

2019 Preview 2019 Annual Meeting

So where will we be at the end of this year? Mayor Hudson has painted a rosy picture – one I would like to embrace. But then reality sets in and the realization that things move so much slower than we wish. That is the nature of bureaucracy.

First I am going to drop one item from my list of projections. I will no longer even mention the progress – or rather the non-progress on the Wastewater Treatment Plant. PERIOD!

The Port Mega Yacht activity will be mainly by the local firm not selected by the County. Hopefully we will hear that a contract has been finalized within the next few days with the chosen firm and begin to see some tear down and the beginning of rebuilding in the main section this year. We had been told that we would hear by February 15th. But we will remain a long way from seeing ships enter and leave this section of the Port. There is a lot of infrastructure that must be in place. We cannot get too impatient as I am often guilty of. It is a very important development and must be done right the first time.

Just last week we began to see beginning of progress for the development of the downtown King Power Plant property. There are 4 viable potential developers. All include a hotel, restaurant varying degrees of retail and residential as well as green space and parking. The timeline for presentations to the City Commission by the selected four is the 1st or 2nd week of May. There is no guarantee that all four will respond to the RFP which means there is no guarantee that the possibility of a train station coming to Fort Pierce will be considered. This has been a long time in coming and the City is trying to do it right. Keep your fingers crossed.

The issue of jet skis – particularly in Jaycee Park – has been referred to the City Parks Committee. This Committee has demonstrated a level headed, well researched approach to their assignments. When I first prepared this section I said that I believed that it was possible that jet skis will be banned from the park and that proper signage in the waterway will make enforcement possible. There are many other areas within the City where these highly motorized watercraft can be launched and enjoyed without threatening the safety of swimmers of all ages and non-motorized sailboats and paddleboards as well. Then I learned just this past Tuesday night while watching the end of the City Commission meeting and

Commissioner Johnson's discussion regarding jet skis that there is a State regulation that a municipality cannot discriminate in regard to jet skis. That if you want to ban them, you must ban all other motorized watercraft as well. Jaycee Park has a boat ramp for launching motorized boats and a navigation channel for boats traveling along the coast to the inland water way that runs just about 100 feet from the top of the designated swim area. While I am sure that someone can come up with a satisfactory solution to this problem before someone gets seriously hurt, it certainly has become more complex. Proper signage, education of the users of jet skis and enforcement of existing ordinances, including the ban on vendor renting of these vehicles is the least of what should happen. The manufacturers and sales groups of jet skis sure must have a great lobbying effort in Tallahassee and it is clearly an invasion of home rule by our State Legislator. Dare we suggest that the law be changed?

Parking will continue to be a problem during season at the beach. There are some vacant properties that could be used as they did in the past. Certainly someone can achieve a breakthrough with one of the owners to achieve another temporary solution. Then, obviously, there must be a long term solution. The City has purchased land for a potential parking

garage. Something has to move forward and the question remains – Will people use a parking garage that is located several blocks away from the center of activity? See Nick Mimms at the end to discuss this issue.

Richard Bouchard, SLC Sr. Coastal Engineer gives us an update on beach nourishment each year at this time. He reports that we are typically on a 2 year federal nourishment cycle. Unfortunately the US Army Corps of Engineers has not provided any federal fund for the next cycle tentatively planned during winter 2019 through spring 2020. Beach erosion will continue during that period. Funding has been requested in the Fiscal Year 2020 Federal budget and if successful nourishment could occur during winter 2020 through spring 2021. See Richard or Joshua at the end of the meeting for more information.

Last – You may have read in the local paper that the TPO is considering changing the traffic pattern on our bridge to two lanes with bike paths on both sides. Several years ago, there was a similar proposal. They held a meeting at the Riverwalk Center with residents to discuss the plan. At that time, those in attendance were not generally in favor of the plan. There are many good reasons both pro and con. Without going into the specifics let me see by a show of hands, How

many feel that a two lane bridge is a good idea? How many opposed? (NOTE – An overwhelming majority of those present were opposed to changing the bridge to two lanes.)

Keep your eyes and ears open for the announcement of a meeting for residents to discuss the issue in the near future. We will keep you informed by Newsletter when we get the information.

Now for the fun part – the reason why some of you come to this meeting! Get your tickets out. Chief please come down to do the draw as usual.