

2018 Annual Meeting 2017 Overview

There were three main areas that I described at the end of the February 2017 Annual Meeting as my hopes and possibles for the year 2017.

- 1. I had high hopes that Mega Yachts would come to Fort Pierce with the accompanying high wage jobs.**
- 2. That there would be an increase in the temporary short term parking as we move forward toward a permanent solution.**
- 3. That the process for the removal of the wastewater treatment plant would continue to be a bureaucratic mess.**

My high hopes for the Port were a home run. Here we are tonight celebrating the purchase of the Indian River Terminal property and 10% of the Bell property and the “Promise for the Future” for the Port of Fort Pierce as a Mega Yacht facility. While I am sure that you have read about it in the Newspaper, here tonight we are honored to have the Port Director, Stan Payne to tell you all from the “horse’s mouth” and you will have the opportunity to speak with him directly at the end of the meeting. I’ll say no more on this topic now. Stan will do all the talking later on.

Parking on South Beach took a nose dive when the property owner of the 3 lots west of the Square Grouper decided to raise the “rent” to unreasonable highs and the City would not meet his demands. Note that the City left the lots in much better condition than they had found them – more than the property owner

deserved. While the surface parking at the SW Corner of St. Lucie Court has been retrofitted, it does not totally make up for the loss over 100 spaces. It's a shame that what I call the "pay to park" lot next to Oculina Bank has as progressed so slowly. One would have thought that they would be ready by the beginning of season to see if folks are willing to pay to have a prime space. Not sure who to blame here. The notion of a parking garage still remains in the undetermined future.

Sadly, my prediction regarding the wastewater treatment plant removal process came true. There has been a continued lack of real progress. Oh yes – there are those who talk a good game but so far that's all it is – talk.

But there were other issues on the table during 2017. Dogs on our beaches took on a life of its own. You received multiple Newsletters outlining the problem. The issue was referred to the newly reconstituted City Beach & Parks Committee for study and recommendations. Charlene Adair, SBA Beach & Parks Chair and a member of the City Committee will describe what has happened and what they will recommend. It is the first of what I call "damned if you do and damned if you don't" situations regarding any solutions to the problem – and remember there are problems. There are many folks on both sides.

The second "damned if you do and damned if you don't" unresolved problem is golf carts on city streets. I believe that this issue has been referred to the Committee as well.

While solutions have not been determined regarding dogs and golf carts, please be advised that dogs are not permitted on City beaches and golf carts that are not road certified are not permitted on City streets. You can be cited and fined for violations in both cases.

Vacation rental applications for Conditional Use have eased over the year while more violators have been brought before the Special Magistrates, found to be in violation and ordered to cease and desist. We hope that we have finally gotten the message out – either rent for 6 months or longer, apply for Conditional Use to rent for shorter periods or cease renting the property. Charlene will speak to this issue later.

The request by the owner of the old trailer park property – now called Causeway Cove – to have his property removed from the South Beach Overlay brought many of you out to the Planning Board and the Commission meetings where it was considered. The South Beach Association along with many residents at Harbour Isle took a firm stance in opposition to the request. We sent you a lengthy Newsletter outlining the reasons for our position. One major consideration was that he submitted no plan for the development of his property and, therefore, no reason why height and density limitations should be removed. It appeared that he was simply trying to increase the value of his property for future resale. The request was denied by the Commission.

Richard Bouchard, St. Lucie County Senior Coastal Engineer, has provided his usual update on beach renourishment.

Starting in early February, crews will begin staging equipment immediately south of the Fort Pierce Inlet to begin pumping roughly 385,000 cubic yards of sand on the beach to combat the severe erosion that has occurred. The Army Corps of Engineers, in partnership with the St. Lucie County Erosion District, has contracted with Great Lakes Dredge & Dock Company for the project which is slated to begin pumping sand in early March, wrapping up before the end of April. The project will collect beach quality sand from offshore and pump it via a pipeline onto the beach south of the inlet.

Please see Richard and Joshua at the end of the meeting if you have questions.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not mention the threat to both the City and the County – in fact all the cities and counties in Florida – by some members of our State Legislature. I will borrow heavily from an editorials and articles appearing in the TCPalm and Palm Beach Post newspapers as they succinctly outlined the issue.

There are members of the Legislature who are advocating that one size fits all for Florida's 67 Counties and over 400 municipalities. In 2017 they attempted an assault on "home rule" – a principle established in the Florida Constitution in 1968. When a legislator was denied the cutting of certain trees, he filed a bill that would pre-empt local governments from regulating the trimming or removal of trees from private property. Pretty silly – yes – but it gets worse. A bill that would eliminate the right for local governments to create a redevelopment agency such as our

FPRA or regulating hydraulic fracturing (fracking) sites, vacation rentals, drones, even gas station signs. In 2018 they are at it again – For some reason, some in the Legislature have been embarking on bills that would strip away the ability of local cities and counties to make their own decisions. Some of the very people who squeal like pigs when Washington tells the State what to do have sought to move business regulation and permitting responsibility to Tallahassee. We are not Miami nor Ocala not even Stuart or Vero Beach and we don't need Tallahassee telling Fort Pierce that we must live under the same conditions as they do. Creating one homogeneous Florida is disconcerting to say the least in a state where municipalities right next to each other can differ greatly. I believe that these decisions are best made by elected City and County leaders. You can discuss this with the City and County Commissioners here tonight. In fact Mayor Hudson has been recognized statewide as a strong proponent of Home Rule. Oh – and to make matters worse – the State Constitution Revision Commission is considering Proposal 96 to be placed on the ballot in November. It would effectively say that the only laws that could be passed to regulate business would be statewide laws.

Has Florida gone crazy? Or is this the result of one political party having too firm a grip in Tallahassee or an attempt for a power grab by certain individuals? I leave the answer to you. But pay attention and ask your Commissioners what you can do to help them on this issue.