

2016 SBA ANNUAL MEETING 2015 OVERVIEW

As I prepared this 2015 Overview, I referred to what I had said last February regarding our expectations for the year.

We expected that the City and County Commissions would meet in March to discuss the Revised Port Master Plan and further Port projects. Actually they met in May (who's counting?) AND November – the outcomes being greater than expected. More about that later.

We projected groundbreaking in the Spring for the Square Grouper and Oculina Bank. Spring was optimistic but we can now almost see what the finished projects will be. The town homes on Seaway have yet to break ground. Rain delays have been severe for these first building projects on the Beach in a long time.

We offered to help with the City proposal for an Entertainment District in the Jetty Park area. To our knowledge, nothing has happened regarding the development of a plan. All efforts and energies, such as they are, have been directed toward the parking nightmare on South Beach – another project we strongly supported. Unfortunately, any City action on solving the parking problem has been sadly lacking. So I will begin tonight with that issue – one that many of you have expressed a concern about.

During the 2014/15 season the notion of an Entertainment District was initially explored by then Interim Chief Frank Amandro, business owners, certain City Staff and the SBA had significant input. Then nothing happened.

At the City Strategic Planning Workshop in May, solving the parking problem on South Beach and Downtown received a high priority ranking. At some point, a City Parking Committee was formed. We heard nothing more until the Committee reported to the Commission on October 19, 2015. Nick Mimms gave the report. Frankly, the report was a disappointment – you may have seen that I was quoted in the local Newspaper where I said so.

We believed that the Committee was tasked with coming up with plans for BOTH immediate temporary short-term solutions to be in place for the 2016 season and exploring and recommending possible long-term permanent solutions. In the report, there were no short-term plans presented and the long term, for the Beach were just 2 – a parking garage at a particular site and parking under the bridge. We kept waiting, hoping to see some action on vacant lots as an immediate short-term “fix”.

Finally on January 21, 2016, the SBA Board of Directors sent a letter to the City Commission and City Manager expressing our concerns and disappointment. Please note that we chose this avenue rather than standing up in Public Comment on TV at a Commission meeting. To date we have not received any response from the City to our letter – not even that they received it. So we will now go public with the letter. Bear with me as I read it to you.

<Insert Letter here>

At their meeting this past February 1st, the Commission approved seeking a parking consultant, not to exceed \$40,000, to provide in depth analysis and specific recommendation for each item in the City Parking Committee’s report – that same report that had no

short term recommendations. For the Beach, this is to evaluate possible sites and the cost/benefits of a new parking garage with financing methods and public/private partnerships. While this might be a worthy exercise, certainly there are other options as well and how long do you suppose it will take to completion? What do we do in the meantime? Is there no one at the City who can come up with something – anything – to provide an immediate, short-term solution?

OK Folks! What do we do now? If you support the SBA Board of Directors position and want to see something done - raise your hand. (A show of hands was overwhelmingly in favor to support the BOD letter) At the end of the meeting make sure you voice your concerns to your Commissioners and City Manager. Tell them we are not going away – that we are waiting on them to provide solutions. That while we want long-term solutions, we need short term as well.

OK – I debated whether to start off with that topic – put it in the middle or at the end. I decided to do it first – get it over with – Let’s move on to areas where things have been more positive.

Kudos to the City and County Commissioners for coming together in a spirit of cooperation and harmony in May and then again in November to move forward on activities at the Port. That’s all I will say at this point as I don’t want steal Don West’s thunder when he talks with you later in the program. Except – as a member of the audience in November I would not have been surprised if they had all joined hands and sang Kum-ba-yah at the conclusion!

After our new police chief, Diane Hopley-Burney, spoke with South Beach residents in June and expressed a need for 2 ATVs to help patrol the beaches themselves and the surrounding areas, the SBA embarked on its first ever fundraising effort. We sent you emails and contacted some of you personally and you responded. On September 21, 2015 we presented the Chief with a check for \$20,000

to purchase 2 ATVs. Over 100 individuals participated. Actually all SBA members participated to some extent as the Association contributed \$5000 to start things off and our only income is from our modest annual dues. So give yourselves a round of applause! The Chief is here tonight – so say hello to her at the end of the meeting and give a pat to the ATV outside as you leave.

Over the year there was increasing activity in short-term rentals in our residential areas. You received a number of Newsletters about this issue. We found that many of you are not aware of which zoning district is yours. Thus the Planning Department has provided a newly revised zoning map of South Beach in your meeting packet. Take a look at it. Unlike the ones online, you can actually read this one! Did you locate your property? Feel free to share it with your neighbors.

I am not going to go through the laborious process of describing everything that happened with short-term – less than 6-month rentals - over the year. We spent many Newsletters and hours before the Planning Board and City Commission dealing with this. Suffice to say –

6 Conditional Use applications to rent for less than 6 months in the R1 & R2 zone were filed. 2 went through the entire process – and were unanimously denied by both the Planning Board and the Commission – the remaining 4 were withdrawn. It is clear that short-term rentals are not appropriate in the R1 & R2 zones – and let's add R3 – but that doesn't mean that some aren't violating the law.

The November 23rd Newsletter outlined the situation in R1 & R2 zones but also in the R4A zone where, for whatever reason – it doesn't matter now – shared use multi-family properties with condo associations were unintentionally included in the minimum 6 month rental restriction. Hopefully this situation will soon be rectified. The SBA sent a recommendation to the city to exempt these properties – a recommendation we also shared with you in the November 23rd Newsletter. A Text Amendment to the Code to exempt these properties was before the Planning Board on February

9th but was tabled due to legal concerns. With any luck, these concerns will be addressed and it will be back before the Planning Board maybe as soon as March 8th. We will keep you informed

Other multi-family properties in R4A must still apply for Conditional Use to offer rentals for less than 6 months. From our perspective, this becomes a “neighborhood” issue. Each neighborhood can determine if these requests are appropriate for them. The SBA will not interfere unless requested to do so. There are only 2 properties, with the same owner, in the process at the present time – next to each other on the east side of S. Ocean Drive – surrounded by similar properties. On February 9th the Planning Board recommended approval of these properties for Conditional Use with a number of conditions that will bring them into compliance with City Code. The owner of these properties is new to the Island and has demonstrated what a responsible owner should do. Know the rules and work within the system. He is a model for all. To discuss these issues see Kori Benton at the end of the meeting.

The problem that remains is the difficulty in enforcing the regulations. Unfortunately, City Code Enforcement officers just can’t knock on every door and ask if they are renters for less than 6 months! Plus the fact that people have been known to lie! You should know that owners advertise online on numerous sites. These sites are known and are being monitored. However some may advertise one property and then refer potential renters to another property they own. Or they get “caught” are cited, take down their add for 30 days, are determined to be “in compliance” and then put their add up again – just waiting to be “caught”. There are many ways to “game” the system. City Code Enforcement and volunteers are working very hard to bring properties into permanent compliance and it appears that is slowly happening. But, they need your help. To discuss this issue see Peggy Arraiz at the end of the meeting.

You received a packet as you entered tonight. Let me briefly go through what you received.

Your Agenda has no reference to the Islander Award – that is not a misprint – it will not be awarded this year.

You have a listing of SBA Board Members and Committee Chairs with telephone #'s and email addresses and the same are listed on our website along with a “Contact Us” form. I am at a loss when people say that they don’t know how to contact us! Some of you obviously do and I hear from you on a regular basis. We tried to include the general membership in the planning for this meeting tonight. In the December Newsletter we asked you submit questions/topics you would like to see covered tonight. I received only 3 emails – one specific to particular road that I referred to the appropriate City staff and received a reply, one from a Committee Chair and one from a member concerned about parking on South Beach. In each case, I responded to that member. I was told that there were verbal comments given to a Board member but had no names, could not verify that they were members and I could not communicate with them. I can only assume that you are satisfied with how we handle the Annual Meetings. If you have something to say to us use the avenues provided – don’t expect others to do it for you.

You have a listing of our Business and Non-Profit Organization members. This is what makes us unique. We are not just another Homeowner’s Association – in fact it is not necessary to be a homeowner – just a beach resident – and even non South Beach residents can be Associate members.

You have to flip over to see the 4 page handout on the Port for later in the program.

That concludes the Overview of 2015 – sorry it was so long.