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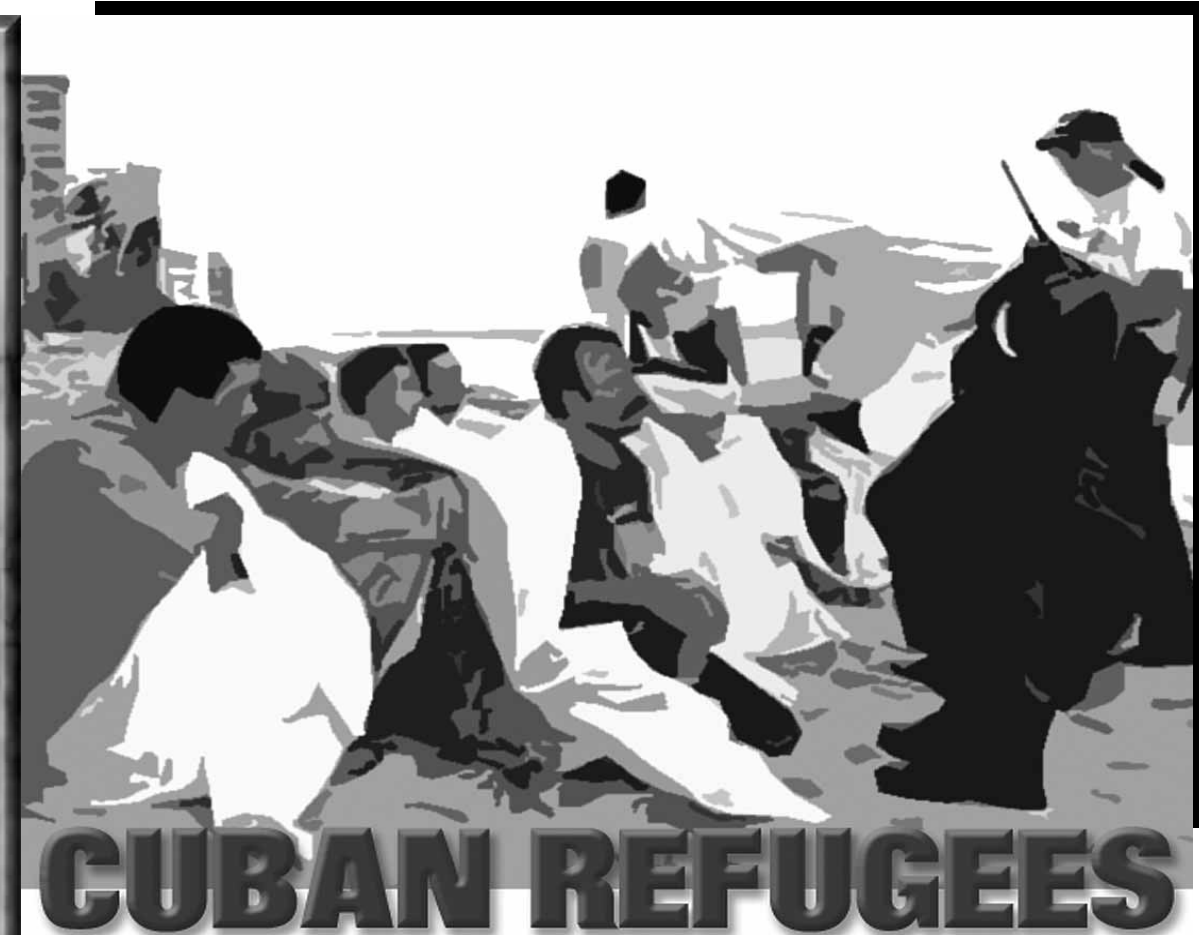
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CUBAN REFUGEES

Article by Eric Berkowitz

Daybreak...the sun peeks over the Atlantic. It's usually a quiet time for the condo dwellers of the Galt Ocean Mile. Dawn sets the stage for them to begin their Tuesday plans. This Tuesday was different. A commotion on the beach attracted the attention of Regency Tower, Galt Ocean Club and Playa del Mar residents. "It sounded like the remnants of a party left over from the night before," said an early riser from Regency Tower. "Men were walking up and down the beach checking the locked beach gates to the condos. Others were sitting in the sand." They were all grateful to be alive - and free.

Ten migrants left Santa Cruz, Cuba on Nov. 21st to elude the heavy arm of Fidel. The vehicle they pinned their hopes - and lives - on was a 16-foot cobbled-together raft that miraculously accomplished its mission. "A floor with balloons" said one onlooker. The "floor" of the unseemly craft was essentially several long wooden planks

affixed to cross-hatched smaller planks. It was bordered on either side by pontoons made of styro-foam sheets and inner tubes. The inner tubes were wrapped in cloth and yellow plastic tarpaulins that were hooked to the wooden floor with large round metal rings. A makeshift railing sat above the wrapped rows of inner tubes. While this nautical wreck invoked onlooker curiosity about how it could have possibly made the crossing from Cuba, the ten refugees viewed it with love in their eyes. Román Eliezer Rodríguez (65), Eliezer Rodríguez (32), Hugo Rodríguez (29), Odi Pérez Reyes, brothers Vicente Miguel Reyna Modelo and Vicente Pascual Reyna Modelo, and four refugees who refused to identify themselves saw their battered raft as a golden chariot. It was, after all, their "Exodus".

Continued on page 5

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Galt Ocean Club	1, 3 or 4 BRs	398,000 - 1,100,000
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Refugees...Continued

There was also suspicion about the refugees' story circulating among area residents who attended the early morning surprise landing. A Regency Tower resident of Cuban descent noted that aside from some blisters on their hands, they all were in extremely good condition for having spent ten days battling the ocean deprived of viable sustenance. The "song-fest" also cast a shadow on their claim to having experienced such a debilitating ordeal. The Coast Guard and Border Patrol have extensive experience with the long-time smuggling tactic of drop and dash. This technique calls for an apparently disheveled group and a sea-worn raft to be ferried offshore by boat, dropped close to the beach and left to approach authorities for asylum.

Pursuant to "The 1996 Cuban Adjustment Act", a group of undocumented Cuban migrants who have made it to land can stay in the country and work. After a year and a day in the U.S. the migrants are eligible for permanent resident status, the first step toward citizenship. If they are intercepted at sea, however, they are usually returned to Cuba. To determine whether this landing was a legitimate "break for freedom", Coast Guard and police vessels launched an offshore search for a smuggling craft. Barring any evidence that a scam was perpetrated, the ten should have no difficulty receiving asylum. Eldest group member Román Eliezer Rodríguez described the sentiments of his fellow refugees following their arrival in the United States, "I'm not going to say that I was born [again] today, because I'm old, but these kids were born again today when they arrived at this beach."

Whether or not our friends and neighbors on the beach Tuesday morning believed the raft refugees to be the "real deal", every one of them walked away with a renewed sense of appreciation for what Román Eliezer Rodríguez calls, "the land of liberty." •



Refugees...Continued

Their floating treehouse was powered by a small Honda outboard engine. They stowed food, water and two bicycle pumps in case the tubes started to deflate. Fortunately, they packed some oars as back-up to their outboard motor and headed for Miami. A motorboat could ordinarily make the trip in about eight to ten hours. Normally, an unpowered raft could cross the Florida Straits in about three days. This, however, was not to be. Tropical Storm Otto decided to destabilize the Atlantic Ocean, creating unusually rough seas. After six days of fighting the north-flowing Gulf Stream, the little outboard sputtered. The temperate ocean capsized the raft and claimed most of its passengers' food and water. Hugo Rodríguez described the incident, "The Sea was very rough. It turned the raft over. We were lucky to get it back. Very lucky."

The homemade oars they took along proved to be their salvation. One of the two brothers, Vicente Pascual Reyna, explained, "We spent four days rowing day and night. We split in two groups and would take turns rowing one hour at a time - each group." After losing their meager supplies to the ocean, they survived by using a few remaining oranges to catch fish. They treated their catch with vinegar and orange juice prior to consuming the raw fish.

Early Tuesday, November 30th - after ten arduous days - they spotted the high-rise condos along the Galt Ocean Mile and paddled to the beach at 6 AM. Dehydrated from the trek, the travelers explored the beach for an exit in search of help. By 6:30 AM, residents slowly grew aware of the situation and started to call for police and medical emergency transports. Sgt. Andy Pallen of the Fort Lauderdale Police Department said, "Police started getting 911 calls about 6:45 AM, after condo residents in the 3800 block of Galt Ocean Drive saw an overloaded raft in the water." The police gave the group blankets and drinking water. Shortly thereafter, Fire-Rescue Medical technicians evaluated their general medical condition. Despite their dehydration and extensive blisters covering their hands, ostensibly from the past four days of intense rowing, the men were in remarkably good condition.

Surprisingly, 65-year-old Román Eliezer Rodríguez started to serenade the crowd of reporters and photographers that collected on the beach. His raft-mates cheered as they clapped a beat to his rendition of a Mexican ranchera song. Amid the laughter and rousing encouragement of his compatriots, Rodríguez chanted, "Hace un año que tuve una ilusión, hace un año que se cumple en este día," (I had a dream a year ago, a dream that comes true today). Explaining this spontaneous ebullience, Rodríguez said, "We are happy to have made it here, to the land of liberty." Filling the role of a stereotypical wet blanket, Border Patrol's arrival quickly quashed the party mood. After being escorted to a Pembroke Pines facility for processing, Sgt. Pallen said the men were expected to be "released to family members who live in South Florida."

Subsequent to their release by authorities later that afternoon, Robert Montemayor - a spokesman for the Border Patrol - said they were all in good health and had been debriefed. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials usually ask refugees that raft here from Cuba if they were assisted by smugglers. Montemayor would not reveal what the men told officials. As to whether the migrants' story was deemed credible, Montemayor exclaimed, "We are still determining that."

Continued on page 24

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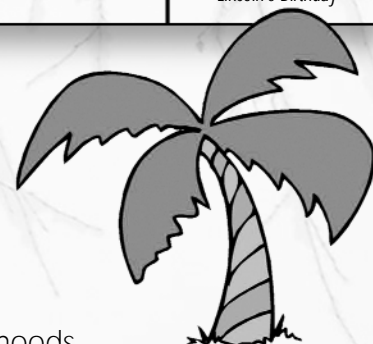


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9 Hairspray Through 1/16 Broward Center Info.: 954-462-0222 Las Olas Art Fest Part I Las Olas Blvd. Info.: 954-472-3755	10 Polar Express: An IMAX 3D Experience Museum of Discovery & Science Info.: 954-463-IMAX	11	12 The Glenn Miller Orquestra Broward Center Info.: 954-462-0222 Panthers vs Washington 7 p.m. Tix: 954-835-7000	13	14 Quartetto Gelato Broward Center Info.: 954-462-0222	15 S. Fla. Folk Fest Through 1/16 Easterlin Park Info.: 954-486-4040
16 The Harlem Gospel Choir Broward Center Info.: 954-462-0222	17 Moiseyev Dance Company Broward Center Info.: 954-462-0222 Commissioner Christine Teel: Pre-Agenda Meeting Beach Community Center Info.: 954-828-5033	18 Joe Cocker Broward Center Info.: 954-462-0222	19 Fort Lauderdale City Commission Meeting City Hall 6 p.m.	20 Galt Mile Community Association Meeting Nick's Italian Restaurant 11 a.m.	21 Fort Lauderdale Orchid Show Through 1/23 War Memorial Info.: 954-828-5380	22 The Wonder Bread Years Through 1/23 Broward Center Info.: 954-462-0222
23 Bill Cosby Broward Center Info.: 954-462-0222	24 Prague Symphony Orchestra Broward Center Info.: 954-462-0222 Fairchild Tropical Garden Moonlight Tour Info.: 305-667-1651	25 Tu B'Shevat	26	27	28	29 Antiques & Collectibles Show 2000 Block of Harrison St. Hollywood 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. Info.: 954-921-3016
30 Bernadette Peters Broward Center Info.: 954-462-0222	31 Commissioner Christine Teel: Pre-Agenda Meeting Beach Community Center Info.: 954-828-5033	1 David Copperfield Through 1/2 Broward Center Info.: 954-462-0222 Fort Lauderdale City Commission Meeting City Hall 6 p.m.	2 Groundhog Day	3	4 Mardi Gras Fiesta Tropicale Through 2/5 Downtown Hollywood Info.: 954-936-3377	5 Heat vs Chicago 7:30 p.m. American Airlines Arena Tix: nba.com/heat
6 Sunday Jazz Brunch Riverwalk, Downtown FL 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Info.: 954-828-5985	7	8 Dan-Wen Wei, piano Broward Center Info.: 954-462-0222	9 Oliver! Through 2/20 Broward Center Info.: 954-462-0222 Ash Wednesday	10	11	12 Lincoln's Birthday

C V C Event

The Citizen's Volunteer Corp will be fertilizing the beautiful palm trees on the beach. Volunteers are to gather at the South Beach Parking Lot, corner of Las Olas and A1A, on **Saturday, January 15, 2005 at 7:30 AM** for a sand-kicking stroll down the beach. Be sure to bring your sun block and a smile for a great day on the beach!

Call Pam Brown @ 954-828-5005 for more information. Donations are gratefully appreciated. Community Service hours are available to students and points are available to recognized neighborhoods.



Let
George
Do it

The City Manager's First **100** Days

Article by Eric Berkowitz

George Demetrios Gretsas was going about his business as the Mayor of White Plains' strong right arm when a colleague handed him an advertisement taken from the New York Times. The "ad" described a nightmare employment opportunity in Fort Lauderdale - the City Manager position. Come to sunny South Florida - Fort Lauderdale has no money - low employee morale - contract disputes - budget crisis...etc. He immediately applied for the job for which he was ultimately chosen. This anecdote demonstrates the reason that the City Commission selected Mr. Gretsas over candidates that were academically and experientially more qualified. Mr. Gretsas thrives on challenges. Nonetheless, it didn't disappoint the Commission when Mr. Gretsas remarked that his primary loyalty would be to "the elected officials" as opposed any particular constituency or city staff. Despite his lack of credentials as a City Manager, the City Commission's gamble on his exuberance and intensity seems to be paying off.


Our new City Manager addressed the Galt Mile Community Association Advisory Board on November 18th. He summarized his first 100 days' experience in the new position. His first major impact on City Hall was an expeditious reorganization of City government. Over the years, the city embarked on a program of consolidation, combining Departments to realize a financial benefit. Unfortunately, the city overzealously pursued this program to the point of gross inefficiency. Officials were charged with control of services outside their experience. According to Gretsas, "Department heads couldn't properly organize or control in-house or field staff." Bloated, poorly administered departments suffered from, "ineffective internal communications as well as poor communication with other Departments." Mr. Gretsas instituted on an "anti-consolidation" effort, expanding the 9 City Departments into 16. After relieving the effects of overconsolidation, he imbued the heads of the reconstituted Departments with some clear and non-negotiable responsibilities. Gretsas elaborated, "Every Department head is required to enumerate their goals and objectives to the City Manager within 70 days." Depending on their success or failure, this list of "expected accomplishments"

Continued on page 12

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George...Continued

Captain Gregory Salters

Accompanying Mr. Gretsas was Captain Gregory Salters of the Fort Lauderdale Police Department. Salters' charge is District 1 Patrol - the Galt Mile neighborhood. An eleven year veteran, Salters joined the FLPD on January 11, 1993. Academically well prepared for his duties, he earned a BS in Business Administration and a Masters in Public Administration from Florida A&M University and is an Adult Education doctoral student studying Human Resource Management at Florida International University. He worked as a financial planner for C & S Bank prior to joining the force. Salters expanded on Mr. Gretsas description of the Department's Homeless policy. There are, in fact, 60 officers that comprise the Homeless Outreach Team scattered throughout the city. While every F.L.P.D. officer has taken the "Homelessness 101" training, these specialists are also schooled in crisis intervention techniques.

Captain Salters explained that there is a local District 1 unit known as "Quebec 17" stationed near L'Hermitage Condominium at Earl Lifshy Park. They have had substantial experience responding to calls from the various Condos that line the Galt Mile - including Plaza South, Galt Towers, Commodore and L'Hermitage. He described how the officers walk a fine line in separating the Homeless that need assistance from those involved in criminal activity. He said that the majority of those addressed by officers take advantage of the Full Service "Homeless Assistance Center" that the City maintains for remedial and long-term aid to the Homeless. They have also been successful in ridding the community of tres-

passers and other law breakers operating under the guise of being Homeless.

Salters' challenge is similar to the one facing Mr. Gretsas - lowering the Homeless presence through a program of assistance and enforcement. The Captain points to successes that the "Quebec 17" unit has enjoyed and expects that they will continue. Captain Salters confirmed the improved work environment for the Police, stating that the Department was optimistic and enthusiastic about the new regime. He asked for and was granted the cooperation of the Galt Mile Community Association's member Associations. As Salters' enthusiasm started to infect us, we asked ourselves, "is there any reason why Rudy Giuliani's carrot and stick can't be deployed in the 'Venice of America'?" Although we've been down this road before, the question remains ripe for begging ...why not? With the support of the community, Police officers like Captain Salters and a clear mandate from the City Manager, we may yet see results.

Captain Salters invited questions from the residents of the Galt Mile neighborhood. His email address is gregorysa@cityfort.com. He can be reached by telephone at (954) 828-5483. City Manager George Gretsas' offices are located at 100 N. Andrews Avenue, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301 and his telephone number is (954) 828-5013, Fax number is (954) 828-5021. For additional information about City Manager, access the "Issues" section of the Galt Mile Community Association web site (www.galtmile.com) and scroll down to the "Budget Bust" page. •

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George...Continued

Gretsas related an experience he had while returning to City Hall at 1 AM with Officer Scott Russell of the Homeless Outreach Team, the City's "Homeless Squad" that receives special training in crisis intervention. Russell has distinguished himself as a paragon of Police relations with the Homeless, receiving an award for his model efforts in 2000 from the Florida Coalition for the Homeless. They found an 82-year-old World War II veteran living on the steps of City Hall. After rousing the sleeping "Homeless" vet they spoke with him at length. The vet wasn't aware that he was entitled to a virtual buffet of benefits - including medical help - from the government. He didn't return to the steps again the following evening. Gretsas decided to use the City Hall steps as a microcosm. If he "could keep the steps clear by helping those who wanted help and clearing out those who didn't," he could expand the formula throughout the city. It will be interesting to see if the new City manager can keep his balance while walking a tightrope between improving the city's image and avoiding a backlash by civil liberties proponents - a walk that former Mayor Rudy Giuliani successfully took in New York City.

Whether the City Commission did an excellent job of scientifically selecting the new City Manager or simply "lucked out", George Gretsas seems to be getting the job done. City Commission meetings are peppered with contentious distractions, often arising from personal disagreements among Commissioners. Anyone watching the Commission meetings in person or on channel 38 has seen Mr. Gretsas perform numerous "respectful interventions", wherein he would encourage the Commissioners to focus on the issue being considered. Some of the benefits from Mr. Gretsas' output, such as the new mood in the Police and Fire-Rescue Departments since the contract settlements, are obvious. New officers are filling vacancies, shaky shifts have been stabilized and the general sense that things are improving is slowly permeating City Hall. Other unexpected, yet positive, outcomes from his efforts are below the radar. During the City Commission's second budget meeting on September 21st, some of the Commissioners questioned whether Fort Lauderdale could afford a departmental restructuring amid this belt-tightening environment. Several Commissioners were surprised to learn that the restructuring actually saved the City a quarter of a million dollars.

Since Fort Lauderdale was knee-deep in a sordid fiscal morass when Mr. Gretsas took control on August 2nd, he never experienced the usual "Honeymoon Period" afforded to municipal saviors upon entering the fray. A budget disaster, hurricanes, contract nightmares - and he's still standing. An unasked question at the Advisory Board meeting was whether he could sustain this torrid pace? Unasked because of an anecdote he related early in the meeting. After the hurricane onslaught, he visited Punta Gorda, a city that was tragically lambasted. The dramatic distinction between the mind-boggling challenges faced by Punta Gorda's residents and our own difficulties impressed Mr. Gretsas, "It helped put our problems into perspective." He stated, "I couldn't help identifying with the way the residents persevered in the face of problems that dwarfed our own." Mr. Gretsas is beginning to assume the character of something that one might find under their tree or next to a spinning dreidel during the holiday season. Whether a Christmas present or "Hanukkah gelt", the first 100 days seems to indicate that the City got a prize in our new City Manager.

Continued on page 20

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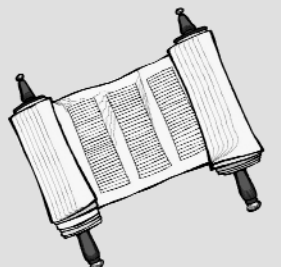
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 - 1807 to 1834—From \$1600 up to \$150,000
 - 1834 to 1838—From \$190 up to \$45,000
 - 1839 to 1908—From \$105 up to \$1,000,000
 - 1908 to 1929—From \$150 up to \$150,000
- \$10 Gold Coin 1795 to 1804—From \$4,000,000 up to \$1,000,000
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 - 1907 to 1933—From \$245 up to \$150,000
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- 1795 to 1798—From \$600 up to \$500,000
- 1799 to 1803—From \$500 up to \$150,000
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- 1873 to 1884—From \$50 up to \$7,000
- 1878 to 1935—From \$750 up to \$500,000

United States Half Dollars

- 1795 to 1797—From \$400 up to \$400,000
- 1801 to 1807—From \$100 up to \$45,000
- 1807 to 1839—From \$30 up to \$28,000
- 1839 to 1891—From \$15 up to \$150,000
- 1892 to 1915—From \$5 up to \$25,000
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George...Continued

The roughly \$4 million savings realized over the first 5 years would approximately equal the City's startup costs should the experiment fail and require the City to reassume control. Gretsas said, "More likely, the program will be successful and the City will have some money socked away in a reserve fund."

Upon arriving in Fort Lauderdale from New York, Mr. Gretsas applied for a permit to do construction on a deck. He got a taste of the frustration suffered by residents when facing the City's permit process. After reviewing the problem, he decided that the dilemma needed attention in two areas. Anyone that has recently dealt with the Building Department will attest to the fact that they suffer from severe understaffing. Inspectors, investigators, reviewers, etc. will all confirm that the budget gaffe has crippled the department's ability to function commensurate with current demand. As with other City Departments, Gretsas intends to reorganize the Building Departments' staff. The City Manager also pointed out that "there are two categories of Building Department staff - the community inspectors and the department personnel involved in the permit process." Gretsas continued, "I intend to merge them into one unit, thereby speeding up the process. Once accomplished, the Department will be better prepared to focus on customer service." Gretsas spoke optimistically of this occurring sometime soon. When questioned about the timing, he said that the Department was in the process of moving into improved accommodations...a new building. Unfortunately, the building "can't currently pass inspection because the roof leaks." Sometimes life is poetic.

Mr. Gretsas found the division of labor between the City of Fort Lauderdale and Broward County to be disconcerting. In White Plains, for instance, he was able to access "traffic central", a room populated with "computers and monitors that actively reflected and controlled the City's changing traffic patterns in real time." Flow, compensation and emergency response were at his fingertips. In Fort Lauderdale, Broward County controls traffic within the city's borders. He is therefore developing a working relationship with Broward County Administrator Roger Desjarlais - his county counterpart of sorts. As the City's "point man", Gretsas has also assumed a leading role in settling the war with Broward County over control of Land Use. "Land Use" is a buzz word for development. While the political decisions for Fort Lauderdale rest with the Mayor and the City Commission and the Broward County Commission will similarly decide the County's position, Gretsas will be working with Mr. Desjarlais behind the scenes. He stated that, "the City considers this to be a 'Home Rule' issue." The Governor has already weighed in on this issue by canceling a piece of legislation that would have given the County's municipalities complete control of development with their borders. Tallahassee has intimated that they want to see a settlement between the County and the cities. It now falls to the various city governments and the Broward County Commission to allow Desjarlais, Gretsas and other city managers to do the heavy lifting.

Continued on page 18

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George...Continued

becomes the springboard for either their advancement or dismissal. Serendipitously, Gretsas' restructure of municipal departments to promote improved communication and control carried a rather pleasant side-effect - a \$250,000 savings!

Contract disputes are anathema to productivity and morale. The City had little chance of maximizing its critical "Public Service" resources while City Police and Fire-Rescue personnel operated within an employment "fog". The prolonged contract negotiations had dispirited the workforce and made budget projections impossible. Gretsas expeditiously achieved agreement between the City and its unions, refocusing the criteria for advancement from longevity to merit. The main determining factor for promotion would be, as required of Department Heads, one's success in achieving their goals and objectives - not the static "time in" a particular position. The downside to guaranteeing a "job for life" is clearly visible at every level in every city department (or, for that matter, in any business where it proliferates!) Mr. Gretsas struck a balance among "job security", merit-based advancement and the betterment of the overall Force. "We traded longevity for new hires," he explained. In addition to budget-based morale problems, unfilled vacancies have placed additional responsibility and pressure on the rest of the Police Force. He continued, "Now that the contract is settled, employees know where they stand and the City has started to fill vacancies." Gretsas said that he is "also adding 13 new positions."

JUST SOLD

Information provided by Eastside Properties

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

L'Hermitage #908 (3/3.5) \$985,000 - closed 11/20/04	Plaza South #3B (2/2) \$450,000 - closed 11/29/04
Galleon #1205 (2/2) \$410,000 - closed 12/02/04	Coral Ridge Towers N #1004 (2/2) \$395,000 - closed 11/29/04
Top of the Mile (2/2) \$280,000 - closed 12/17/04	Regency Tower #503 (1/1.5) \$287,000 - closed 12/06/04
Plaza South #17M (2/2) \$570,000 - closed 12/01/04	Ocean Riviera #1405 (2/2) \$424,000 - closed 12/17/04
L'Ambiance #2105 (3/2.5) \$840,900 - closed 12/15/04	Ocean Summit #506 (2/2) \$415,000 - closed 12/16/04
Southpoint #2108S (1/1.5) \$345,000 - closed 12/06/04	Ocean Club #1203 (2/2) \$350,000 - closed 12/13/04

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The City Manager pointed to another longstanding municipal quagmire. Apparently, staffing levels are being determined by the "gut feelings" of the various Department Heads. Dogmatically, when poor administrative decisions lead to departmental difficulties or excessive overtime, those in charge have a tendency to blame insufficient personnel. Gretsas intends to engage a Consultant with expertise in this area. This will allow City officials to determine whether or not the claim of being understaffed is credible or if it is a smokescreen for inefficiency or incompetence.

Another feather in Gretsas' cap was the privatization of waste removal services within the city. The City of Fort Lauderdale shared the responsibility for trash collection with Waste Management, Inc. on a 40% - 60% basis. By dividing the work, the city was able to compare costs and control quality of service. Being "in the business" allowed the city to pass authoritative judgment on its partner's performance. Gretsas carefully assessed Waste Management's potentially assuming sole collection responsibilities for the entire city. After satisfying himself that their record warranted "high marks" for their performance, his "package" to the private company included a \$565,000 purchase of the City's equipment and vehicles and directly hiring 14 sanitation employees currently working for the City. The estimated annual savings of \$890,363 would be warehoused in a reserve fund pending the success or failure of the effort. Should Waste Management's service levels deteriorate, the city wants to be able to reinstate in-house collection.

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Continued on page 13

Homestead Exemptions Made Easy



Article by Eric Berkowitz

All legal Florida residents are eligible for a Homestead Exemption on their homes, condominiums, co-op apartments, and certain mobile home lots if they qualify. The Florida Constitution provides this tax-saving exemption on the first \$25,000 of the assessed value of an owner/occupied residence. You are entitled to a Homestead Exemption if, as of January 1st, you have made the property your permanent home or the permanent home of a person who is legally or naturally dependent on you. The filing period for homestead exemption for 2005 is March 2, 2004 through March 1, 2005.

When filing an application you must bring the following items listed below, dated prior to January 1, 2005. All owners occupying the property prior to January 1, 2005 must file in person on jointly held property, other than husband and wife, who may file for each other, with the required documents for both (copies or originals). If you are married and the deed has different last names for husband and

wife, a marriage license/certificate must be presented.

- Proof of Ownership: Recorded Warranty Deed, Co-op Propriety Lease, Notice of Proposed Taxes or Tax Receipt, if in your name(s). A deed must be presented if the property is jointly owned. If the PROPERTY IS HELD IN A TRUST, A COMPLETE COPY OF THE TRUST AGREEMENT IS REQUIRED.
- Proof of Permanent Florida Residence, ALL DATED PRIOR TO JANUARY 1, 2005:
- Florida Voter's Registration or Recorded Declaration of Domicile - REQUIRED.
- Florida Driver's License ("Valid Only in Florida" license is not acceptable) or Florida Identification Card - REQUIRED.
- Florida Vehicle Registration - REQUIRED.
- Non U.S. Citizen must bring permanent Visa (Green or Pink Card) or Political Asylum Documentation and Recorded Declaration of Domicile - REQUIRED.



Note: it is generally against the law for a Florida resident to drive in Florida with an out-of-state license or tag if he/she claims Homestead Exemption (Sections 320.37 and 322.08 of the Florida Statutes).

- The State mandated application form requires the following information for all owners living on the premises and filing.

Continued on page 19

Exemptions...Continued

- Current employers of all owners
- Addresses listed on last I.R.S. income tax returns
- Date of each owner's permanent Florida residence
- Date of occupancy for each property owner
- Social security numbers of all owners filing are required

Homestead Exemption does not transfer from property to property. If you had this exemption last year on another property and moved, you must file a new application for your new residence. Notify the Property Appraiser to cancel the exemptions on your former home. Property purchased during last year may show qualified exemptions of the seller. The sellers' exemptions will not carry over to this year; you must apply for your own exemptions! The amount of the homestead exemption granted to an owner residing on a particular property is to be applied against the amount of that person's interest in the property. This provision is limited in that the proportional amount of the homestead exemption allowed any person shall not exceed the proportionate assessed valuation based on the interest owned by the person. For example, assuming a property valued at \$40,000, with the residing owner's interest in the property being \$20,000, then \$20,000 of the homestead exemption is all that can be applied to that property. If there are multiple owners, all as joint tenants with rights of survivorship, the owner living at property filing receives the full \$25,000 exemption. Residents 65 years or older may qualify for the additional "Senior Exemption". Qualified seniors must have a total household adjusted gross annual income not in excess of \$22,096 to be eligible for the additional exemption. This exemption must be applied for annually. While current exemption holders can apply by mail after January 1, 2005, first time applicants are required to apply in person.

In addition to the eight local Property Appraiser's offices available to residents in Broward, the Broward County Property Appraiser's Office will conduct special taxpayer sign-up sessions for the 2004 Homestead Exemption and Senior Exemption at City Hall, the Beach Community Center, and various Homeowners and Civic Associations this November, December, January and February. As part of this Outreach Program, the Appraiser's Office will send Deputy Property Appraisers to the meeting locations to assist members and new area residents with their property tax exemptions filings.

Beach Community Center (3351 NE 33rd Street) sign-up dates are:

- Friday, December 17th - 10:00 AM - 12:00 Noon
- Friday, January 21st - 10:00 AM - 12:00 Noon
- Friday, February 18th - 10:00 AM - 12:00 Noon

Note: For the Homebound, who cannot leave their home and need to file for Homestead Exemption, please call: 954-357-6830

Former Broward County Commissioner Lori Parrish defeated J. R. Markham in a hard fought Democratic Primary and challengers Mark Taravella, John J. Makos and write-in candidate David Longstaff in the main event on November 2nd to become the next Broward County Property Appraiser.

Continued on page 21

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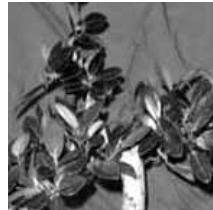
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Gold Mound



Green Island Ficus



Silver Buttonwood

Mr. Fortier first spoke about using two different types of plants and, "staggering them in the beds along the sidewalk for the entire length of the Galt." This idea would alternate two green plants, Indian Hawthorn and Green Island Ficus, in the sidewalk beds. In a variation, he would replace one of the two green plants with another candidate, Gold Mound. The yellow Gold Mound would add interest by contrasting with either the Green Island Ficus or the Indian Hawthorn. Fortier said, "I believe the green and bright yellow from the Gold Mound would make an awesome statement." A third option he described would combine three different colored plants. In a more opulent version, the Green Island Ficus and the yellow Gold Mound would be staggered with Silver Buttonwoods, creating some variation of silver, yellow, green, silver, yellow, etc. to adorn Galt Ocean Drive.

Fortier's optimism is infectious. Addressing a room filled with Association representatives, he stated, "While I can make recommendations for the neighborhood landscaping, you have to live with them." He then invited input from the residents. The excitement with which he explained his plan spilled over to the audience as they questioned him about the plan's details. Fortier says that this plan can be done with

existing resources. Since his address to the Presidents Council, Fortier has kept his commitment to apprise the Association of developments, emailing Council Chairman Pio Ieraci with permutations of his intentions for the Galt Mile. Whichever landscape architecture Mr. Fortier ultimately implements, it will have the benefit of being able to survive and thrive – in contrast with the current plants. Green, yellow, silver, etc. are all preferable to the drab brown of the dead or dying patches that intermittently mark the existing sidewalk beds. Hopefully, the lower maintenance costs of the sturdier arrangement will enable Fortier's troops to help keep the block in a "Disney-like fashion". If his intensity and commitment are successfully reflected in his plan's outcome, the Galt Ocean Mile will again sparkle with the ambience envisioned by Earl Lifshy and the Galt Mile leadership while first conceiving to put a "Smile on the Mile!"

Update: To properly frame the new landscaping, Mr. Fortier will clean and seal the pink aggregate sidewalk and the paved street inlets to recover their original luster. To view an example of this process, see the patch of sidewalk bordering the large center planter in front of Regency Tower. This "test area" was treated first to determine the effectiveness of the process—editor. •



Exemptions...Continued

Ms Parrish will assume the reins of her new office from its current occupant, Rocky Rodriguez, on January 3, 2005. Mr. Rodriguez inherited the position from former Broward Property Appraiser William Markoff upon his untimely passing. The Broward County Property Appraiser (BCPA) maintains a web site at "http://www.bcpa.net". The Property Appraiser's office has instituted a new Online Homestead Filing Program. While the Property Appraiser's Outreach Program is remarkably convenient for new filers, the internet-based program is even easier. You can save time, gas-money and avoid lines and crowds that assemble at the eight local Broward offices. Go to the Galt Mile Community Association web site (www.galtmile.com), click on "Homestead Express" and scroll down to the links at the bottom of the article to access the "Online Homestead Filing Program". Galt Mile residence have a friend in the BCPA's office. Please contact Bob Wolfe of Inter-Governmental Media Relations at (954) 445-5732 or by email at "media@bcpa.net" for further information. •

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Smiles...Continued

Demonstrative of this new hungry attitude permeating department staff is Robert Fortier. Bob Fortier is a Parks Department Foreman whose responsibility includes managing the beach area. When Hurricane Frances tossed about 40% of the sand from Fort Lauderdale Beach across A1A, Fortier's crews returned the silicon deluge to its original location. Despite the massive shock endured by the landscaping along the coastal highways from the windiest season in recent history, Fortier's people have kept the beach boulevards verdant. This was done on a shoestring; imagine what they could do with adequate resources. Consistent with this "Eye of the Tiger" credo, Fortier has a plan for the Galt Mile.

Galt Ocean Mile underwent a massive rehabilitation several years ago. The extensive civic improvements known as "A Smile on the Mile" were paid for from an assessment contributed to by every Galt resident. President Robert Rozema of the Galt Mile Community Association described the arrangement brokered between the Community and the City, "We paid for it, the City built it and promised to maintain the improvements in a 'Disney-like fashion' - a reference to the meticulous manner in which Disney maintains their famous Park." Rozema continued, "The Galt Mile Improvement Project is arguably the most successful neighborhood redevelopment project in the City's history." The pact has been sorely tested by FP&L, AT&T, Bellsouth and an assortment of contractors that failed to restore the street to its original condition subsequent to decimating it. While not always successful, at least the City has tried to live up to its obligation...until recently. When the City's finances magically evaporated, so did their ability and their will to properly maintain the Galt Mile.

On November 1, 2004, Mr. Fortier addressed the Presidents Council of the Galt Mile Community Association. After explaining the weather-related obstacles faced by his staff - hurricanes, severe winds that "fried" even mature plants, etc. - and the fiscal constraints that Parks and Recreation was operating under, Fortier revealed an optimistic plan to reinvigorate the neighborhood landscaping. Responsible for its maintenance throughout the City's budget-based hard times, Fortier has had the opportunity to examine the block's flora and has arrived at some productive conclusions. Consistent with the Statewide Greenways and NatureScape programs, Fortier is a proponent of propagating native plants. He contends that indigenous plant life, having adapted to our area's environmental rigors, enjoys the natural protection afforded by millions of years of evolution. As such, native flora will better withstand the punishment that currently devastates the Galt Mile's landscaping. He also stated that plant selection should take into account the specific environmental hazards found on the Galt Mile. Proximity to the ocean dictates that the plants be saline-resistant, owing to their constant exposure to salt. Since the ocean winds explode through the corridors separating the high-rise structures that line the Galt, only plants capable of surviving these gale-force vortices should be considered. While these constraints will preclude the selection of many plant types, there is still a wide enough variety available to provide an aesthetically pleasing arrangement that can withstand the wind and the salt. Bob Fortier has a wealth of ideas about the type and configuration of plants he would like to see along the Galt Mile.

Continued on page 8

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F O R T I E R

"Smiles on the Mile"

Article by Eric Berkowitz

Phil Thornburg was tagged to run Fort Lauderdale's Parks Department, replacing former Parks and Recreation Director Ernest Burkeen. It's a job that requires a delicate chemistry of diplomacy, political chops, fiscal efficiency, artistic proclivity and patience. The City's budget boondoggle has taken a withering toll on every municipal department. Because departmental cutbacks in the Police or Fire-Rescue Departments would imply increased danger for the City's residents, they are high profile media fodder. Therefore, every official news release expounding on the budget repercussions includes a disclaimer, "No Police or Fire-Rescue personnel will be cut!" When the Public Safety Aides (who assist the Police) were scheduled for termination, the City sponsored a Code Fine Amnesty Program to avoid laying them off. It allowed property owners who successfully brought their violated properties into compliance to pay a greatly reduced fine if they paid it quickly. The funds collected financed a temporary repeal of the Public Safety Aides threatened layoffs. What's left? Where can the budget axe repeatedly fall with impunity? PARKS and RECREATION!

Clearly, trimming the overgrowth in the City's swales isn't nearly as important as patrolling the streets or serving on an Emergency Medical team. We can afford to close a park an hour or two earlier well before we can afford to lose one minute of 911 response time. While every resident cares about Fort Lauderdale's aesthetics, they care more about safety and/or survival. Police and Fire-Rescue will always take precedent over Parks and Recreation. As such, the Parks Department has learned to make do with less, more so than almost any other City service. Thornburg knows that his Parks Department is at the back of the line for resources. So does his staff. Despite a demoralizing effect on its personnel, living with a bare cupboard for the past year has also toughened up the Department. Every cent allocated in their new budget will be painfully stretched and meticulously distributed. They plan on doing more with less.

Continued on page 6

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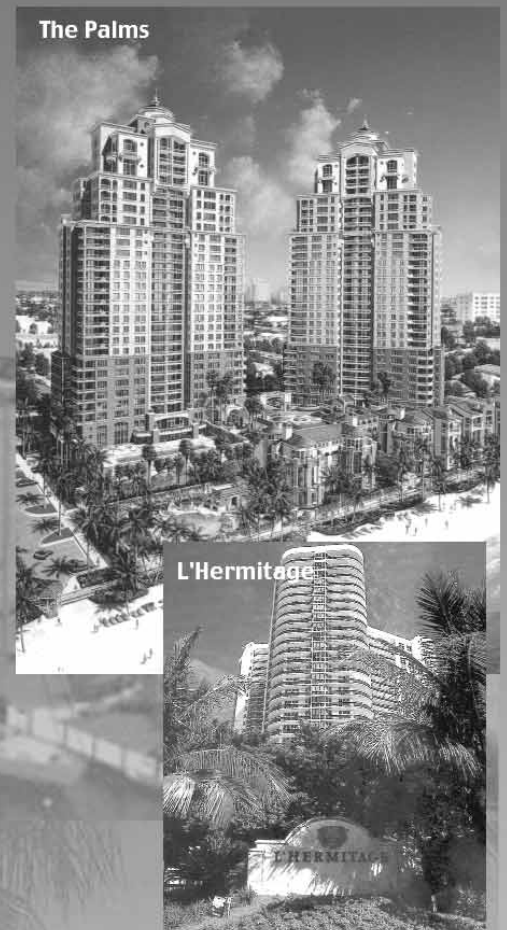
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