together this Chinese menu of constitutionally vetted prohibitions, Stewart tailored an ordinance that placed the City's entire business district off limits to begging.

To pass a First Amendment litmus test, each prohibition in Stewart's regulatory Rubik's Cube would have to be content neutral, narrowly tailored to some significant governmental interest and insure the availability of alternative channels of communication for those impacted by the new law. It also had to satisfy Commission objectives. At the April 17, 2012 Commission meeting, the first reading

of Stewart's ordinance earned a green light. At the May 1, 2012 second reading, it went into the books following unanimous approval by the City Commission. As provided in Ordinance No. C-12-10, the law became fully effective 15 days after approval, on May 16, 2012.

The significance of this legal gymnastic can't be measured. When the City passed Resolution 93-143 on July 20, 1993, wherein Beach Rule 7.5(c) prohibited panhandling, begging and soliciting on the Fort Lauderdale beach and nearby sidewalks (the area within 150 feet of Atlantic Boulevard or Seabreeze Boulevard), nationally acclaimed ACLU heavyweights Bruce Rogow and Beverly Pohl unleashed a legal Tsunami against the prohibition that lasted for 6 years. On October 29, 1999, the United States Supreme Court refused to hear an ACLU appeal of a favorable decision rendered by the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals four months earlier. When Stewart's ordinance was enacted last year, although Constitutional watchdogs predictably complained, their subsequent silence in court underscored the constitutional adequacy of Stewart's handiwork.

### Filling Stewart's Shoes

While shepherding these major projects to successful conclusions during his final 15 months, Stewart addressed the scores of legal tripping hazards that fill every City Attorney's daily calendar. He also guided the search committee to a seemingly soft landing, as Cynthia A. Everett appears to have the stones to fill Stewart's shoes. While in private practice, she spent the past 14 years serving as Village Attorney in the Village of Pinecrest, a 7.5 square mile, 19,000-resident suburb of Miami located southwest of Coral Gables and north of Palmetto Bay.

After graduating from FSU (Florida State University) in 1978 with a major in government and earning a law degree at George Washington University Law School in 1982, Everett served as an assistant state attorney in Miami's 11th judicial circuit, where she was tasked with running the felony division in 1987, prosecuting homicide and specially assigned criminal cases. In 1989, Everett moved from State to Federal level, joining the civil division of the U.S. Attorney's office in Miami, where she prosecuted fraud cases (no shortage in South Florida) and defended the government against civil lawsuits.

Turning to the private sector in 1995, Everett joined the Miami law firm of Williams & Associates. In 1997, she was appointed by the City of Opa-Locka as City Attorney. When the Pinecrest Village Council decided in 1999 to replace the Broward County firm of Josia, Goren, Cherof, Doody and Ezrol (now Goren, Cherof, Doody and Ezrol) with a Village Attorney more conversant with Miami issues, they snatched Everett from Opa-Locka.

Board certified by The Florida Bar in labor and employment law and a Florida Supreme Court certified civil and appellate mediator, Everett served on The Florida Bar Board of Governors, was a member of the Board of Governors special committee on Election Reform, is a past President of The Wilkie D. Ferguson Jr. Bar Association (FKA The Black Lawyers Association of Dade County), and is a member of the Florida Municipal Attorney's Association.

She currently serves on the Florida Bar's Leadership Academy Committee, and is a member of the Florida Bar's Alternative Dispute Resolution Section, the General Practice Solo and Small Firm Section, the Labor and Employment Law Section and the City County and Local Government Law Section. Not too shabby!

A fair-minded city resident might agree that the City got its money's worth from Stewart's prolonged slide to home plate. Since taking control of the City's legal armory, Stewart transformed a catch-as-catch-can department that hemorrhaged money into the most formidable City Attorney's office in the State. Given the untold \$millions he saved the City's taxpayers every year since 2002, Fort Lauderdale owes Harry Stewart more than it could ever hope to repay. As for Ms. Everett, if some very smart lawyers on the City Attorney Search Committee are right, she will build on Stewart's legacy... and keep our elected officials out of trouble! •

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<p><b>18</b> Las Olas Outdoor Green Market 333 E Las Olas Blvd. &amp; SE 4th Ave. 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Info.: 954-426-8436</p> <p>KISS Hard Rock Live, 7 p.m. Tix.: www.hardrocklivehollywoodfl.com</p>	<p><b>19</b></p> <p>Commissioner Bruce Roberts: Pre-Agenda Meeting Beach Community Center, 6 p.m.</p>	<p><b>20</b> BINGO Galt Towers Social Room (4250 Galt Ocean Drive) 7:30 p.m. Info.: Cyndi Songer: 954-563-7268</p> <p>Fort Lauderdale City Commission Meeting City Hall, 6 p.m.</p>	<p><b>21</b> BINGO Regency South Party Room 7 p.m. Info.: Bob Pearlman: 954-547-4063</p>
<p><b>25</b> Las Olas Outdoor Green Market 333 E Las Olas Blvd. &amp; SE 4th Ave. 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Info.: 954-426-8436</p> <p>Riverwalk Sunday Arts Esplanade Park 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Info.: 954-468-1541</p>	<p><b>26</b></p>	<p><b>27</b> BINGO Galt Towers Social Room (4250 Galt Ocean Drive) 7:30 p.m. Info.: Cyndi Songer: 954-563-7268</p>	<p><b>28</b> BINGO Regency South Party Room 7 p.m. Info.: Bob Pearlman: 954-547-4063</p>
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<p><b>8</b> Las Olas Outdoor Green Market 333 E Las Olas Blvd. &amp; SE 4th Ave. 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Info.: 954-426-8436</p>	<p><b>9</b></p>	<p><b>10</b> BINGO Galt Towers Social Room (4250 Galt Ocean Drive) 7:30 p.m. Info.: Cyndi Songer: 954-563-7268</p> <p>Monthly Art Round Table Museum of Art 12 to 1:30 p.m. RSVP: 954-262-0221</p>	<p><b>11</b> BINGO Regency South Party Room 7 p.m. Info.: Bob Pearlman: 954-547-4063</p>

AUGUST 8 - 29: Seminole Hard Rock Poker Open, Hard Rock in the The Poker Room, Info/Reservations: improvtfl.com  
 AUGUST 11: Symphony on Sundays: THE SYMPHONIA Boca Raton, Mizner Park Amphitheater, 7 p.m., Info.: myboca.us/pages/mizneramphi  
 AUGUST 17 - 18: Buckler's 23rd Annual Craft Fair, South Florida Fairgrounds WPB, Info.: 386-860-0092  
 AUGUST 17: Back 2 School Bash, Flamingo Gardens, 9:30 to 4:30 p.m., Info.: www.flamingogardens.org  
 AUGUST 17: Annual Back to School Giveaway & Health Fair, Carter Park (1450 W. Sunrise Blvd.), 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Info.: 954-768-0920  
 AUGUST 25: 3rd Annual Animal Adoption Fair, War Memorial Auditorium, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Info.: 954-971-4432  
 SEPTEMBER 7: Academy of Art + Design Open House, Museum of Art, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., RSVP: 954-262-0239



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September 21 (Tentative)  
International Coastal Cleanup  
9 a.m. to noon  
Info. & Site Locations: 954-519-1270



**FOR A COMPLETE LISTING OF EVENTS, GO TO THE CALENDAR AT [WWW.GALTMILE.COM](http://WWW.GALTMILE.COM)**

<p><b>15</b></p>	<p><b>16</b> Jazz on the Square El Mar Drive &amp; Commercial Blvd 6:30 to 10:30 p.m. Info.: 954-776-5092</p>	<p><b>17</b> Music-By-The-Sea ATA &amp; Commercial Blvd 6:30 to 10:30 p.m. Info.: 954-771-2900</p> <p>Fort Lauderdale Gun &amp; Knife Show (Through 8/18) War Memorial Auditorium Info.: 954-828-5380</p>
<p><b>22</b></p> <p>Fort Lauderdale RV Show &amp; Sale Broward County Convention Center 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. Info.: 561-328-2900</p>	<p><b>23</b> Jazz on the Square El Mar Drive &amp; Commercial Blvd 6:30 to 10:30 p.m. Info.: 954-776-5092</p>	<p><b>24</b> Music-By-The-Sea ATA &amp; Commercial Blvd 6:30 to 10:30 p.m. Info.: 954-771-2900</p> <p>Fr. Lauderdale Bus Loop 300 SW 2nd Street 6 to 11 p.m. Info.: 954-260-6194</p>
<p><b>29</b></p>	<p><b>30</b> Jazz on the Square El Mar Drive &amp; Commercial Blvd 6:30 to 10:30 p.m. Info.: 954-776-5092</p> <p>Miami Fall Home Design &amp; Remodeling Show (Through 9/3) Miami Beach Convention Center Info.: 305-667-9299</p>	<p><b>31</b> Music-By-The-Sea ATA &amp; Commercial Blvd 6:30 to 10:30 p.m. Info.: 954-771-2900</p> <p>Health Food Expo Haizenga Plaza 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Info.: 954-292-9782</p>
<p><b>5</b></p>	<p><b>6</b> Jazz on the Square El Mar Drive &amp; Commercial Blvd 6:30 to 10:30 p.m. Info.: 954-776-5092</p> <p>Sushi &amp; Stroll Summer Walks Morikami Museum &amp; Japanese Gardens 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. Info.: <a href="http://morikami.org/sushiandstroll">morikami.org/sushiandstroll</a></p>	<p><b>7</b> Music-By-The-Sea ATA &amp; Commercial Blvd 6:30 to 10:30 p.m. Info.: 954-771-2900</p> <p>West Palm Beach Antiques Festival (Through 9/8) South Florida Fairgrounds Info.: 941-697-7475</p>
<p><b>12</b></p> <p>Steely Dan Mizner Park Amphitheater, 8 p.m. Tix.: <a href="http://myboca.us/pages/mizneramphi">myboca.us/pages/mizneramphi</a></p>	<p><b>13</b> Erev Yom Kippur</p>	<p><b>14</b> Music-By-The-Sea ATA &amp; Commercial Blvd 6:30 to 10:30 p.m. Info.: 954-771-2900</p>

Fridays: Aruba Beach Café's Friday Fun Fest Pig Roast, 4 to 7 p.m.  
First Saturday of Every Month: Beach Cleanup, Commercial Blvd. & the Beach LBTS (Meet at Pavilion), 9 to 9:30 a.m., Info.: 954-776-1000  
First Saturday of Every Month: North Beach Art Walk, 3280 NE 32nd St, 7 to 11 p.m., Info.: 954-537-3370  
Second Saturday of Every Month: Beach Sweep, 9 a.m. to 12 p.m., Info.: 954-474-1835  
Sundays: Tour-the River Ghost Tour, Stranahan House & Water Taxi, 7:30 p.m., Tix.: 954-524-4736  
Tuesday-Saturday: Gentle Yoga (All Levels), North patio behind Tiki Bar (Ocean Manor Resort 4040 Galt Ocean Dr.), 9:30 a.m., Info.: 754-779-7519  
Sunday/Thursdays: Beginner Pilates, North patio behind Tiki Bar, Sun: 9:30 a.m./Thurs: 10 a.m., Info.: 754-779-7519  
Saturdays: Saturday Night Under the South Florida Stars, Fox Astronomical Observatory at Markham Park, Sunset to Midnight, Info.: 954-384-0442

# Vice Mayor Bruce Roberts'

## July 2013 Newsletter

"In his July 2013 Newsletter, Vice Mayor Bruce Roberts bids farewell to former City Attorney Harry Stewart and former Fire Chief Jeff Justinak, reviews a budgetary debate about optionally raising the Fire Assessment Fee or the Millage Rate, relishes a high profile accolade won by the City, discloses an extension of the Lien Amnesty Program, looks at District I usage of the "NextDoor" online gossip swamp, recommends viewing an educational mass murder, and delivers favorable performance and utilization reports for the Sun Trolley and the Broward B-Cycle program.

When the City's highest paid employee retired, former City Attorney Harry Stewart left some big shoes to fill. Before departing, Stewart participated in a replacement process that yielded Cynthia Everett, a well-credentialed attorney with the academic and experiential assets to manage a job that's not unlike playing dodge ball with hand grenades. Stewart is a study in contradiction. Notwithstanding the \$382,000 he was paid in 2011 (salary and benefits), his skills and connections could have easily brought him many times that amount annually, without breaking a sweat. His decision to work for the City – and earlier for the County – can only be explained as a labor of love. Although Harry Stewart's legal handiwork for the City impacted our lives for more than a decade, few people know anything about this legal icon (a cosmic imbalance rectified elsewhere in this issue).

When former Fort Lauderdale Fire Chief James R. Eddy retired unexpectedly in 2009 after less than three years in the saddle, 25-year Fire-Rescue veteran Jeff Justinak was drafted as Acting Chief. One year later, after returning to his New Hampshire home, Eddy died from complications following surgery. On the last day of his tenure with the City, former City Manager George Gretnas handed Justinak the permanent job. Justinak was the first Fort Lauderdale Fire Chief who landed the top spot after rising through the department's ranks.

After guiding the City through a whipsawed economy without raising the Millage Rate, the rebounding housing market has provided the City Commission with a glimpse of relief. Higher property values evidenced by Property Appraiser Lori Parrish's "2013 Estimate of Taxable Values" will modestly flesh out tax revenues without raising the tax rate. However, Commissioners are itching to address infrastructure improvements frozen since the recession forced local governments to gut wrench skeletal budgets. Having kept their 2009 campaign pledges to restrain the Millage throughout the recessionary downturn, Commissioners would have a tough time explaining a decision to raise the tax rate now. An alternative suggested in City Manager Lee Feldman's proposed 2014 budget, raising the Fire Assessment Fee (\$7.50 monthly increase - \$90 annually) would similarly lighten the fiscal weight of these improvements - while enabling the City Commission to rack up another budget year without a



rate increase - and bumping their commitment scorecard to 5 - 0 (7th year in total with an operating millage of 4.1193). Technically, the fee increase will fully fund Fire Suppression Services, thereby relieving the General Fund of this expense and liberating \$12.3 million to fund improvements. In explaining that Commissioners put the kibosh on a millage increase without deciding the Fire fee at their July 9th meeting, Roberts gives us a peek at the handwriting on the wall. Coughing up an additional \$90 next year (\$86.40 if paid by November) to adequately fund fixing streets & sidewalks, update wastewater collection & water distribution systems, while addressing a citywide backlog of corridor improvements is not a bad deal.

In sensing Roberts' delight about the District I neighborhoods that use the "NextDoor" social media venue to find lost pets, get advice about light-fingered baby sitters and borrow tools from one another, you may have noticed that the Galt Mile is a no-show. In asking neighbors what they think about this opportunity, several pointed out that Galt Mile residents get the same tips at the pool each morning - although spiced by nasty gossip and killer doses of mindless blather. When further inquiring about what unit owners would post in NextDoor, a Galt Mile resident who lives in one of our Lauderdale-by-the-Sea associations said he would out a neighbor who grows pot in his bedroom closet. A SouthPoint resident said she would rip a Board Member she hates and an Ocean Club owner queried, "Why would I go on a site where moochers are trying to borrow my stuff?" We may not be ready for this.

Roberts is entitled to take pride in the Sun Trolley's progress. When the Galt Mile route was on death row in 2009, the newly elected Roberts engineered a luncheon meeting with Galt Mile officials and Chris Wren, Executive Director of the Downtown Fort Lauderdale Transportation Management Association (DFLTMA), the 501(C) 3 non-profit corporate parent of the Sun Trolley. They hatched a rescue strategy wherein the local bus service would turn its focus to destination sites frequented by local residents. Instead of schlepping tourists to tourist traps, it would ferry shoppers to malls and patients to hospitals or rehab. To revive the comatose Galt Mile route, Wren began mapping a connection between the Galt and Galleria. Over the next few years, Wren and Sun Trolley spark-plug and Managing Director Pat Zeiler reconfigured system routes and enhanced connectivity. Instead of puerile marketing promos (i.e. getting married on the Sun Trolley?), they played to their strengths, connecting to Harbor Shops, extending the Galt route to Imperial Point Hospital, expanding the beach link (that serves the Barrier Island) to a seven day service and fashioning a visitor's layover excursion that exploited a virtually bottomless new source of ridership. If not for Roberts, Wren and Zeiler, progress reports would still be earmarked by painful apologies instead of glowing consumer statistics. TripAdvisor, the world's largest travel website with more than 100 million travel reviews and 200 million monthly visitors, ranks the Sun Trolley as Fort Lauderdale's 3rd most popular attraction, just after the Intracoastal Waterway and the Fort Lauderdale beach.

By the way, if you are partial to CSI, Law and Order, NCIS, Criminal Intent or other seedy crime dramas that cloak gratuitous violence with life lessons, you will enjoy the 5-minute "Active Shooter Event" recommended by Roberts. I was particularly intrigued by the malevolently disturbed shotgun-wielding bald "perp" that central casting adorned in a stereotypical black outfit and sunglasses. Give it the once over - since watching it may also save your life. For the skinny on these issues, read the Vice Mayor's update... - [editor]\*

FROM VICE-MAYOR  
BRUCE G. ROBERTS  
JULY 2013

**New City Attorney Hired:** Since 2002, Harry Stewart has served the City of Fort Lauderdale as its City Attorney. After a brilliant legal career in both private and government practice, Harry has moved on. We wish him the best! In the meantime, the Commission selected Cynthia Everett to succeed Harry Stewart on July 11th.

Commissioners agreed to have Mayor Jack Seiler negotiate a contract with Ms. Everett, currently in private practice and on contract with the Village of Pinecrest.

Continued on page 11

Cynthia has also served as Opa-Locka's City Attorney, as an Assistant U.S. Attorney in Miami and an Assistant State Attorney in Miami. Ms. Everett and Assistant City Attorney Bob Duncel were among five finalists forwarded to Commissioners by a search committee.

**Interim Fire Chief:** As you may already know, Fire Chief Jeff Justinak retired. Jeff dedicated 25 years to public safety in Fort Lauderdale. Under his leadership, our Fire-Rescue Department has become more professional. Effective July 13th, Robert Hoecherl, one of three Deputy Fire Chiefs, was appointed to the position of Interim Fire Chief for an indefinite period of time. This designation comes with all the responsibilities, authorities and emoluments of the Office of Fire Chief granted under the City's Charter and Code and State Law. Robert has been with City for 26 years.

**Budget:** At the July 9th Commission Meeting, the upcoming 2014 budget was discussed in the context of achieving the priorities established in the City's Vision 2035, the Five-Year Strategic Plan, the Neighborhood Survey, and the Commission Annual Action Plan. In addition to the community, input was received from our Budget Advisory Board, which recognized the need for additional revenues for the City to enhance services and to maintain and improve infrastructure. The Board recommended maximizing the Fire Assessment Fee and raising the operating millage rate to 4.5 from the current 4.11. They further recommended that 90% of the revenues derived from the increased millage rate be designated to rebuild infrastructure; they estimated that over ten years, this would generate \$195 million for this specific purpose. After our discussion, it was unanimously decided not to raise the millage rate, but leave open the option of maximizing the Fire Assessment Fee. The impact on residences would be a \$7.50 per month increase in the fee. Ten year projections indicate that this would stabilize our budget, slightly increase reserves and provide for capital and infrastructure improvements. The 2014 budget proposal from the City Manager also creates a fund balance of \$56.3 million or 20.5%, slightly increases General Fund operating expenditure from \$272,675,963 to \$274,441,421, and slightly decreases the all funds budget from \$476,150,126 to \$475,299,993. The next public hearings on the budget will be September 3rd and 12th.

**Fort Lauderdale Among Top 10 Small American Cities of the Future:** Fort Lauderdale has been ranked No. 7 for economic potential on a list of the Top 10 Small American Cities of the Future, according to fDi Magazine. The foreign direct investment magazine ranked cities by collecting data on economic potential, human resources, cost effectiveness, infrastructure, business friendliness and FDI strategy for 422 cities. The top 10 small cities of the future are: Sunnyvale, CA; Durham, N.C.; Irvine, CA; Chattanooga, TN; Stamford, CT; Guelph, ON; Ft. Lauderdale, FL; Cary, N.C.; Ann Arbor, MI; Fremont, CA. As stated by Mayor Seiler, "This new ranking by fDi Magazine serves as an international recognition that the City of Fort Lauderdale is continuing to move forward on the right track. The City's sound fiscal management, progressive economic development initiatives and long-term infrastructure investment strategies have created a high level of optimism that is triggering billions of dollars in private and public investment."

**Lien Amnesty Program:** The City's Lien Amnesty Program has been extended through September 30th. Property owners are invited to take advantage of this special offer. Neighbors who bring their property into compliance can clear outstanding liens at a significantly reduce rate—some up to 85%! More information, including an application and fact sheet, can be obtained at [www.fortlauderdale.gov/lien-amnesty](http://www.fortlauderdale.gov/lien-amnesty), by sending an email to [LienAmnesty@FortLauderdal.gov](mailto:LienAmnesty@FortLauderdal.gov) or by calling 954-828-5050.

**Nextdoor Media Social Network Update:** In August of last year, the City became the first in Florida to launch Nextdoor, a free, private social networking website for neighborhoods. Since that date, Nextdoor has become an integral part of many of our neighborhoods' communica-

tion networks. Currently we have 47 of our neighborhoods on Nextdoor with 1,486 of our neighbors using the website in their neighborhoods. Additionally, those 1,486 neighbors have posted 3,426 messages to each other on the website! In order to protect our neighbors' privacy, we cannot see the content of these messages, but we are provided with general metrics from Nextdoor in order to track the effectiveness of the tool. Nextdoor creates private neighborhood sites off of our existing neighborhood boundaries and allows only those neighbors with addresses within the neighborhood to join. Neighbors are able to use the site to get to know their neighbors; share information about traffic, lost pets, crime and emergency preparedness; ask questions or get advice on babysitters, restaurants, carpet cleaners and more; sell, borrow and give away tools, furniture, bicycles and any other items; and receive and comment on important information from City officials. As a City we have been using Nextdoor to share information about upcoming events, new programs, traffic advisories and severe weather alerts. Nextdoor provides a platform to share exciting new developments citywide, as well as personalize neighborhood security concerns on a neighborhood level. District 1 participants include Bay Colony, Coral Ridge, Coral Ridge Country Club Estates, Coral Ridge Isles, Imperial Point, Lake Estates, Landings, Palm Aire Village East; South Twin Lakes (neighborhood in an unincorporated area); Sunrise Intracoastal and Twin Lakes North!

**Run. Hide. Fight.** Surviving an Active Shooter Event: I know we never want to think that this sort of thing could happen, but in the real world, and in light of all the shootings throughout the country, it is important. This instructional video demonstrates options on surviving an active shooter situation including escape routes, hiding spots, and fighting back as a last resort. It can be found on the City's Police Web Page at <http://www.flpd.org/>. One of our constituents requested we put this information in our newsletter – thank you for the suggestion!

**TMA Sun Trolley and B-cycle Performance Report:** The following is a mid-year ridership report for the Downtown Fort Lauderdale Transportation Management Association (TMA) Sun Trolley service and the B-Cycle Bike Share program for the 2012-13 fiscal year. Through May 2013, the Sun Trolley has carried a system-wide total of 336,190 passengers, which is a 47% increase over this point last year. This increase was in part a result of adding the former Housing Authority (HACFL) routes, the increase in the Beach Link service from four days a week to seven days and the introduction of the Airport Excursion route, all beginning in January of this year. Based on current ridership, the Sun Trolley is projected to carry approximately 490,000 passengers for the 2012-13 fiscal year; a 45% increase. The City's partnership with the B-Cycle Bike Share program has been a success since its start in mid-December 2011. For the nine months of FY12, there were 9,458 bike rentals, and for the first six months of FY13 there have been 6,164 bike rentals. There will be another report out after this service has been active for 2 years. These results show that the TMA Sun Trolley and the B-Cycle Bike Share program are a viable and necessary element to the Fort Lauderdale's transportation network, providing the connectivity for our residents, workforce and visitors to the City.

**Office Contact:** Robbi Uptegrove – 954-828-5033; email: [ruptegrove@fortlauderdale.gov](mailto:ruptegrove@fortlauderdale.gov)

In addition to hosting two pre-agenda meetings twice a month, I am also available to attend your HOA meetings to update your neighborhood on what is going on in the City as well as answer any questions/concerns you may have. Please contact Robbi to schedule.

**NOTE:** The Commission is on recess until August 20th. Office staff will be here to assist with any concerns or issues you may have. Scheduled meetings will resume August 12th.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** For easy access to the many links offered in Vice Mayor Roberts update (and other articles) check the online versions of the articles in the GMCA website ([www.galtmile.com](http://www.galtmile.com)). •

# BCPA meets GMCA

## Property Appraiser Shares Good News with Galt Mile

By Eric Berkowitz

On June 20, 2013, Broward County Property Appraiser (BCPA) Lori Parrish sent two trusted officials from her office to address the Galt Mile Community Association (GMCA) Advisory Board. Deputy Property Appraiser Bob Wolfe, a longtime friend to the Galt Mile who handles media relations for Parrish was joined by Condominium and Cooperative Division Coordinator Maureen Morrison. Since the Advisory Board represents homeowners who fall under her purview, Morrison initially took the floor.

### Parrish Report Boosts Spirits

Three weeks earlier, Parrish released the "2013 Estimate of Taxable Values", a statistical compilation generated annually on June 1. Focusing on residential sales transactions that were closed between January 2, 2012 and January 1, 2013, the report lists the estimated gross taxable value of properties in each of Broward's 31 municipalities, as well as certain neighborhoods, the County's unincorporated area and tax districts component to the County's assorted taxing authorities. More importantly, it compares the 2013 values to those of 2012, demonstrating the percentage change for each of the included jurisdictions.

In short, it is invaluable as a market barometer for real estate in Broward County. After summarizing the data, Morrison announced that our housing market is bouncing back. With the exception of the unincorporated area and 28 homes in the Lilliputian community of Lazy Lake, 30 of Broward's 31 municipalities booked a healthy increase in property values. Closer scrutiny of the 8.29% decline in the unincorporated area revealed that lower values for sizable tracts owned by Florida Power & Light dragged down a modest increase in residential property values.

With \$60 million added to its \$25 billion tax base, Fort Lauderdale values jumped 4.36%, juiced by long delayed new construction. In Broward County, a \$603 million increase in property values pumped up the countywide tax roll to \$132 billion, a 4.39% improvement over the previous year that prompted the Property Appraiser to describe current home value levels as "pre-recession". Broward recaptured 75% of its 2008 \$176 billion value, when the overinflated real estate bubble exploded, precipitating the recession. Fort Lauderdale realized 80% of its 2008 \$32 billion pre-recession tax roll.

While last year's "2012 Estimate of Taxable Values" also showed a net increase, the 1.24% improvement was distilled from a snake-bit mixed bag of 2011 municipal economic snapshots. Declines suffered by eight of the County's cities (including Dania Beach and Tamarac) were marginally offset by modest gains in the other 23. More than one-quarter of Broward's municipalities were flirting with abbreviated work weeks, roundhouse layoffs, massive service cutbacks and unplanned job furloughs while impoverished Lauderdale Lakes faced a \$9 million debt to BSO for unpaid dispatch services, a \$1.4 million budget shortfall, a \$30 million long term marker, \$2.5 million pilfered from its CRA account to keep the lights on and imminent receivership. In contrast, this year's data portrays a 12 month storybook regional recovery.

To avoid the acrimony suffered by most government staffers in the tax business, Morrison issued a preemptive BCPA disclaimer, noting that assessments are not only based on the valuations crunched by the Property Appraiser, but also on tax rates unilaterally set by the County, its municipalities, and other statutory taxing authorities (i.e. School Board, Hospital District, Water Management District, Children's Services, etc.). When queried about upcoming assessments, Morrison admonished "Until these rates are set in early August and finalized at Public Hearings in September, there's no way of knowing how the data will translate into tax bills." However, County and City officials have been floating clues alluding to modest millage hikes.

Continued on page 13



**The Millage Mystery**

For instance, after Broward County agreed to fund a long awaited consolidated countywide emergency dispatch service, settling an increasingly belligerent dispute with many of its major cities (including Fort Lauderdale), County Commissioners updated constituent municipalities in their respective Districts about the settlement's financial impact. At the May 16 Galt Mile Advisory Board meeting, John Newstreet - District Director for County Commissioner Chip LaMarca - revealed plans to raise the County millage rate by .17 mils to offset an anticipated \$20.3 million funding shortfall for the \$42.6 million project. Newstreet said "About \$21 will be added to the tax assessment for a homesteaded property with an average taxable value of \$121,000."

City officials have also been dropping breadcrumbs suggestive of an increase. At recent Advisory Board and Presidents Council meetings, City Commissioner Bruce Roberts repeatedly commented that despite a City Commission policy to immobilize the City's Millage rate, a slight uptick may be necessary to address debt and fuel growth critical to the recovery. Citing the Property Appraiser's June 1 valuation report as evidence of a recovering housing market, Fort Lauderdale Mayor Jack Seiler surmised that we may "see a little bit of a bounce back up" in our tax bills, while waxing optimistically "I think it'll be negligible."

After 6 years of hot-footing their way through budget gauntlets strapped to a frozen millage rate while squeezing blood from nickels to make payroll, the prospect of once again collecting enough tax revenues to painlessly pay the bills has our local public officials floating on endorphins. They are dabbling with two options. If they stick to last year's Millage rate, the higher valuations will increase tax bills and bring in more revenues. They are also trying to determine whether local taxpayers are adequately confident in the economy to additionally cushion the budget by nudging the Millage.

**Housing Bounces Back**

Morrison clarified that although valuations are harvested from last year's sales activity, City and County officials draw on more recent data when configuring millage rates. As reported in the Sun Sentinel and Miami Herald, median single family home prices in Broward rose 22% to \$250,000 in May, as the market continued a dramatic reversal after six years of price declines that hit bottom in 2012. The May 2013 Broward median price for condos jumped 28.2%, according to the Greater Fort Lauderdale Realtors.

Another key market statistic is the estimated number of months it would take to deplete the entire housing inventory given current sales rates. Of particular interest to Galt Mile homeowners, this industry indicator is commonly used to determine whether we are in a buyers' or sellers' market. The standard benchmark for a balanced market (in which neither buyer nor seller enjoys the upper hand) is 5.5 months of inventory. Higher numbers (larger inventories) favor buyers while lower numbers (smaller inventories) favor sellers. In May 2013, Greater Realtors of Florida reported a 3.4 months' supply of single family homes and a 4.3 months' supply of condos, denoting a market wherein sellers squarely call the shots. After five years of buyers cherry-picking properties, the market transitioned in January of 2011; when the supply of single family homes and condos both shrunk to less than 5.5 months of inventory, passing control to sellers.

**Constitutional Compost**

Morrison turned her attention to several newly approved Constitutional Amendments that were a positive by-product of a moronic legislative vendetta. Since many Florida Legislators view constitutional dictums as personal playthings, former House Speaker Dean Cannon and former Senate President Mike Haridopolos became apoplectic when Florida voters passed Constitutional Amendments 5 and 6 in 2010 - which preclude lawmakers from "engineering"

Continued on page 14

**Better Healthcare**  
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A Little-Known Benefit for Aging Veterans

Did you know there is a government benefit that pays for caregivers in the home? Please be advised that you may be entitled to a Department of Veterans Affairs benefit called the Aid and Attendance and Pension benefit. This benefit can be significant, it covers services that include light housekeeping, cooking, shopping, transportation, and other activities of daily living. Qualification does vary. Feel free to call us at 954-473-4008 to learn more.



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election outcomes by gerrymandering voting districts. Outraged by the prospect of ordinary citizens messing with legislative career paths by leveling long-twisted electoral playing fields, the legislative leaders dumped 11 proposed junk amendments into last November's ballot.

Hoping that impatient voters would tick off "yes" or "no" based on little more than a deliberately misleading ballot title, they introduced proposals to make the Judiciary subservient to the Legislature, scotch the line separating Church and State, and reverse Constitutional privacy protections for every woman in the State of Florida, which were then blended with a series of overly generous although emotionally charged tax exemptions. At the October 18, 2012 GMCA Advisory Board meeting, BCPA Media honcho Bob Wolfe warned members that the proposed amendments were "deceptive" and the tax proposals shared one element, "They would force local governments to explode tax rates for property owners." While handily rejecting asinine or blatantly partisan proposals and some arbitrarily generous tax gifts, voters approved several of the more reasonable targeted tax exemptions.

Morrison briefly summarized how these new Amendments affect property owners. Amendment 2 extended an existing exemption for combat-disabled veterans from Florida to all combat-disabled veterans, regardless of where they resided when entering the military. Amendment 9 entitles the surviving spouses of first responders who die in the line of duty (volunteer law enforcement officers, correctional officers, firefighters, emergency medical technicians and paramedics) to the same total homestead property tax exemption currently available to surviving spouses of Florida military veterans who die from service-connected causes on active duty. A bit more of a stretch is Amendment 11, which authorizes cities and counties to grant full homestead property tax relief to low-income seniors who have lived in a home valued at up to \$250,000 for at least 25 years. Since the relief is contingent on supermajority approval by both the City and County, it is unlikely to become effective until after 2014 - if ever.

### Ludicrous Legislation

Opening the floor to questions, Morrison and Wolfe were asked how the 2013 legislative session impacted tax exemptions. One Advisory Board member inquired about the fate of legislation he referred to as "The Mercenary Snitch Bill". Filed by Sarasota Senator Nancy Detert, Senate Bill 182 provided for two vehicles conceived to deter abuse of Florida's Homestead Exemption. The bill sought to cultivate whistleblowers by placing a bounty on Homestead cheats - either "double dippers" who claim homestead status for two or more properties in different jurisdictions by fraudulently characterizing each one as their primary residence or scofflaws who rent their homesteaded properties without a military active duty exemption or explicit approval from the Property Appraiser.

A second section of the bill required Condominium and Cooperative associations to annually submit to the County Property Appraiser by January 31st "A list of the units that were rented in the previous year rather than occupied by the owner." While forcing associations to generate uncompensated work product, the bill failed to provide them with liability protection. For instance, if the Property Appraiser aggressively pursued the owner of a unit mistakenly identified by the association as having been rented, the association could face costly damages. Even if the information were accurate, since scofflaws at risk for sizable sums in back taxes, penalties, and interest are often predisposed to slug out a settlement in court, their mandated involvement would threaten to place associations at ground zero in a legal maelstrom they would otherwise observe from the sidelines.

Although they would have liked to get rental lists from "associations turned snitch", most Property Appraisers agreed that the whistleblower bounty was counterproductive. Since an ensuing flood of marginally credible "tips" would have to be individually investigated by the Appraiser's office, several testifying Property Appraisers told the Senate Committee on Community Affairs that it would overwhelm their limited resources while producing few viable leads. Expressing familiarity with the bill, Bob Wolfe fielded the question, explaining that the bill failed. In fact, it never made it past the Community Affairs Committee, where it was marooned on the Calendar through Sine Die (the end of the session).

Another Advisory Board member asked about a bill that would enable any Florida resident to rent a homesteaded property for up to 30 days each year. Declaring that Homestead Exemptions were never meant to be applicable to rental properties, Wolfe disparaged Senate Bill 342 sponsored by Senator John Thrasher as a "bad joke". He added that

the short-term rental bill was approved because "Thrasher is a former Chairman of the Republican Party of Florida, and a close ally of Senate President Don Gaetz."

Wolfe explained that the bill was a favor from Thrasher - who represents Putnam, Flagler and St. Johns Counties - to St. Johns County Tax Collector Dennis Hollingsworth, a Thrasher supporter. Ponte Vedra Beach, south of Jacksonville in St. Johns County, is home to the headquarters of the PGA Tour and hosts The Players Championship. Golf enthusiasts, links groupies and media personnel who annually swarm the renowned TPC Sawgrass Golf Courses during The Players Championship and other PGA events need temporary room and board. Thrasher drafted the legislation because local homeowners who want to annually rent space to PGA golfers or paparazzi covering PGA events feared that St. Johns Property Appraiser Sharon Outland would shred their Homestead Exemptions. Seizing an opportunity to share some local media glow, Hollingsworth and Thrasher cooked up this turkey.

Wolfe commented "The new law is virtually useless for the purposes that most owners - or tenants - lease a property, although the 30-day lease terms are perfect for siphoning a few bucks from the golf tournament." While facilitating lucrative month-long rentals for a handful of St. Johns homeowners, enacting this local patronage project miffed Property Appraisers across the State, who agree with Wolfe that the geocentric measure solely benefits the sponsor's upstate constituents.

### Tangible Personal Property

An association official asked Morrison and Wolfe how residential personal property is treated when a unit is leased to a tenant. Wolfe explained how items that would be ordinarily be considered household goods by an owner living on the property - such as stoves, refrigerator and furniture - become taxable Tangible Personal Property (TPP) which must be reported each year. Even if the owner-landlord fails to file a tax return reflecting rental income, the Property Appraiser will assess tangible personal property by making a "best estimate" based on similar equipment and assets owned by other businesses that lease comparable properties. The assessment will also include a 25% penalty for non-filing, incentivizing owner-landlords to annually file a timely return.

Morrison added that owners who disagree with the assessed TPP value - or any other valuation listed on their TRIM notices - can provide additional information to the Property Appraiser demonstrating that the appraised value differs from the market value of the property. If still dissatisfied, property owners have 25 days from the August mailing date of the TRIM Notice to file a petition with the Broward County Value Adjustment Board (VAB). The actual deadline - which is always in mid-September of each year - is indicated on the TRIM notice.

Finally, Wolfe reminded the Advisory Board that the Property Appraiser sponsors monthly customer service outreach events for Galt Mile residents. BCPA staffers - including a Deputy Property Appraiser - will assist area residents with Homestead, Senior, and other exemption applications, as well as answer assessment questions in the Beach Community Center at 3351 NE 33rd Avenue from 10:00 AM to 11:30 AM on the final Friday of each month.

### BCPA Contact Info

- To contact BCPA Condominium and Cooperative Division Supervisor Maureen Morrison, call 954-357-6832 or email her at mmorrison@bcpa.net
- To contact exemption specialist and BCPA Media point man Bob Wolfe, call 954-357-6871 or email him at media@bcpa.net
- For questions about scheduled outreach events, contact Nicoleta Jones at 954-357-5579 or send an email to njones@bcpa.net
- For Customer Service, call Assistant Property Appraiser Kim Cardone at 954-357-6830 or send her an email at kcardone@bcpa.net
- To rat out friends and neighbors, call BCPA fraud-buster Ron Cacciatore at 954-357-6900 or email him at rcacciatore@bcpa.net
- For the Big Cheese, call Lori Parrish at 954-357-6904 or send her an email at lori@bcpa.net

Surprisingly, they will respond - even Parrish! Disabled? Have trouble walking? Call Customer Service Manager Kelly Brown at 954-357-6035 or email her at kbrown@bcpa.net to arrange for a FREE Homebound Outreach visit by a bona fide Deputy Property Appraiser - in your home! That's right. These guys deliver!!!

# THE DOCTOR will see you now.

GET A SAME OR NEXT-DAY APPOINTMENT.  
**CALL 954.888.DOCS (3627).**



**Marlene Aramburu, DO**  
Family Practice  
6405 N Federal Hwy.  
#300A  
Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33308



**Coralee Camargo, MD**  
Family Practice  
3536 N Federal Hwy.  
#102  
Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33308



**Jennifer Capezzuti, DO**  
Family Practice  
4750 N Federal Hwy.  
#300  
Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33308



**Diana Hodarnau, MD**  
Internal Medicine  
6333 N Federal Hwy.  
#225  
Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33308



**Sandhya Nemade, MD**  
Internal Medicine  
6405 N Federal Hwy.  
#102  
Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33308

## Not feeling well? Need to see a doctor right away?

These Broward Health Physician Group doctors are offering same-day or next-day appointments\*. With several convenient locations, we have a doctor near you. So if you want fast relief or need a new doctor, just call **954.888.DOCS (3627)** or visit **[BrowardHealth.org/doctor](http://BrowardHealth.org/doctor)** to schedule an appointment.

**Medicare and most insurance plans accepted.**

\*Same-day appointments must be made before 11am. Hours are M-F 8:30am-5pm.



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4 BED, 4 BATH POOL HOME WITH OVER  
4100 SQ. FT., OPEN CHEF'S KITCHEN.

IMMACULATELY MAINTAINED!

\$980,000.

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### OCEAN CLUB CONDO

2 BED, 2 BATH CONDO OVERLOOKING  
THE OCEAN HAS SPACIOUS ROOMS OVER

1600 SQ. FT. FULL AMENITIES.

\$389,000.

DAVID PICKERING 954-288-8110



### CRISTELLE

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FLOOR, FULLY FURNISHED, WRAP

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\$1,498,500.

JEFF KAHN 954-445-6307



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2 BED, 2 BATH IN PRISTINE CONDITION.

FULL AMENITY BUILDING ON THE  
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NASER ALCHIHABI 954-865-5084



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