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"An Official Publication of the Galt Mile Community Association"

September 2008

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GEORGE GRETSAS TAKES HIS SHOW ON THE ROAD

By Eric Berkowitz

One day prior to every meeting of the Fort Lauderdale City Commission, Commissioner Christine Teel convenes a Pre-Agenda Meeting for her District 1 constituents at the Beach Community Center. By arming herself with their direct input, she can better prioritize issues as they are confronted in the next day's meeting. She occasionally dedicates the meeting venue to special presentations. The Commissioner notifies interested District 1 residents about each upcoming meeting by email, usually reminding them that "Two or more City Commissioners and/or Advisory Board members may be present at this meeting. All are invited to attend." In early July, her email targeting the July 14th meeting varied, conveying instead, "City Manager George Gretsas will be attending to present the City's goals and objectives for the upcoming fiscal year. Mr. Gretsas will discuss his plans for reducing costs, while improving the quality of life for the residents and businesses in the City of Fort Lauderdale. He will be available to address your concerns and answer your questions about issues of interest specifically to District I residents and the future of our City."

On July 14th, residents that attended the meeting got more than they bargained for. The meeting was moved from the room ordinarily occupied by Commissioner Teel's pre-agenda regulars to the auditorium. As the audience filed in, they were greeted by City Manager George Gretsas, Commissioner Christine Teel and a host of municipal department heads representing every major city agency. To

assist the City Manager field questions after the presentation, Gretsas invited Fire Chief James Eddy, Director of Business Enterprises Cate McCaffrey, Building Services Manager Valerie Bohlander, Code Enforcement Manager Mike Maloney, Public Works Director Albert Carbon and the Executive Officer for Police District 1, Captain Raul Diaz (subsequently promoted to Major Police District 3). Gretsas also brought his three Assistant Managers, David Hébert, Kathleen Gunn and Steve Scott.

After being lured to Fort Lauderdale from White Plains, New York, where he was the Mayor's right arm, George Gretsas strapped up, thickened his skin and extricated the city from the deepest, darkest fiscal hole in Fort Lauderdale history. Aside from bringing intensity and a focused work ethic to the job, Gretsas cleverly kidnapped fellow New Yorkers Kathleen Gunn and David Hébert from their respective administrative positions in White Plains and, with native Floridian Stephen Scott, formed the managerial commando squad that disassembled - and then rebuilt - Fort Lauderdale's organizational infrastructure.

Each was assigned responsibilities commensurate with their experience and intuitive capabilities. Formerly an Executive Director of the White Plains Downtown Business Improvement District, Kathleen Gunn was charged with overseeing Business and Economic Development as well as Parks and Recreation. By luring a host of mid-size businesses such as the Kaplan University to the City, Gunn substantially expanded the tax base, lowering tax pressure on homeowners.

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City Manager George Gretsas with management team.

THE BROWARD LEGISLATIVE DELEGATION "CALYPSO" WORKSHOP



By Eric Berkowitz

Some Broward delegates (L-R) Rep. Ari Porth, Rep. Franklin Sands, Sen. Jeff Atwater, Rep. Jack Seiler, Rep. Jim Waldman

SOME BACKGROUND

On August 11, 2008, the Broward Legislative Delegation convened a "Calypso Workshop" at the Beach Community Center. Initiated by Oakland Park Representative Jack Seiler and Executive Director Sandy Harris in response to the hailstorm of antipathy and confusion about the planned gasworks off the coast of Fort Lauderdale, the event drew about 250 residents from surrounding neighborhoods. The Delegation is comprised of State legislators elected from Broward County. Attending members included Senator Jeffrey Atwater, Representatives Ellyn Bogdanoff, Jack Seiler, Perry Thurston, Jim Waldman, Ari Porth, Martin Kiar, Franklin Sands, Matt Hudson and Joe Gibbons.

With Election Day around the corner, the area's incumbent lawmakers realized some "added value" in the well-attended event, a fact that also attracted some of their more obscure opponents to the workshop. While the legislators were ostensibly there to learn, the residents were hopeful that delegates would share with Governor Charlie Crist their reasons why a dangerous 18-story fossil fuel plant should never have been sited near these heavily populated beach-front communities.

The controversy started last December, when Fort Lauderdale City Commissioner Christine Teel surprised local neighborhood associations with disconcerting news about a planned liquefied natural gas (LNG) plant located adjacent to the beach. After wading through mountains of marketing hype and scare tactics, civic organizations and public officials investigating this issue concluded that the gasworks threatened the adjacent population with catastrophic conflagration similar to disasters in Cleveland and Skikda, Algeria that killed and maimed hundreds and incinerated city blocks.

The Calypso Project's parent is a \$110 billion French company called SUEZ, a huge conglomerate filling newly privatized energy, water and waste management niches in Europe, Africa, Asia, South America and the Middle East. Its corporate subsidiaries face worldwide charges of human rights violations (i.e. Aguas Argentinas, in which SUEZ is the majority stockholder, was thrown out of Argentina for selling polluted water). Currently pursuing a merger with French natural gas powerhouse Gaz de France, SUEZ is under fire from European Union regulatory authorities for flagrant anti-trust violations. To obtain EU monopoly clearance for the delayed merger, SUEZ is divesting certain assets such as its Distrigas LNG plant in Massachusetts, whose suitors include Gazprom, the Russian gas utility and Sonatrach, its Algerian counterpart!!!

Calypso is their third foray into the American LNG market, having built the Distrigas of Massachusetts LLC LNG facility in Everett, Massachusetts that was cited by the Department of Transportation's Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration for safety violations from 2002 through 2005. They are about to open another Massachusetts LNG plant called Neptune near Manchester. Offering proof that the Everett plant was a danger to the local citizenry, the Mayors of Everett and Boston closed the SUEZ Everett facility with an injunction that was later vacated when the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) forced the issue into a friendly federal court using subsequently discredited documentation

that the plant was safe – over the objections of local Police and Fire Departments in Boston and surrounding communities. An "Independent Risk Assessment" purchased by SUEZ is currently being used to promote that their Calypso plant is also safe. The workshop revealed that neither the local residents nor their representatives believe that SUEZ is remotely concerned about their safety.

THE MAIN EVENT

SUEZ official and Calypso Assistant Manager Brad Cooley first addressed the panel, opening with "I'm here to tell you that the project is safe. We wouldn't build it if it put anyone on shore at risk." After stating "We don't view an LNG tanker as a potential terrorist target," Cooley enigmatically said, "We're concerned about a terrorist attack. We're putting plans together to mitigate an attack. Suez will provide its own resources for an emergency response, including rescue vessels. We filed a draft security manual with the Coast Guard. If resource shortfalls occur, we will make up for them." Cooley contended that the project was located across from the Galt Mile Beach "to minimize impacts to the local hard bottom environment." Winding up, Cooley stated that "Under no circumstances would a vapor cloud ever reach shore. The ignitable part of a vapor cloud will only extend 3.8 miles. However, with the Coast Guard involved, there is no reason to worry about this ever happening. The Coast Guard put together a security plan in cooperation with local authorities. Safety is not an issue for this project."

Chairman Seiler invited attending local public officials to either respond to the SUEZ statements or express their concerns. City Commissioner Christine Teel read a resolution passed by the City of Fort Lauderdale asking the Governor to deny the dangerous project. Mayor Roseann Minnet of Lauderdale-by-the-Sea informed the panel that her municipality also passed a resolution opposing the Calypso gas plant as did Pompano Beach. Minnet stated, "If we continue down this path, we will see increased harm to our environment and rising energy costs. Wind, solar and ocean energy are plentiful in our area. Florida's future is energy self-sufficiency not continued dependence on foreign fossil fuels. Wind turbines and solar panels are not attractive targets for terrorists." Commissioner Suzanne Boisvenue of Oakland Park also spoke against the construction of this life-threatening fossil fuel way-station.

To offset the marketing materials distributed by SUEZ to support Cooley's presentation, civic leaders armed delegates with a 33-page "White Paper" explaining the issues and diagnosing in detail each of the reasons for asking the Governor to veto the project. Fully annotated with source citations, the White Paper was referenced by panel members in developing questions for Mr. Cooley.

Representative Ari Porth asked Mr. Cooley "why the project was not built in the Bahamas, as originally intended almost 10 years ago?" Once the Bahamian Government investigated the dangers of placing a liquefied natural gas facility in an urban environment, they refused to approve the SUEZ license application. Several relevant events influenced the Bahamian freeze. In 2002, the SUEZ Everett facility was cited for serious safety violations for failure to properly train plant security employees, maintenance staff, and fire protection personnel as well as failure to monitor corrosion control (equipment was rusted). More importantly, despite SUEZ promises that LNG safety technology was foolproof, a similar LNG processing facility in Skikda, Algeria suffered a catastrophic explosion in 2004 that killed 23, injured 72 and reduced the area to rubble.

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Workshop...Continued

Mr. Cooley downplayed what transpired in the Bahamas, stating "We applied for a license many years ago. For some reason, the Bahamian Government never responded to our application. Although we do not know why we haven't heard from them, we became tired of waiting. We decided to finally move the project closer to the U.S. mainland, which would also save a lot of money." In addition to characterizing the Bahamian refusal to grant them a license as a mystery of life, Cooley also neglected to mention that the SUEZ decision to relocate the facility immediately followed passage of the Energy Policy Act of 2005, wherein changes in the law removed local populations as well as local and State governments from the licensing process. Since FERC, newly empowered as the unilateral LNG licensing authority, could be counted on to do whatever benefited the company (as mandated by a White House Executive Order), SUEZ concern about local opposition by impacted communities threatened with incineration disappeared. They expected an uneventful approval.

Several Legislators asked Cooley about the citations SUEZ received in 2002, 2003 and 2005 for safety violations at their Distrigas LNG plant in Everett Massachusetts. Cooley admitted that the Office of Pipeline Safety fined SUEZ \$220,000 for safety violations. He stated that the violations were minor and SUEZ subsequently claimed that the charges were baseless. Cooley also mentioned that the fine was reduced.

On July 23, 2002, Massachusetts Congressman Edward Markey, a member of the House Subcommittee on Homeland Security, described the plant's lack of security to the House of Representatives, stating, "The Distrigas LNG facility in Everett is owned by a Belgian-based energy affiliate of the French conglomerate, Suez. Unfortunately, I have found that security at this facility is sorely inadequate. Both from whistleblower reports and from direct first hand observation, I have seen a facility where security is either nonexistent or woefully lacking." When initially served with the violations in 2002, SUEZ mounted a \$multi-million legal campaign aimed at exploiting regulatory loopholes. While every charge was admittedly true, a few were withdrawn due to statute of limitations protections and legal challenges claiming that the relevant regulations were drafted in a confusing manner. Markey disparaged Distrigas' reaction to the violation notice, "While Distrigas says it is improving its security procedures, it has also said that the company would fight the Department's proposed fine." Markey angrily insisted that SUEZ should redirect the resources they committed to exploiting legal technicalities to instead providing the mandated security originally promised to the endangered Boston area. He added, "Only time will tell whether the situation on the ground in Everett will change and whether the companies' European corporate parents will provide the funding and support to allow a 'security first' philosophy truly take hold at Distrigas."

Senator Jeffrey Atwater told Cooley that he was disturbed by his statement that

SUEZ thinks that safety is not an issue. The Senator declared "Safety is the most important issue! Atwater asked Cooley, "Who will be responsible for funding the 'additional security' that will be required, local governments? Since Broward is already facing a shortfall, where will the resources come from?" Cooley told the Senator "We plan to work with local governments at the appropriate time and we would shoulder some of the burden." Atwater turned to Broward County Sheriff Al Lamberti, who was observing from the back of the room. Referring to Cooley's statement that a plan was developed by the Coast Guard in cooperation with local authorities, the Senator asked, "Did Suez consult with your office on additional security measures at any time during this process?" The Sheriff shrugged and announced, "Personally, no, I have not been consulted on this project." Visibly irked, the Senator told Cooley, "I can't imagine that a security plan is viewed as a post-licensing decision." Atwater informed the SUEZ official, "I sent a letter to Governor Crist expressing my opposition to this poorly planned project. It was a mistake to locate this type of facility adjacent to heavily populated neighborhoods." Atwater's response was roundly applauded by the audience.

Delegation chair Jack Seiler also expressed disappointment at Cooley's statement, contending that public safety was at the heart of the community's objection to this project. When Seiler asked him to outline the SUEZ security plan, Cooley said "Our draft security plan is on file with the Coast Guard. However, the details of the plan are confidential." Seiler clarified, "We're not asking to reveal the plan's details, we want to know that it's capable of responding to prospective threats."

When Representative Seiler asked the Sheriff about the project's security impacts, Lamberti complained "We're already pressed for resources to deal with our day-to-day responsibilities in Port Everglades. Where will the money come from to deal with additional needs? What will happen in case of a catastrophic event? We must have the capability to fight anything that might happen in the port as a result of this project. Where will the resources come from for preparation and readiness, not just response? We were already a terrorist target before this project. This will just add one more target that we'll have to prepare for."

Galt Mile Community Association President Pioteraci was among the many complainants who challenged Cooley's claim that the danger from a pool fire is limited to a 3.8 mile range, as estimated in the "Independent Risk Assessment" paid for by SUEZ. Contrary to Cooley's statement, the study was not performed by the Coast Guard, but by Houston based Risknology, Inc., a firm that specializes in helping oil and gas companies tailor risk assessments to elicit regulatory approval. Studies from December 2004 through May 2008 by Sandia National Laboratories, the recognized benchmark for LNG hazard assessments, offer examples of ignitable vapor clouds spanning distances of 7.3 to 7.9 miles. Cooley also neglected to mention that the Sandia studies and the Risknology study commissioned by SUEZ warn that an additional

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The Galt Mile News is the official newsletter of the Galt Mile Community. Published 12 times a year, this publication is designed to educate the Galt residents of neighborhood-oriented current events and issues, and to offer residents Galt-specific discounts from various local merchants.

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minimal cushion of 1 2/3 miles is required to survive the thermal radiation from the resulting 3000° fireball. The total survivable distance from the LNG plant is therefore between 9 and 10 miles. The planned Calypso facility starts only 7.7 miles from Galt Ocean Drive and 7.9 miles from A1A. You do the math. Ieraci pleaded with panel members, "We beckon you to speak on our behalf to Governor Crist to ensure he hears our concerns. Suez cannot guarantee our safety. The Coast Guard cannot guarantee our safety. They can't protect us against a terrorist attack. This is further dependence on foreign fuel."

GMCA Advisory Board member Fred Nesbitt quoted from a December 2007 Government Accountability Office (GAO) report stating that liquefied natural gas (LNG) tankers face "suicide attacks from explosive-laden boats, standoff attacks with weapons launched from a distance and armed assaults" resulting in a "severe threat to public safety, environmental consequences, and disruption of the energy supply chain," and - most importantly - that "the Coast Guard - the lead federal agency for Maritime Security - has insufficient resources to meet its own self-imposed security standards." He continued, "If a tanker is breached, the 20 billion gallons of released natural gas would be ignitable by a spark and have the force of a small nuclear bomb. The resulting fire is not suppressible. Local police and fire units have neither the funding nor training to contend with the effects of such an attack."

Referring to damage that the project's anchoring system will afflict on the seabed, local fisherman David Neilsen said "You're going against some of the strongest currents in the world. The chains will hurt the bottom of the ocean. A couple of good strikes of lightning, god knows what will happen."

William Claire of Plaza South Condominium accused SUEZ of locating Calypso outside local jurisdictions to avoid accountability. Claire also said it may not matter how far Calypso claims that a vapor cloud can travel. "Piracy has tripled in recent years and LNG tankers are susceptible to being commandeered and steered into Port Everglades before being breached and ignited."

General Manager Patricia Quintero of L'Hermitage I Condominium also expressed distrust for Cooley's unsubstantiated assurances that SUEZ will somehow protect the neighborhood from tanker breaches. Quintero declared, "You're asking us to put all our faith in you and just wait and see what you'll do. That's not good enough."

Seemingly overwrought, Playa del Mar's Linda Eiding explained that after paying her dues, she moved here to enjoy the fruits of a lifetime of sacrifice and hard work. Addressing the panel, she lamented, "I don't want to live the next 25 years being stressed out wondering whether or not we will be killed in an explosion."

Fort Lauderdale resident Chris Chiari told the panel that he became familiar with the project while serving on the Broward County Marine Advisory Board. Chiari contended that Calypso has continuously misled people about the project throughout its history. "They didn't simply become impatient with the Bahamian Government and decide to move. The opposition to their project became insurmountable for good reason. The Bahamian Government showed real leadership. They decided to protect their citizens from a potential catastrophe. The SUEZ campaign to hide the serious dangers and the additional cost to taxpayers while creating false impressions that this project will lower energy costs has proven that they aren't trustworthy."

Regency Tower resident Eric Berkowitz notified the panel about an amendment to the Coast Guard Bill in Congress (HR 2830) that allows the Coast Guard to use state or local government resources to assist in enforcing security plans for LNG sites. The amendment makes local taxpayers financially responsible for their own protection and the protection of facilities owned by foreign-based corporations. Berkowitz told the panel "In a July 21, 2008 Washington Times Commentary, Admiral James A. Lyons Jr., commander in chief of the U.S. Pacific Fleet, laments how the Coast Guard's budget and resources shortfall from their LNG security responsibilities will be filled by local law enforcement agencies.

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The Admiral complains that, in addition to being an 'unfunded mandate on local governments and reducing their resources for traditional community law enforcement protection, they are not trained for this mission. You must have specially trained personnel such as counterterrorist SEALs to defeat a determined terrorist attack.' Furthermore, Admiral Lyons wonders why taxpayer-funded Coast Guard resources are being used to finance security for foreign-based private companies."

WHY THE WORKSHOP?

Following the workshop, residents continued speaking with legislators about their concerns. Senator Jeffrey Atwater said that this workshop accomplished two important objectives. In addition to providing legislators with an opportunity to learn about the project's inherent dangers; they learned first-hand how the people living in adjacent communities feel about being forced to live

with these very real threats. "The issue is not whether you are for or against natural gas, but whether dangerous facilities should be allowed in heavily populated areas." Atwater also disparaged the unfunded mandate on Broward taxpayers forced to underwrite an open-ended security burden.

Representative Elyn Bogdanoff agreed that the workshop was critically important. "Senator Atwater and I have each spoken with the Governor about why this project should not go forward, explaining that the neighboring communities are understandably vehemently opposed to living under a daily catastrophic threat. Since the workshop has edified some of our colleagues about the project's downside, more legislators will support our request that the Governor veto this project". Bogdanoff also said that we should take this opportunity to "prevent additional bleeding of energy dollars to foreign governments, many of whom are openly hostile to our interests." She asked, "Is there any reason that we want to send more American dollars to Algeria, Iran, Libya or Yemen?"

Additional information about the Calypso Project is available on the GMCA website Calypso page (www.galtmile.com/calypso.html) •



COMMISSIONER KEN KEECHL'S CORNER

"OUR SHARED VISION FOR BROWARD COUNTY, PART 2"

By Broward County Commissioner Ken Keechl-District 4

** In January of 2007, newly elected Broward County Commissioner Ken Keechl released a newsletter entitled "Our Shared Vision for Broward County". It reviewed his first five weeks in office, expressed gratitude to his constituents (whether or not supportive of his candidacy) and issued a series of promises. What distinguishes Mr. Keechl from most grateful rookie officeholders is that he made good. His then proclaimed policy program entailed "lowering taxes, protecting our green spaces from development, lessening density on our beaches, and ensuring fiscal accountability". A few months later, he added "enhancing Broward's attraction to business, both old and new."*

His July/August 2008 Newsletter holds up a mirror to those nascent commitments. When confronted with Tallahassee-mandated tax cuts, he joined his peers last year in cutting expenses, many of which shamefully defined waste and abuse. However, in year two, since most of the overt pork targets had already fallen victim to the previous year's bloodletting, Commissioners were forced to carefully evaluate the remaining programs and services before administering this year's budget haircut. When pet projects of the individual Commissioners became vulnerable, mutual protection agreements among their sponsors threatened needed services. Often at the expense of collegiality, Keechl tenaciously supported maintaining services that provided lifelines for the disenfranchised voiceless.

By salting into the County's Comprehensive Land Use Plan an amendment to discourage the conversion of Broward County's remaining golf courses into hypocritically redundant rows of mediocre McMansions, he helped "protect our green spaces from development." To enhance the County's business climate and broaden its tax base, he fought to bring two of the County's critical transportation hubs, Ft. Lauderdale/Hollywood International Airport and Port Everglades, into the 21st century - without any environmental sacrifices. His support for a convention center hotel will ultimately preserve Broward's competitive edge in the struggle for lucrative convention business. To match his promises against his achievements, read on... - [editor]

When you elected me to the Broward County Commission in November 2006, you, the residents of District 4, sent a powerful message to the Broward County Commission. You supported a new vision for Broward County.

Your votes signaled a desire for lower property taxes. You wanted less politics and more leadership by the County Commission. You demanded fiscal accountability and the elimination of wasteful spending. You were not opposed to additional development, but you wanted "smart growth" focused on protecting surrounding neighborhoods and preserving Broward's dwindling green and open spaces.

Quite simply, you wanted an environmentally sensitive, business-friendly Broward County Commissioner representing you and your families. I am pleased to report that in the last year and a half, our shared vision is now becoming a reality. In furtherance of our shared vision,

- I voted with the majority to lower property taxes two years in a row while simultaneously protecting the social safety net for our less fortunate residents;
- I successfully co-sponsored a historic amendment to Broward County's Comprehensive Land Use Plan to "strongly discourage" the conversion of Broward County's remaining golf courses to residential developments;
- I voted with the majority to expand the southern runway at Ft. Lauderdale/Hollywood International Airport before daily airport gridlock became the rule rather than the exception;
- I spearheaded the effort to authorize the expansion of Port Everglades while successfully opposing the unnecessary destruction of its precious mangroves in the process;
- I demanded an outside investigation of Broward County's Animal Control and Regulation Division when I learned of animal abuse by Broward County employees and
- I voted to authorize the construction of a long overdue convention center hotel. Without this hotel, Broward was in jeopardy of losing our competitive edge over other popular convention destinations.

During the remaining 2.5 years of my term, I will continue to advocate for our shared vision. You, your families, and all of Broward County deserve nothing less. Together, we can make a difference. •

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Gretsas...Continued

Attorney Stephen Scott is in charge of Administrative Services, providing guidance for the City's Human Resources and Information Technology Departments. Although he also oversees the Finance Department, Scott says, "When it comes to the City's finances, George is 'hands on'. While we work together, his ideas have been integral to the city's expeditious recovery." Upon first arriving in Fort Lauderdale, David Hébert was tasked with transforming the City's Public Information Office into an effective and reliable communications tool. A former advisor to the Westchester County District Attorney in New York, Hébert was later conscripted by Gretsas to serve as a liaison between his office and Fort Lauderdale's Police and Fire-Rescue Departments. By assisting FLPD to implement recommendations based on findings of the Safir-Rosetti study, Hébert was instrumental in dropping the city's crime rate.

Early on, Gretsas realized that a majority of the city's problems were embedded in a municipal culture that fostered departmental fiefdoms organized according to the capabilities and priorities of their all-powerful departmental potentates. Advancement was a function of longevity. With the help of his triumvirate of Assistant City Managers, Gretsas changed the ground rules, insisting that promotions should reward merit, not the length of time an employee was able to survive undetected in some innocuous capacity.

To avoid any confusion about his objectives and expectations, he needed to carefully clarify his plans for the elected officials to whom he was answerable and the municipal employees that would benefit or suffer from his intention to infuse every level of city government with accountability. By encapsulating his message in dramatic audio-visual presentations on tape or disk, he could communicate his ideas and immunize himself from politically motivated attempts to mischaracterize his motives.

He first addressed the Galt Mile Community Association Advisory Board on November 18, 2004, three months after the City Commissioners selected Mr. Gretsas over candidates that were academically and experientially more qualified because, as per Commissioner Teel, "he had a fire in his belly".

Continued on page 8

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Gretsas...Continued

Over the next few years, as he implemented the changes he described at that first encounter, the city underwent a remarkable recovery. Since then, Gretsas has annually utilized his trademark audio-visual format to update the community and its neighborhood association.

FISCAL NIGHT TURNS TO DAY

Following a formal introduction by the City Manager, his July 14th Power-Point extravaganza flashed across the screen. Emulating a prologue worthy of Vincent Price or Rod Serling, it opened with, "Our Story Begins - Circa 2003. It was a period of doom in the small southern waterfront community. Hopelessness and desperation were all around. A chill wind blew through the fair city." Listing the problems that either led to or resulted from the City's fiscal implosion, each framed entry was superimposed on a caricature of the semi-skeletal "cover ghoul" from "Tales of the Crypt". The series of destabilizing conditions responsible for the prevalent pessimism included a \$21 million insurance deficit; reserve funds depleted; bond ratings lowered; furloughs, layoffs, lawsuits; controversy and service reductions. As a segue to the metaphoric "light at the end of the tunnel" leading to the city's recovery, the frame slideshow continued, "And through all the chaos and confusion... despite all the dread and terror... love was in the air!"

Having captured the audience's attention – if not their curiosity – Gretsas looks at progressive annual improvements to the city's financial health. Had Fort Lauderdale adhered to the national standard for a healthy reserve, roughly 5% to 15% of the annual expense budget, they would have socked away \$10 million to \$30 million instead of the pitiful 2003 reserves balance of \$875,000. That year's negligible reserves grew to \$9.3 million in 2004 (just under 5%), \$30 million in 2005, \$43 million in 2006 and \$67 million in 2007 – far exceeding the national benchmarks and realizing the largest fund balance in city history.

Continued on page 10

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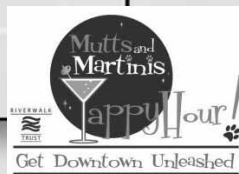
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<p>7 Sunday Jazz Brunch Riverwalk, Downtown FL 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.</p> <p>Urban Gourmet Market Las Olas Blvd. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Info.: 954-462-4166</p>	<p>8</p>	<p>9</p>	<p>10</p>	<p>11</p>	<p>12</p> <p>Jazz on the Square The Village Grille Commercial Blvd. & A1A 7 p.m.</p>	<p>13</p>
<p>14</p> <p>Urban Gourmet Market Las Olas Blvd. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Info.: 954-462-4166</p>	<p>15</p> <p>Vice Mayor Teel Pre-Agenda Meeting Beach Community Center 7 p.m. Info: 954-828-5033</p>	<p>16</p> <p>Ft. Lauderdale City Commission Meeting City Hall 6 p.m.</p>	<p>17</p>	<p>18</p> <p>G.M.C.A. Advisory Board Meeting</p> <p>Mommy and Me for moms & kids 2-5 years Miami Seaquarium Info. & Res: 305-361- 5705 X. 207</p>	<p>19</p> <p>Mutts & Martinis Yappy Hour Briny Riverfront Pub 5:30 to 8 p.m. Info.: 954-468-1541 Pet Adoptions Available</p>	<p>20</p> <p>A Romantic Evening with Tchaikovsky Broward Center Tix.: 954-462-0222</p> <p>Aroid Show and Sale (Through 9/21) Fairchild Tropical Gardens Info.: 305-667-1651 X 3344</p>
<p>21</p> <p>Hollywood Beach Latin Festival Hollywood Beach Info.: 954-625-6616</p> <p>Urban Gourmet Market Las Olas Blvd. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Info.: 954-462-4166</p>	<p>22 First Day of Fall</p>	<p>23</p> <p>An Evening with Lance Armstrong Riley McDermott's 6:30 p.m. Info. & Tix.: 954-560-2285</p>	<p>24</p>	<p>25</p> <p>Three Blonde Moms (Through 9/27) Broward Center Tix.: 954-462-0222</p>	<p>26</p> <p>Hollywood Beach Clambake (Through 9/28) Info.: 954-924-2980</p>	<p>27</p> <p>Antique Show War Memorial (Through 9/28) Info.: 954-828-5380</p>
<p>28</p> <p>Urban Gourmet Market Las Olas Blvd. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Info.: 954-462-4166</p>	<p>29</p>	<p>30</p>	<p>1</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Pablo Picasso Museum of Modern Art (Through 2/23/09) Info.: 954-525-5500</p>	<p>3</p> <p>Melodies in the Park Riverland Park 7 p.m.</p> <p>Jazz on the Square The Village Grille Commercial Blvd. & A1A 7 p.m.</p>	<p>4</p> <p>Las Olas Art Fair (Through 10/5) Las Olas Blvd. 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Info.: 954-472-3755</p>
<p>5</p> <p>SUNDAY JAZZ BRUNCH On Riverwalk</p> <p>Sunday Jazz Brunch Riverwalk, Downtown FL 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.</p>	<p>6</p> <p>Vice Mayor Teel Pre-Agenda Meeting Beach Community Center 6 p.m. Info: 954-828-5033</p>	<p>7</p> <p>Ft. Lauderdale City Commission Meeting City Hall 6 p.m.</p> <p>Janet Jackson BankAtlantic Center Tix.: 954-523-3309</p>	<p>8</p>	<p>9</p>	<p>10</p> <p>Jazz on the Square The Village Grille Commercial Blvd. & A1A 7 p.m.</p>	<p>11</p> <p>High Heel Hike Las Olas Blvd & SE 9th Ave Registration: 11 a.m. Hike: Noon \$25/diva Info.: 954-FAB-HEEL</p>



A LOOK AHEAD

- October 12 - November 9 Fort Lauderdale International Film Festival Info.: 954-760-9898
- October 14 - 19 Hairspray, Broadway Broward Center for the Performing Arts, Tix.: 954-462-0222
- October 26 Neil Diamond BankAtlantic Center, Tix.: 954-835-SHOW
- October 28 Maroone Moonlight Movies Huizenga Plaza, Info.: 954-463-6574
- October 30 - November 3 Fort Lauderdale International Boat Show Mar Yachting Center, Broward Convention Center, Info.: 954-764-7642



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Gretsas..Continued

The \$20.6 million insurance deficit of 2003 shrank to \$13.4 million in 2004, zero in 2005; a \$4 million surplus in 2006 doubled to \$8 million in 2007 and rounded out to a healthy \$10 million fully reserved surplus in 2008. In response to Fort Lauderdale's bathing in the light of fiscal integrity, Moody's and Standard & Poor's ratings for the city's general obligation bonds turned from negative to positive in 2005 before rising to the current favorable Standard & Poor's AA rating and Moody's Aa2 rating.

Turning attention to the City's tax environment, Gretsas baited the audience, asking if Fort Lauderdale had the highest tax rate in Broward County. When they said YES, he said NO! How about 2nd?, 5th?, 10th?, 15th, NO! A chart demonstrated that Pembroke Park's 8.5 Millage and Sea Ranch Lakes' 6.95 Millage claimed the top spots. Fort Lauderdale came in at number 20, after Hollywood, Dania, Sunrise, Hallandale, Deerfield, Oakland Park, Davie and 12 other Broward cities; sporting a Millage of only 4.1193. The City Manager pointed out that taxes were cut in each of the past 3 years, achieving record 10-year lows in 2005 and 2007.

Of the 31 municipal water and sewer rates in Broward County, Fort Lauderdale is the 27th lowest. Of the 27 different municipal Fire Assessment Fees, the "Venice of America" enjoys the 22nd lowest. The proposed budget cuts taxes again (14%) while "preserving city services." In view of the \$11 million lost to the city due to mandated tax cuts, maintaining service levels was a significant achievement. Gretsas explained that the city wasn't the only player on the TRIM notice, alluding to other entities that absorb resources such as the water district and the school board, among others. He demonstrated the average tax savings for homesteaded and non-homesteaded condo owners as compared to last year. The average homesteaded owner of a \$288,305 condo saved \$83.83 while the average non-homesteaded owner of a \$320,820 condo saved \$36.08 more than last year.

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PENSIONS 101

Acknowledging that he was risking putting his audience into a somnolent state, the City Manager announced, "To grasp an accurate picture of the city's financial challenge, residents need to understand the part played by the city's pensions. As such, consider this as Pensions 101." Municipal employees belong to either the General Employees' Retirement System (GERS) or the Fort Lauderdale Police & Fire Pension. Gretsas exhorted that these Defined Benefit Plans will ultimately bankrupt Fort Lauderdale. Employees participating in the General Employees' Retirement System get 3% of their salary toward their pension for every year they work for the City. After 20 years, they are entitled to 60% of salary for the rest of their lives. To fund this pension system, the city must pay 23% of an employee's salary. After 20 years on the job, employees belonging to the Fort Lauderdale Police & Fire Pension realize approximately 67% of their salaries for life. Given a multiplier of 3.38%, the cost to the city had escalated to 49% of base pay. These formulas will guarantee onerous tax increases in the near future to finance the exponential growth of fund obligations.

To remediate this threat, the City Manager negotiated recent contracts utilizing formulas based on Defined Contributions (similar to a 401k or 401a plans) instead of Defined Benefits. New hires that will belong to GERS will see 5% for each year of a three year contract. This will cap pension expenses at only 9% of base salary instead of the current 23%. Over a 30 year period, the city will realize a minimum savings of \$100 million. New Police and Fire-Rescue hires will see 5% for each year of a two-year contract as per their restructured pension agreements. The new arrangement will cost the city 36% of base salary instead of the ruinous 49% that it currently funds. The first year savings alone is anticipated to be about \$2.6 million.

Continued on page 11

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City Manager George Gretsas enumerates accomplished objectives

QUALITY OF LIFE IN THE "VENICE OF AMERICA"

Crime index totals reflect significant gains in controlling the crime rate. In 2005, there were 12,719 incidents. Instead of the usual knee-jerk response, hiring more police, the City commissioned a study that reviewed departmental strengths and weaknesses. The Safir/Rosetti Report made recommendations that formed the basis of a police action plan implemented in August of 2005. As a result of reallocating resources in 2006, the number dropped to 11,622. The 11,235 incidents recorded in 2007 were the second lowest in city history. The projected 2008 total, based on first quarter extrapolation, is 11,607.

The strategy of improving how the staff was managed instead of hiring more staff swiftly put an end to double digit increases in the crime rate. Gretsas explained, "When we noticed a first quarter increase in the annualized crime rate, we asked Police Chief Frank Adderley to look into insuring that the trend is quickly reversed. We've also purchased video cameras for patrol vehicles."

Fire-Rescue response times are improving. The statistic that best measures the mission efficiency of any major municipal Fire Department is response time. Units are arriving on scene 23 seconds faster than last year, a 12% improvement. Additional steps to improve response times are also being implemented. Given the departure of longtime predecessor Otis Latin, Gretsas introduced the new Fire Chief, James Eddy.

In 2006, the Building Department finally started to show improvement, thanks primarily to Building Services Manager Valerie Bohlander. Proactive Code Enforcement also started yielding results. To better measure productivity, responsiveness and efficiency, individual performance measures for code inspectors were implemented. 59% of all code cases were discovered by these code inspectors. Reflecting the department's emphasis on efficiency, 90% of code complaints are now investigated within 24 hours of receipt of a citizen complaint. Neighborhood blight due to insufficiently maintained buildings and lots, buildings in foreclosure or owners tied up with insurance delays will be more effectively addressed thanks to a new ordinance clearing the way for code citations.

Gretsas announced, "We turned the corner in the war on Graffiti through a joint effort by Code Enforcement, Public Works and the Police. Over one year period, 1330 reports of graffiti and subsequent removal took place. While our overall goal is, of course, to reduce graffiti City-wide, our immediate goal is to remove Graffiti within 24 hours."

In another partnership between Code Enforcement, Public Works and Police, Gretsas claims a lower incidence of illegal dumping. "Our goal is to investigate and clean up illegal dump sites within 48 hours." Last year, the environmental crimes police made 39 arrests attendant to the 662 illegal dump sites that were expeditiously cleaned up.

Although a noise abatement and traffic safety program has been underway in the Galt Mile neighborhood for the past three years, both officers and neighborhood residents have asked for more effective ordinances. The City met with a noise consultant to develop effective methodologies to combat noise pollution. Gretsas said, "We intend to amend the current ordinance to better balance residential and commercial needs. The new ordinance will address Special Entertainment Districts, amplified sound, time limits for construction and maximum levels for emergency generators."

Continued on page 13



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Gretsas...Continued

A new ordinance governing newspaper boxes is scheduled to go into effect on September 4, 2008 – just after Labor Day. The disconcerting collection of multicolor newspaper boxes of various shapes and sizes will be replaced with less offensive uniform black dispensers.

The City Manager said, "Everyone we've asked about the appearance of the Beach area has had nothing but praise for the City." Gretsas exclaimed "The beach has never looked better." The new medians that adorn the streets are a distinct improvement and the beach itself boasts new playground and picnic equipment. He said "The Business Improvement District has done a great job of cleaning up the beach area and making it look brighter."

PLANNING THE CITY'S FUTURE

City Manager Gretsas then focused on Fort Lauderdale's future, announcing that "The Vision is clear!" He expressed gratitude to "the 2,000 residents helping to plan where the City will be in 5, 10 and 15 years down the line. Their work on developing cohesive master plans for neighborhoods will become more evident with time." Downtown Master Plan Amendments portend a mixed use development of housing, shopping and entertainment which will also create jobs and an interesting blend of activities. He foresees beautiful buildings lining pedestrian-friendly streets permeated by a variety of parks and public spaces that will be serviced by an assortment of public transportation options.

Gretsas is also optimistic about the New River Master Plan finally tapping a precious municipal resource to create another major downtown people magnet. The plan would create a waterfront promenade connecting the North and South sides of the River that would help promote a mix of activities along the riverfront.

Continued on page 14

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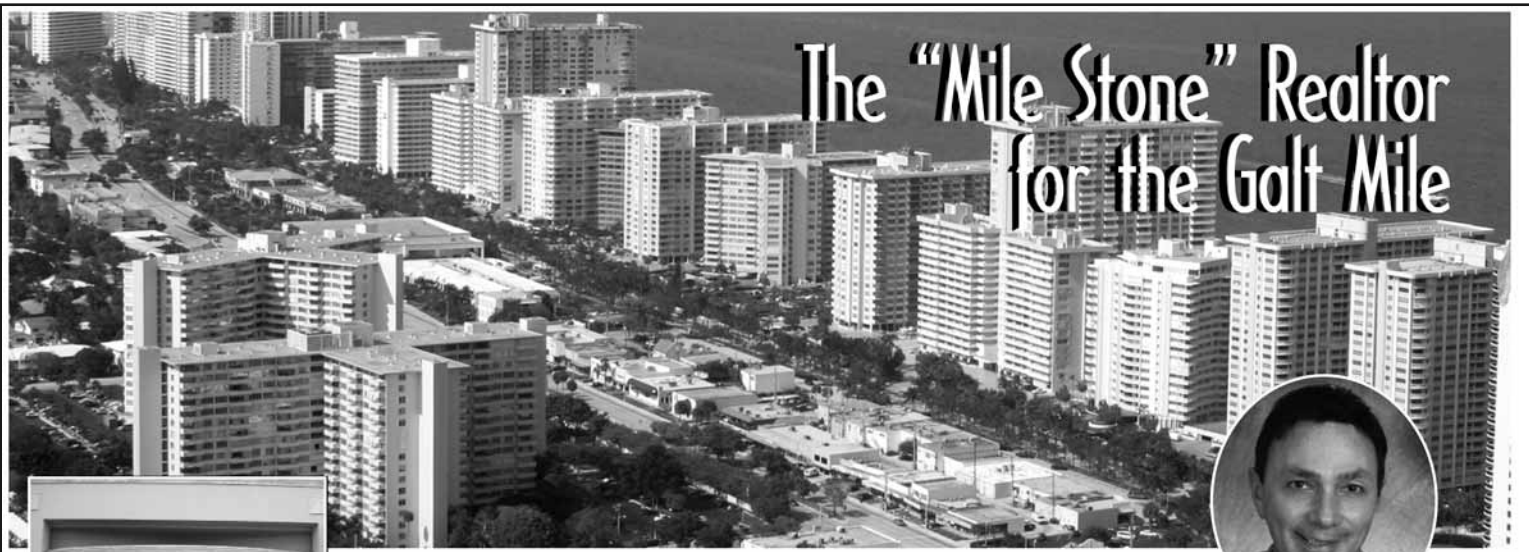
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Gretsas...Continued

Gretsas explained, "The plan will energize the river by carefully positioning development in a manner that protects view corridors while enhancing its critical mass as a destination." It addresses housing, shopping, dining and night life as well as recreation and boating. He expects the plan to be completed this summer.

Plans are also underway to reinvent Riverwalk. Gretsas stated that "The Riverwalk District Public Realm Plan will examine the mistakes made in the original plan so that they may be either corrected or simply redeveloped from scratch. The aim is to create excitement at the Riverwalk." In anticipation of creating a lively destination area, public access must be maximized by linking adjoining streets, parks and public spaces. To insure that the area fulfills its potential as an entertainment, leisure and recreation magnet, effective management must be established and activities programmed. A Study to maximize the Riverwalk's natural assets will begin this fall.

A public transportation option for travel within the downtown area, the DDA Circulator, is expected to satisfy a series of municipal needs. It will link proximal destinations. It will also attract activity and encourage longer visits to the area. By reducing traffic it will ease the crushing demand for parking. If installed and promoted properly, it may provide a long-term solution for sustainable City living. Since it could provide a template, Gretsas explained that "the Lightrail could be extended to the beach if successful."

The North US-1 Urban Design Plan examined methods of improving convenience, utilization and aesthetics along one of the city's main transportation corridors. In addition to ensuring that new development is compatible with nearby residential areas, the plan needs to preserve a careful balance in blending commercial and residential uses. As a regional shopping destination, street beautification and new landscaping along Federal Highway should provide a convenient and pleasurable shopping experience. The plan should enable pedestrians to walk from store to store after parking

once. Since the plan has already been completed, the next steps are ordinance revisions along with a landscape and signage plan.

The Central Beach Master Plan has been under development for some time. It seeks to make improvements to public properties, allow greater retail opportunities, expand beach activities and connect parks, shops and restaurants. To effect these improvements, the beach will require the appropriate zoning flexibility. Referring to the mixed feedback over the large boxlike hotels, Gretsas said, "Better zoning may have prevented some of the density issues currently facing Central Beach residents." An Intra-coastal boardwalk overlooking the waterfront would go a long way to accomplishing the plan's connectivity objectives. Gretsas projected that the plan would be completed this winter.

As discussed by Commissioner Christine Teel in her December 2007 Newsletter, the City Manager examined the reasons for instituting Neighborhood Development Criteria Revisions. To allow citizens the right to choose a vision for their neighborhood and protect the neighborhood's particular character, the revisions establish new guidelines for redevelopment. Planning will begin in the near future.

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan will improve trails and connectivity to recreation amenities while protecting natural resources and providing nature programs that will take advantage of the valuable public green space. Organized activities can range from educational and leisure recreation to expanded health, fitness and wellness programs. The plan also encourages the enhancement of partnership opportunities with other public and private recreation and open space providers. Gretsas complimented Parks Director Phil Thornburg and Parks personnel for doing such a wonderful job with the City parks, stating, "All of our feedback about City Parks is positive. Virtually everyone agrees that our Parks are excellent."

A bond program passed several years ago to finance rehabilitating deteriorating Fire-Rescue stations across the City is well underway. The Fire Rescue Bond Program evaluated the current and future staffing levels at stations and tailored the size requirements of future stations accordingly. The City has already completed construction of Stations 47, 53/88 and EOC (Emergency Operations Center). The design of Fire Station 29 is already finished and the designs for Fire Stations 49 and 3 are 90% complete. The audit review concluded that the rehabilitation program has demonstrated appropriate controls, oversight, and program management.

A plan to provide adequate water resources and drainage capacity to the Fort Lauderdale area has made significant strides during the past few years. To date, 78 projects totaling an investment of \$244 million have been completed as part of the WaterWorks 2011 project. The Peele Dixie Water Treatment Plant has successfully come online and 4,250 sewer connections have been completed. \$150 million in revenue bonds were obtained as part of the financial plan. So far, WaterWorks 2011 facility projects are 75% complete and pipeline projects are currently 66% complete. A management review concluded that the project demonstrates sufficient management controls by AI Carbon, reliable results and compliance with applicable regulations and contracts.

The modernization and enhancement of Executive Airport is also in the cards. Incorporating a 20 year development strategy, the Airport Master Plan responds to environmental, community and business interests. The plan, which analyzed enhanced revenue generation strategies, will be completed in the fall.

Before inviting residents to ask the attending City officials relevant questions, Gretsas warned against "the development pendulum swinging too far in either direction," claiming "uncontrolled development is as dangerous as no development. We must keep in mind that neighborhoods are the most important parts of the city and must reflect the vision of their inhabitants."

The presentation elicited a spontaneous round of applause from attending residents. From his thematic use of 2001 theme "Thus Spake Zarathustra" to open presentation to his closing admonition, Gretsas managed to hold audience attention throughout the presentation. Following the "show" audience members circulated through the room, putting inquiries to the various available city department heads.

If you regret having missed the Gretsas Show and find written reviews that simply divulge informational content aesthetically inadequate, you may still have two opportunities to satisfy your need for dramatic context. The City Manager's "Goals and Objectives - 2008" presentation was originally made before the City Commission during the June 17, 2008 Conference Meeting. You can either watch an archived webcast of the City Manager making this presentation to the City Commission or download the presentation files and watch the actual presentation.

To contact the City Manager, call 954-828-5013. His office is located at 100 N. Andrews Avenue, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301 (for those of you who still conversant with the mechanics of snail mail). Send faxes to 954-828-5021. Check the "Report Card" page on the Galt Mile Community Association web site (www.galtmile.com) for additional contact info

for and articles about City Manager George Gretsas. The City Managers complete (Goals & Objectives 2008) presentation is also downloadable from the GMCA's website following the article entitled, "Gretsas: Goals & Objectives). •



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