

LOCAL WEEKLY REPORT

November 7 –November 11, 2011

CORAL GABLES

After Coral Gables commissioners threatened to declare Seaway Corp., the operator of the Biltmore Hotel, in default on its lease for non-payment of rent, a deal was finally reached. Under the agreement, the Seaway Corp., will repay taxpayers \$5.5 million in overdue rent and golf fees for the hotel. The Coral Gables City Commission could approve a settlement agreement by December.

According to a Herald report, on Tuesday, City Attorney Craig Leen informed commissioners that city officials and Biltmore executives agreed in principle on the following key issues:

- Seaway will repay more than \$5 million in overdue rent (\$500,000 a year plus 2.5 percent interest starting July 2012). The exact amount due is under negotiation.
- The company will resume payments to the city. Starting next year, base rent will increase from \$600,000 to \$800,000 per year. The base rent owed will increase by \$50,000 per year for the life the lease.
- Seaway will pay Coral Gables \$650,000 in outstanding golf management fees. It will start paying \$160,000 a year in fees starting September 2013.
- Over the next ten years, the City will issue Seaway a credit against a portion of certain capital improvements made to the hotel.

Mayor James Cason is expected to call a special meeting the next few weeks, when commissioners will vote on whether or not to approve the agreement. Attorneys on both sides continue to work out the legal details regarding the rent dispute.

MIAMI

On Thursday, Miami Police Chief Manuel Orosa addressed more than 40 of his officers regarding tensions between his department and the Florida Highway Patrol (FHP). The fallout stems from an incident involving a trooper pulling over and detaining at gun point, a Miami police officer for speeding. Since the incident, it has been reported that a war of words erupted over the internet and led to defacing a

trooper's car with gallons of human feces. The trooper whose car was vandalized was identified as former City of Miami Commissioner Joe Sanchez.

In his address, Orosa told officers that whatever the issues, the backlash towards the FHP had to stop. Orosa recognized that a Miami police officer had pulled over a trooper on the turnpike extension on Tuesday, which was well outside of the city's jurisdiction but indicated the officer did not do it in a retaliatory manner. However, Orosa did warn police officers against these types of stops.

KEY BISCAYNE

Last week it was reported that the Village of Key Biscayne submitted a letter to the state's environmental regulators about a possible legal challenge to the Port Tunnel drilling project, consequently delaying Monday's start date. However, Key Biscayne rescinded the challenge and the final environmental permit needed to commence drilling was awarded and drilling began on Thursday.

In order to start the project, Miami Access Tunnel (MAT), environmental regulators and city of Miami officials agreed to take the first 30,000 cubic yards of soil from the dig (approximately 2 months' worth) and set it at a local landfill that has already been approved by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP). The soil will be tested to ensure that it is safe from contaminants to meet the standards for use in residential development. Once the soil is determined safe, MAT will reapply for a state permit to deposit the fill on Virginia Key, where the city wants to cap an old landfill as a part of an environmental restoration project.

On Monday, city officials briefed the Virginia Key Beach Trust, which manages the historic park adjacent to the site where the fill will be placed. Albert Sosa, director of Capital improvements for the City of Miami indicated that that soil would undergo extensive testing and would only be moved to the barrier island if certified as clean.

On Tuesday, November 8th, the Village of Key Biscayne Council discussed the issue and both the City of Miami and DERM were present to address concerns.

HOMESTEAD

The Homestead Housing Authority has decided not to take action against its executive director Oscar Hentschel in response to two sexual harassment complaints. Additionally, board members have halted the process of hiring an outside firm to investigate the allegations.

The housing board of directors held an emergency session on Monday to discuss the handling of the complaints, as well as, Mayor Steve Bateman's suggestion to

place the executive director on paid administrative leave until an investigation is complete. The board agreed that they did not have enough information about the harassment complaints to merit placing Hentschel on leave and instead, allowed him to continue working in his normal capacity. The vote was 4-1 to retain him. Lois Jones cast the dissenting vote and accused the executive director of misusing a housing authority gas card in Fort Lauderdale and Hialeah, dining with board members at the authority's expense and utilizing a housing authority truck for personal use. Hentschel responded by denying any wrongdoing.

DORAL

On Wednesday, former school member Frank Bolanos announced his candidacy for Doral Mayor. Bolanos hopes to fill the seat of outgoing Mayor Juan Carlos Bermudez, who will not seek re-election in 2012. Bermudez has been the sole mayor of the city since its incorporation but has filed to run in the 2012 race for county mayor.

Doral's mayoral race which is scheduled for November 2012 has also drawn the following candidates: Councilman Pete Cabrera and former councilman Robert Van Name, who unsuccessfully ran for the District 112 House seat last year.

Bolanos has been a resident of Doral since 1995 and served on the Dade County School Board from 2001-2006. He plans to remain focused on the city's parks program and supports ongoing efforts to rebrand the area known as the city's town and marble district as the "Doral Design District", in hopes of attracting design professionals, artists and additional businesses.

The qualification period for candidates will remain open until July 2012.

On Wednesday, October 26th, City of Doral Mayor, Juan Carlos Bermudez gave the "State of the City" address. Mayor Bermudez spoke of his vision for the coming year and the future of Doral's Economy. The Mayor also presented the City's accomplishments for fiscal year 2010-2011.

Bermudez spoke of the city's achievements and growth over the last eight years in comparison to other cities in South Florida.

Mayor Bermudez said that he fulfilled his promises to organize Doral without raising taxes. He further stated that it was possible to lower taxes for the city's benefit, while allowing the city to grow and prosper.

Additionally, Bermudez touted the use of Doral parks' recreational services, as well as the implementation of water management projects to improve the city's natural resources. The mayor credited the Fire Department and Police Department with making Doral one of the safest cities to live in. Mayor Bermudez also discussed

Doral's improved government transparency. He said that Doral is unique because it has its own TV and radio station which transmits events and meetings held by city officials. He also indicated that the city's website was a useful tool for residents to keep current on relevant issues.

HIALEAH

The final two candidates for mayor of Hialeah received endorsements Wednesday, less than a week before that city's runoff election on Nov. 15.

Speaking at a Hialeah senior center, current Mayor Carlos Hernandez was joined by former Mayor Julio Robaina and U.S. Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart. The congressman praised Hernandez for his honesty and integrity qualities he says his competitor lacks.

Raul Martinez has also been working at convincing Hialeah voters since the general election. Martinez received the endorsement of former state lawmaker Roberto Casas, and support from Hialeah's fire and police unions.

JACKSON HEALTH SYSTEM (JHS)

According to a Herald report, on Thursday, JHS executives announced that most hospital employees will be required to take two weeks of furloughs between now and September 30th, when the 2012 fiscal year ends.

Jackson leaders indicated that union negotiations have fallen short of solutions to the fiscal problem and fewer patients are coming to the public hospitals. The measure is expected to save \$27.5 million, according to Chief Executive Carlos Migoya.

Most employees, earning between \$25,000 and \$200,000 a year, will be required to take two weeks of furlough, four of the days before December 31st. Employees earning less than \$25,000 must take five days this fiscal year, with two days this calendar year. Those earning over \$200,000 will need to take 11 furlough days, with four days before Dec. 31.

SEIU, the union representing nurses and other healthcare professionals, says it has offered \$36 million in concessions about half of what Jackson was asking but insisted the cuts be used to improve patient care.

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS (MDCPS)

On Wednesday November 9th, Miami-Dade Public Schools and Broward County Public Schools held a Bi-County School Board meeting to discuss legislative priorities for the 21012 Legislative Session. Welcoming remarks were made by Perla Tabares Hantman, Chair, School Board of Miami-Dade County, Alberto Carvalho, Superintendent Miami-Dade County Public Schools and Robert Runcie, Superintendent Broward County Public Schools. The topics discussed included Class Size Reduction, Health Insurance Plan and Charter School Capital Outlay.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Florida League of Cities:

The **51st Annual Legislative Conference** will be held on **November 17-18, 2011**, at the Hyatt Regency Orlando International Airport. The second of the League's annual meetings, this important conference sets legislative policies and priorities for the upcoming session of the Legislature. Over the course of the two-day meeting, attendees will hear speakers at general sessions, participate in workshops and attend legislative policy committee meetings.

Please click the link for more information :

<http://www.floridaleagueofcities.com/Assets/Files/programlegconf2011.pdf>

Miami-Dade County League of Cities:

What: MDCLC Best Practices Conference

When: December 2, 2011

Where: Intercontinental Doral, 2505 NW 87th Ave., Doral

Four County Regional Compact Announces 3rd Annual Climate Leadership Summit

The Summit will feature speakers and discussions on sustainability and climate change, and the Regional Climate Action Plan will be presented.

The Southeast Florida four-County Regional Climate Change Compact consisting of Palm Beach, Broward, Miami-Dade and Monroe counties is pleased to announce the 3rd Annual Regional Climate Leadership Summit to be held December 8-9, 2011 in Key Largo, Florida.

To register click the link: <http://www.monroecounty-fl.gov/forms.aspx?FID=80>

