

2017 ANNUAL MEETING 2016 OVERVIEW

As I prepared this report, I referred to what I had said last February regarding some of our expectations for 2016.

First, I expressed the hope that we would see two Mega yachts berthed at the Port for refurbishing and repair every week with plans to expand the area to accommodate more ships.

Then we awaited the opening of Oculina Bank and the Square Grouper.

We hoped that the City – with your urging at the meeting – would come up with temporary parking as they explored long term solutions.

Finally, we predicted that Code Enforcement and the Planning Department would continue to get a handle on short term rental violations.

Let's take them one by one.

Mega Yachts – There is bad news and potential good news.

After a number of true Mega yachts suddenly there were none. Then two smaller boats and now none for some time. I have been told that the folks who own that area of the Port, decided to up the charges to berth the ships and to require that all invoicing for the jobs go through them – basically controlling the financial aspect of the operation. Obviously this was unacceptable to the firm that was being very successful and they left even though they had a number of Mega yachts lined up to come to Fort Pierce. Since then a new firm has entered into an agreement to purchase the area – supposedly if they can make a go of their operations in now less than a year. We have all seen how well that is going! Two small boats and nothing. Recently we saw a gambling ship berthed for a few days. It wasn't there for repair – and now it is gone.

But now the potential good news.

The County and the City are seeking an RFQ – Request for Qualifications – for the development of the 20 acres at the north end of the Port owned by the County. The deadline to apply is February 17th. To quote from the City website, “The site is thought by industry experts to be ideal for development of a maintenance, repair and overhaul for Mega yachts. We can hope that a Mega yacht firm will bid for this Public/Private development. It is a shame that a going enterprise with demonstrated success was, in fact, forced to leave and we lost over a year of jobs and revenue.

While I am talking about the Port let me mention the activity at the south end – called Fisherman’s Wharf. We had a presentation on this area at last years Annual meeting. The plans are being developed and projects defined to rehab the bulkheads and dredge the basin along with upgrading Wharf Road. Remember when we had a water view restaurant there? With the new plans it would be possible to have small cruise ships or a ferry to the Bahamas.

The new Port Director is here tonight – See Stan Payne at the end of the meeting for more information.

The opening of Oculina Bank and the Square Grouper is a no brainer – They opened! And both are fine additions to the Island. Of course there is the byproduct of increased traffic and parking in that area. So let’s move on to the parking saga.

We made much of this at our meeting last February including my reading of a letter that your Board of Directors sent to the City Commission requesting (more than a request really) a short term solution while they explored long term efforts and giving them a deadline. Cheer up Nick and Tom I won’t read that letter again tonight! Suffice to say, that those of you in attendance last year by a show of hands were in unanimous support of that request.

Then what to our wondrous eyes should appear? In May – a plan to lease 3 lots to the west of the Square Grouper to provide a “temporary” parking solution. Had someone been listening? We did keep you informed. You may recall receiving an email Newsletter showing the proposed project. Tonight Nick will take you into the future with the proposed parking garage as a more permanent solution.

Now to the news on short term rentals – meaning less than six months – in the R4A zone. You can check your zoning map that we have included in your handouts again for tonight. There is nothing pending in the R1,2 or3 zones.

As predicted, Code Enforcement and the Planning Departments have gotten a handle on the violators. Letters are being sent out in groups to inform these folks. Basically, they have three choices – rent for 6 months or longer, submit a Conditional Use application and go through the process to get approval for less than 6 months or cease renting altogether.

You may recall that back in February-March of 2016 we informed you of a text amendment to the City Code to exempt controlled access, gated or deed restricted properties i.e. those with condo associations – from the 6 month minimum rental in R4A. We sent you a number of email Newsletters covering this topic. Come March it was determined that any text amendment to the existing ordinance could nullify the entire ordinance according to the State. Since that would only make the situation worse, this reasonable solution on the part of the City was withdrawn. If this sounds complicated or ridiculous – well – it is!! There is/was some hope that the State Legislature would return to its senses and return home rule to municipalities regarding short term rentals but it has not happened. In fact, in a recent editorial on January 19th in the local paper it was noted that a State Senator from Sarasota has introduced a bill that local governments cannot, (and I quote) “restrict the use of, prohibit or regulate vacation rentals” (end quote). This would not affect laws passed before June 1, 2011 so the original Fort Pierce ordinance would stand with no changes.

At the Annual Meeting last February we indicated that applications for Conditional Use regarding rentals and other similar issues in R4A should become a “Neighborhood” issue because there are areas on the beach that might be appropriate for rentals of less than 6 months while others might not. That the SBA would review such applications for adherence to City Code, the South Beach Overlay and that have appropriate conditions attached. If so determined, we would not speak for or against such applications as one size won’t fit all. That the surrounding neighbors would be the ones to speak for or against such applications. To that end we have been sending you monthly

updates on Conditional Applications coming before the Planning Board and Commission so you can exercise your voice.

There is still an effort to try and accommodate those multi-family units with condo associations regulating rental restrictions.

So far there are only 2 properties that have been approved for Conditional Use in the R4A zone. For more information see Peggy Arraiz and Rebecca Grohall at the end of the meeting.

Enough about short term rentals! Of the 12 Newsletters sent since last February over 1/2 dealt with this issue in part or whole!

My last two items really belong toward the end of the meeting when I present what we expect during 2017 – not what has happened in 2016 – but I have noticed that some of you get antsy after a guest speaker and in anticipation of the drawing so I am including them here.

Richard Bouchard, St. Lucie County Senior Coastal Engineer has provided an update on beach renourishment. (Quote)

“The federal government is operating under a continuing funding Resolution through the end of April. As a result, there is no new federal funding for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to renourish Ft. Pierce Beach this spring. Florida Inland Navigation District (FIND) is looking to dredge material from the Intracoastal Waterway in the vicinity of Fort Pierce Inlet. Initial indications are that a large portion of this material may be beach compatible. We are looking to work with them to see if this material could be pumped onto the beach before sea turtle nesting season, especially in the northernmost segment where erosion is so severe” (end Quote) He attached a letter from County Commissioner Frannie Hutchinson as Chair of the SLC Erosion District to FIND requesting same.

Richard could not be here tonight so see Glenn Henderson Coastal Management Services Director or Commissioner Hutchinson for more information at the end of the meeting.

And finally, we have received a request from Commissioner Tom Perona to provide input on an issue that the Commission will be discussing in the near future. He has noticed an increase in golf cart traffic on the Island and it appears that some of the drivers are underage and some do not pay attention to posted regulatory signs. According to the City Attorney, the City of Fort Pierce has adopted the State Statute which prohibits the operation of golf carts on public roads and streets with certain exceptions. Those exceptions include: (and I quote Mr. Messer)

“The operation of a golf cart on public roads must be approved by the Department of Transportation and/OR City. This approval is demonstrated by the posting of appropriate signage to indicate that the operation of a golf cart is permitted.

The City may enact a more restrictive ordinance after consultation with the DOT.

The City Police Dept. is authorized to enforce the provisions of the Statute. Golf carts are permitted within a retirement community.”

Currently, there is no signage on public roads to indicate that that they are permitted. As a member of the SBA Board said in response to Commissioner Perona’s request – While a parent or grandparent would not consider giving the keys to their car to an underage driver, they might not have the same reluctance about the key to a golf cart.

By a show of hands, let's get your opinion on several questions – Tom, Jeremiah and Linda you might want to stand and see the response.

- 1. How many of you see golf carts on our public streets as a potential problem? 3/4 How many do not? <1/4 How many are not sure? 3**
- 2. How many of you feel that the City should prohibit golf carts on our public streets? 2/3 How many do not? 1/4**
- 3. How many of you favor allowing golf carts with certain limitations?
(The following questions were confusing so no clear answers)**
 - A. Only on side streets not on A1A? Yes No**
 - B. Not in any parks? Yes No**
 - C. Only if they are licensed as motor vehicles? Yes No**
 - D. Only if they are registered with the City? Yes No**

Thank you for your input – If you have more to say on this matter, please see Tom, Jeremiah and Linda at the end of the meeting.

That concludes my report.