

LOCAL WEEKLY REPORT

January 2– January 6, 2012

MIAMI BEACH

Miami Beach Commissioner Jerry Libbin has stated that condo residents in the city have been disenfranchised and has begun a petition drive to create a high-ranking “condominium ombudsman” to deal with the concerns and complaints of condo residents and associations. According to the petition language, the ombudsman would specifically address issues regarding condominiums and the city’s code compliance, building and fire departments, and would answer exclusively to the city manager.

Libbin indicated that the ombudsman would act as an advocate for associations and unit owners who run into obstacles on issues ranging from permits to code citations and fire inspector mandates. Additionally, the ombudsman would allow the city’s departments to operate more efficiently and make government more responsive.

It has been additionally noted that Libbin is considering running for mayor in 2013 and currently condo residents make up approximately 40,000 of the city’s voting bloc.

GREATER MIAMI CHAMBER OF COMMERCE (GMCC)

Upon adopting its legislative package, the GMCC officially took a position to support casino resorts under several conditions. Along with the referendum and local tax requirements, the Chamber indicated that it would also require casinos to fund efforts to mitigate damage caused by the new facilities, including social issues and infrastructure costs. In the adopted resolution, the Chamber additionally calls for casinos to hire 75 percent of their workforce locally and requires “parity” for pari-mutuels. The call for parity would allow racetracks and jai-alai establishments to offer the same gaming tables while paying the same taxes as the mega casinos.

SWEETWATER

As part of a vision to make the area of Sweetwater surrounding Florida International University (FIU) more alluring to students and professors, the City of Sweetwater

rezoned two parcels of land across from FIU (Southwest Seventh Terrace and 109th Avenue). According to Mayor Manny Marono, the zoning change to mixed-use residential and commercial will better compliment the university, while serving its needs.

According to Miami-Dade property records, the lots are currently owned by developer Sergio Pino and University Campus Lodge LLC.

The zoning will allow for a 15 story building with approximately 180 residential units and retail on the first floor (The tallest building in Sweetwater if completed).

According to Marono, no developers have made an offer to date.

SOUTH MIAMI

As the City of South Miami prepared to vote on a proposal to expand its boundaries and hire a law firm to represent it in the annexation process, an outcry from city residents brought the effort to a halt.

Part of the annexation study included expanding boundaries as far as the Palmetto Expressway on the west, Red Road on the east, Bird Road on the north and Snapper Creek on the south.

Currently, City Manager Hector Mirable is completing an annexation financial feasibility study to present to the commission for discussion. The studies will determine the cost versus revenue of annexing.

PINECREST

Village of Pinecrest Mayor Cindy Lerner delivered her fourth state of the village address on December 29, 2011. In the address the Mayor highlighted goals that were set and met with success. Among them was the creation of an Educational Compact with the district, which enabled the village to enhance the technology at its five schools; and a Green Academy, which was established to highlight the excellence of their environmental science program, while collaborating with the Village's Sustainability initiative.

The Mayor also spoke extensively on the village's opposition to the FPL transmission line corridor plan (the following was taken from her speech):

OPPOSING FPL PLAN

I would like to take a moment to share with you one very important aspect of what your Village Council has been doing to fight to protect and preserve the health, welfare, the aesthetics and the economic viability and future of the US 1 corridor; that is our now

three-year-long battle against the FPL proposal to put the monstrosity 100-foot-high transmission lines along our entire western boundary along US 1; in fact, it would go from 136 street north all the way to I 95. I invite you, the next time you drive along US 1, to pay attention to the electric poles. You will first notice that there are a few power lines, the smaller ones that you never even notice. Those are, in fact, not transmission lines; those are the lesser voltage distribution lines that cover all neighborhoods. The major transmission lines are the huge trestles, the ones you see on the back side of The Falls that go diagonally across Kendall, Westchester and the City of Miami into downtown Miami, and were placed there in the '60s when they built Turkey Point. They connect and carry the power to downtown Miami. You may also have seen the 100-foot poles out in the Everglades and along industrial corridors, and are now even along a major corridor in North Miami, making it look far more industrial an area than before. The Pinecrest Village Council was thrust into this battle in 2009 when we were first notified of FPL's plans and we have been united in our passion to prevent these lines from ever being built where FPL proposes. That is, unless they were installed under ground. But FPL tells us that if we want the lines underground, then we must pay for it, to the tune of somewhere in the neighborhood of \$13-18 million per mile for 8 miles of lines. And they won't substantiate where they get that figure since they are not in the habit of building infrastructure underground, where it belongs. This, when they propose spending \$20 billion (and growing) on new infrastructure to build two new nuclear power plants? And they refuse to include the main transmission lines as part of their infrastructure, so that instead they will be able to declare higher dividends for their stockholders. Well, no siree, not on our watch!

So our council has taken the lead and we are litigating the matter in an administrative proceeding before the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. Also joining our fight are the cities of South Miami and Coral Gables. And we thank them for joining forces with us in this battle against a goliath "power". We are proposing an alternate corridor, which is actually the original corridor built by FPL when they built Turkey Point.

We do not want to impose new infrastructure in new neighborhoods; instead, we want to force the utility to make significant improvements on the Infrastructure they have not tended to for 40 years. We are proposing it be either undergrounded or upgraded, as many places along that corridor haven't seen any upgrades in 40 years. We have now become quite expert in the policies and politics of fossil fuels vs. renewable energy, and the truths we must all become more aware of with nuclear energy, especially since Fukushima disaster in Japan. We learned how the Florida utilities are financing their investor-owned businesses when we learned about the early cost-recovery law passed by the Florida Legislature in 2006. Pinecrest was the first council to pass a resolution to urge the legislature to repeal the law written by utilities in 2006, known as Early Cost Recovery (ECR), followed by South Miami and now many other cities as well. ECR permits FPL and Progress Energy to charge all of their rate payers additional charges for the costs of siting, designing and obtaining the licenses and permits for the new nuclear plants without having to commit to ever building the plants. So far they have raised over \$300 million, and counting. They received a certificate of need back in 2007, before the real estate bubble burst and the economy tanked, and growth slowed

significantly. They have not yet received a license by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, which may never happen. The truth is, and the hope is, that these new plants never get built and that instead we move into the world of distributed renewable energy. Our resolution to repeal Early Cost Recovery has been adopted by the Miami Dade League of Cities and other cities all over the state, so we are again leading the way.

Finally, we passed a resolution this year to declare that when the franchise agreement entered into by Miami Dade County, before we ever incorporated, expires in 2020, that the Village of Pinecrest will have weaned itself away from reliance on franchise fees (which are in fact only a pass through for cities, allowing their residents to pay an extra fee on their electric bill, which is then passed through to the cities) sort of a back door tax arrangement the utilities came up with as an exchange for cities to promise not to compete with them for creating energy. That might have worked 30 years ago, but has no place in today's municipal structure when it will be renewable energy that drives our new economy.

So, from the proposal three years ago to run new lines down US 1, the Pinecrest Council has stood firm and united, we have informed ourselves, coalesced with neighboring municipalities and invested our village resources to make sure we preserve and protect, far more than the corridor, but our health, security and future. I thank the council for fighting on with me.

Save the Date:

What: Miami Dade League of Cities 58th Annual Gala

When: Saturday, February 18, 2012

Where: Jungle Island, 1111 Parrot Jungle Trail

LOCAL WEEKLY REPORT

January 9– January 13, 2012

MIAMI BEACH

On Wednesday, the Miami Beach Commission voted to repeal the city's law restricting the sale, discharge and possession of firearms in order to come into compliance with a state law that took effect in October.

In 1987, the Florida Legislature decided that it has the sole power to regulate firearms in Florida, but the law did not include any penalties. In 2011, the legislature passed a law that gives the governor the power to remove elected officials who enact or enforce local firearms regulations. The law further provides for a \$5,000 fine and gives gun owners and gun rights groups the right to sue for damages if they believe their rights have been violated.

While the city voted to pass the repeal, it passed with a minimum of the required votes. Mayor Matti Bower left the dais and did not vote on the motion, while commissioners Michael Gongora, Jerry Libbin, Edward Tobin and Jonah Wolfson voted to pass the motion. Commissioners Deede Weithorn and Jorge Exposito were absent.

Prior to the repeal, city law made the sale, display or possession of a firearm in public place illegal during a declared emergency. Additionally, firing a gun within city limits and possession of a firearm or explosives during a demonstration, rally picket line or parade was also illegal.

HIALEAH

On Tuesday, Hialeah's city council proposed a new contract for unionized employees, which includes furloughs and changes to the retirement system.

The proposed contract calls for increased contributions to healthcare, 15 unpaid vacation days and eliminates longevity pay, while restoring a 17 percent pay cut that was imposed last year on the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME).

AFSCME President Barbara Hernandez indicated that the union will carefully consider the proposed changes to retirement benefits, since pensions are crucial for retirees' ability to provide food and housing for themselves.

Hialeah Mayor Carlos Hernandez indicated that the proposed contract will save Hialeah almost \$8 million over two years. The next meeting between union leaders and the city will take place on January 20.

SWEETWATER

On Monday, City of Sweetwater commissioners voted 4-1 to appoint Isolina Marono as interim commissioner, filling the vacancy that the late Vice Mayor Ariel J. Abelairas left behind.

Isolina Marono, 63, is Mayor Manuel Marono's mother. She is a retired and active community resident of 41 years. She has not yet indicated if she will run for the Group 4 commission seat in May. The Mayor, who is not a member of the commission, does not cast votes and according to the Miami –Dade Commission on Ethics and Public Trust, the appointment does not violate the city's law.

The late Vice Mayor Abelairas, died on New Year's Eve following a prolonged battle with heart disease. He was 62 and is survived by wife Griselle Abelairas and three children.

NORTH MIAMI

According to a Herald report, on Monday, a controversial garbage collection ordinance that was heard by the city council caused a battle of words on the dais. The ordinance is linked to Mayor Andre Pierre's nephew, Ricardo Brutus, who was arrested in March for allegedly accepting \$4,000 from a local businessman to ensure its passage.

Councilman Michael Blynn, who opposed the ordinance, brought up the Mayor's nephew, which prompted Pierre (who apologized on Wednesday) to respond by asking the councilman "what would happen if your daughter is a prostitute?"

Blynn and Councilman Scott Galvin both voted against having a private company in charge of trash collection. One of the reasons cited for opposing the ordinance was concerns of higher rates after an initial contract runs out and the speed of clean up after a natural disaster.

Currently, the county charges residents \$57 a month to pick up trash twice a week, including one day of bulk pick-up. Pierre said a private company can provide the same service for about 70 percent less.

Blynn said "If we approve this we are actually going to raise the fees for residents who don't live in apartments and give the apartment owners as much as \$8 million

in rewards". He then mentioned Brutus' bribery charge and the shouting began.

Prosecutors say Brutus, who was also Pierre's reelection campaign manager, was caught on tape accepting \$4,000 from businessman Shlomo Chelminsky, whose family owned several apartment buildings and was cooperating with authorities.

Read more here: <http://www.miamiherald.com/2012/01/11/v-fullstory/2585214/north-miami-mayor-apologizes-for.html#storylink=cpy>

NORTH BAY VILLAGE

Another seat on the village council has been vacated. Commissioner Frank Rodriguez submitted his resignation letter (opening up the Treasure Island seat) and becomes effective January 31. Rodriguez did not give any specific reasons for his resignation.

According to the city's code, the remaining commission will vote on a candidate once Treasure Island residents have applied for the seat. The new commissioner will serve until the next general election in November.

STATE OF THE DISTRICT ADDRESS

On Thursday, January 12, Miami-Dade County Commissioner Lynda Bell gave her first State of District Address. The event was held at the South Miami-Dade Cultural Arts Center. The Commissioner addressed the residents of District 8, which include, the City of Homestead, Town of Cutler Bay, Village of Palmetto Bay and Village of Pinecrest.

Elected officials who attended included: Miami-Dade County Mayor Carlos Gimenez, Miami-Dade Commissioner Xavier Suarez, Miami-Dade, Town of Cutlerbay Mayor Edward MacDougall, and Village of Palmetto Bay Mayor Shelly Stanczyk.

Offices that were represented included: Congressman Mario-Diaz-Balart, Miami-Dade County Board of County Commission Chairman Joe A. Martinez, Commissioner Sally Heyman,, Village of Pinecrest and City of Homestead.

Commissioner Bell commenced by recognizing the sacrifices made by members of the armed forces, Miami-Dade law enforcement community and public servants. The commissioner highlighted the many accomplishments achieved during her time in office, given the difficult political and economic climate.

Among the accomplishments, she emphasized her role in helping create a line item budget that is easily read and accessible to all residents; requiring County

departments to recommend better workforce strategies and identifying unnecessary spending to be used for cutting costs during contract negotiations (saving the county \$32 million this year). Commissioner Bell also spoke about her stance against the elimination of funding for Miami-Dade's Agricultural industry resources, which resulted in positive growth in an industry with \$2.7 billion economic impact. She spoke about her creation of the Sponsor-A-Road Program, which encourages businesses and non-profits to sponsor right-of-ways for greening and beautification (providing taxpayer relief).

Most importantly, Commissioner Bell underscored four legislative items that she declared will change how city hall operates. The first requires every county employee to receive ethics training; the second requires that every lobbyist who lobbies the county receive ethics training that includes gift restrictions and sunshine requirements; the third item doubles the time which county elected officials would have to wait to lobby the county from 2 to 4 years after service; the fourth requires those who serve on the Board to receive ethics training prior to receiving payment from any organization which receives county funding.

In an effort to bring government closer to the people, Commissioner Bell highlighted the success of the "311 Service Centers" which were created by bringing together the Tax Collector, Clerk of the Courts and Mayor to create a "one stop shop" where residents can access a wide range of government resources including paying taxes and purchasing transit passes.

In conclusion, Commissioner Bell pledged to work closer with the municipalities in her area, as well as organizations such as Chamber South, the Economic Development Council of South Dade, and the Homestead/Florida City Chamber to develop a comprehensive economic development plan for the region.

MIAMI-DADE LEAGUE OF CITIES (MDCLC)

On Thursday, January 12, the MDCLC held its monthly Board of Directors meeting at the Rusty Pelican in the City of Miami.

As the final board meeting prior to the Annual installation Gala, the Board of Directors dedicated this meeting to distributing its annual awards. The Miami-Dade County's Office of Intergovernmental Affairs was presented with the President's City Attendance Award for its commitment, dedication and attendance at the monthly Board of Directors meetings.

Save the Date:

What: Miami Dade League of Cities 58th Annual Gala

When: Saturday, February 18, 2012

Where: Jungle Island, 1111 Parrot Jungle Trail

LOCAL WEEKLY REPORT

January 16– January 20, 2012

JACKSON HEALTH SYSTEM (JHS)

A report from Jackson Health System's Chief Financial Officer Mark Knight to Jackson's board indicated that projections show disturbingly low five days cash in June before the system goes broke in August. The projection does not include Medicaid cuts, which could be realized by July 1, if the legislature cuts healthcare spending as expected. Chief Executive Carlos Migoya noted that the projections are based on the assumption of maintaining the status quo, which he indicated is not the case. Migoya stated that he will continue to work on staffing levels and bringing in more patients. Additionally, Board Member and State Representative Michael Bileca emphasized the importance of Jackson reaching a settlement with the union to lower costs. Bileca explained that the Florida House is proposing cuts of several hundred million dollars to healthcare, but they are not targeted as much on hospitals as the governor's plan is (the Scott plan will have an impact of more than \$200 million on Jackson). Details of the Senate budget have not yet been released.

MIAMI BEACH

Last week the Miami Beach city commission agreed to request that developers interested in redeveloping the convention center submit their qualifications for the project.

After the city rejected the design presented by the design firm Arquitectonica, commissioners agreed to reach out to developers to partner with the city and design the new convention center and possibly develop the surrounding 52 publicly owned acres. Part of the reason for seeking a partnership with private investors is the need for funding; the city only has \$55 million for the project. Several developers who toured the site last month will now have an opportunity to apply for the job.

Some business leaders have warned that a casino resort bill filed with the state legislature could bring resorts with massive amounts of convention space to downtown Miami, making the convention center obsolete. However, Las Vegas casino mogul, Steve Wynn reportedly offered to build a casino on the convention center site and pay for the entire project. Despite the offer, the Miami Beach has repeatedly rejected casino gaming in the city.

City Manager Jorge Gonzalez expressed his expectation to find a qualified developer and issue a request for proposals around March.

The City of Miami Beach is launching a program that will allow tourists and residents to rent automobiles on an as-need basis (rates can be found as low as \$9 per hour). Customers can register for free at www.Hertzondemand.com and the bill is then charged to a credit card (the price of gas and insurance is included in the rate). Hertz has established the same program in dozens of cities and over 40 universities, including Florida International University. Miami Beach stated that the program is the first municipal car share service in Florida.

DORAL

Last week the City of Doral held a ground breaking ceremony for Downtown Doral Park, which is officially under construction. The three acre park and new City Hall is expected to be completed in July. The developer, Codina Partners will build two playgrounds for children ages 5-12. A concrete area across from City Hall is slated as a multi-use area for the city. In lieu of some impact fees for the downtown area, Codina Partners in giving the park and its improvements to the city. According to Codina, the cost will exceed \$1 million.

The three story building (60,000 sq. ft.) will include a culture arts facility on the first floor for art exhibits and movie showings; the second floor will have staff offices and a Solution Center where city matters from resolving permits to zoning can be handled; and the third floor will house the council chambers, offices of elected officials, the city manager's office, human resources and finance. City Hall will be equipped with high efficiency air-condition and lighting as well as water conserving faucets and toilets.

The cost for the project totals \$22 million. The move is set for the week of July 4.

MIAMI LAKES

According to a Herald report, Miami-Dade prosecutors have opened an investigation into whether three Miami Lakes councilmen violated the state's Sunshine Law by gathering together at a popular restaurant after a meeting.

Councilmen Richard Pulido, Nelson Hernandez and Tim Daubert, voted in unison against proposed changes to the rules governing the town's zoning board on December 13, then met with a town activist at a sports pub immediately after. The men denied speaking about the meeting.

The same three men were said to have upset Mayor Michael Pizzi on January 5

when they left a council zoning workshop to attend a private community meeting which was discussing an issue that would eventually go before the city council. The head of the town's public safety committee, Keving Morejon, told reporters that the councilmen sat together and spoke about the public safely meeting that night.

The subpoena was served at Town Hall on January 11, after the scheduled council meeting adjourned.

MIAMI SPRINGS

On Wednesday, January 18th, the Miami Springs council held a workshop and discussed changes to the current election process. Councilman Bob Best, who is in his fourth and final term, proposed several changes and the council agreed to consider putting some of the ideas before the voters.

Currently, elections for the mayor and all four council seats are held every for two years on odd numbered years in April, with eight year term limits. Councilman Best proposed that like many other municipalities, Miami Springs piggy back with state or federal elections, which would save money. Additionally, he suggested four year terms, with 12 year term limits. Mayor Zavier Garcia indicated that some changes may be good and would consider input from city residents prior to placing questions on a ballot.

The topic will be discussed further at the next scheduled council meeting on Monday, January 23 at 7:00 P.M.

PINECREST

The Village of Pinecrest was recently awarded the highest ranking in South Florida for quality of life by the South Florida Business Journal. The new rankings come from a study of 1,146 cities, towns, villages, municipalities and unincorporated communities with populations greater than 10,000 in 13 southern states. The study looked for well-rounded areas with healthy economies, light traffic, moderate costs of living, impressive housing and strong educational systems by using a 20 part formula to rate each community's quality of life. Other areas of South Florida in the top 10 "places to live" are Key Biscayne, Parkland, Coral Gables and Weston.

ANNOUCEMENTS:

South East Florida Transportation Council (SEFTC)

What: South Florida Regional Planning Council

When: Monday, January 23, 2012

Time: 10:00 A.M.

Where: 3440 Hollywood Blvd, Suite 140, Hollywood, Fl.

Please click to view the agenda:

<http://www.seftc.org/system/agendas/78/original/SEFTC%20Package%2001-23-12%20Rev.pdf>

Save the Date:

Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce (GMCC)

What: Trustee Luncheon (Outlook for 2012: Paving the Road for the Travel Industry)

When: Wednesday, February 1, 2012

Time: 11:30 A.M. to 1:30 P.M.

Where: Jungle Island, 111 Parrot Jungle Trail

Please click the link for more information:

<http://www.miamichamber.com/cwt/External/WCPages/WCEvents/EventDetail.aspx?EventID=2949>

Florida International University (FIU) Day in Tallahassee

What: FIU Day 2012 reception

When: Wednesday, January 25, 2012

Time: 5:30 P.M.

Where: Governor's Club, Tallahassee, Fl

RSVP (305) 348 – 3505 herra@fiu.edu

Also at FIU

What: FIU College of Law will host U.S. Supreme Court Justice Samuel A. Alito, Jr. for the College of Law Moot Court Final Round

When: Thursday, January 26, 2012

Time: 5:00 P.M. (arguments commence / reception to follow)

Where: FIU Law Ceremonial Courtroom

RSVP by Friday, January 20, 2012 <http://go.fiu.edu/FIU> Law Justice Alito

Downtown Bay Forum

What: Luncheon Meeting / American Airlines Bankruptcy What Does It Mean To Our Community?

When: Wednesday, January 25, 2012

Time: 11:30 A.M.

Where: Wolfson Auditorium @ Temple Israel, 137 NE 19th Street, Miami, FL.

RSVP Annette Eisenberg (305) 757-3633

Miami-Dade League of Cities

What: Miami Dade League of Cities 58th Annual Gala
Saturday, February 18, 2012

When:

Where: Jungle Island, 1111 Parrot Jungle Trail

LOCAL WEEKLY REPORT

January 23– January 27, 2012

MIAMI

City of Miami Commissioners forewent action on three crucial items, which were expected to generate revenue for the city's general fund. The initiatives included a ticket surcharge, a new billboard ordinance, and a plan for a local group to renovate the Miami Marine Stadium.

The measure to add a \$1 surcharge to events at city-run facilities and public roads lost momentum when Miami –Dade College President Eduardo Padron told city leaders that the surcharge would negatively impact the school's four campuses (the new fee was to be coupled with an existing city surcharge). Additionally, commissioners were informed that the city might run into trouble collecting the money based on a state Supreme Court ruling that found surcharges unconstitutional years ago.

Commissioner Michelle Spence-Jones had pushed for the measure in hopes of finding ways to pay for popular city parades, such as, the Three Kings Parade and the Martin Luther King Jr. Parade. Spence-Jones withdrew the item at the request of City Manager Johnny Martinez.

The second item (deferred) is a billboard ordinance (will come back to the commission two weeks) that would allow the city manager to place internally illuminated signs on city-owned buildings with at least 1,000 patrons. The buildings would include Miami Riverside Center, The Knight Center and the Gusman Center for the Performing Arts. The measure is being opposed by Scenic Miami, an organization focused on beautifying Miami and eliminating visual pollution.

The third item (deferred) is a plan to create a new steering committee that would oversee the restoration of the Miami Marine Stadium on Virginia Key. The work would be overseen by the local activist group Friends of Miami Marine Stadium.

The committee would include the city's planning director, a local resident and two members of the Miami Sports & Exhibition Authority (MESA), which includes four commissioners and the mayor.

The agreement contains a clause that would ultimately give MESA the ability to lease the property from the city. By making another entity the landlord, Miami would be able to circumvent a city law that forbids it from developing waterfront property without voter approval. Friends of Miami Marine Stadium hopes to raise \$30 million in order to restore the structure back to its original form and use (concerts and boat races).

JACKSON HEALTH SYSTEM

Jackson Health System and the University of Miami are developing a plan that will clarify and delineate the difference between UM doctors who work at Jackson and those who work for UM's own health enterprise. To read more, please click the link provided by the Miami Herald:

<http://www.miamiherald.com/2012/01/23/v-print/2604166/jackson-health-system-um-headed.html>

DORAL

Former Doral Councilwoman Sandra Ruiz announced that she will be running for the Doral City Council. The election will take place on November 6, 2012.

Two council members and the mayor are vacating their seats this year: Councilman Micahel DiPietro and Pete Cabrera and Mayor Juan Carlos Bermudez are leaving due to term limits.

Ruiz is running for Cabrera's Seat 1, along with Bettina Rodriguez-Aguilera, economic developer for the city. Biboana Salmon, a mom who went on a hunger strike in 2000 urging local leaders to address her concerns of underfunding in Florida's schools, has filed for DiPietros Seat 3.

Two other candidates have filed to run in the council race but have not yet declared for which seats: Former councilman Robert Van Name and Clementa Vera, a board member of Parks and Police 4 Kids of Doral.

In the mayor's race two candidates have filed, former school board member Frank Bolanos and Councilman Pete Cabrera. Candidates have a deadline of July 24 to qualify for the election.

Miami Herald

After selling its Miami property to the Genting Group, the Miami Herald is relocating to the former headquarters of the U.S. Southern Command in Doral. The property is approximately 158,000 square feet and will be renamed One Herald Plaza at Westpointe Business Park. The Miami Herald also purchased an adjacent six acres which will house the company's 119,000 square foot production building.

The Herald will remain at its current location until May 2013.

HIALEAH

On Monday, Hialeah union leader Barbara Hernandez confirmed her commitment to work with the city on a new contract for general employees, in spite of her belief that the firings are politically motivated. Mayor Carlos Hernandez denied the allegation and said that the firings were done for the sake of efficiency.

The union and the city have been negotiating a new contract since 2009, and in 2011 the city imposed drastic salary cuts of 17 percent. The union and city expect to have a new contract in place by April 1.

According to the Herald, Union President Hernandez said the union is proposing a contract that is a year longer (it would run through 2014). And would increase union contributions to their health insurance in lieu of 15 unpaid vacation days. The union also offered the elimination of time-and-a-half pay for employees who work on holidays, opting for regular pay. The union is also opposed to changing their pension system to a defined contribution system that the city recommended. The proposal would reverse the 17 percent salary cut imposed in the last union contract.

SOUTH MIAMI

With election day on February 14, South Miami residents will have two candidates to choose from for mayor and five for City Commission.

Former South Miami mayor and state representative Julio Robaina is running against Mayor Philip Stoddard. Commissioners Brian Beasley and Velma Palmer decided not to run for reelection. Beasley had served as commissioner since 2008 and Palmer since 2004.

Joshua Liebman and Sally Philips are running for Beasley's seat.

Liebman, 37, is the executive director of TeamFootWorks training programs and a realtor. Philips, 68, a retired psychologist, has resided in South Miami since 1998.

Southwest High School teacher Gabriel Edmond, long-time activist Bob Welsh and former vice-mayor Armando Oliveros are running for Palmer's seat.

Oliveros stepped down from the commission in October 1999 when he was facing money laundering charges. He served eight years in prison.

Early voting will take place from 9 A.M. to 5 P.M. February 11 and 12. Regular voting will take place from 7 A.M. to 7 P.M. at City Hall, 6130 Sunset Drive.

Regional News

On Tuesday, Disney announced that it will commence sailing from Miami on

December 2012 through May 2013. The Disney Wonder will sail from Miami to the Bahamas and the Western Caribbean (among other possible destinations).

The 2700 passenger Disney wonder had previously sailed out of Los Angeles but in November, Disney canceled cruises to the Pacific coast of Mexico that had been scheduled for 2012 and 2013. The recent economic down turn and violence in Mexico heavily contributed to the decision.

The move is expected bring in more tourist, who will add pre or post-cruise stays, rent cars and create jobs.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Save the Date:

Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce (GMCC)

What: Trustee Luncheon (Outlook for 2012: Paving the Road for the Travel Industry)

When: Wednesday, February 1, 2012

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