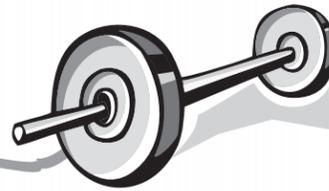




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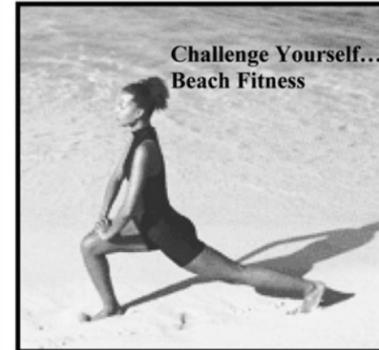
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Introducing the new Galt Gazette—the official publication of the Galt Mile Community Association, brought to you exclusively by The Galt Mile Community Association Board of Directors, and produced/published by Allison Weingard Muss.

This new community publication will include Galt Ocean Mile-specific concerns, issues, updates, events, and victories. It will contain local advertisements with valuable coupons and specials specifically for Galt Ocean Mile residents.

Delivery, provided by a local delivery service, can be expected between the 5th and 12th of each month. A copy of publication will be put in your mailbox, provided there is access. If no access is available, several copies will be left on the table with the other local publications. As with any new process, there may be some kinks. So, if you haven't received the newsletter by the 15th of the month, please contact a board member so the problem can be corrected.

In an effort to win the title of "Town Crier," the newsletter will try to encompass the who, what, why, when, where, and how of our community. But to accomplish this, your help is needed—if you have a suggestion, feel free to e-mail it to galtnews@yahoo.com All suggestions are taken into consideration.

If you have any questions regarding the paper, please contact Mrs. Muss at galtnews@yahoo.com

GALT OCEAN VILLAGE SHOPPES

The Galt Merchants Association has transformed a \$15,000 capital improvement program grant received from the City of Fort Lauderdale into a viable and exciting Master Plan designed to morph the Galt Ocean Village Shops into a vibrant tourist magnet and an exemplary commercial success. City of Fort Lauderdale Project Engineer, Hal Barnes, presented the project's details at a Town Hall style meeting at the Beach Community Center to hundreds of area residents and local merchants. Galt Merchants Association President, Alex Leeds M.D., narrated a brief chronology of the project's history and presented the Architectural Alliance's vision for the Galt Ocean Village Shops.

The Master Plan serves to heighten the aesthetics, functionality, and economic viability of the area bounded by the Intracoastal Waterway on the west, A1A on the east, Oakland Park Blvd. on the south, and NE 34th Street on the north. The lowest responsible bidder of the firms invited to design the master plan was Architectural Alliance in the amount of \$14,500. The establishment of a mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly area with the appropriate infrastructure enhancements and amenities, traffic flow and parking considerations, and the accompanying visual enrichment afforded by decorative sidewalks, brick paver inserts, special lighting, and new landscaping will transform this area into a "destination" place for locals and tourists.





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MAYOR NAUGLE UPDATE



Fort Lauderdale Mayor James Naugle, a longtime political benefactor of the Galt Mile community, was the guest speaker at the October 16th, 2003 Galt Mile Community Association Advisory Board meeting. Shore Preservation, Fire Safety and Insurance dogma were placed on "hold" while the Mayor addressed a municipal issue that impacts the City's ability to contend with each and every other challenge...MONEY!

Fort Lauderdale's financial condition is dire. The City's coffers are empty and funding is the primary item on every City Hall agenda.

Mayor Naugle distributed a multi-page collation to support his presentation. The first page was a two-line chart entitled "Full-Time Budgeted Positions". The top line shows that there were 2103 full-time budgeted positions in 1996 and there are 2551 full-time budgeted positions proposed for 2004, an increase of 448 positions. The average annual compensation for a municipal employee is currently \$71,924.00 (\$86,835.00 for Police and \$81,622.00 for Firefighters/EMTs). Annual compensation for the 448 additional employees amounts to about \$32,221,952.00.

Despite the fact that a certain increase in governance expense is to be expected to accommodate the growth of our City, this 21.3% increase in staff is indicative of a "do it in-house" policy that has historically proliferated in City Hall. Three conditions need to exist for this policy to continue unopposed. The first two are {1} the need to control every aspect of every service that the City delivers and {2} the general sentiment that the City can deliver the services more efficiently than its commercial competitors. It is, of course, a gamble. If your "in-house" effort supplants some inefficient vendor whose business is based on the siphoning off of tax dollars into the company's strong-box, you're a hero. If, however, your competition does it better and cheaper, you're a goat. The third condition is always necessary whenever you gamble, {3} the resources to cover your bet. Funds adequate to equip, staff and house the operational needs of the indicated service need to be available. When you can't pay, you can't play. Currently, the City can't pay.

Fort Lauderdale's mission has been refocused. While treading this financial tightrope, the City has to find a way to deliver acceptable levels of service for a lot less money! The Mayor explained, by way of example, that the "Bulk Trash" component of the Sanitation Rate on the Garbage Bill could be moderated by outsourcing collection to a commercial Sanitation business. To deliver the service in-house, the City needs to buy and maintain expensive equipment (trucks, roll-offs, claws, etc.), hire collection staff and retain administrative and support staff to oversee the division. The fiscal stress of this labor-intensive service is magnified by the benefit costs (pension, workman's compensation, health insurance, etc.) that outsourcing sidesteps. When GMCA President Robert Rozema asked Mayor Naugle about replacing the large number of broken uprights along the Galt Mile, the Mayor explained that the number of City electricians had diminished from 12 to 8. The electrician responsible for maintaining the uprights had been downsized (retired). The Mayor implied that the City might be better served by outsourcing services like this.

Continued on page 7

Let me introduce myself.

I am Lizzie Pind...resident of Galt Ocean Mile's Plaza South, and realtor for Galt Ocean Mile residents. As an educated and trained contracts administrator, I can assist you buy, sell, or rent a home.

A native of Denmark, I have been living in South Florida for 7 years, helping neighbors buy, sell, or rent homes that suit their South Florida lifestyles.



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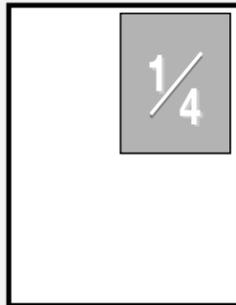
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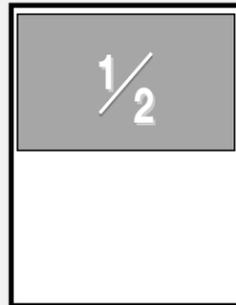
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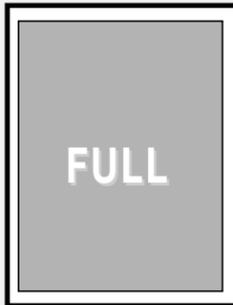
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Eleven more properties were sold in the Galt Ocean Mile Community:

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Playa del Mar #1814
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\$200,000

Top of the Mile N #302
(1/1.5)
\$163,500

Sea Ranch Club A #312
(2/2)
\$342,000

Commodore #1503
(1/1.5)
\$218,000

Sea Ranch Club A #1514
(2/2)
\$365,000

Port Royale #1108
(2/2)
\$235,000

Sea Ranch Club A #518
(2/2)
\$465,000

Coral Ridge Tower E #506
(1/1)
\$85,900

Coral Ridge Tower N #1117
(1/1)
\$97,500



THE BUDGET CRISIS

The Budget Crisis faced by Fort Lauderdale has been diagnosed by a fiscal physician, Acting City Manager Alan A. Silva. Mr. Silva has volunteered to suffer a six-month ordeal in which he aspires to wean the City of Fort Lauderdale from the devastating fiscal habits to which it has become accustomed, administer a dose of reality into its "fairy tale" budget projections and help its stunned residents (us) to face the music. The medication prescribed is a combination of fee and tax increases, service cuts and the temporary freezing of programs that have played a large part in Fort Lauderdale's evolution.

Mr. Silva, former Director of the Office of Human Resource Development for the U.S Agency for International Development (1994-1997) and City Administrator for Fall River, Massachusetts (1981-1984, 2000-2001), presented the inimical budget facts to the City Commission on December 3rd. He awaited their reaction with the caveat that he would only continue as Acting City Manager if the City was willing to realistically face its dilemma and take the difficult measures necessary to put its affairs back in order. Pleased with the City Commission's recognition of the magnitude of the problem, he characterized the Commission's resolve to take the hard steps back to solvency as a "watershed event." In an effort to soften the harsh effects, Silva relegated the authority/responsibility for the cutbacks to the Department Heads that would have to live with them. Each Department Head would, in turn, accept full responsibility for "living within their means" and face dismissal for outstripping their budget. The Commission faced the music on December 16th and passed the austere budget measures by a 3-2 vote (Vice Mayor Carleton Moore and Commissioner Cindi Hutchinson dissenting).

The fees, taxes and fee/tax increases approved by the City Commission at their scheduled December 16th meeting to soften the budget shortfall are as follows:

- Fire assessment fee: 50 percent increase, from \$42 to \$63.
- Ambulance transport fees charged to Medicare: Increased from \$330 to \$425, \$452 or \$525, depending on level of treatment.
- Water and sewer rates: 5 percent increase, amounting to about \$2.71 more per month for the average user.
- Parking fines: 32 percent increase, from \$19 to \$25.
- Parking rates: Various increases citywide.
- Home or business alarm systems registration fee: \$50, with an annual renewal fee of \$25.
- Alarm response fees: Doubled, to \$100, if more than two alarms are responded to in one year.

- Sanitation fee: A 10 percent increase, amounting to \$34.74 more for a single-family home.
- Property taxes: 10.16 percent tax increase. The impact varies, depending on the value of an owner's property and whether it is entitled to a \$25,000 homestead exemption. The increase ranges from \$12 more for the average homesteaded single-family house, to \$215 more for a non-homesteaded house.

As things currently stand, the City is about \$12 million short in meeting its anticipated \$215 million operating budget. While fees and taxes increase income, layoffs and program cutbacks decrease expenses. The City has adopted a buffet of rescue efforts to address possible layoffs:

- No current Police or Fire-Rescue personnel will be laid off.
- Police Public Safety Aides: A code lien "amnesty program" in which code violators can have fines reduced to 25 percent if they pay during February is designed to raise \$550,000. If not, aides would face layoffs in the spring.
- Mounted Police Patrol Unit: Private citizens and developers have pledged \$44,500 to sustain the unit.
- 50 Unnamed municipal employees face layoffs.
- Forced unpaid days off and unpaid furloughs are expected to make up \$2.4 million of the operating shortfall.

The \$12 million recovered by this painful venue will provide us with a one year reprieve. The expected shortfall for the next year is \$15 million - \$16 million. Commissioners agreed that next year portends a tax increase. They will also determine whether a \$125 million Bond Issue should be placed on the March ballot to finance new police headquarters and fire-rescue stations. City Unions representing the beleaguered municipal employees who will have to pay the "human cost" of these budget measures have been placed in the difficult position of having to balance the needs of their constituencies with Fort Lauderdale's fiscal realities. Police, Fire-Rescue, and other union representatives have been making a cogent case for the fact that their membership will be forced to "take the lumps" for the City Administration's inexcusably poor fiscal judgment. While Mayor Naugle and the City Commissioners have committed to avoid any Police or Fire-Rescue layoffs, the fact that the unions haven't come to an agreement on a new contract could lead to layoffs down the road.

At the December 16th City Commission meeting at City Hall, many speakers repeated their willingness to pay higher taxes and fees to help navigate through this difficult time rather than face the cuts in manpower and services that threaten the City.

Continued on page 9



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Mayor... Continued

The Mayor feels that a majority on the City Commission is predisposed to exploring these cost-cutting alternatives. He expressed concern about a proposal by one commissioner to install a new bureaucracy designed to monitor rental properties for possible code violations. The rental property owner would be subject to obtaining a license or paying for an annual inspection. Properties would be reviewed for cleanliness, upkeep, repairs, and the warranted permits. The new division could require resources to fund operational ezThe offering will be considered in conference by the City Commission, reviewed by the City Attorney and subject to Public Hearings.

Mayor Naugle injected an element of irony into the presentation by including a "Fiscal Year 2002/2003 Ad Valorem Tax Profile" of selected municipalities compiled by the State of Florida Department of Revenue in his fact sheets. He offered a table contrasting Population Estimates, Operating Millage, Total Taxable value and Taxes Levied and 2002 Per Capita Taxable Value and Total Taxes Levied in Fort Lauderdale, Miami, Orlando, Jacksonville, Hollywood, Tampa, Clearwater, Saint Petersburg, Pembroke Pines, Coral Springs, Hialeah and Tallahassee. It demonstrated, among other things, that the 2002 Per Capita Taxable Property Value in Fort Lauderdale was \$98,114.00. Aside from Orlando at \$70,399.00, the rest of the municipalities were about half that of Fort Lauderdale (Miami - \$47,785.00, Hollywood - 53,653.00, St. Petersburg - \$40,124.00, Pembroke Pines - \$47,587.00, Coral Springs - \$51,950, Tallahassee - \$42,060.00, etc.). At \$475.58, Fort Lauderdale had the highest 2002 Per Capita total taxes levied of the major Florida municipalities. This superior income stream should lend itself to a speedier economic recovery for our beleaguered municipal bankbook as compared to our sister cities. The challenge for our City Fathers (and Mothers) will be to sustain the relatively inexpensive "Quality of Life" programs that are usually the first to go when a government becomes financially strapped. If they can "walk the walk" and tighten the City's belt without succumbing to the political heat, our Mayor and Commissioners should benefit from an expected revenue spurt in about two years.

Our Mayor emphasized the financial impact that The Galt Mile has on the City's finances. District 1 (our district) represents 37.06% (\$5,347,229,990) of the total assessed property values for the City of Fort Lauderdale. While the Member Associations (condos & co-ops) of the Galt Mile Community Association account for 22% (\$1,163,544,450) of the District 1 valuations, they comprise more than 8% of the total municipal valuation (\$14,428,491,910). We historically receive, in return, substantially less than we contribute.

The Mayor spoke to the replacement of recently departed City Manager Floyd T. Johnson. Fort Lauderdale has engaged Alan A. Silva, 53, as "Acting City Manager" for a six-month term effective October 9, 2003 (Pro Bono!). Mr. Silva, former Director of the Office of Human Resource Development for the U.S. Agency for International Development (1994-1997) and City Administrator for Fall River, Massachusetts (1981-1984, 2000- 2001), will be responsible for directing the City of Fort Lauderdale's day-to-day operations, administering a total operating budget in excess of \$375 million and overseeing a staff of nearly 2,500 employees.

Continued on page 9

THIS MONTH AT-A-GLANCE

JAN/FEB



SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15 Galt Mile Community Association Meeting Nick's Italian Restaurant 11 a.m.	16 ^{to 1/18} Orchid Show War Memorial 10 a.m. - 9 p.m.	17 ^{to 1/18} S. Florida Folk Festival Easterlin Park Info.: 954-252-9437
18 	19 Commissioner Christine Teel: Pre-Agenda Meeting Beach Community Center 7 p.m. Info.: 954-828-5033	20	21 Fort Lauderdale City Commission Meeting City Hall 6 p.m.	22	23	24 ^{to 1/25} Paradise City Arts Festival Broward Convention Center Info.: 800-511-9725
25	26	27	28	29	30	31 ^{to 2/29} Florida Renaissance Festival Quiet Waters Park Info.: 954-776-1642
1 Suntrust Sunday Jazz Brunch Riverwalk 11 a.m. - 2 p.m.	2	3	4 ^{to 2/15} 42nd Street Broward Center for the Performing Arts Tix: 954-462-0222	5	6	7

A LOOK AHEAD

February 17 Itzhak Perlman, Violin Broward Center for the Performing Arts.
Tix: 954-462-0222.



Budget . . . Continued

Vice Mayor Carlton Moore indicated that he received many budget-related emails. He asked the people that sent the emails whether they would support a tax increase. Moore said, "I think only one of them said no." Alan Silva's unrequited challenge entails walking a tightrope between cutting expenses (jobs, services, etc.) and increasing resources (taxes, fees, etc.). Perched between those that demand more services and those reluctant to pay for them, he has agreed to temporarily serve as Fort Lauderdale's fiscal "bull's-eye", universally taking the heat resulting from the mismanagement practiced by his predecessor and others. Remarkably, he is doing it "Pro Bono"! How many "Doctors" do you know that work for free?

Mayor . . . Continued

Fort Lauderdale and Miami belong to a minority of municipalities functionally administered by a City Manager. The Mayor's preference for a permanent solution, aside from Chief of Police Bruce G. Roberts, is to lure a highly qualified proven commodity away from some successful "City Manager-based" municipality instead of promoting from within the existing hierarchy.

Naugle touched on several other issues. He voiced his concern over the Palazzo development on Las Olas Boulevard and the Intracoastal Waterway. He's understandably uncomfortable with allocating a paltry \$5 Million valuation for the foreseeable future on one of the most desirable locations in the Greater Fort Lauderdale area. In response to a query by GMCA Presidents Council Chairman Pio Ieraci, he expressed consternation over the unbridled development taking place downtown. Thousands of units are coming online with no adjunctive relief from the concomitant traffic. He advocates the development and promotion of public transportation to reduce the exploding congestion. While not advocating a moratorium on development downtown, the Mayor asked that the City be afforded the opportunity to "catch up" with regard to traffic control. He also encouraged progressive solutions like the efficient, convenient sub-rooftop parking provided by the downtown Publix Supermarket.

For additional political Updates or contact information for ALL of our representatives, check the Galt Mile Community Association Web Site (www.galtmile.com).

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How much do I need to exercise?

According to most health and fitness institutions and councils, a healthy adult should exercise 30 minutes every day.

What is the best type of exercise for my child?

If your child is pre-teen and does not have any limitations that might take special precautions, you want to make sure he/she is getting the following: First, Cardiovascular training to strengthen their system and their heart, release energy, and stay healthy. Second, Balance and Coordination training; this is the age when it is most important to engage this area of the brain so that these skills are targeted. Third, Flexibility training; it is a great way to prevent injuries and teach your child how to relax, focus, and concentrate on their body.

Please send all questions or ideas to: kellyfitness@bellsouth.net or fax 954-630-2212. WELLFIT Forum is made up of an Exercise Physiologist, Fitness Professional, an Athlete, a Nutrition Specialist and a Doctor. The WELLFIT Forum is a column developed for you, our readers, that answers questions regarding fitness, wellness, nutrition and health for adults and children.

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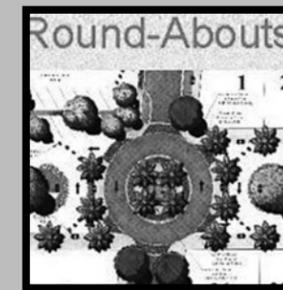
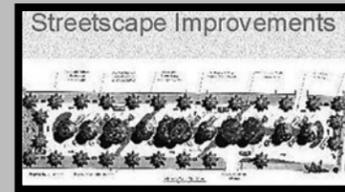
Pio Ieraci, Chairman of the Galt Mile Community Association's Presidents Council, led a contingent of eight Galt Mile residents to Tallahassee in support of rescuing Ft. Lauderdale's disappearing beaches. As a result, the Broward County Shore Preservation Project finally received the long awaited green light from the Governor and the Florida Cabinet at the scheduled May 13th Cabinet meeting. Rose Guttman, Fern McBride, Kathleen Freismuth, Iris and Joe Anastasi, Ron Gresser, and Eric Peter Berkowitz met the Governor and the Cabinet wearing red tee shirts emblazoned with "Save Broward Beaches" in response to the unwarranted delays encountered by the project in Tallahassee.

Director Steve Somerville of the Broward County Department of Planning and Environmental Protection (DPEP) described to the Cabinet members the county's plan to safely replace sand on Broward beaches lost to tidal erosion, tropical storms, and hurricanes. The project is scheduled to address severely eroded

beaches in segments according to the degree of shoreline shrinkage. Somerville assured Governor Bush that Hollywood Beach, the Segment III (3) portion of the project, would start receiving sand within six months to rebuild its devastated beach.

Time was equally allocated to the proponents and opponents of the project to present their final arguments to Attorney General Charlie Crist, Chief Financial Officer Tom Gallagher, Commissioner of Agriculture Charles Bronson, and Governor Jeb Bush. The Cabinet Members, having been briefed by their aides who met with the concerned parties the previous week, strictly enforced the imposed time constraints. After Steve Somerville summarized the salient aspects of the County's intentions, Broward County Commissioner Jim Scott, Hollywood Representative Eleanor Sobel, and Fort Lauderdale City Commissioner Christine Teel all voiced strong support for the project's implementation.

Continued on page 11



Shoppes...Continued

The formula to be implemented by the Architectural Alliance is anchored by a potpourri of storefront, streetscape, and waterfront improvements carefully designed to enhance the catchment area. The plan integrates increased lighting to heighten visitors' comfort levels about safety and better sidewalk connections between shops to facilitate browsing as well as shopping. Sidewalks will be widened to accommodate outdoor café use. Traffic flow will benefit from a user-friendly on-street parking reconfiguration. The plan supports a garage for the anticipated increased parking needs. The aesthetic improvements include a street tree program while eye-catching Round Abouts with fountains will punctuate a pedestrian thoroughfare that intersects the streets. Architectural Alliance's comprehensive planning approach incorporates the Intracoastal Waterway into the visitor's experience. Waterfront development is an essential component of the project. Pedestrian Promenade

upgrades and intermittent water taxi stations will provide an additional gateway to the area while taking aesthetic advantage of our bordering Intracoastal resource. A Waterfront Park is projected to abut one of the planned water taxi stops.

Dr. Alex Leeds has spearheaded this effort from its inception, nursing the project through a plethora of governmental obstacles. He points out that the Galt Ocean Shops development has all the attributes necessary to create a "Las Olas North", capable of attracting tourism and investment. The "Il Lugano" development, one of the projects western anchors, was approved this past summer by the Planning and Zoning Board. Dr. Leeds' enthusiasm about the project yields a kind of contagious excitement in local residents and merchants. If he is successful in bringing this effort to fruition, the entire Galt Mile Community will be the beneficiary. If you are interested in assisting with this unique neighborhood transformation, contact Dr. Leeds by E-mail at aleeds@bellsouth.net. If you have any technical or statutory questions, please contact Hal G. Barnes, P.E., City of Fort Lauderdale Project Engineer, at (954) 828-5065. Additionally, you can go to the Galt Mile Community Association web site (www.galtmile.com) and access the Galt Merchants Assn page for pictures, maps, and drawings of the project. After all, having a "Las Olas North" in your backyard won't exactly hurt real estate values...

Beaches...Continued

Pio Ieraci, who also chairs the Broward Beach Coalition, hosted an effective presentation advocating the inclusion of the Fort Lauderdale, Segment II (2), renourishment into the overall project. After explaining the need to address Fort Lauderdale's eroded beaches, Mr. Ieraci introduced highly respected environmentalist Roy Rogers to the Cabinet. Mr. Rogers has served as the Vice Chair of the Florida Audubon Society and Vice Chair of the Florida Community Trust. In addition, he Chairs the Nature Conservancy and is the Governor's appointee to the Environmental Regulation Committee. Rogers' portrayal of the entire project as safe, well-planned, and absolutely necessary offset claims to the contrary by project opponents. Mr. Ieraci then directed the Governor's attention to the red tee shirted Galt Mile residents standing in the audience and introduced Eric Berkowitz as their representative. Mr. Berkowitz alerted the Cabinet to the depth of the community's concern about losing its beach. David B. Struhs, Secretary of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, exclaimed his appreciation to Mr. Berkowitz for the clear demonstration of support for the project by the Galt Mile residents.

Governor Bush and the Cabinet voted unanimously to approve, with certain conditions, Broward County's permit request for the entire project. The Hollywood Segment would proceed immediately. This segment would be monitored for eighteen months to assure its anticipated outcome and use any data gathered from this oversight to refine the process as applied to the Fort Lauderdale segment. As the project proceeds, updates will be posted on the Galt Mile Community Association Web Site (www.galtmile.com).

FT. LAUDERDALE FIRE CHIEFS EXTEND WELCOME MAT TO ASSOCIATIONS



On October 30, 2003, Fort Lauderdale Fire Marshal Steve Kastner, Division Chief of the Fort Lauderdale Fire Prevention Bureau, and Chief Robert Edgar of the Emergency Medical Services Bureau met with GMCA Presidents Council Chairman Pio Ieraci and Advisory Board Member Eric Berkowitz to improve communications among the Fire Marshal's office, the E.M.S. Division and the community. The meeting, arranged by Fort Lauderdale Public Information Specialist Monique Damiano, centered on vehicles that would help promote a two-way information window through which community concerns could pass to the Fire Marshal and be directly addressed free of distortion.

EMS Division Chief Robert Edgar also indicated that a direct exchange of information would serve to highlight certain critical "public safety" issues that could save lives in the Galt Mile community. Chief Edgar's recent initiative to emplace AEDs (Automated External Defibrillators) into the neighborhood's condominiums and co-ops is an unmitigated success, as almost half of the 25 GMCA member Associations have purchased the life-saving devices while others are investigating their installation. The proposed information format would help focus the Fire-Rescue Department's attention on those issues considered as priorities by the Galt Mile Community Association. Fire Marshal Kastner could respond to "community-specific questions and problems" with direct and unedited answers on the Association's web site. Similarly, EMS Chief Edgar could alert the community to life-saving procedures that could help avert or shave valuable response seconds off time-critical emergency medical situations. Chief Edgar regretfully informed us that the Department would be unable to follow through on their original intention of providing Associations that purchased AEDs with CPR/AED certified training. The fiscal constraints that Fort Lauderdale is laboring under are too severe "to deliver the training at this time". He recommended several alternatives that we are currently exploring. He also promised to reconsider when the City's financial situation stabilized. See the Galt Mile Community Association Web Site (www.galtmile.com) for viable alternatives.

Fire Marshal Kastner has been caught up in the confusion that resulted from the Fire Safety legislation and the recent Fire Safety Amendment issued by Tallahassee. Both legislative efforts are legally and practically dogmatic. Fire Marshal Kastner's responsibility is to enforce a law that is inherently unclear yet extremely costly. A wide range of contradictory legal opinions and interpretations from condominium attorneys followed on the heels of the original legislation.

Shortly after its inception, Marshal Kastner, like scores of other local fire officials throughout the state, issued a notification of the new legislation to condominiums within his jurisdiction. When the shortcomings of the legislation reached flabbergasted condo boards, they directed their ire toward the local Fire Marshal. Marshal Kastner responded with a town hall style public meeting on 7/10/2002 in which he reassured residents that he intended to "work with them". Because of the harsh directives enigmatic terms of the actual legislation, this did little to assuage the growing anxiety of affected condos and co-ops.

In a recent attempt to quell the statewide confusion, Florida State Fire Marshal Tom Gallagher's office conducted a series of public meetings throughout the state to shed some light on the statute and the amendment. Marshal Kastner, along with several hundred concerned residents, attended the September 10th, 2003 Public Meeting at the Beach Community Center. After the meeting (at which the staff member from the State Fire Marshal's office admitted that he didn't understand the legislation) Marshal Kastner recommended that condominium associations wait until Tallahassee clarifies the terms of the statute before responding to its perplexing tenets.

The Fire Marshal has been the target of community consternation for the past year. Residents and their representative Boards, anticipating possible enforcement retribution from the Fire Marshal's office, have been poised for an unpleasant legal encounter. This atmosphere of suspicion and distrust has soured relations with the Fire Marshal that were once excellent. Board members that used to call the Fire Marshal's office for guidance or advice hesitate to do so for fear of broaching a "Pandora's Box" of potential acrimony. Marshal Kastner said that while this anxiety is understandable, it's completely baseless. He assured us that he has no political agenda and that his only aspiration is for a workable statute that would save lives. He stated that he wanted residents to feel comfortable with the fact that he has no intention of enforcing the statute until its terms are clear. He acknowledged that the legislation has become the focus of competing political agendas. Marshal Kastner anticipates that "two or three more legislative sessions" would be required to develop a more universally acceptable statute.

In an effort to ameliorate the currently uneasy relationship with the community, the Fire Marshal is actively seeking improved communications. He has invited the Galt Mile Community Association to request his official or unofficial input on any fire-related issue. He offered to provide timely advice to help any Association cope with the legislative confusion or the upgrading of their fire safety systems. Marshal Kastner said

Continued on page 13

Fire Chiefs article continued

that Association members are always welcome to contact him for any reason. "I am always willing to answer their questions. They should never be afraid of contacting me." He also offered to review and comment on any fire safety issue considered important enough to publish on the Galt Mile Community Association web site. Marshal Kastner said that while he harbors reservations regarding some of the concepts espoused and sources used on the GMCA Web Site, he "agrees with 90% of the content". Having the Fire Marshal's office available as an open resource would be of enormous benefit to individual Associations and the community as a whole. In response to a request by Pio Ieraci, Marshal Kastner agreed to address the December 1, 2003 meeting of the GMCA Presidents Council. In the spirit of this new "open door" relationship with the Fire Marshal's office, Ms. Damiano (of the Public Information Office) offered to regularly email a complete municipal information packet to any condo association upon request.

Subsequent to structuring a format for improved communications, the Fire Marshal recounted some of the qualities that comprise a good fire safety system. The keys are flexibility and common sense. Whether or not an Association anticipates compliance with some variation of the statute (once demystified), the basic detection and alarm systems that protect us should have the ability to adapt to technological upgrades. Component systems are vastly preferable to the pre-packaged proprietary systems that require complete replacement once obsolete. Separate control panels, enunciator panels, communications boards and

auxiliary features allow for the selective upgrading of equipment required by code changes or technological advances.

The cost of upgrading specific parts of a good system is substantially less than scrapping and replacing an inadequate one in its entirety. Marshal Kastner also warned against falling into a proprietary equipment trap. Verify with the equipment manufacturer that multiple local fire-safety equipment maintenance companies can service the purchased equipment. Some vendors will take a sizable loss on the equipment cost, knowing that they will recover substantially more while servicing it. This trap can only be sprung if the vendor that sold the equipment is the only available servicer as well.

We feel that this overture can provide the basis for a return to times when the Fire Marshal was a staunch ally of our neighborhood association, providing attention to the individual needs and unique concerns of our member Associations and their fire safety engineers. The Galt Mile Community Association and the Fire Marshal's office both share a desire to protect our residents. It's simply a matter of narrowing our differences (real or imagined) about how this can best be achieved. More to come...stay tuned...



FOLLOW UP AT THE DECEMBER PRESIDENT'S COUNCIL MEETING

Fort Lauderdale Fire Marshal Steve Kastner addressed a Galt Mile Community Association Presidents Council meeting in December to respond to questions about the new amendment to the controversial Fire Safety legislation. Marshal Kastner reaffirmed that his office would not enforce the requirement that Associations submit an Alternative Minimum Fire Safety Plan within 180 days of their annual fire inspection until Tallahassee clarifies the dogmatic terms of the legislation. He estimated that it would probably take "two to three additional legislative sessions" before all the wrinkles were ironed out. He extended an invitation to any Association to feel free to call him with any question about fire safety. When asked if he could express the legislative guidelines that his office intended to follow in writing, he said that he would be glad to. Marshal Kastner agreed to compose a written general outline of the legislative requirements and submit it for publication on the Galt Mile Community Association Web site (www.galtmile.com). Because of the intense constraints on the Fire Marshal's time as a result of Fort Lauderdale's budget problems, the set of guidelines will be published in January, 2004 on the Fire Safety page of the GMCA Web site.

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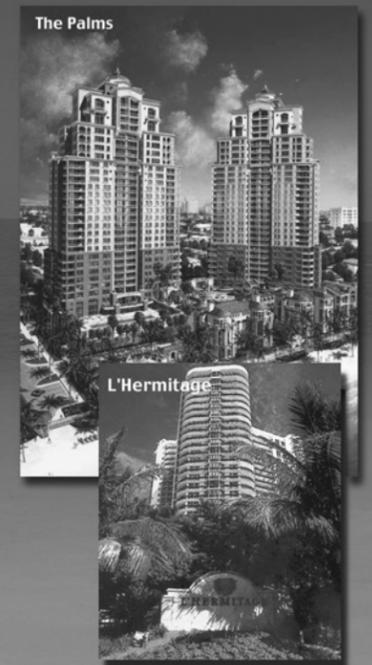
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