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HOTEL TAKEOVER RAID AT EDEN ROC JUST ONE OF A SERIES OF DRAMATIC OWNER-MANAGER CONFLICTS, pg. 8



CAMERAS GET RED LIGHT: Miami-Dade commissioners Tuesday preliminarily repealed a red light camera ordinance – in unincorporated areas – that the commission had passed Jan. 20, 2011. No cameras were ever installed at intersections in unincorporated areas. “Not a single notice of violation or traffic citation has been issued on behalf of Miami-Dade County based on red light cameras,” the legislation says. “This board now desires to repeal all

authority and direction to implement or maintain a red light camera program in the unincorporated area of Miami-Dade County by repealing [the] ordinance.” Repeal wouldn’t affect traffic laws that have led to red light cameras in municipalities. A hearing must be held before the commission takes final action.

PRAY CONTINUE: While some US schools are being sued for allowing prayer before sporting events or functions, the Miami-Dade County Commission on Tuesday preliminarily approved an ordinance that would solidify an invocation before each meeting. “The board desires to adopt this formal, written policy to clarify and codify its invocation practices,” the resolution says, and “the board intends to adopt a policy that does not proselytize or advances any particular faith, or show purposeful preference of one religious view to the exclusion of others.” The resolution adds that the commission is within the law in holding an invocation before meetings. The resolution says “Such invocations before deliberative public bodies have been consistently upheld as constitutional by American courts, including the United States Supreme Court.” A hearing must be held on the measure before the commission debates or decides the issue.

MARINE STADIUM: A steering committee is to ask Miami city commissioners today (10/25) for a three-month extension to present a viable operating plan for restoration of Miami Marine Stadium. The city is supposed to participate in a public-private partnership with the Miami Sports and Exhibition Authority and Friends of Miami Marine Stadium Inc. to plan and apply for grants and funding for the stadium’s restoration. The three-month extension, if approved, would end Feb. 14.

DOCK AWAY: The Miami City Commission voted unanimously to accept the bid from Kearns Construction Co. to build a floating dock at Kennedy Park, 2400 S Bayshore Drive. The project is to cost \$155,604, which will come from the Department of Capital Improvements’ budget.

THE NEWSMAKER

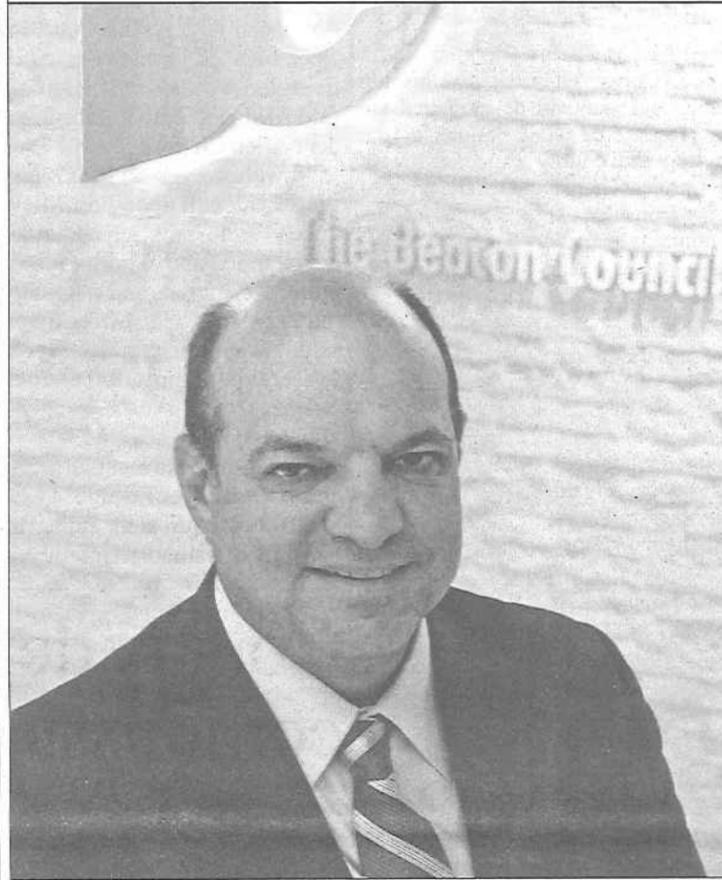


Photo by Marlene Quaroni

Joe Pallot
Heading Beacon Council as it handles vital jobs effort
The profile is on Page 4

Team stays at Jackson after gains

By LOU ORTIZ

A Financial Recover Board enlisted in 2011 to turn around the financial mess in Jackson Health System will keep its current members under a new permanent board.

Miami-Dade commissioners Tuesday approved creation of a seven-member board of trustees to govern the County Public Health Trust, down from a 17-member board that was dismissed when the system was \$88 million in the red.

Since May 2011, the recovery board has steadily turned things around, with a possibility of a balanced budget – when the just-ended budget year is closed out – and a projected \$35 million surplus this year.

The two-year tenure of the Financial Recovery Board ends next May. But the members will be appointed to staggered terms on the new board. And five of the seven will also serve on the nominating committee for the trust that will select replacements for the board of trustees when terms expire.

The nine-member nominating committee, whose selections would ultimately require county commission approval, will include a union official.

“The intent was to keep it [the board] independent,” said outgoing commission Chairman Joe Martinez, who helped fashion the new the board. “[But] any instruction you give them they need to abide by. You still have that power.”

Barbara Jordan and some other commissioners tried to no avail to defer and later defeat the ordinance, which passed 7-4.

Ms. Jordan said the Financial Recovery Board’s success has come via layoffs of hospital employees, attempts at privatization and other cuts. “We have appointed a Financial Recovery Board that has not presented us with a financial recovery plan,” she said.

Rebeca Sosa disagreed: “They have done an incredible job.”

■ Martinez plays MD again, writes prescription for Jackson trust, pg. 7

Marlins’ goal: kick in top-level soccer at stadium

By MEISHA PERRIN

The first soccer match to be held at the new \$525 million county-owned Marlins Park in Little Havana will be a Nov. 14 international friendly game between Venezuela and Nigeria.

But that is only the beginning of soccer, and events in general, at the stadium if all goes as planned, according to Sean Flynn, senior vice president of marketing and event-booking for the Miami Marlins, whose owners control stadium use and revenues.

Marlins Park officials are looking to hold world-class soccer at the venue, he said – and with an international friendly just around the corner, the idea is very real.

There is “great interest” in having soccer at the stadium, Mr. Flynn said. “Miami is a great soccer market – one of the best in the US. The interest for world-class soccer events is high.”

In January, the stadium will be hosting its first tournament-like event, Miami Soccer Challenge between European club teams and Central/South American club teams that are still being discussed, and they are looking to have more of those through out the year, Mr. Flynn said.

Moving forward, the Miami Soccer Challenge could potentially be a tournament that includes 14 teams, and the goal is to broadcast the matches internationally, Mr. Flynn said.

Essentially, he said, officials want to have games not only in January, but also at other times throughout the year when the Marlins are not using the stadium for baseball.

“I think that there is public here [for soccer] – especially Latin American,” Miami Mayor Tomás Regalado said. “It will give the stadium another life after the [baseball] season.”

Last month, the city welcomed representatives from Argentinean Club soccer team Boca Juniors, one of the most successful soccer teams in the world, who toured the stadium and expressed interest in having a tournament there in the future.

The Argentinean team, according to Mr. Regalado, who went with representatives to look at the stadium, wants a presence in Miami.

“They were dazzled by the stadium,” he said.

Although neither the city nor Miami-Dade County gets any money from events at Marlins Park, the success of the stadium is good for Miami’s international image and economy, according to Mr. Regalado.

During his travels to future potential sister city Madrid, Mr. Regalado said he spoke to the president of Spanish Club Team Atlético Madrid, which also is interested in seeing the new stadium.

“These teams understand that the US is a big market. They see the growth of soccer. The same thing the [Miami] Heat did with China, they want to do in Miami,” he said.

And if a team visits with the US, they will use rooms in hotels, rent cars, move around – and all of these things will help the economy, he said.

“It’s not only a win for the Marlins. It’s a win for us, too. It brings people to the city.”

Mr. Flynn, who books the events for the building and has been working with promoters and teams to bring such events to the stadium, said future stadium events won’t be limited to sports.

“We always knew this building would be used for a number of events beyond baseball,” Mr. Flynn said. “Soccer, we thought, would be the biggest opportunity because of Miami and the fan base in Florida for soccer.”

“We want to use [the stadium] for many other events.”

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THE INSIDER

MILITARY HOSPITALITY: Commissioner Jose "Pepe" Diaz, a former leatherneck, is asking the Miami-Dade administration to work out an agreement to extend the stay of the Military Hospitality Lounge at Miami International Airport. The lounge took over the hospitality of armed forces personnel in 1998 when the USO (United Service Organizations) closed up shop at the airport because of budget cuts. Mr. Diaz, who served in the Marine Corps, has been a chief sponsor of the lounge. Each month it serves 1,200 military personnel and their families who pass through the airport. The "lounge makes travel through the airport more comfortable and less stressful for military travelers and provides a range of services free of charge, including snacks, soft drinks, telephone and Internet access, printer and fax services, and emergency overnight accommodations," the resolution says. The lounge, funded through community, corporate and individual donations, is open daily, staffed by volunteers. The lounge has been operating rent free. The county Regional Transportation Committee passed the measure on a voice vote last week, sending it to the 13-member county commission to act.

JOBS, JOBS, JOBS...: Miami-Dade Mayor Carlos Gimenez told a breakfast meeting of Miami's Consular Corps last week that his top priorities moving forward are job creation and economic development. He told consuls general and associates from dozens of nations at the Intercontinental Miami downtown that the county can assist with permitting for their nationals' business projects here and he is committed to offering better county service to the Consular Corps: "Your success here actually benefits our entire community's success."

...AND TRANSPORTATION TOO: Nontraditional ways to finance better and farther-ranging public transportation are also on the agenda of Mayor Carlos Gimenez, he told the Consular Corps. In response to France's consul general, Gaël de Maisonneuve, who asked why there is so little tri-county cooperation in developing dependable commuter transportation along Florida's East Coast, the mayor said he is looking to work with companies from around the globe in public private partnerships to develop untraditional ways to better finance public transportation: "The challenge is how we pay for it."

BUSINESS LOANS: The number of US Small Business Administration-backed loans in South Florida to export and international trade firms grew 25% in fiscal 2012, while the total value of those loans jumped 146%, the agency said this week. During the fiscal year, the SBA provided 79 loans guaranteed for \$53.6 million in South Florida. "South Florida is a natural hub for international trade activity and we have actively promoted SBA's export and international trade loan guaranty programs," said South Florida District Director Francisco "Pancho" Marrero. "Exporting is creating opportunities for small businesses to create good-paying jobs and provide economic benefits to local communities nationwide."

INDUSTRIAL PURCHASE: An affiliate of The Easton Group has purchased two adjacent industrial buildings totaling nearly 59,000 square feet just east of Miami International Airport. The group also signed a five-year lease with the site's tenant, GA Telesis, the company announced. EWE Warehouse Investments East Airport LLC paid \$2.9 million, or \$50 per square foot, for the buildings. David Janney Trustee Partnership was the seller of the building at 3939 NW 27th St. and Service Container LLC was the seller of the building at 3901 NW 27th St. "This deal was a win-win for all," said Easton Group Chairman Edward W. Easton.

HEALTHY RETURN: Miami-Dade commissioners have approved returning payments made since Oct. 1 to two more county unions that had been paying an extra 4% of wages toward healthcare benefits. Tuesday's brings total county returns of actual and projected payments to seven unions to \$50,727,000. The latest are the Transport Union Local 291, with an estimated cost of the return \$6,560,000; and the Government Supervisors Association of Florida Local 100, totaling \$10,375,000. The additional 4% contributions were part of the 2011-12 budget that then newly elected Mayor Carlos Gimenez fashioned to close a \$200 million shortfall, which included reducing property taxes and eliminating 1,000 positions. The 4% in additional healthcare payments — union members were already paying 5% of wages — had created an uproar among employees and some commissioners. The commission approved givebacks for five other unions this month.

POLISH TRADE: The Florida Foreign Trade Association was to host an event this week focusing on trade with Poland. The event, called Alliance Business Expo — Trade Poland, was to be held at the Miami Free Zone in Doral. More than 150 exhibitors were expected. The event was to include several business seminars. Port Miami Director Bill Johnson and Eric Stewart of the US-Poland Business Council in Washington, DC, were slated as keynote speakers.

ENTERPRISE GRANT: Enterprise Florida, the state's economic development agency, has been awarded a \$1.1 million state trade and export promotion grant by the US Small Business Administration. It marks the second straight year Enterprise Florida has received money under the program. Last year, it received \$780,786. "The grant presents a great opportunity for small and medium-size enterprises," said Manny Mencia, Enterprise Florida's senior vice president of international trade and development, based in Coral Gables. "It allows them to take advantage of overseas tradeshows and missions, because we will be able to provide them with funding to offset their costs."



Manny Mencia



Gaël de Maisonneuve



Francisco Marrero



Edward W. Easton

Cargo giant returns to Port Miami

BY SCOTT BLAKE

A giant of the sea cargo industry has re-established a presence at Port Miami.

Mediterranean Shipping Company S.A., or MSC, has started weekly service between Miami and Central America. The new route will connect Miami-Dade County's seaport with Puerto Santo Tomas De Castilla in Guatemala, Puerto Cortes in Honduras, Freeport in the Bahamas and the Port of Jacksonville.

Prior to initiating the new service, MSC stopped service at Port Miami years ago and has since focused its business at Port Everglades near Fort Lauderdale, said MSC Executive Vice President Allen Clifford.

Now, however, an MSC cargo vessel will call upon Port Miami once a week, handling containerized imports and exports, such as building materials and hospitality industry supplies, Mr. Clifford said. He said he expects exports to account for most of the Miami business.

In Miami, he said, MSC typically will operate a vessel with a cargo capacity of 2,000 TEUs, or 20-foot equivalent units, the capacity of a standard intermodal

container.

"These are not huge vessels," he said during an interview Tuesday with Miami Today. "But we hope for them to be full."

The addition of MSC in Port Miami's lineup of cargo shippers should help the seaport continue to improve its cargo volumes.

In fiscal 2011, for example, Port Miami handled 8.22 million tons of cargo — the highest annual total for both imports and exports since 2006. In following years, however, the port's total cargo tonnage declined before bottoming out at 6.83 million tons in fiscal 2009, when the recession was in full effect.

Port Miami's cargo tonnage peaked in fiscal 2005 at 9.47 million tons, statistics show.

Geneva, Switzerland-based MSC is the world's second-largest shipping line with more than 430 cargo vessels. MSC also is the parent company of MSC Cruises, an international cruise line.

MSC's first call at Port Miami for its new Central America-Freeport service recently arrived with the vessel Northern Delight V. South Florida Container Terminal will handle the new service at its Port Miami cargo yard.

Mr. Clifford would not dis-

cuss specifics about why MSC's cargo operation left Miami long ago and is returning now.

"You always want to go where the cargo is," he explained. "Situations change, volumes [of cargo] change, needs change."

On the new Miami route, the company expects the heaviest shipments to come and go from Honduras. MSC also has a central operation in Freeport. In addition, MSC has a South Florida office with about 40 employees, offering full import/export customer services.

Mr. Clifford said the new weekly service wouldn't have an impact on the company's staffing in South Florida.

MSC currently does not have plans to add to its new cargo operation in Miami.

"MSC is a company that plans for everything in the future," Mr. Clifford said. "MSC always keeps an eye open" for new opportunities.

"At this time, however, nothing else is planned," he added.

Still, the company has made a commitment to the local seaport, and does not anticipate that the new service will be short-lived.

"MSC," he said, "is the kind of company that sticks around."

County defers move to permit local commissioner to stymie annexation

BY LOU ORTIZ

After nearly three hours of debate, the Miami-Dade County Commission Tuesday deferred a proposed ordinance that would give all commissioners the power to single-handedly stop annexations in their districts.

Instead of sending the proposal by Javier Souto to a committee for review, the commission voted 7-4 to defer and again take up the proposed ordinance Nov. 20.

The four-week deferral is expected to give Mr. Souto time to meet and work out a compromise with Sweetwater city officials, who want to annex a portion of Mr. Souto's District 10. The annexation would include a portion of Florida International University.

"The proposed ordinance requires that prior to the filing of any annexation proposal or petition, each county commissioner whose district is impacted, must provide a written consent for consideration to the clerk of the board," according to the legislation.

Before the debate, city officials and others told commissioners the proposed ordinance would violate the Florida Sunshine law — because a commissioner would make decisions in private without public input or process — and the actions would be arbitrary and differ among districts.

"Take time to look at the complicated legal issues," Jimmy Morales, general counsel for the Miami-Dade League of Cities, himself a former county commissioner, told the commission. The county "charter lays out a clear

process for annexation," he said. But Mr. Souto said Sweetwater's actions affect Fontainebleau in his district and reduce its residents to "second-class citizens."

"You [Sweetwater] were throwing the people of Fontainebleau away," he said, adding that there was no consideration of "the incorporation process going on with Fontainebleau."

"They have a process already going on," Mr. Souto said. "It was on hold because of the moratorium. The people have been hurt badly... because of this."

Commissioner Lynda Bell said that Mr. Souto's proposal goes against the democratic process. She asked the commission to vote and defeat the measure.

Sally Heyman agreed. "Let's not make this personal," she said. "I would like this to go away today. I am opposed to this."

Ms. Heyman said the annexation process should be inclusive, and to allow one commissioner to make decisions for all on a proposal the person may not agree with amounts to "absolute censorship."

"We have a process, we have a charter, and we never go exclusively to one member when there is something we don't like," she said.

Outgoing commission Chairman Joe Martinez said the ordinance is a policy change and about "absolute power." "If you want one person to have the power... that's up to you," he said. "That's what this is about."

But Dennis Moss said the commission should consider broader issues. He said sometimes an-

nexations result in cherry-picking, the taking of unincorporated areas with tax bases such as commercial and industrial while leaving out poor and disadvantaged sections.

"I am not in favor of someone coming in and poaching those areas," he said. "There needs to be additional dialogue to see if something can be worked out. There needs to be mutual respect on both sides."

But Esteban Bovo Jr. said commissioners should be involved in annexations involving their districts.

"I'm a big believer in conversation," he said. "I support Mr. Souto's need to be involved."



Dennis Moss

We want to hear from YOU!

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After tongue-lashing, Beacon Council chair offers apology

BY LOU ORTIZ

A day after being tongue-lashed at County Hall, Beacon Council officials appeared before another county committee and stressed their willingness to work with Miami-Dade County in a more cooperative way and to partner with the county commission to help bring more economic development to underserved areas.

Council officials struck a conciliatory tone at the Economic Development & Social Services Committee the day after Commissioner Lynda Bell alleged she had been treated rudely and with disrespect in a private meeting last Monday with the council's President & CEO Frank Nero and its volunteer Chairman Joe Pallot.

"I want to personally apologize — and I feel bad about any bad feelings we had on Monday — and make sure Commissioner Bell understands," said Mr. Pallot at the economic development committee meeting Wednesday prior to a presentation by the council and other county economic development groups.

"I took away some very good suggestions," said Mr. Pallot about the personal meeting with Ms. Bell. "We are here and we really want to work with you," he said. "I feel very bad personally about any bad feelings that you have."

Mr. Nero, who gave the council's presentation, said he echoed Mr. Pallot's sentiments: "I want to echo the remarks of the chairman."

Ms. Bell said she and her chief of staff attended the Monday meeting with Mr. Nero and Mr. Pallot to discuss legislation she intends to file that would make the Beacon Council more transparent and accountable to the county.

She discussed her alleged treatment at that private meeting and the proposed legislation the next day at the Internal Man-

'I appreciate the apology, but it may have come from the wrong person.'

Lynda Bell

agement & Fiscal Responsibility Committee, which she chairs.

Later that day, in an interview with Miami Today, Mr. Pallot said: "I am surprised that was her interpretation of the meeting that she was treated disrespectfully. We had a candid and professional conversation about what the Beacon Council does and our transparency."

But Wednesday, after Mr. Pallot's remarks at the Economic Development & Social Services Committee meeting, Ms. Bell said: "I almost don't want to speak, but I'm going to. I want to thank the chairman [Mr. Pallot] for your comments. That meeting did not go well."

"It's good to hear you in the public," Ms. Bell told Mr. Pallot. "I appreciate the apology, but it may have come from the wrong person."

Commissioner Esteban L. Bovo Jr. was blunt: "I appreciate the apology to my colleague, but I'm not sure echoing is [an apology]. We all need to conduct ourselves with a lot of respect."

The Beacon Council has been the county's economic development arm since Oct. 1, 1987, a contract that renews automatically each year — a provision the proposed legislation would excise.

The council is to receive \$3,750,000 in 2012-2013 from a county surtax on business. Mr. Nero told the committee it also receives \$2 million from its members.

Ms. Bell and other commissioners say they don't believe the council is doing enough for minority and mom-and-pop businesses, or doing enough to

bring investment to underserved communities.

Temporarily deferred legislation by Ms. Bell and Xavier L. Suarez would impose a wide range of requirements on the council in return for the business tax dollars.

They include the group getting input from the commission, setting goals and submitting an annual budget.

Mr. Nero told commissioners the council's role is to attract national and global job-producing investments, and to retain local companies and help them expand. He said the services are free and confidential.

Mr. Nero said that this year only 19% of the companies that the Beacon Council aided received government incentives. He said half of those companies are coming into the county and the other half are local operations of all sizes.

"The companies themselves determine where they will locate and expand based on their business decisions," said Mr. Nero, adding that companies consider the local workforce, infrastructure, education and quality of life.

"We promote the entire county," he said. "We try to encourage companies to locate in targeted urban areas."

New investments the council brings in, Mr. Nero said, increase demand for goods and services from local small businesses.

But he cited inherent problems that impede investments in some targeted urban areas, such as lack of infrastructure and zoning. "We do not have adequate incentives to induce these companies to locate in the urban areas," he said.

"If we can partner together, we can get it done... to make [urban areas] more competitive," Mr. Nero said.

Commissioner Dennis Moss

Legislation proposes changes

Legislation proposed to alter the Beacon Council calls for:

- An annual meeting before June 1 between the council's executive committee and the county commission. The meeting would be a public hearing with regional economic development entities invited to attend and speak.

- An economic strategy implemented by the council that provides, in part, advertising, promotional activities, general marketing and contributions to Small Business Administration licensed venture capital entities. The council currently adheres to this requirement.

- Commission input in economic development strategy of the Beacon Council, following recommendations by the County Office of Economic Development and International Trade.

- Benchmarks and goals that the Beacon Council should achieve in each new year.

- Efforts by the Beacon Council to create, sustain and grow local businesses in both urban and rural communities.

- Provision to the commission of a Beacon Council budget listing anticipated revenues, salaries and expenditures paid with county funds.

- A commission-appointed voting member on the council's executive committee.

- An advisory board comprised of regional economic development organizations.

Regional economic entities the resolution named include the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce, the Miami-Dade Chamber of Commerce, the Economic Development Council of South Miami-Dade and the Latin Chamber of Commerce of the United States.

The resolution also calls for the end of the automatic renewal of the contract between the Beacon Council and the county — which some commissioners said amounted to a lifetime contract — and replacing it with "a more customary provision for renewal of the agreement at the option of the board [commission] and Beacon Council."

The county negotiation team for the contract would include the mayor or an appointee, the chairman of the commission or a designee, a business leader in the community appointed by the commission, and a representative of a regional economic development entity. The resolution asks that the council be represented by no more than four people.

acknowledged that the council has brought investment and jobs. But, he said, "I want to see more opportunity and more happening from the Beacon Council in some of the most disadvantaged communities."

Ms. Bell agreed. "Why don't we work on making them more marketable?" she asked. "The people that pay the \$3.9 million [in taxes to the council] are small businesses. They're trying to survive in this community. Thirty-three percent of their tax bill goes to the Beacon Council."

Mr. Bovo said there are no "sacred cows" among groups that receive county funding. "At the end of the day, we're on the

hook," he said. "We need to have the flexibility to meet those [small business] demands."

"Working together is the only way to accomplish the best for Miami-Dade County," said Rebeca Sosa, who chairs the Economic Development & Social Services Committee, which will vet the legislation along with Internal Management & Fiscal Responsibility Committee.

The targeted urban areas "are where we need to sit down and work together," she said.

The legislation must be approved and forwarded by both committees to the commission before the 13-member panel can debate and consider the measure.

Joe Pallot enters presidency of Beacon Council with aim...

The offices at the Beacon Council were abuzz last Tuesday when Miami Today reporter Laura Stace sat down to interview new volunteer chairman Joe Pallot.

Mr. Pallot has a long history with the Beacon Council – working with the economic development organization throughout his law career – and had only just taken the reins this month from outgoing chairman Alan Becker of commercial law firm Becker & Poliakoff when unflattering press hit the newsstands over a reported tussle between a county commissioner and Beacon Council heads, including himself.

The day of our profile interview, county Commissioner Lynda Bell told her colleagues at an Internal Management & Fiscal Responsibility Committee meeting that during a meeting with Beacon Council heads she had been treated “rudely” and with “disrespect”.

Mr. Pallot said he was surprised by the commissioner’s interpretation of the meeting and denied the allegations.

The Monday meeting between the organization and commissioner was to discuss legislation Ms. Bell intends to file that she says would make the Beacon Council more transparent and accountable to the county.

Ms. Bell and fellow commissioner Xavier Suarez are sponsoring a resolution that would require the county administration to negotiate a new agreement with the Beacon Council, which is slated to receive \$3,750,000 from Miami-Dade in the current budget.

The measure would amend a 25-year-old pact between Miami-Dade and the Beacon Council and require the organization to get commission input, set goals and submit an annual budget.

Last Wednesday at the Economic Development & Social Services Committee meeting Mr. Pallot said he wanted to “personally apologize” to Ms. Bell. The commissioner said she appreciated the apology, but “it may have come from the wrong person.”

Mr. Pallot told Miami Today he has three main goals for the Beacon Council as he begins his chairmanship, including a focus on the One Community, One Goal project designed to create high-paying jobs in targeted industries in Miami-Dade County.

As general counsel for Heico Corp. – a supplier of FAA-approved engine and component parts – Mr. Pallot said he was fortunate to work for a company that supported his endeavors with the Beacon Council.

His tasks for the year ahead will be tough and his schedule demanding, but he said his high energy levels and enthusiasm to achieve his goals will keep him working as hard as he can.

We can be sure that when he is not at his Heico office on Brickell Bay Drive or the Beacon Council office several blocks west adjacent to Mary Brickell Village, he will be darting between the two.

While he said he loves what he does, perhaps Mr. Pallot will find time for a golf game or two with his sons. The self-proclaimed “terrible golfer” tries to hit the links for relaxation on the weekend



Photo by Marlene Quaroni

Joe Pallot is focusing on the One Community, One Goal effort spearheaded by the Beacon Council to target growth in the area of high-income jobs in specific industries.

The Newsmaker

Joe Pallot

Chairman, the Beacon Council; General Counsel, Heico Corp.
80 SW Eighth St., Suite 2400, Miami 33130
(305) 579-1300
chairman@beaconcouncil.com
Age: 52
Born: Coral Gables
Education: Bachelor of Science, Jacksonville University. Law Degree, University of Miami School of Law.
Personal Philosophy: Be true to yourself, don't compromise your principles. Try to keep it simple.

Watch the interview

www.miamitodaynews.com

Click on Profile

– that is, when he's not cheering on the Dolphins, the Hurricanes or any number of teams the sports fan follows.

Miami Today met with Mr. Pallot in the Beacon Council offices, where he spoke candidly about the Beacon Council's big project for the year – the expansion of Univision in Miami.

Q: What are your major goals for the Beacon Council for the year ahead?

A: In addition to the work the Beacon Council regularly does, the three things that I focused on for this year in my annual meeting announcements were the One Community, One Goal effort and having a really strong first year of this five-year initiative by growing the job base and generating high-paying jobs throughout the community.

I recognize that while we've done a great job getting our message out to potential employers we haven't had the resources to tell our story and our successes here at home, so that's another one of my goals, and coupled with that is making sure that we have the finances to

increase the reach of our message.

Q: You previously said you planned to bolster the organization's budget. How do you plan to do that?

A: We've started to put a committee together to look at that. The first thing we want to do is look at what other economic development agencies have done throughout the country. There are some that raise and spend significantly more money than we do. They found a way to do that, and we want to look at those as examples.

One of the things that's important to me is that we not supplant someone else's dollars, but we look to supplement our own budget. We can't stop doing what we're doing, we need to enhance it.

We're not simply going to look in one place. We're going to look at some creative ideas, including working with the private sector.

Q: You've previously said you want to enhance the organization's image and spread the message of the Beacon Council. What are your plans moving forward with that?

A: I think the people who know the Beacon Council know how strong the organization is and the success that it has. The issue is that not enough people here in town know who we are.

Getting the message out so that we inform them of this organization and what we're doing for the community is key. When I've had the chance to go around and talk to people about the Beacon Council, people understand what the mission is and they understand the successes.

Q: What are you looking forward to most during your chairmanship?

A: I think the most exciting part is One Community, One Goal and working with our three chairs: Mayor [Carlos] Gimenez, Art Torno and George Foyo. They're energetic, very informed, really very successful not only within their organizations but throughout the community.

I think the fact that we have the mayor together with the private sector is very important and very valuable. They're energized, as am I, and the community.

We also, for the first time, are focusing on the education component from the beginning of the process. From the superintendent of schools right up through

the presidents of the universities, we will be working together with both the public sector and the private sector. I think that's going to be great.

Q: Can you tell us a little bit about the One Community, One Goal project?

A: One Community, One Goal is the second time the community has done this. It's an effort for our community to look at targeted industries that have the best chance of growing good-paying, sustainable jobs in our community and not relying on the traditional few industries that we once relied on. Those traditional industries are very important to us and always will be, but the idea is to expand the base.

When the economy was getting weak a few years ago and struggling, the idea was re-offered as something we should look at. The Beacon Council took on the role of being the catalyst as part of a communitywide effort. It was not the Beacon Council alone, and it will only be successful if it's an entire community effort.

We engaged – with private sector dollars, not public sector dollars – a nationally recognized consultant in economic development. We studied the local community for the better part of a year. We initiated a survey of everyone in the community we could. We expected about 2,000 responses. We got over 5,000 responses.

Through the effort we identified the targeted industries. Many of them look like the old targeted industries [chosen in the first One Community, One Goal effort in the 1990s] but we now have clusters below and, importantly, we have the education resources as a foundation across the board.

The idea is to take those and work with our task forces on a communitywide basis to target those industries and those clusters to bring jobs. The Univision project falls right into those targeted industries.

Q: Can you tell us a little bit about the Univision project?

A: One of the nice things is the Univision project was closed and delivered right before I took over the chairmanship. So the jobs will count towards this year. I'll get to announce them again at the end of the year as part of our year but, in fact, other people did the work.

What's exciting about Univision is it's going to have significant international presence. Some of the things that they're announcing they're going to do are really innovative in terms of their scope and what they're going to do.

We were able to retain nearly 120 jobs here in town that would have been lost if that project had gone somewhere else. They were looking at other places. We were able to attract nearly 350 new jobs and a couple of hundred million dollars in capital investment.

It's a significant project, probably the largest one we've done in nearly 20 years here. We've already heard from people who are excited about it and will probably, before the end of the year, be announcing other jobs that were generated because they're coming here.

The work is a classic story about how the Beacon Council does its job. When a



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...of building jobs, finds early county commission friction

company is considering expanding in Miami-Dade or coming to Miami-Dade, we learn about that either from a professional site selector and their consultants or from real estate professionals who hear the story first or from commissioners or sometimes others in the community. Sometimes the company contacts the Beacon Council directly.

They have to agree to be a project, which can include research and some assistance on incentives if that's appropriate, and certainly Univision was qualifying for incentives and received some significant incentives.

Some companies want a lot of research results and some can do a lot of the work themselves or through their consultants. Sometimes it takes a long time — a year or more — sometimes it could be done in several months. It really depends on how fast the company wants to move.

Q: Can you tell us about any other exciting projects the Beacon Council will be working on in the year ahead?

A: We always have projects that are going on.

One of the great advantages of having a public/private partnership performing economic development, particularly in the state of Florida, is companies can come to us and remain confidential until they're ready to announce what they are doing. That's very important to companies, particularly companies that are looking to relocate from another community, because they don't want their own employees to wonder what's happening or hear rumors that they're moving.

One of the things that we have ongoing is companies that are talking to us on a confidential basis about relocating here and then we work with the county and through that process can maintain their confidentiality.

Q: If you were making a pitch to a company to relocate its headquarters from another part of the country to Miami, what would it be?

A: I think it's a lot of things. I think it's the residents and potential employee base

and I think it's our multiculturalism.

I think South Florida really sells itself, but I think the other valuable part about opening or relocating to South Florida is that unlike a lot of communities in the Northeast and the Midwest, we're very welcoming. People can come here and get engaged and succeed without having had a deep history here.

The fact that I have a deep history here is good for me and fun for me, but it's not a precondition to success as it is in other places.

Q: Can you tell me a little bit about your role at Heico?

A: As general counsel I'm the senior lawyer in the company. We're a locally based public company and we have facilities in a variety of states and overseas. I oversee all legal matters. I perform a lot of the work myself and with my colleagues and of course also work with outside counsel.

Q: Is your office located near the Beacon Council?

A: My office is right off of Brickell on Brickell Bay Drive, so it's easy for me to walk here as I need to.

Q: How do you plan on splitting your time? Will you be running through Brickell back and forth?

A: I'm sure that I'll be doing a fair amount of that. Frank Nero and his staff are excellent here at the Beacon Council, and similarly the professionals I work with at Heico are terrific. Fortunately, as well, the people with Heico are very community minded and civically engaged, so they're very supportive of the work that I'm doing here. At the same time, I plan to not let anything fall through the cracks.

Q: One would assume that taking on both these roles you would have to be very organized. Are you an organized person?

A: I'm an energetic person, but I think if you were to look at my desk it may not appear that I'm organized. The fact that if something consumes more time than I may have anticipated on any day, it's okay and I'll figure out a way to get my

work done.

Q: What preparations did you make before you assumed the chairmanship, personally and professionally?

A: One of the things that we do at the Beacon Council is identify our chair-elect a year before. That allows us an opportunity to work with the chair and get to know the current issues.

I was very lucky to be able to work with Alan Becker, our immediate past chair. He's a very dynamic leader and I learned a lot from Alan and I appreciated that.

On a broader scale, I've been volunteering at the Beacon Council almost since its inception. As a young lawyer I worked for a law firm with a gentleman who was instrumental in putting the Beacon Council together with the named founders. Ever since, I've volunteered with the Beacon Council. I'm committed to its mission and to the public/private partnership built here.

Q: You worked as a commercial loan officer right out of college and then you went to law school. Was that always the plan or did you just not enjoy working in the banking world?

A: It was really neither. It was not the plan and it wasn't that I didn't enjoy what I was doing. I had the opportunity to attend law school. I could take a break from fulltime employment at that time. I wasn't sure that I wanted to practice law, but I wanted to give myself the opportunity and wanted the education.

Q: What was the toughest thing about law school?

A: I think the toughest thing about law school is learning how to manage your time. Law students are faced with a tremendous amount of work, and it's not really possible to do it all. You have to figure out in your own way what's important to get done and what isn't. That's the hard part.

Q: You went to the University of Miami and you were born in Coral Gables. Do you follow UM?

A: I do. I am a big sports fan. I follow UM and other teams and universities as

well. I'm a big Dolphins fan too.

Q: Now you have two pretty demanding roles, what do you like to do on the weekend to relax?

A: I enjoy the work I do. I don't look at it as needing some time to relax. I have two sons and we enjoy our time together, especially playing golf and vacationing together.

Q: Do you have a regular group of people you golf with?

A: There is a group that I often play in on Saturdays unless one of my sons will play with me, and then I always give them first preference. I try to get out about once a week on the weekend when I can.

Q: Are you a good golfer?

A: No.

Q: What do your sons do?

A: One is a junior in Florida State University and the other is a senior in high school here.

Q: What is your son studying?

A: Finance.

Q: Are you going to give him some tips from your experience in the banking world?

A: I've tried to give him some simple tips. Stay in school. Get good grades. Get a job.

Q: This is a community you've grown up in and one in which you have strong ties, I can see that when you talk about creating jobs and opportunities here in Miami it is really exciting for you. Is that fair to say?

A: Yes, it is fair to say — particularly when it happens to be in exciting industries with high-paying jobs. These are people who are going to be living in our community and in neighborhoods where they're going to buy homes and shop, so it really benefits a lot of people.

It's a good example of the old phrase: rising tides lift all boats. When you look at our targeted industries, it reinforces to me that the time and expense we put into figuring out what those targeted industries should be was the right approach, and it encourages me knowing we're on the right path.

MIAMI TODAY

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Ballot item on terrorism is really about county contracts

A question far down November's ballot could sour Miami-Dade's economy while playing into the hands of lobbyists seeking huge contracts at added taxpayer cost.

Yet the question seems to simply ask whether we oppose doing business with terrorists. How could voting yes erode our economy and add government spending?

The answer requires a deeper look.

The item is labeled a "non-binding straw ballot on contracting with companies doing business with state sponsors of terrorism." But the text asks voters about spending local government funds "to procure services or capital improvement programs from companies actively doing business in countries" on the US list of state sponsors of terrorism.

It's a long leap from doing business with state sponsors of terrorism, as the heading says, to doing business with any company or individual in a country that is branded a sponsor of terrorism. The courts could have a field day decid-



Michael Lewis

ing which of those two the question means.

Then there's the issue of what doing business means. Is it having an office in another nation? Or holding a major contract? Or a related company active there? Or would an attorney working to aid a single individual flee dictatorship in Cuba be considered doing business there?

But no need to argue over meaning. The intent is so clear that the question could well have read "Should Miami-Dade County be allowed to contract with a Brazilian-affiliated company to handle major construction projects that clients of local lobbyists are also seeking?"

Or, even more directly, "Should Miami-Dade County dump dealings with Odebrecht Construction Inc. for massive contracts at Miami International Airport and elsewhere?" That would have been direct and not muddied business for thousands of other companies and individuals active abroad.

The ballot question seeks to tilt the playing field for county contracts from efficient companies to those that bid higher or can't do the job as well but want the business. It's that simple.

A yes vote would provide cover and comfort to special interests that could

tilt bid selections.

That, in turn, would not only drive up costs when the best bidders cannot win but also drive away businesses related to companies that do dealings of any sort where terrorism might ever become an issue. Four nations are on the US list now, but who knows about the future?

In Miami, which has for years sought foreign investment and foreign offices, passage of this vote would chill business. We say we want them here, but passage would prove we don't.

We got this item in August when county commissioners were vetting dozens of ballot issues, most related to charter amendments. Esteban Bovo proposed it and the others said yes 11-0 (don't blame Xavier Suarez or Dennis Moss, who were absent).

There was no thoughtful debate; too many ballot items were being approved or culled one after another. With time to think, commissioners might have killed this atrocity.

Miami-Dade is still in the United States, which has a policy that deals with terrorism and has laws about who can legally do business where. Commissioners are asking us to override US policy "to the extent permitted by law,"

to quote the ballot.

Frankly, the State Department is a better judge of what such policy should be than our commission.

Commissioners put up this specious proposal only after a US district judge in July barred the state from enforcing its own legislation seeking essentially the same roadblock to contracts, a barrier based on terrorism that has nothing to do with the companies in question but has the same aim: tilt the business playing field.

When it didn't fly at the state level, it roosted in Miami-Dade County.

No judge will knock out our vote, because it already is non-binding. But it still can distort the business climate and let the world know that no matter how open Miami says it is, we want only local guys to get the business and will make sure they do, one way or another.

Remember, this question did not come out of thin air. There's a reason it's on the ballot, a reason that has nothing to do with patriotism or terrorism.

A yes vote would do nothing but harm our economy. It would not prevent anyone on the globe from doing business anywhere on the globe except in Miami-Dade County. Are we, after all, our own worst enemies?

Commissioner wants to learn who's behind massive projects

In response to your editorial, "As big issues wait, commissioners fritter away 'free' time," you mentioned my concerns with regards to a proposed Miami-Dade County Regional Soccer Park and Stadium to be located at 9000 NW 58th St.



Javier Souto

This application is being processed as a Government Facility application. This would allow the Park & Recreation Department to develop a 37-acre site with a Miami-Dade Regional Soccer Park and Soccer Stadium in Northwest Miami-Dade County on a former landfill. Additionally, the next 10 acres are part of the Florida Power & Light easement property and have high-voltage transmission lines.

This item was presented to the full board of commissioners without prior notice or any information on whether proper analysis has been conducted on the former landfill to determine if the area is a suitable site for a soccer park. As a result, children playing in this field will be in direct contact with soil that can potentially have contamination issues such as potential toxins and electromagnetic emanations coming from the high-voltage transmission lines.

As an elected official, I am tasked with determining if proceeding with the item is in the best interest of the residents of our community. Therefore, I believe that my request for an environmental report does not accurately reflect me "frittering away free time" or engaged in a "turf war."

My preference would have been that the department had conducted the report. To reference an example,

The Writer

Javier Souto, a realtor, has been a Miami-Dade County commissioner since 1993. Previously he served two terms in the Florida House and two terms in the Florida Senate. His commission district includes portions of Kendall, Westchester and Fontainebleau.

a few days after I expressed my concerns, arsenic poison was discovered in the soil at Kendall Indian Hammocks Park.

In the past, neighborhood parks have been shut down due to the discovery of high levels of arsenic and other contaminants in toddler playgrounds. In addition, I also questioned the rush to push this item forward when it was discovered that there was no budget allocated for this project.

I have supported and later regretted similar projects. For example, there was a proposal for redeveloping the Homestead Air Force Base after Hurricane Andrew with the promise of jobs for South Dade and a boost

in the economy, but the area is still undeveloped.

Have we forgotten the county spending \$23 million to build a parking garage in Liberty City using money meant to battle poverty under the guise of a biotech project pushed by snake oil salesman Dennis Stackhouse?

Then, there was the rush to build a baseball stadium in South Dade in order to attract a Major League team for spring training.

There was also the sudden urgency to purchase thousands of Prius and other motor vehicles that were later stored away unused for five years or more in a Metrorail parking garage while their factory warranties expired.

Some will recall the \$20 million lawsuit against the county from a Canadian developer for the fiasco involving the redevelopment of the Opa-locka Airport or the time the county rushed to spend hundreds of millions to purchase Japanese trains for the airport years before they were ready to install, as a result paying the Japanese to exercise them for us and watching the warranties ex-

pire while they sat in Japan.

Pardon me for having a modicum of skepticism when I hear these great pitches over and over again. I want to know who is really behind developing this project, which we will soon know when the proposals come back.

I expect some people already know who will be returning a submission, but I also want to know who are those interested in the project, and I think the public wants and deserves to know as well. I have heard rumors about international companies that have done substantial business with the county who have interest in developing a world-class soccer facility in this community.

In light of all these uncertainties and a serious lack of documentation presented in support of this item, I could not understand – and still cannot understand – the rush to push this forward, but in the end we will all learn what is truly behind this seemingly innocuous item.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Long-term memory points to competition in Miramar

Your Oct. 18 editorial arguing not to throw the bums out of county office because it removes "institutional memory" from the process needed for a governing body to function at its best has merit and deserves a "no" vote for term limits.

"Institutional memory" of that select group of Miami Today readers can also be applied to Ana Acle-Menendez's response to criticism that the Beacon Council, whom she reps as vice presi-

dent of marketing and communications, isn't working hard enough to bring businesses to the entire county. She replied that their "competition is out-of-state."

Actually, from what I've read over the years in Miami Today, their competition is just across the county line: Miramar. I can't tell you how many times I've read where another county company was shutting down and moving to Miramar – announcements that, unlikely as it may seem, usually came from the Beacon Council.

DC Copeland

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Partners aim for a splash turning park into tourist attraction

BY LAURA STACE

From the deep blue to the boardroom, a group of sea savvy business partners have turned their love of water sports and professional prowess into what is set to become a major Miami tourist attraction.

Chairman and founding partner of Colliers International South Florida Michael Fay has assembled a team of wakeboard enthusiasts to develop a \$2 million cable ski facility at Amelia Earhart Park.

"Ours will be a truly international facility with pull across the globe," Mr. Fay said of the Miami Watersports Complex, which is to feature two six-tower cable ski systems and a two-tower system.

He said the 90-acre, kidney-shaped lake is so big there will also be room to utilize a boat.

Mr. Fay said when the complex is up and running, it will most likely employ 10 to 20 part-time and full-time staff.

The facility will be another drawing card for tourists, said Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau President and CEO William Talbert.

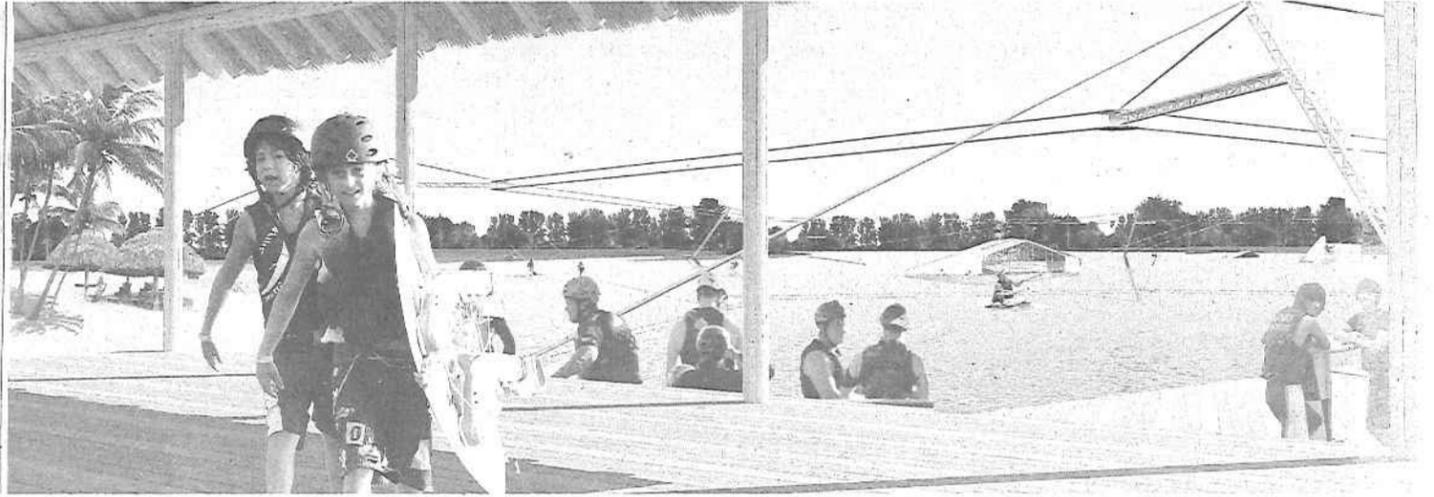
"For the folks that want to do something different, this will be unique," he said.

Mr. Talbert said the organization will promote the facility in its materials.

The complex is expected to attract regional, domestic and international visitors, said William E. Solomon, chief of the contract management and procurement division for the Miami-Dade County Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces Department.

He said the park averages 1,500 visitors during the week and 5,000 on weekends.

"It is anticipated that the number of visitors for Amelia Earhart



A team of executives plans to develop a \$2 million cable ski facility in Amelia Earhart Park "with pull across the globe," said Michael Fay.

Park will increase due to the Watersports Complex," Mr. Solomon said. "The number of visitors would be contingent upon the additional events and competitions held by the licensee."

The team has grand plans for the facility, and Mr. Fay said the driving force behind the project is smart business planning and a lot of passion.

He said he has the perfect blend of partners for the project — his wife Paula Fay, Miami Ski Nautique owners Henrick and Kim Laursen, attorney Juan Pablo Capello and former owner of Orlando Watersports Complex Rene Hofmann.

Each, Mr. Fay said, is excited and happy about where the project is heading.

The county commission recently approved the licensing contract with Miami Wake Board Cable Complex — which does business as Miami Watersports Complex.

Mr. Fay said the team is now entering the permitting process before construction begins, and he estimates the facility will probably be open by next summer or fall.

Right now, the company offers wakeboarding lessons at Amelia Earhart Park, he said.

Patrons can also enjoy a tube ride behind a boat. All equipment is on site and available for rent.

That business, Mr. Fay said, has experienced varied revenue. "You make money some months, you lose money some months," he said.

Mr. Fay said he foresees the new facility being a viable venture for himself and his partners after the first few years as well as a source of increased revenue for the county.

"This lake literally has sat there forever with no use," he said. "So we've taken a part of a park which was being unused and turned it into an income producing asset for the county."

The park's revenue will increase based upon additional parking revenue from the special events held. The contract calls for a monthly minimum guaran-

tee and a percentage of the gross revenue that will be payable to Miami-Dade County, Mr. Solomon said.

The licensing contract outlines that the minimum estimated revenue to the county is \$840,000 over the initial 20-year term, based on the negotiated minimum annual guaranteed rent of \$42,000 a year. However, if the licensee's gross receipts are between \$525,000 and \$1,250,000 a year, the rent due will be calculated at 8% of the licensee's monthly gross receipts.

Mr. Fay said the complex operators did have some options beyond the 20-year term.

The Miami Watersports Complex will join an exclusive list, he said.

"In the US, there is only about 12 to 15 really true cable parks even close to the magnitude that ours will be," Mr. Fay said.

He said cable skiing is being considered to be included as an Olympic sport.

"We would be direct benefactors of that because we believe our facility would be a mainstay for a large event," he said.

Mr. Fay said he had plans for

the complex to host tournaments — like the ones he and his family participate and place in.

The self-proclaimed serial entrepreneur said he was a competitive water skier in the '70s and took up wakeboarding in the early '90s.

Years later, his son decided to compete in wakeboarding tournaments — with his dad in tow.

Soon the whole Fay family was competing, he said, and placing in major competitions.

The project has taken a long time to get to this point, Mr. Fay said, and he had previously considered other venues that turned out to be not quite right.

He said he talked to the county parks department in 2009 and they suggested Amelia Earhart Park.

"Right then and there we knew that was going to be a great park," Mr. Fay said.

Construction is limited to the north lake. The Miami Watersports Complex will be the only one using that area, Mr. Solomon said.

He said he didn't anticipate that construction of the project would affect park visitors.



Michael Fay

Martinez again leads the medics to make Jackson healthier

BY LOU ORTIZ

Commissioner Joe A. Martinez finished the job Tuesday that he started more than a year ago when the Jackson Health System was bleeding red to the tune of nearly \$90 million.

Mr. Martinez, outgoing chairman of the commission, helped install the Financial Recovery Board on May 20, 2011, that led to a dramatic turnaround of the finances at Jackson. On Tuesday, he led the charge with an ordinance that transitions the recovery board into the new board of trustees of the County Public Health Trust.



Joe Martinez

"The responsibility on who serves on the [trustee] board is up to the commission," he said. "You picked quality people. That's the success of that [recovery] board."

The two-year tenure of the Financial Recovery Board ends in May 2013. But the seven members will be appointed to staggered terms on the new board,

from four- to one-year terms. The previous trust board had 17 members.

Five members of the new board will serve on the nine-member nominating committee that will select replacements for the board of trustees when the terms expire. The other four members will include a union representative, a mayoral appointee, one from the commission, and another from the county legislative delegation.

Selections by the nominating committee must be approved by the 13-member commission.

"The intent was to keep it [the board] independent," said Mr. Martinez, who helped fashion the new the board. "[But] any instruction you give them they need to abide by. You still have that power."

Mr. Martinez said the nominating committee eliminates the need to include representatives from local universities, or continually "adding people until it [the board] becomes non-functional."

But Barbara Jordan and others tried to no avail to defer and later defeat the ordinance, which passed by 7-4 vote.

Ms. Jordan voted to defer the

measure and then voted against it. But she later changed her vote to approve the ordinance because it will allow her to recall the measure for reconsideration before it takes effect next year.

Mr. Martinez will be replaced on the commission by a new commissioner after the Nov. 6 election.

Ms. Jordan said the current Financial Recovery Board's success has come from layoffs of hospital employees, attempts at privatization and other cuts. "We have appointed a Financial Recovery Board that has not presented us with a [five-year] financial recovery plan," she said.

"The Financial Recovery Board was not established to be the board for the Public Health Trust," she said. "That was not the original intent. What's the rush to do this?"

She also said that having trust board members on the nominating committee was wrong. "I think that takes away from objectivity," she said.

Dennis Moss, who also voted against the ordinance, said the new trust board should consist of nine members. He voiced concerns about the diversity in the future board, the public spats

over management and the union, and the absence of a plan from the recovery board on where the health system is headed.

The Financial Recovery Board replaced the former 17-member board of trustees of the trust at a time the system was facing an \$88 million deficit, following a deficit exceeding \$200 million in the immediate prior fiscal year.

Since May 2011, the recovery board has steadily turned things around, with a possibility of a balanced budget — when the 2011-12 budget year is closed out — and a projected \$35 million surplus in 2012-2013.

The current board consists of Chairman Marcos Lapciuc and Darryl K. Sharpton, the vice chairman; Joaquin del Cueto, secretary; Joe Arriola, treasurer; and Michael Bileca, Mojdeh L. Khaghan and Stephen S. Nuell.

"They have done an incredible job," said Commissioner Rebeca Sosa, adding that they serve as volunteers. "You need an experienced board to make decisions."

The previous legislation on the permanent board that came before the commission in September did not include the union.

There should be a seat for the

union and "as stockholders we should be recognized," Martha Baker, a registered nurse and president of Service Employees International Union Local 1991, told commissioners last month.

The union represents 5,000 employees in the Jackson Health System.

"We need a commitment to the mission" by those considered for the board, she said about the Public Health Trust's mission to provide healthcare to the poor and the uninsured. "Don't apply if you don't agree on our mission to deliver public healthcare."

On Tuesday, Commissioner Sally Heyman said that Jackson is "everybody's issue." "I don't think it's mission accomplished," she said.

"Everybody is committed to the mission: keeping us financially solvent so we can meet that mission," Ms. Heyman said. "We need to remain focused on financial recovery."

Mr. Martinez said Jackson "would be under right now" if it were not for the recovery board.

"You really took the lead on this," Commissioner Lynda Bell told Mr. Martinez. "You took on the task of saving Jackson."

County campaigns for corporate tax credit for creating jobs

By LOU ORTIZ

Miami-Dade is campaigning for a new state law to allow corporate tax credits of \$1,500 for each new job created.

The Urban Job Creation Investment Act would allow creation of economic development zones, according to a resolution the county commission passed Tuesday.

"Under the act, businesses located in designated zones could apply for certification to receive certain benefits, including 50% reduction in the amount of state sales tax imposed," says the resolution sponsored by Commissioner Rebeca Sosa.

"The act also would authorize the creation of funds within each design-

ated zone made up of sales taxes collected within each program zone that would be used to finance redevelopment projects in the zone," the resolution says.

The commission is supporting the Beacon Council, the county's public-private economic development organization, in urging the Legislature to pass the act or similar legislation. The commission also wants the county's state lobbyists to advocate for passage of the legislation.

According to county documents, the act would create:

■ A one-time \$1,500 corporate tax credit for each new full-time employee hired who lives in a program zone and had been unemployed at least 90 days or

was getting public assistance.

■ A 50% tax credit against sales tax paid by certified businesses within the zone on the purchase of depreciable items.

■ Subsidized unemployment insurance costs for employees who earn less than \$4,500 per quarter as determined by the area's local development corporation.

■ A tax credit against the corporate business tax of 8%.

"The act would establish a sales tax revenue floor for each program zone, reflecting current sales tax revenue that is generated in the program zone, and addressing any negative fiscal impact the act could have on state revenue," according to county documents.

Sales tax revenue in excess of the

floor in each program zone would go into a fund for economic development and each zone could apply for more funds for other projects and improvements within the zone, the documents say.

Republican State Sen. Rene Garcia of Hialeah proposed a bill to create the act during this year's legislative session, but the bill died in March in the Senate Commerce & Tourism Committee.

"The Beacon Council is pursuing passage of the Urban Job Creation Investment Act during the 2013 session of the Florida Legislature in an effort to encourage economic development," the commission's resolution says, "and [the commission] would like to support the Beacon Council in its efforts."

With hotel door shut, trust seeks new Gusman revenue source

By MEISHA PERRIN

Although Miami has just discovered that affordable housing above its historic Olympia Theater at the Gusman Center for the Performing Arts is locked in place until 2060, the non-profit trust created to raise funds for the center that houses the 80 residential units and ground-floor retail is pursuing other ways to keep the theater afloat, Mayor Tomás Regalado says.

The Olympia Centers Inc. trust, created last year to ensure the theater's long-term survival after the city cut funding, had plans to possibly turn the affordable housing into a hotel to earn revenue to cover the 40% of the Gusman's \$500,000 annual operating cost that ticket sales don't cover.

An ongoing dispute between the city and the Olympia Building regarding management of the affordable housing and commercial property is on the city commission's agenda to be settled today (10/25) – barring more deferrals of action – after which the trust will be tasked



Bookings were up 23% during August, said Gusman's Margaret Lake.

with finding a new management company for the building.

The current managing team, Echevarria, Mr. Regalado said, wants out – and although it is city-owned property, the city has never been in the business of managing buildings.

Members of the trust don't want to run it, either, he said, as they would then have to attend

to some of the building's minor deterioration.

But for the members of the trust, the most important thing is ensuring the theater's long-term survival.

As part of its cost-savings, Mr. Regalado said the trust is considering moving from office space the building pays to rent just across the street from

the theater at 169 E Flagler St. and instead using one or two of the Olympia's residential units to house them.

"Having our offices across the street from the venue in the Alfred I. duPont Building instead of in the Olympia Theater at the Gusman Center creates unnecessary inefficiencies," theater Director Margaret Lake said. "All of the staff here spend a lot of time back and forth from the theater to the offices. We would like to have our administrative offices in the building that we administer."

It also means paying rent for administrative office space in other places, which is an unnecessary extra expense, according to Mr. Regalado, and all the trust members want is a consistent revenue stream to find capital.

"They want to make sure it is covered, because they want an endowment for the future," he said. "They don't want it to fail in 5, 10 years."

Failure, however, seems to be far from the theater's line of vision, as according to Ms. Lake

the Olympia is up 23% over last year as of mid-August in bookings, and 50% of its clients are new.

"The theater itself is doing 100% better than before in terms of bookings and visibility in the community," Mayor Regalado said. "The trust has been very aggressive in bringing in shows – and I think the theater itself will eventually be self-sustaining."

The Olympia Theater opened as a cinema in 1926 in the city's first air-conditioned building, and in 1975 Maurice Gusman bought the theater and adjacent Olympia office building and donated them to the city.

The building has hosted events such as the Miami Film Festival, and will be hosting the Miami Nice Jazz Festival at 8 p.m. Oct. 26 and 27 to kick off Miami French Week.

The venue also hosted then-Sen. Barack Obama in 2007 during his book tour.

So far this year, the theater has already had 39 events, according to its website. Last year it held 62.

No home for homeless here, commission says

By LOU ORTIZ

A measure the Miami-Dade County Commission passed preliminarily Tuesday would bar the homeless – or anyone else – from sleeping on county property.

"This ordinance will prohibit overnight camping on county property, and specifically bans the use of county outdoor space for living accommodation purposes or sleeping activities..." said Deputy Mayor Edward Marquez in a memo to commissioners.

The law would issue a warning first, he wrote. "Further violation... is subject to arrest."

"The county has an obligation to maintain its property clean, safe and publicly accessible..." Mr. Marquez wrote. He cited lack of means for disposing of waste and access to utilities as reasons to ban camping.

A hearing must be scheduled on the legislation sponsored by Lynda Bell before the commission decides whether to pass it on second

reading.

Hundreds of persons under the banner of Occupy Miami, a spinoff of the Occupy Wall Street movement of last year, encamped outside the Stephen P. Clark Government Center, the official name of county hall, until they were evicted in late January.

According to the National Coalition for the Homeless, the list of US governments making homelessness illegal is growing. They include Atlanta; Boston; Jacksonville; Tucson; Seattle; Beverly Hills and Long Beach, CA; Georgetown in Washington DC; and Dallas and Austin, TX.

"The flaws in this effort to criminalize homelessness are as numerous as they are obvious," according to the coalition. "These... ordinances (and similar state statutes) are misguided because they seek to hide homeless people, not end homelessness."

The proposed Miami-Dade ordinance defines camping as the use of outdoor space for living



Edward Marquez: keep site clean.

accommodations, including the setting up of tents, shacks, shelters, or making preparations to sleep, including the laying down of bedding.

"Any person violating this section shall, upon being warned by a county official or a law enforcement officer, cease the prohibited activity," according to the ordinance. "If the person continues the prohibited activity after such warning, the official or law enforcement officer may direct the individual to leave the premises. Any individual who does not leave as directed is subject to arrest for trespassing."

The National Coalition for the Homeless says such ordinances lead to harassment.

Baseball stadium work resumes to add parking

By MEISHA PERRIN

There is still work to be done at Marlins Park, where a sixth parking lot that was originally planned as part of the approximately \$120 million parking project cost to the City of Miami was being used in its first season by construction trailers.

Now, the Marlins and the city are looking to finally complete 165 spaces on two of the stadium's eastern surface lots.

The project is set to begin Nov. 1, according to Assistant City Manager Alice Bravo, and is to take about eight weeks to be completed.

Currently, there are a total of six parking lots, including the unfinished lot, and four parking garages for a total of 5,632 parking spaces at the site, according to Henry Torre, city director of public facilities.

The Miami Parking Authority operates, manages and controls the parking at the stadium for which the Marlins pays just more than \$10 per space for some 5,382 spots for the first 15 years, gradually increasing to about \$12.53 each by year 31. The team is allowed to charge patrons whatever price it chooses for spaces and can retain the price differential.

Revenue collected from the parking spots is supposed to pay down the construction debt for the stadium parking, which is somewhere around \$200 million. Projections show the city expects to collect almost \$4.5 million in parking revenues annually for the first five years, and just a bit more the next five years.

Because it is a part of the original parking set-up, Ms. Bravo said, the sixth lot will not cost additional money to build.

Terminal illness: Stores hurt by airlines shift get rent breaks

BY LOU ORTIZ

Stores and eateries in the Central Terminal of Miami International Airport, now more than 50 years old, are in line to receive more millions of dollars in rent relief as passenger traffic falls after airlines move over to new terminals.

The Miami-Dade Aviation Department is seeking to continue the relief program, which suspends payments to the airport from monthly rent to minimum annual guarantees, through January 2015.

A county commission committee last week approved continuing the rent breaks. The cuts now go to the full 13-member county commission for action.

The suspended contractually guaranteed payments — in most cases — are being replaced by a percentage of gross revenues.

“What really started this was the construction program,” said Adrian Songer, aviation department chief of business and revenue development. “It was initially designed to be rent relief through construction.”

Mr. Songer said the commission approved the initial program in January 2012 and made it retroactive to November 2009. “That’s when the construction barriers went up,” he said. “We had to shut down the North Terminal from the Central Terminal.”

The South and North terminals are new additions that added 5.7 million square feet to the airport and 130 gates, 24 for domestic use and 106 capable of handling international flights. The South Terminal opened in 2007 and the North Terminal is expected to be finished in early 2013.

Another problem for the stores and eateries is question marks surrounding the anticipated redevelopment of the Central Terminal.

The airport drew 38,314,389 passengers last year. Mr. Songer said the South Terminal gets about 20% to 25% of all airport passengers, the North Terminal about 70% and the Central Terminal 5% to 10%.

“For the most part, these [contract] amendments continue to replace the minimum annual guarantees and rents with each concessionaire’s percentage fee to provide financial relief,” Deputy Mayor Jack Osterholt told commissioners in a memo.

“These fees are generally based upon the cost of the commodity; i.e., a smaller fee for an inexpensive category such as books, and a higher fee for more expensive items such as jewelry,” he said.

“The concessionaires,” he said, “were [previously] granted economic relief due to the impact of capital improvement program-related construction as well as diminished passenger traffic.”

The percentages range from as low as 8% for books to 18% for sunglasses. Those in between include 10% for Starbucks and 17% for alcoholic drinks at Bud Brewhouse.

Mr. Osterholt said the “level of sales of the Central Terminal concessionaires is uncertain in the short-term. Airlines continue to be relocated (primarily from the Central Terminal to the North and

South Terminals) as the North Terminal construction program comes to a close.”

“South Terminal airlines are also experiencing rapid growth in international passenger traffic demand,” he said. “While two South Terminal domestic airlines have been relocated to the Central Terminal, the Central Terminal still only houses 10% of airport passenger traffic.”

“Moreover, the future redevelopment of Central Terminal, its timing, phasing and financing, remain uncertain as such planning is not expected to be completed for another two years,” Mr. Osterholt wrote. “Lacking a project scope and related timeline therefore precludes the development of an RFP [request for proposals] for a transition concession program.”

“These amendments will provide a bridge period through Jan. 31, 2015,” he said, “until the planning process that will provide a timeline and phasing for any redevelopment of the Central Terminal is completed, and the concession

program aligned accordingly.”

During a county commission Regional Transportation Committee meeting last week, Commissioner Dennis Moss said the aviation department should have flexibility to extend the financial relief past January 2015.

“We know how contentious an issue these contracts can become,” he said. “Give the airport some flexibility for the need of additional time, if they are not able to adhere to the timeframe.”

All the committee voted for the measure except Xavier Suarez, who questioned the length of the relief period.

“It’s not fair to end those contracts early because of what’s happening in the Central Terminal,” Mr. Moss said, “so there’s a certainty among the concessionaires there.”

According to county documents, the financial relief and concessionaires include:

■ Carrie Concessions Inc — suspension of \$61,677 in monthly rental payments and 12% of the

gross, replaced with payments of a category fee based on gross revenues.

■ Communitel Inc — suspension of minimum annual guarantee of \$83,930 and 15% of the gross, exceeding the minimum monthly guarantee, replaced with payments of category fees based on gross revenues.

■ Duty Free Americas Miami LLC — in a previous amendment it was required to pay lesser of the minimum annual guarantee of \$20,018,770 or a percentage fee, but in 2011 the minimum annual guarantee and percentage fee were waived and replaced by a percentage of the category fee.

■ Host International — initial suspension of minimum annual guarantee of \$5,034,032 and monthly rent, replaced with assigned category percentage fee of 7% to 19% gross revenue, whichever is greater. That is now further amended to a percentage fee, ranging from 10% to 17% based on category. The firm had invested \$2 million to upgrade facili-

ties.

■ Westfield Concession Management LLC — replaces minimum annual guarantee of \$1,972,417 with percentage category fees of 8% to 16%.

■ Lenlyn Ltd. — suspension of rental payments but pays minimum annual guarantee of \$2,400,580 or fee of 7.3% to 7.8% of gross revenue.

■ Sunglass Hut Trading LLC — pays concession category fee of 18% of gross revenue.

■ BFC Airport Stores — suspension of monthly rent and minimum annual guarantee of \$241 per square-foot, replaced with payments of category fees based on gross revenue.

■ Global Concessions — pays a category percentage fee of gross revenues in lieu of minimum annual guarantee and monthly rent.

“We need a bridge, a breathing period where we don’t put in anyone new [concessions],” Mr. Songer said. “We need time to develop what we’re going to do in the Central Terminal.”



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November 29

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Photo by Maxine Usdan

Damages caused by the failure of a drainage pipe cost more than \$4 million at the Ziff Ballet Opera House.

Opera house damages top \$4 million; county hasn't added to funding

By LOU ORTIZ

The Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts has been healed of storm damages at its Sanford and Dolores Ziff Ballet Opera House at a cost of more than \$4 million.

"The damage caused by the failure of the drainage pipe has been repaired. Everything is back to normal," said Suzy Trutie, assistant director of communications for Miami-Dade County.

"The total cost of clean-up and repairs to date is approximately \$4.3 million," she said. "However, we are expecting that amount to be reduced in excess of \$525,000 by payment from the Performing Art Center Trust's business interruption insurance carrier."

During a storm May 20, a storm drain pipe on the roof of the Ziff Ballet Opera House failed and damaged the interior of the building on the west side of Biscayne Boulevard. The water damaged interior acoustical ceilings, partition walls, hallways, multiple large restrooms, carpets, surrounding stair finishes, baseboards, electrical equipment, fire alarms and two elevators.

The center's Knight Concert Hall on the east side of the boulevard was not damaged.

With a \$5 million deductible, center officials said the center would have to absorb all the damage costs.

In July, the county commission approved a measure that would allow the center to use up to \$5 million of the county's annual \$7.6 million operating subsidy to pay for damages to the Ziff building. At that point, the \$472 million center had already incurred more than \$2.5 million in damage costs.

"The Board of County Commissioners granted authorization to expend up to \$5 million for the damages, Ms. Trutie said.

"The Arsht Center's fiscal year 2012-2013 budget will have to be amended to cover the remaining \$3.473 million in flood expenses," she said. "In the fiscal year 2011-2012 budget, the flood expenses were \$827,000."

Center officials did not comment on whether they would request additional funds from the county to make up shortfalls, if any.

The 570,000-square-foot center straddling Biscayne Boulevard between Northeast 13th and 14th streets was designed by world-renowned architect Cesar Pelli of Pelli Clarke Architects, theater planning and design consultant Joshua Dachs of Fisher Dachs Associates Inc. and acoustician consultant Artec Inc.

Construction began in 2001 after the county commission approved a contract by Performing Arts Center Builders, a partnership of Odebrecht Construction Inc., the Haskell Company and Ellis Don Corp. The center opened in 2006.

The center has retained a forensics engineer who is to determine if other causes such as workmanship and materials might have contributed to or led to the damages.

"The forensic investigation is still ongoing," Ms. Trutie said. "We have sent notices to all parties involved in the design of the facility."

At the end of fiscal 2011, the center reported an \$86,000 surplus, \$1.4 million in reserves and operating revenues of \$35.6 million, according to county records. Operating expenses were reported at \$35.5 million, with an endowment subsidy to the operations of \$500,000 and occupancy costs of \$7.6 million, an amount equal to the annual county subsidy.

MIAMI TODAY CELEBRATES 30 YEARS

Miami Today will soon be celebrating its 30th Anniversary by honoring 30 living legends who have made our community better through their endeavors

Over the past 30 years Miami Today has cultivated close ties throughout the fabric of this community and has taken a role in convening leaders of many facets that make Miami unique.

30 Living Legends NOMINATIONS

As a valued community member, we seek your suggestions by nominating candidates who you think fit these parameters and should be celebrated as a Miami Today Living Legend. We ask for your assistance in the nomination process.

LIVING LEGENDS PRE-REQUISITES:

- Nominees must have made an imprint on the development of Miami-Dade County in the past 30 years
- Nominees must be able to attend the 30th anniversary event in March 2013

Please e-mail your nominations to Kristina Toth at ktoth@miamitodaynews.com with subject line: Living Legends Nomination.

Thank you for your assistance

30 Years
MIAMI TODAY

Miami, Wells Fargo talk of bonds to ward off port tunnel fund crisis

By MEISHA PERRIN

Officials from the City of Miami and Wells Fargo sat down last week to discuss the sale of bonds that would steer Miami away from the looming crisis that is the \$45 million port tunnel loan repayment due in January.

The loan was taken out two years ago to finance Miami's portion of the half-completed tunnel dig at Port Miami, and at the last commission meeting, Chairman Francis Suarez expressed his concern with the administration's waiting until the last minute to figure out what to do.

But according to Mayor Tomás Regalado, Wells Fargo, the bank that holds the loan and is in charge of the bond issuing, gave the city a timeline last week for the sale of the bonds and payment of the loan that ends before Dec. 13 – putting Miami ahead of schedule for its January deadline, Mr. Regalado said.

The current plan, if approved by the city commission, is for the city to issue bonds, with the interest being paid by the Omni Community Redevelopment Agency.

The process, according to the resolution on today's (10/25) commission agenda, would mean that Miami would piggyback on the procurement of bond underwriting services from pre-qualified in-

vestment banking firms approved by the City Council of Clearwater, FL. The firms would provide underwriting services for three years from Nov. 3 with the option to renew for two additional one-year periods.

Selected underwriting firms include Wells Fargo Bank, NA; Bank of America Merrill Lynch, and RBC Capital Markets LLC.

If that can't work, or isn't approved by the commission, the city is also considering a private equity with private company Gates, Mr. Regalado said, and if the private company offers a better deal, it would be up to the commission to decide which plan it prefers to use.

The second back-up plan for the city, according to what Chief Financial Officer Janice Larned said at the last commission meeting, is flipping the short-term loan into another short-term loan to take advantage of ultra-low interest rates and give the city another two years to avoid financial disaster.

At today's meeting, the commission is also to approve the acceptance of an annual grant from the Omni CRA for the principal and interest due annually on the port tunnel bonds and debt obligation.

According to backup documents, the CRA is to pay approximately \$88 million to the city in annual installments through 2030 once the port tunnel project is substantially completed.

Miami-Dade warns Florida to keep its gas tax, not shift to a mileage tax

By LOU ORTIZ

Florida is being cautioned by Miami-Dade County to think twice before replacing its motor fuel tax with an alternative tax, even though revenues are dropping.

Replacing the fuel tax with one based on the miles a vehicle travels would harm economic development and tourism and also invade privacy, so leave well enough alone, is the message the Miami-Dade commission Tuesday sent to Gov. Rick Scott and the Legislature.

"Since 1921, road construction and improvements in Florida generally have been funded through motor fuel taxes levied on each gallon of fuel purchased," the resolution says. "Currently, more than 50 cents of every gallon of motor fuel purchased goes to federal, state and local taxes to fund transportation construction and improvements."

The county concedes that since 2004 the introduction of fuel-efficient vehicles and the economic downturn have cut into fuel tax funds.

The county says motor fuel tax revenue is expected to drop \$500 million a year through 2015,

with an eventual loss of \$5.1 billion in collections by 2020.

"Looking to the future, it is estimated that motor fuel tax revenues will continue to decline as vehicles become more fuel efficient and as automobile manufacturers bring onto the market more hybrid, battery and electric vehicles such as the Toyota Prius, Chevrolet Volt and Nissan Leaf," says Tuesday's resolution, sponsored by Rebeca Sosa.

"These dynamics call into question the long-term viability of motor fuel taxes as the primary revenue source for transportation improvements," it says. "Simply put, motor fuel taxes may not be a sustainable source for funding needed transportation improvements in the future."

"There is no consensus regarding a new revenue source to replace motor fuel taxes," the resolution says. "The Florida Department of Transportation currently is considering a number of alternatives to provide a sustainable source for funding transportation projects over the next decade."

According to the county, one alternative would link fuel taxes to the number of vehicle miles driven, which would require drivers to pay annually or monthly. The miles driven would be measured by a Global Positioning System installed in vehicles or having drivers report the number of miles driven based on their odometer readings.

"A transition to funding transportation projects based on vehicle miles driven may negatively impact economic development and tourism, especially in Florida," the resolution says. "Installing a GPS device in automobiles also may raise privacy concerns."

"As vehicles become more fuel efficient, it may be necessary over the long-term to transition to different means of funding transportation projects, but the Florida Department of Transportation should proceed cautiously given the current state of the economy and so as not to negatively affect economic development and tourism," the resolution says.

A certified copy of the resolution is to go to the speaker of the House, Senate president and chairman and members of the county's legislative delegation. The county also wants its lobbyists to advocate against a miles-driven tax.



Rebeca Sosa

THE LAST WORD

USEFUL MIX: A resolution by the Miami-Dade County Infrastructure & Land Use Committee asks the administration to study adding another land use category to the Comprehensive Development Master Plan. The resolution from



Jean Monestime

Jean Monestime would accommodate mix-use development such as urban centers, where people could live, work and enjoy recreation. The current plan includes categories such as business and office and industrial and office. But the industrial and land use category limits the retail uses in industrial areas, and the business and office category restricts industrial uses in business areas, county documents say. The master plan has no category that allows retail uses together with light industrial uses such as warehouses. "The creation of a new land use category or the modification of an existing land use category to accommodate both general retail and light industrial uses could promote mixed-use development, open up new avenues for development in the county, and allow for creativity in land uses," the resolution says. The administration will have 60 days to report back to the committee on the new category if the full 13-member commission approves the committee's action.

TRADE ZONES: The Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce will host a panel discussion Tuesday titled "Foreign Trade Zones: What's in it for you?" Florida Blue at 8400 NW 33rd St. in Doral will host the event, which begins at noon. Panelists slated to appear are Vision Council President and CEO **Dennis Daley**, South Florida Logistics Services Executive Vice President **Manny Fernandez**, FTZ World Services General Manager **Arcelio Gerardo**, and Port Miami Assistant Director **Kevin Lynskey**. Details: (305) 577-5445.

LIGHT THE NIGHT: **Ralph E. Lawson**, executive vice president and chief financial officer of Baptist Health South Florida, will serve as the Miami-Dade walk chair for the annual Light the Night Walk, hosted by the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society, which will be held from 5-8 p.m. Nov. 10 at Bayfront Park in Downtown Miami.



Ralph E. Lawson

NEW FACILITY: Plaza Construction has completed Joe's Stone Crab's new 12,000-square-foot Hamilton Fishery processing facility, coinciding with famed Miami Beach restaurant's 100th season, which began this month. Designed by STA Architectural Group, the multimillion-dollar facility will serve as the central plant for stone crab processing in Everglades City. "Our goal was to create a state-of-the-art facility that is something that Everglades City could be proud of and that will open up opportunities for the fishermen of that area," said Joe's Stone Crab Chief Operating Officer **Stephen Sawitz**.

LAW CONFERENCE: The Ralph E. Boyer Institute on Real Property and Condominium Law presents the 25th Institute on Real Property Law and the 37th Institute on Condominium and Cluster Developments this week through Friday (10/26) at the Biltmore Hotel in Coral Gables. The Institute on Real Property Law is designed to present current topics of interest to lawyers and related professionals involved in real estate transactions, development and finance. The Institute on Condominium Law and Cluster Development is designed to update condominium and planned development law.

STUDIES AT AIRPORT: Miami International Airport is targeted as the site of business transition program to provide skills and employment training for disabled young adults. "Project Victory" is an agreement between Miami-Dade County and Miami-Dade Public Schools. The school district would provide supplies and materials, while students would use computers, telecommunications equipment, Internet access, tables, chairs and desks maintained by the county Aviation Department. The program would run the remainder of this year through June 2015, with an agreement to extend it for two additional one-year periods until July 21, 2017, if both parties agree. Students 18 to 22 would get skills and experience at a variety of work sites at the airport, which might lead to employment. "Students will be provided support with accommodations, adaptations, and on-the-job coaching," the resolution says. Members of the county Regional Transportation Committee approved participation last week. The county commission must next vote on the project.

OLYMPIC HONORS: The British Consulate of Miami hosted a reception on the terrace at Miami City Hall last week to honor 30 Florida athletes who participated in this year's Olympic Games. According to Miami Mayor **Tomás Regalado**, of those 30 Olympians, about 20 confirmed to attend the reception.

ARTFUL SITE: Miami-Dade County's Art in Public Places website has a new look – with options galore to explore. Residents and others can access the website by going to www.miamidadepublicart.org. The site shows images and documentation of the 700 works in the collection. Visitors can create virtual tours and search by medium, artist or location. "The new website features expanded content, opportunities for artists, tools, resources and news items that will be constantly updated," according to the county Department of Cultural Affairs. The Art in Public Places program began in 1973. "Twenty-four hour a day, digital access has created a new meaning for the term 'public art,'" **Dennis Scholl**, vice president of the arts at Knight Foundation, said in a statement. "This new site is an opportunity for people all over the world to engage with one of Miami-Dade County's most valuable artistic assets."



Dennis Scholl

CHAMBER CELEBRATION: Today (10/25) has been declared "Chamber Day in Coral Gables" in celebration of the Coral Gables Chamber of Commerce's 87th anniversary. Mayor **Jim Cason** and the city commission made the declaration last week. The chamber has created for today a one-of-a-kind citywide awareness campaign, One To Grow On, in which chamber leaders will visit members and non-members in their place of business. The day is to conclude with a celebration from 6-8 p.m. at Cibo Wine Bar as part of its one-year anniversary, with special guests **Robert Furniss-Roe**, president of Bacardi North America, and **Nick Di Donato**, president & CEO of Liberty Entertainment Group.

FILMING IN MIAMI

These film permits were issued last week by the Miami-Dade County Mayor's Office of Film & Entertainment, (305) 375-3288; the Miami Mayor's Office of Film, Arts & Entertainment, (305) 860-3823; and the Miami Beach Office of Arts, Culture and Entertainment-Film and Print Division, (305) 673-7070.

TELEMUNDO NETWORK, Hialeah, Nitido, City of Miami.

THE POTENTIALISTS REALTY, Miami, The Potentialists, Countywide, Miami Beach citywide.

STARZ MIAMI PRODUCTIONS LLC, Miami, Magic City Season 2, Collins Avenue between 41st and 87th streets, Miami Beach citywide.

D'ONE TEAM CORP., North Bay Village, Manual de Supervivencia, City of Miami citywide, Coconut Grove residential, Hobe Beach, Rickenbacker Causeway Beaches.

LEFT RIGHT INC., NY, Mob Wives 3, City of Miami citywide, countywide, Miami Beach citywide, North Miami Beach.

CUBANA DE TELEVISION LLC, Miami, Doña Barbara El Musical, Studios Cubana de Television, unincorporated Miami-Dade County.

KIRKSTALL ROAD ENTERPRISES INC., NY, The First 48, Miami-Dade County Medical Examiner's Office.

NBC UNIVERSAL MEDIA LLC, NY, Camino a la Corona de Miss Universo, Amelia Earhart Park.

UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI, Coral Gables, Hiding Places, Greynolds Park.

KSC STUDIO LLC, Hollywood, FL, Stills for Venus Fall Photo Shoot, Miami Beach citywide.

PRO ONE PRODUCTIONS INC., Miami Beach, Stills for Sport Fashion, City of Miami citywide, Miami Beach citywide.

PULSE PRODUCTION INC., Venice, CA, Stills for H + M, Miami Beach citywide, Ocean Terrace between 73rd and 75th streets.

DAVID SEGUI PRODUCTION SERVICES, Miami Beach, Stills for Next Directory, Countywide, Miami Beach citywide.

SELECT SERVICES INC., Miami, Stills for Monroe & Main on Figure, Countywide, Miami Beach citywide.

CHASING FIREFLIES LLC, St. Petersburg, FL, Stills for Spring 2013, Crandon Park Beach.

PRO ONE PRODUCTIONS INC., Miami Beach, Stills for Fashion House, Countywide, Miami Beach citywide.

NHOUSE PRODUCTIONS, Miami, Stills for La Redoute, Countywide, Miami Beach citywide.

P. STUDIO PRODUCTIONS INC., Miami Beach, Terranova Callope, Countywide, Miami Beach citywide.

MARKUS MUELLER PRODUCTIONS, Miami Beach, Sport Scheck, Countywide, Miami Beach citywide.

MOBILE ARTS INC./MOBILE ARTS PROD SERVICE, Miami Beach, Stills for MAPS Team, Countywide, Miami Beach citywide.

THE PRODUCTION FACTORY LLC, Miami Beach, Stills for Portfolio One/Lane Bryant, Miami Beach citywide.

\$280 million property tax reduction in play on Nov. 6 ballot

By LOU ORTIZ

What might spell tax relief to commercial property owners and home buyers if voters pass Amendment 4 on Nov. 6 could result in a leak in the treasure troves of taxing districts – but for how long?

Miami-Dade County, municipalities and other taxing districts stand to lose \$280 million in property tax revenues over the next four years if voters approve the proposed Florida constitutional amendment, according to the Florida League of Counties.

The league of counties and the Florida League of Cities have mounted a campaign to try to defeat the amendment that they say would cost the state nearly \$1.7 billion in lost property taxes over the next four years, with cities losing \$447 million during that span.

According to the league of cities and property tax professionals, if the amendment passes it would:

■ Prohibit increases in the assessed value of homestead property if the fair market value of the property decreases.

■ Cap non-homestead or commercial property owners' assessment increases at 5% per year.

In addition, the measure would implement an additional homestead exemption for first-time buyers equal to 50% of the median home price in the county. The additional exemption, however, would be gradually reduced until it expires within five years.

The assessment cap reduction and first-time homebuyer provisions would apply to city and county taxes, but not to school property taxes.

For taxing districts in Miami-Dade, including the county, the league of counties estimates losses would total \$50.5 million in 2013, \$94.3 million in 2014, \$132.2 million in 2015 and \$196.6 million in 2016.

"Yes, homeowners will also gain, but on a limited basis," said Barry Sharpe, the managing member and principal of Property Tax Appeal Group LLC in Hialeah. "But the real big winners will be the owners of shopping centers and commercial properties."

"Placing a 5% property assessment

tax cap (for the next 10 years) on properties such as Aventura Mall, assessed at \$280 million, or Dadeland Mall, assessed at \$322 million, will result in tremendous tax savings for those owners," he said. "Furthermore, there is no incentive in the new law for them to have to pass along those savings to either their tenants or the shoppers.

"Ultimately, with overall lower property tax revenues (due to the cap), municipalities may make up part of that loss by increasing their tax millages for everyone," he said. "That is when homeowners will first feel the pinch in their pockets, the real effect of the new law."

"I own several shopping centers and commercial properties in South Florida," Mr. Sharpe said. "I also stand to greatly benefit with the passage of the amendment."

County Budget Director Jennifer Glazer-Moon said the anticipated losses from the amendment are "next to impossible to estimate. You have to make assumptions on what parts of the property tax rolls will grow [residential, com-

mercial etc.]"

But, she said, if taxing bodies and governments are limited on the ways they pay for services – when they aren't immune to price increases in fuel, labor and supplies – it would ultimately lead to tax rate increases across the board.

"Increases in government have been absorbed because property tax rolls go up," Ms. Moon said. "Growth is how we absorb the cost of doing business."

"If you keep limiting," she said, "then your tax rates have to go up if you want to keep services at the same levels."

Ms. Moon said she has not seen voter initiatives locally against the amendment. "I haven't seen anything," she said.

Mr. Sharpe said he wins either way. "I do not know what to recommend to voters," he said. "For me, in either case it will be a win-win situation, either as commercial property owner or as an agent doing tax appeals."

Constitutional amendments require approval of 60% of those who vote in the election statewide.