

# GALT MILE NEWS

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE GMCA

WHAT'S  
HAPPENING  
ON THE MILE???

MARCH 2015

PRINTED BY



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# FIRST 2015 PRESIDENTS COUNCIL

By Eric Berkowitz

## Frustration



## Fireworks

On February 2, the Galt Mile Presidents Council convened its first 2015 meeting at Fountainhead Condominium. The agenda, traditionally packed for the year's inaugural meeting, addressed a threat to the Galt Mile Sun Trolley, a media driven controversy over the City's Homeless policy, and a predictable outburst during a Beach Renourishment update. Ordinarily, Presidents Council meetings are kept confidential, ostensibly to promote a free exchange of ideas. Since some of the issues undertaken at the February meeting are of critical concern to all Galt Mile residents, traditional "discretion" will be set aside.

### Honorarium

The agenda also featured an honorarium for three Galt Mile residents whose lives have been devoted to improving yours. Coral Ridge Tower's Francis Casier, Leah Glickfield of Regency South and Commodore's George Mayer collectively invested almost a century either defending our rights or scrapping for new ones. The three veteran activists were vested as Honorary Permanent Members of the Galt Mile Community Association, joining Earl Lifshy (as in Earl Lifshy Park) and a handful of other neighborhood forebears.

### The Galt Mile Sun Trolley

At the December 1, 2014 Presidents Council meeting in Plaza South, Commissioner Bruce Roberts disclosed a threat to the Sun Trolley's Galt Mile route. Roberts and Broward Commissioner Chip LaMarca sit on the Board of the Downtown Fort Lauderdale Transportation Management Association (DFLTMA), the Sun Trolley's parent agency. Roberts recently learned about an inexplicable decline in ridership on the Galt Mile route segment along Oakland Park Boulevard to Federal Highway, which services the Coral Ridge Mall as well as Holy Cross and Imperial Point Hospitals. Since ridership was unaffected on the Galt Mile route section along A1A south to Sunrise, Roberts suspected a data collection glitch, and proposed to further investigate. A drop in ridership could be used to cut back or end the neighborhood's local bus

service. Having worked long and hard to preserve the Galt Mile Sun Trolley, Roberts and Galt Mile officials couldn't allow that to happen.

When the Sun Trolley was facing termination in 2008, DFLTMA Executive Director Christopher Wren brought in Patricia Zeiler to help turn it around. A personable and well-organized ball of fire, Zeiler rebuilt the City's nearly insolvent Community Bus Service into a thriving vibrant enterprise. Her system-wide improvements were exemplified by the Galt Mile route, where she cultivated a loyal and stable ridership.

Named the "2014 Nonprofit Leader of the Year" at the Annual 211 Broward Academy Awards in March 2014, Zeiler decided to cash in on her remarkable self-made success - and accepted an offer to run the prestigious Fort Lauderdale Historical Society. After a frantic search for a management Guru to fill Zeiler's mythic pumps, on December 2, 2014, Wren and DFLTMA Chair Alan Hooper announced the appointment of Robyn Chiarelli - an FDOT prodigy whose sterling resume framed a brilliant career in public transportation.

Roberts escorted Chiarelli to the January 15, 2015 Galt Mile Advisory Board meeting, where she took questions from association representatives. In a post-meeting discussion with the new Sun Trolley Executive Director, Roberts and Galt Mile officials raised doubts about the enigmatic ridership statistics, questioning their accuracy and emphasizing the need to maintain the neighborhood bus service - citing its importance to elderly hospital patients, Library and Community Center patrons and others for whom the Trolley is a primary source of transportation. Chiarelli agreed to attend the February 2 Presidents Council meeting, where she could formally introduce herself to the neighborhood, and either confirm or assuage concerns about the threat to the Galt Mile Sun Trolley.

At the February 2 meeting, Chiarelli assured attendees that the route was not in immediate danger. Given Roberts' suspicions about how the ridership statistics were gathered, she had since verified their accuracy. Explaining that the Galt Mile Route still exceeded the County's contractual survival standard of 7.1 riders per hour, Chiarelli promised to further explore the sudden drop in bus patrons, and do whatever was necessary to rebuild ridership. After inviting suggestions and other input from Galt Mile residents, especially those who ride the Trolley, Chiarelli closed with a promise to update her progress at future meetings.

### The Homeless: Prey and Predators

Chiarelli was followed by Commissioner Roberts' monthly municipal report, which reviewed the recent controversy surrounding the City's treatment of its Homeless population. In fact, Fort Lauderdale maintains one of the most progressive homeless programs in the State. While the administration was being crucified for enforcing an ordinance that placed the City at odds with a 92-year old homeless advocate who was deified in the media, reporters were far more concerned about maintaining a hormonal "hot button" issue than fairly assessing the City's homeless policy. As City officials had been repeating for months, feeding the homeless is not illegal in Fort Lauderdale. However, it is illegal to feed several hundred people in front of your house without your consent - or doing so without providing for access to basic sanitation and lavatory facilities.

Having joined the meeting in progress, Mayor Jack Seiler affirmed that Fort Lauderdale maintains one of the State's most effective homeless safety nets, as roving teams of Homeless Advocates and FLPD officers annually make roughly 8,000 referrals to critical services for anyone who stumbles over the question "Where did you sleep last night?" Along with subsidizing comprehensive recovery resources for homeless men, women and families (including the 220-bed Homeless Assistance Center), the City funnels HUD grant funds into a program (100,000 Homes Campaign) to permanently house - and otherwise assist - those chronic homeless deemed most "at risk".

A few members inquired as to why the City didn't more aggressively publicize its efforts on behalf of the homeless while undergoing a withering attack in the media. Seiler remarked, "Homelessness is a serious problem, not only for Homeless individuals and municipalities, but also for visitors, businesses and City residents." Seiler explained that the City's homeless program is designed to help people transition from homelessness into productive self-sufficiency. For those chronic homeless persons who are unable to adapt, the City works to provide homes and sustenance.

Continued on page 4



To answer the question, Seiler added "While implementing this critical safety net to assist our homeless population, we don't want Fort Lauderdale to become the target destination for homeless persons across the Country."

Seiler explained how the City's other new ordinances make it illegal to sleep on the street, panhandle on dangerous high-traffic street corners, carve out living quarters in public parks by planting a bag of possessions in the nearby bushes, or solicit money using implied or overt threats. However, he also recognized the futility of scooping up scofflaws who would be recycled back to the street in 24 hours. Seiler explained how the County's processing protocols add to the City's burden. When homeless persons are arrested in any of Broward's 31 municipalities, they are taken to the County jail in downtown Fort Lauderdale to await arraignment. Unless they are referred to a hospital or remanded, after a few minutes in court, they are discharged into the local downtown area, where they generally stake out a bench or stretch of sidewalk.

Not surprisingly, attendees were far more concerned about the roving groups of "homeless thugs" who aggressively extort money from passers-by or otherwise threaten vulnerable Galt Mile residents. Members described how these "wannabe gangster types" congregate at the Hess gas station across A1A from L'Hermitage and at the Oakland Park Boulevard beach access - where they regularly threatened elderly L'Hermitage and Southpoint residents. They also hang out in front of the Library, by the Winn Dixie dumpsters, and other neighborhood sites that have degenerated into gauntlets.

Commissioner Roberts - the City's former Police Chief - was familiar with their concerns, having accompanied a half dozen Police District 1 Commanders to scores of Galt Mile Advisory Board meetings. These high-ranking FLPD officials uniformly admonished that when a community is reputed as lucrative for panhandlers; along with the additional homeless persons attracted by the easy money are cadres of those who prey on them. Drug addicts, muggers and other street punks that seek out and victimize defenseless homeless people threaten every neighborhood resident. Differentiating the survival pitfalls caused by homelessness from the far more dangerous predatory criminal activity that follows in its wake, former Police District 1 acting Commander Mike Gregory (since promoted to Assistant Chief) told the Advisory Board "People confuse members of the homeless community with the predators who exploit them. Those that prey on the homeless won't hesitate to prey on your families."

Continued on page 5



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Roberts offered two suggestions. If you witness - or experience - an intimidating solicitation or otherwise suspicious behavior, don't intervene, call the police. Secondly, he implored GMCA members and association officials to educate neighbors about the danger of tossing money at whoever occupies the nearest sidewalk bench, and recommend instead that they redirect their generosity to organizations that address the root causes of homelessness (i.e. the Broward Partnership for the Homeless, etc.). While these street punks are a monster of our own making, we can begin to reverse the current problem by exercising good judgment about where we throw money. As always, it's your call.

#### Beach Renourishment Pot Shots

Ieraci then turned to District 4 Broward Commissioner Chip LaMarca. In tow with LaMarca were County and Federal officials focused on the long overdue Segment II Beach Renourishment. After recounting the past year's regulatory obstacles, LaMarca stated that Broward Beach officials finally had the State permit in hand. Confirming this project milestone, Broward Natural Resource Administrator Nicole Sharp (who replaced the retired Eric Myers) remarked "We worked with our engineers and we put forward a very environmentally sensitive project."

Moving on to the current quagmire, LaMarca announced "We are still working with NOAA Fisheries to elicit their approval." In short, among the reams of regulatory documentation required for the Federal Permit is a biological opinion letter from NOAA Fisheries (AKA the National Marine Fisheries Service). For months, this agency in the Commerce Department delayed consideration of the County's Federal permit application. To awaken this sprawling narcoleptic bureaucracy, the neighborhood association spearheaded an effort to enlist our Federal Representatives to break the Federal malaise that held the project hostage.

After hundreds of letters, phone calls, faxes and emails flooded the local and Washington D.C. offices of Congresswoman Lois Frankel (who represents Galt Mile residents on "The Hill"), Senator Bill Nelson and Senator Marco Rubio, all three prodded the agency to move the project forward.

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- NURSING HOME NEGLECT



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Continued on page 8

Severe Tidal Erosion Digests Broward Beaches.



# APRIL / MARCH

SUN

MON

TUE

WED

<p><b>15</b> Las Olas Outdoor Green Market 333 E Las Olas Blvd. &amp; SE 4th Ave. 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Info.: 954-426-8436</p> <p>Our Town America Festival Classic Car Show Coral Springs Sportplex 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Info.: 954-410-5536</p>	<p><b>16</b> BINGO SouthPoint 7 p.m. Info.: 954-563-6353</p> <p>Galt Mile Library Book Sale: Special Low Prices Galt Mile Library, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Info.: 954-537-2024 or mqz@rocketmail.com</p>	<p><b>17</b> BINGO Galt Towers Social Room (4250 Galt Ocean Drive) 7:30 p.m. Info.: Cyndi Sanger: 954-563-7268</p> <p>Saint Patrick's Day</p>	<p><b>18</b> BINGO Regency South Party Room 7 p.m. Info.: Bob Pearlman: 954-547-4063</p> <p>Spring Business Expo 2015 Broward Convention Center (3rd Floor) 3 to 8 p.m. Info.: 954-838-9644</p>
<p><b>22</b> Las Olas Outdoor Green Market 333 E Las Olas Blvd. &amp; SE 4th Ave. 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Info.: 954-426-8436</p> <p>Florida AIDS Walk and Music Festival South Beach Park (just N of the Sheraton Beach Resort) 7:30 a.m. On-Site Registration Info.: 954-522-3132</p>	<p><b>23</b> BINGO SouthPoint 7 p.m. Info.: 954-563-6353</p> <p>Itzhak Perlman Broward Center for the Performing Arts 8 p.m. Info.: 954-462-0222</p>	<p><b>24</b> BINGO Galt Towers Social Room (4250 Galt Ocean Drive) 7:30 p.m. Info.: Cyndi Sanger: 954-563-7268</p>	<p><b>25</b> BINGO Regency South Party Room 7 p.m. Info.: Bob Pearlman: 954-547-4063</p>
<p><b>29</b> Las Olas Outdoor Green Market 333 E Las Olas Blvd. &amp; SE 4th Ave. 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Info.: 954-426-8436</p> <p>Jackie Evancho Broward Center for the Performing Arts 7 p.m. Info.: 954-462-0222</p>	<p><b>30</b> BINGO SouthPoint 7 p.m. Info.: 954-563-6353</p>	<p><b>31</b> BINGO Galt Towers Social Room (4250 Galt Ocean Drive) 7:30 p.m. Info.: Cyndi Sanger: 954-563-7268</p>	<p><b>1</b> BINGO Regency South Party Room 7 p.m. Info.: Bob Pearlman: 954-547-4063</p>
<p><b>5</b> Las Olas Outdoor Green Market 333 E Las Olas Blvd. &amp; SE 4th Ave. 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Info.: 954-426-8436</p> <p><b>Sunday Jazz Brunch</b> Riverwalk, Downtown FL 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Info.: 954-828-5985</p>	<p><b>6</b> BINGO SouthPoint 7 p.m. Info.: 954-563-6353</p> <p>Commissioner Bruce Roberts: Pre-Agenda Meeting Beach Community Center, 6 p.m.</p>	<p><b>7</b> BINGO Galt Towers Social Room (4250 Galt Ocean Drive) 7:30 p.m. Info.: Cyndi Sanger: 954-563-7268</p>	<p><b>8</b> BINGO Regency South Party Room 7 p.m. Info.: Bob Pearlman: 954-547-4063</p>
<p><b>12</b> Las Olas Outdoor Green Market 333 E Las Olas Blvd. &amp; SE 4th Ave. 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Info.: 954-426-8436</p> <p>Festival Flea Market Annual Spring Mega Classic &amp; Foreign Car Show Festival Flea Market Mall 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Info.: 954-560-5412</p>	<p><b>13</b> BINGO SouthPoint 7 p.m. Info.: 954-563-6353</p> <p>Boz Scaggs Broward Center for the Performing Arts 7:30 p.m. Info.: 954-462-0222</p>	<p><b>14</b> BINGO Galt Towers Social Room (4250 Galt Ocean Drive) 7:30 p.m. Info.: Cyndi Sanger: 954-563-7268</p>	<p><b>15</b> BINGO Regency South Party Room 7 p.m. Info.: Bob Pearlman: 954-547-4063</p>

MARCH 21: CF Cycle For Life, Homestead-Miami Speedway, Check-in - 6:30 a.m.; Start Time - 7:30 a.m., Info.: 954-739-5006

MARCH 21-22: Dig The Beach Volleyball Fort Lauderdale Open, Fort Lauderdale Beach Park, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., Info.: 561-241-3801

MARCH 22: 7th Annual Kendra's Kisses Memorial 5k Race, Markham Park, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., Info.: kendraskisses@bellsouth.net

MARCH 28: Spring Egg Hunt, Mills Pond Park, 10 a.m., Info.: 954-828-894

MARCH 28: Florida Derby, Gulfstream Park Racing and Casino, Hallandale Beach, Info.: 954-454-7000

MARCH 28-29: 27th Annual Las Olas Art Fair - Part II, Las Olas Blvd between SE 6th Ave. & SE 11th Ave., 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Info.: 954-472-3755

MARCH 28-29: Fort Lauderdale Gun & Knife Show, War Memorial Auditorium, Info.: 954-828-5380

APRIL 11-12: Rock the Ocean - Tortuga Music Festival, Fort Lauderdale Beach Park (100 Seabreeze Blvd.), Info.: 1-615-498-7548

APRIL 12: 7th Annual Jazz Picnic in the Park (Jazz Survivors), Ilene Lieberman Botanical Gardens, 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., Info.: 954-730-3000

APRIL 18-19: Hotsume Fair - 2015, Markham Museum and Japanese Gardens, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., Info.: 561-495-0233

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## UPCOMING EVENTS IN OUR AREA

April 24-25

5th Annual Deerfield Beach Wine & Food Festival  
Quiet Waters Park  
6 to 10 p.m.  
Info.: 561-338-7594

April 25

Kathy Griffin  
Broward Center for the Performing Arts  
8 p.m.  
Info.: 954-462-0222

May 1

The Las Olas Wine & Food Festival  
Las Olas Boulevard  
7:30 to 10 p.m.  
Info.: 954-727-0907

May 1-3

West Palm Beach Antiques Festival  
South Florida Fairgrounds, WPB  
Info.: 941-697-7475

May 2

Household Hazardous Waste and Electronics Drop-off Events  
6011 Nob Hill Road, Tamarac  
9 a.m. to 2 p.m.  
Info.: 954-828-8000

May 3

2nd Annual Classic Car & Truck Roundup  
Bergeron Rodeo Grounds, Davie  
10 a.m. to 4 p.m.  
Info.: 954-563-4000

May 16

24th Annual Island City Canoe Race  
Colohatchee Boat Ramp  
10 a.m.  
Info.: 954-390-2175

May 22-25

Ft. Lauderdale Spring Home Design And Remodeling Show  
Broward County Convention Center  
Info.: 305-667-9299

**FOR A COMPLETE  
LISTING OF EVENTS,  
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CALENDAR AT  
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<p><b>19</b></p> <p>G.M.C.A. Advisory Board Meeting Nick's Italian Restaurant 11 a.m.</p>	<p><b>20</b></p> <p>The West Palm Beach Bus Loop Clematis Street, West Palm Beach 6 p.m. to Midnight Info.: 954-574-6000</p> <p>John Mellencamp: Plain Spoken Tour Broward Center for the Performing Arts, 7:30 p.m. Info.: 954-462-0222</p>	<p><b>21</b></p> <p>SE Florida Scottish Festival &amp; Highland Games Snyder Park 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. Info./Tix.: 954-577-9010 or www.sasst.org</p> <p>Dania Beach Arts and Seafood Celebration (Through 3/22) Frost Park, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Info.: 954-924-6801 X 3750</p>
<p><b>26</b></p> <p>Palm Beach International Boat Show (Through 3/29) Evernia St. &amp; Flagler Dr. (waterfront) / North Clematis St. &amp; Flagler Dr. (waterfront) Info./Tix.: 954-764-7642</p>	<p><b>27</b></p> <p>Miami Spring Home Design And Remodeling Show (Through 3/30) Miami Beach Convention Center Info.: 305-667-9299</p>	<p><b>28</b></p> <p>9th Annual KID Duck Fest Derby Esplanade Park, 1 to 4 p.m. Info.: 954-390-7654 x1251</p> <p>Delray Beach Bacon &amp; Bourbon Fest (Through 3/29) Downtown Delray Beach Info.: www.delraybaconfest.com</p>
<p><b>2</b></p>	<p><b>3</b></p> <p>Erev Pesach (Passover)</p> <p>West Palm Beach Antiques Festival (Through 4/5) South Florida Fairgrounds, WPB Info.: 941-697-7475</p>	<p><b>4</b></p> <p>North Beach Art Walk A1A, 32nd AND 33rd Streets 7 to 11 p.m.</p> <p>34th International Orchid &amp; Bromeliad Show (Through 4/5) Flamingo Gardens 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Info.: www.flamingogardens.org</p>
<p><b>9</b></p>	<p><b>10</b></p>	<p><b>11</b></p> <p>Household Hazardous Waste and Electronics Drop-off Events Mill Pond Park 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Info.: 954-828-8000</p> <p>15th Annual Riverwalk Run Huizenga Plaza, 7 a.m. Info.: 954-740-0621</p>
<p><b>16</b></p>	<p><b>17</b></p>	<p><b>18</b></p> <p>Great Strides - Fort Lauderdale Hugh Taylor Birch Park 10 a.m. Info.: 954-739-5006</p> <p>New River Raft Race Esplanade Park on the New River 3 to 7 p.m. Info.: st.george@bergercommercial.com</p>

Tuesdays/Saturdays: Sunrise Paddleboard Bonnet House Eco Tour, 928 NE 20 Ave., 10 a.m., Info.: 954-440-4562

Fridays: Aruba Beach Café's Friday Fun Fest Pig Roast, 4 to 7 p.m.

First Saturday of Every Month: Beach Cleanup, Commercial Blvd. & the Beach LBTS (Meet at Pavilion), 9 to 9:30 a.m., Info.: 954-776-1000

First Saturday of Every Month: North Beach Art Walk, 3280 NE 32nd St, 7 to 11 p.m., Info.: 954-537-3370

Second Saturday of Every Month: Beach Sweep, 9 a.m. to 12 p.m., Info.: 954-474-1835

Mondays: Food Trucks at Artspark, 5:30 to 10 p.m., Youngs Circle in Hollywood

Sundays: Tour-the River Ghost Tour, Stranahan House & Water Taxi, 7:30 p.m., Tix.: 954-524-4736

Saturdays: Saturday Night Under the South Florida Stars, Fox Astronomical Observatory at Markham Park, Sunset to Midnight, Info.: 954-384-0442

Daily: Yoga on the Beach, Ocean Manor Resort (4040 Galt Ocean Dr.), 9:30 a.m. (weather permitting), Mats supplied, \$10 donation, Open to the Public, Info.: 754-779-7519 or 516-840-1455



By June 2014, LaMarca announced "With regard to the beach renourishment project... The biological opinion has been transmitted from the scientific study to legal review at the National Marine Fisheries office. We expect that this legal review will be short and then the final opinion will be sent back to the US Army Corps of Engineers for the final permit. We are gearing up with the three cities to be ready for the procurement process so that we have a contractor and we are ready for November."

November passed without word, and December, and January. By the February meeting, the pot boiled over. Enraged by decades of frustrating delays, attending officials from every Galt Mile association exploded, blasting restrained invective while venting heated suggestions for another email campaign – either to target and torture the responsible bureaucrats, or threaten an eclectic lineup of elected officials.

Joining LaMarca were two representatives from the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) Palm Beach Gardens Regulatory office. Since the Army Corps of Engineers is the Federal Agency responsible for issuing the Federal permit, all South Florida beach renourishment applications must be filed in the Corps' Jacksonville District. However, ACOE regulators in a nearby local office help County or City applicants meet the Federal permit requirements. The ACOE Palm Beach Gardens Supervisory Biologist and office chief Susan Kaynor and Project Manager Garrett Lips had been working with LaMarca to push the Broward project to fruition.

Surprised by the epidemic rancor, the two officials assured the audience that a resolution was imminent. Noticing that they appeared perplexed by the neighborhood's extreme reaction, leraci asked if they were familiar with the project history, and that a County plan to offset tidal erosion – starting with repairs to the Hillsboro Inlet – was first recorded in the federal register in 1965. "We

have been fighting to save our beach for more than a decade," said leraci. Initially filed at the turn of the Century, the Broward plan to fix North County beaches evolved to meet ever-changing regulatory requirements, standards that far exceeded those imposed on any other beach in the State.

GMCA Officials leraci and Berkowitz summarized project stumbling blocks that Galt Mile residents helped overcome, including a 2002 meeting in Hollywood, when two busloads of Galt Milers salvaged the South County Renourishment (Segment III was completed in 2006), a 2003 cabinet meeting in Tallahassee wherein testimony from Galt Mile officials won Cabinet approval for the State permit, and countless meetings with former Broward Beach Administrators Stephen Higgins and Eric Myers – and every District 4 County Commissioner – all of which yielded unmet promises of an imminent North County (Segment II) beach fix. leraci commented "It's not difficult to understand why residents in Broward beachfront communities are angry."

Mayor Seiler asked the local Corps officials why the project was frozen in NOAA Fisheries. Evidently, a complaint from the head of a small environmental group immobilized the project, despite its endorsement by every major environmental group and agency in the State. Incredulous that a handful of radicals could thwart the will of 300,000 people in three Florida Cities and 1.9 million Broward residents, Seiler asked "What can the City of Fort Lauderdale do to unblock the stalled beach renourishment?" Citing how bureaucratic foot-dragging is not only undermining the region's beach economy, but since a healthy beach is the only real protection against cyclonic storm surge, the Mayor complained about delays endangering \$billions in upland property while risking the lives of thousands of beachfront homeowners.

County officials feared another dilemma. Colonel Alan M. Dodd, the District Commander of the Army Corps of Engineers in Jacksonville, is about to retire. If he retires before a permit is granted, the County could conceivably be forced to revisit either all or part of the process, prospectively adding years to this debacle.

Seiler asked the Corps regulators if they knew who it was that broke NOAA Fisheries' prolonged delay in considering the County application. Garrett Lips answered "It was me." The room went silent. Seiler asked Lips "What happens next?" Explaining that NOAA Fisheries had until February 28 to complete its project review, Lips said that he will meet with agency bureaucrats to resolve the impasse amicably. If they fail to respond, he will submit a letter that will force the agency to either rescind their objection or take it to the next level, thereby extracting the issue from its bureaucratic black hole and exposing it to redress. Although still flustered by the decades of insupportable delays, upon hearing a promising strategy from one of the few regulatory officials able to penetrate the heavily cloistered agency protocols, Galt Mile and City officials asked LaMarca for updates as Lips implemented his plan.

**A Soft Landing**

On opening the March 2 Presidents Council meeting in Galt Towers, leraci said he anticipates a project update from LaMarca, who was in Washington D.C. for a Port Everglades regulatory hearing. Given the passions inflamed by this issue, leraci promised to email members any news upon receipt. Two days later, a message arrived in the form of an email string between LaMarca and Commission Aide Kate Wesner.

Since the Corps was unable to negotiate an understanding with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), Lips issued a "3c letter" on February 20th. As explained by

LaMarca, "This requires NMFS to rescind or elevate their objections by March 9, and based upon conversations, they do not intend on elevating their objection. Once rescinded, the



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Corps has stated they can issue a permit by end of week (March 13). LaMarca concluded with a promise to notify the neighborhood association when he receives the final resolution.

In a separate message to Ieraci, Lamarca commented "It looks like I will get an Army Corps permit for Segment II on March 13th as an early birthday present (March 16th). I will reach out to procurement and capital projects to get the proposed construction schedule for the project. Thank you." On March 9, LaMarca got sneak peek at his birthday present, and sent the following message to the neighborhood association: "The county received confirmation from the Corps of Engineers that National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has officially recinded their objections in regards to Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) for the Segment II Beach Renourishment Project. Now that objections have been lifted, the Corps of Engineers is able to issue the Federal permit, which could occur by end of week.

Once we have permit in hand, the next milestone is to continue our efforts on the Project Participation Agreement (PPA). The PPA is currently being reviewed and revised by the various levels of the Corps of Engineers. Without this document, we cannot reward the project, or we would jeopardize the Corps' funding. We have been coordinating with Intergov to expedite this review, but we are still awaiting the draft version of the document for initial review.

We will keep you posted as to our progress, but please do not hesitate to contact Nicole Sharp or Dr. Jurado with any questions."

After decades of being shredded in a regulatory Cuisinart, it appears that the Segment II Beach Renourishment will materialize (after sea turtle nesting season ends in November) scoring the Federal Permit will mark one of LaMarca's more memorable birthdays, and send a wave of cautious optimism across the Galt Mile—and City Hall.

However, since 20 years of chronic disappointment has cultivated deep seeded suspicions, many Galt Mile residents will understandably postpone celebrating until they feel the new sand between their toes. Stay tuned. •



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# Commissioner Chip LaMarca's

## March 2015 Newsletter

*Deepening and widening the channel is one of three major Master Plan improvements. The Southport Turning Notch Expansion will lengthen the existing deepwater turn-around area for large cargo ships from 900 feet to 2,400 feet and allow the Port to berth and service five additional monster vessels. Also, instead of hauling containers to and from off-port rail terminals, or bucking road traffic on the Turnpike or I-95, on July 16, 2014, the Florida East Coast Railway (FEC) opened an on-site Intermodal Container Transfer Facility (ICTF) to enable the seamless transfer of international containers between ship and rail, trimming the time required for bringing goods to market - and vesting the port with a significant competitive advantage over other Florida East Coast ports (like Port Miami).*

*In August 2014, when the Corps of Engineers announced that it would recommend dredging the channel to 47 feet, instead of the 48 feet needed to insure clearance of post-Panamax vessels, the Corps made a point of declaring that the cost of that last foot would have to be borne by Broward. On August 12, the Broward Commission voted unanimously to pick up the estimated \$18 million tab for digging out the extra foot using Port Everglades business revenues from port user fees.*

*In 2015, the Port's future brightened considerably. In January, Port officials celebrated the completion of a \$24 million remodeling of Cruise Terminal 4 - critical to the unimpeded traffic flow of cruise passengers. In mid-February, 2015, Congresswoman Lois Frankel met in Washington D.C. with staff from the South Florida Congressional Delegation, State and Broward elected officials and Richard Biter, Assistant Secretary for Intermodal Systems Development for the Florida Department of Transportation, to prepare for a make-or-break hearing by the Army Corps of Engineers Civil Works Review Board.*

*Convening on February 27, 2015, the Civil Works Review Board unanimously approved the final environmental and economic feasibility studies for dredging the channel to 48 feet (50 feet with allowable overdepth) and expanding the turning notch, triggering a 30-day comment period. After the Corps issues a "Chief of Engineers Report" in May, which will recommend the project to Congress for construction authorization, the pre-construction, engineering and design (PED) phase will be followed by approximately two years of contract procurement and another five years for construction. The \$374 million funding feedbag is comprised of \$190 million of federal dredging money and \$183.1 million in Port revenues, supplemented by State contributions. NO TAXES in the mix!!!*

*Admonishing the need to move quickly, Congresswoman Lois Frankel told the Review Board "Any delay to the expansion risks the new larger freight ships contracting with other ports, passing us by and taking thousands of jobs with them". LaMarca has been bouncing between Broward, Tallahassee and Washington D.C. like a suburban straphanger, carrying the County's agenda for Beach Renourishment and the Port improvements. If a recently implemented regulatory strategy to unblock the Segment II beach fix also bears fruit, he will be 2 for 2 this March. Not too shabby! Read on for the rest of LaMarca's March message. - [editor]"*

### March 2015 Newsletter

By Commissioner Chip LaMarca

**U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Civil Works Review Board Moves Deepening and Widening Project Forward**  
Broward County Commissioners are applauding recent action by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Civil Works Review Board that moves forward major plans to deepen and widen Port Everglades' channels and turning basin. Port Everglades has been working with the Corps for more than 18 years on this project, designed to enable safe passage of deep draft post-Panamax cargo ships, those too large to fit through today's Panama Canal. The project is anticipated to create an estimated 4,700 total construction jobs and nearly 1,500 permanent direct jobs locally. The estimated cost is \$374 million which will be paid with Port Everglades revenue generated through port user fees, federal appropriations and state grants. No local tax dollars will be used for this project because Port Everglades is a self-funded enterprise fund.

#### FLL Records Highest Passenger Traffic

2014 was a record year for Broward's Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport (FLL) with 24.6 million passengers using the airport, an increase of more than one million compared with 2013. FLL's spike in passenger travel was attributed to new services and additional flights by its largest domestic carriers JetBlue, Spirit, Delta and Silver. International traffic also increased 26 percent year over year, with more than 4.6 million passengers using FLL. This increase is due in part to new service by Azul, Copa, Norwegian, TAME and Volaris Airlines. The new runway, which opened in September, helped to eliminate delays that previously discouraged the launch of new flights.

*Continued on page 11*

*"In his March 2015 Newsletter, Broward Commissioner Chip LaMarca reviews a regulatory benchmark for Port Everglades, record passenger traffic at Fort Lauderdale - Hollywood International Airport, Broward's environmentally friendly commuter minibuses, tax incentives for expanding businesses, an FP&L solar energy pilot program, a County adoption program for homeless pets, a Centennial celebration of the 13th Annual Broward Water Matters Day and a County event commemorating Women's History Month. Given his unrelenting support for Port Everglades, it's no coincidence that LaMarca's March message to constituents opens by applauding a long-awaited Federal green light for infrastructure improvements that will cement the Port's future as a regional economic powerhouse.*

*Beginning in 1997, Broward officials have been begging the Army Corps of Engineers to approve funding for deepening Port Everglades' channel to accommodate the anticipated explosion of Post-Panamax vessels from Asia and the Pacific when the \$5.25 billion Panama Canal expansion is completed in 2016. Post-Panamax ships that are 25% longer, 50% wider and have a deeper draft than the largest vessels currently able to navigate the canal - a configuration called "Panamax" - will rebalance the worldwide economy by significantly lowering hemispheric transportation costs.*

*Since faster and cheaper shipping of goods between the East Coast and Asia will enable American farmers and manufacturers to better compete with South American and European counterparts, the economic cascade will guarantee Post-Panamax adapted Gulf and East Coast seaports tax revenue windfalls and thousands of new jobs. The Panama Canal Authority has estimated that five or six operational ports on the U.S. East Coast could handle the resulting tornado of cheaper goods, triggering frenzied construction by East Coast seaports competing for a piece of the Post-Panamax Golden Goose.*

*After 18 years of bumping up against foot-dragging Federal bureaucrats, Congressional gridlock and play for pay politicians while imploring the Army Corps of Engineers to undertake planned improvements, on June 28, 2013, the Corps finally released its Draft Environmental Impact Statement for "Navigational Improvements to the Port Everglades Harbor," a prerequisite for deepening Port Everglades' channel from 42 feet to 48 feet (plus two feet of allowable overdepth for a total of 50 feet) and widening the channel entrance to allow entering and departing ships to safely skirt by cargo and cruise ships docked along the Intracoastal Waterway inside the Port.*



**Transit Offers New Vehicles for Commuters and Paratransit Customers**

Broward County Transit (BCT) is working to improve comfort, safety and the environment with new state-of-the-art vehicles for commuters and paratransit customers. Transit introduced its cleaner propane-fueled paratransit vehicles in January with seating for 10 passengers and room for up to three wheelchairs, digital security system with cameras, and adjustable temperature controls. New 45-foot Motor Coach Industries buses are slated for operation in the spring and will feature high-back seats with extra hip-to-knee space, Wi-Fi and LED reading lights, A/C vents, electrical outlets and USB ports at each seat. These buses will be used for the 95 Express Service routes from Southwest Broward to destinations in Miami-Dade County.

**County Targets New Businesses with Incentive Funding**

The County is offering incentive funds for Qualified Targeted Industries looking to expand operations and create more jobs in Broward. Potential businesses will receive varying amounts of funds from the County depending on the level of expansion, and may qualify for additional funds from the city in which they plan to expand, and from the State. The County's Office of Economic and Small Business Development has approved two new projects under the Qualified Targeted Incentive Tax Refund Program

Broward County Signs Agreement for First FPL Community-based Solar Installation Broward is the first location in Florida to sign an agreement with Florida Power & Light (FPL) for installation of a solar photovoltaic system funded by FPL's new Voluntary Community-based Solar Pilot Partnership Program. The installation has the potential to generate over 140,000 kilowatt hours of electricity annually. In so doing, it will contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by over 100 metric tons of carbon dioxide supporting the County's commitment to a 20 percent renewable energy usage goal and supporting the regional goal to achieve, by 2050, an 82 percent reduction in regional greenhouse gas emissions.

**Broward County Animal Care and Adoption Welcomes and Encourages Donations**

Your generosity will help support our numerous programs and services such as adoptions, behavioral training, and enhancements to medical equipment in our clinics and improvement and expansion to our shelters. More importantly, your support will save the lives of many homeless dogs and cats. Visit [broward.org/animal](http://broward.org/animal) to find information and photos of animals that are currently available for adoption. There is also information on providing temporary foster

care for animals that are too young to adopt or have special needs. If you find that adoption or foster care isn't for you, please consider volunteering, where you will have the unique opportunity to help the shelter dog and cats.

**Water Matters Day Matters March 14th**

"Celebrating Our Centennial" is the theme of the 13th Annual Broward Water Matters Day on Saturday, March 14th from 9AM to 3PM at Tree Tops Park in Davie. This year's free event is part of the County's Centennial celebration, Broward 100 - Celebrating the Art of Community. At Water Matters Day, residents can learn about local and regional water resources, how water is managed and protected, and how Broward is planning for future water needs. Over 45 educational exhibits and booths will be on display to help residents understand the role each of us play in protecting and conserving our water supplies. Participants will also be able to take home a free native plant or tree by visiting at least 12 of the event's exhibits and obtaining stamps from each on their event program.

**March is Women's History Month**

The Broward County Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) will observe National Women's History Month, March 1st-31st, by hosting A Community Conversation - Women 4 Women - forum to understand the major issues affecting women and their families throughout the county. The free forum is open to the public and takes place Friday, March 27th, 3-5PM, at the African-American Research Library and Cultural Center, 2650 Sistrunk Boulevard, Fort Lauderdale.

Stay connected with by visiting [Broward.org/District4](http://Broward.org/District4) and sign up to receive email updates from our office. If there is anything that we can do to assist you with your vision for a better Broward, please do not hesitate to contact our office at 954-357-7004 or by email at [clamarca@broward.org](mailto:clamarca@broward.org).

As always, it is my honor to serve you.

**Chip LaMarca**

Broward County Commissioner, District 4



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# CUTTING THE



By Eric Berkowitz

# GALT MILE CANOPY

In early November, 2008, Commodore resident José "Chepo" Vega emailed a complaint to the Galt Mile Community Association about the "precarious" state of landscaping along Galt Ocean Drive. A few days later, he followed it up with a call to GMCA Vice President Eric Berkowitz, exclaiming "While I was walking in front of my building, I saw someone walk into a low hanging tree limb. It could have blinded him. Why doesn't the City pay attention to the landscaping on our block?" Chepo argued that if he knew who to contact about addressing this issue, he would gladly volunteer his time and horticultural acumen. He was invited to apprise Advisory Board members and attending association officials about his concerns at the next Galt Mile Presidents Council meeting.

## Galt Mile Block Maintenance Liaison

At the December 1, 2008 meeting, while participants discussed the now defunct Calypso Project, Beach Renourishment, monkey business in the Florida Office of Insurance Regulation and the impact of deliberately dilatory foreclosures on Association budgets, Chepo cornered former Commissioner Christine Teel, detailing his concerns. Offering to contact the Parks Department and investigate the problem, she requested that he contact her office the following day.

Excited about the prospect of finally making headway, the next day Chepo emailed GMCA officials Pio Ieraci and Eric Berkowitz "I spoke briefly to Commissioner Teel at the Monday meeting then called her subsequently at her suggestion. In our conversation I mentioned our concerns about the problems we are having with the sidewalk trees. I told her that the trees are growing bent due to the strong ocean winds and the use of the wrong stakes to prop the trees. I mentioned to her that somebody can injure their eyes with the low branches, etc. I volunteered to meet with anybody from the city that can help solve this problem. Teel told me that she is going to call the persons in charge of the planting and if I did not hear from them in a week, to call her and let her know."

As directed by Teel, her commission assistant Eve Bazar sent an email to Julie Richards in the City Manager's office, explaining, "José Vega resides at the Commodore condo on the Galt. He feels that the trees on the Galt aren't being pruned properly, and in some cases may cause harm to people since the branches are too low. Mr. Vega talked with the commissioner and would like to meet with someone from P&R (sic - Parks and Recreation) who is responsible for the trees so he can alert them to the problems. Would you please have someone from P&R contact Mr. Vega to discuss this matter? Thanks."

A week later, Parks Department Operations Superintendent Brian Hopper met with Chepo. On December 13th, shortly after their meeting, Hopper notified former Assistant Director Terry Rynard of Parks and Recreation, "I have met with Mr. Vega and we have begun trimming and restaking the trees. We will continue this work over the next week or two. Mr. Vega is pleased with our response thus far and was very complimentary of staff. I will follow up when

work is 100 prct complete."

To muster support from the neighborhood's 27 member associations, Chepo attended the December 18, 2008 GMCA Advisory Board meeting at Nick's Italian Restaurant. Following reports from our City and County Commissioners and several agenda discussions, GMCA President Ieraci turned to Chepo, thanking him for following his original complaint with active pursuit of redress. Landscaping and block maintenance had long been stones in Ieraci's shoe, and a source of frustration for most veteran neighborhood officials.

When Galt Ocean Drive residents voluntarily assessed themselves to fund the broad range of civic upgrades known as the Galt Mile Improvement Project in 1995 (pink aggregate sidewalks, new traffic signals and signage, interred utility lines, paved crosswalks, new landscaping, etc.), the City agreed to maintain the many improvements in "a Disney-like manner." Whenever the Parks Department dropped the ball, Galt Mile association officials would meet with the District 1 City Commissioner and Parks Department Director Phil Thornburg to elicit assurances that civic maintenance would improve. Such promises had a half-life of three to six months, and turned to vapor when the bureaucrats' feet were no longer in the fire. By 2008, frustrated residents had watched their landscaping cycle through 12 years of intermittent green periods and brownouts.

After announcing, "Chepo is working with the City to address the landscaping problems along Galt Ocean Drive," Ieraci proposed that Chepo be officially vested to represent the Neighborhood Association in this effort. A quick vote affirmed Chepo's status. After indicating that she would notify the Parks Department about the Advisory Board's action, Teel said that Chepo would "probably hear from them after the Holidays." For the first time, the neighborhood association had a permanent block maintenance liaison to the City.

In April of 2009, after taking the District 1 cockpit from Christine Teel, newly elected Commissioner Bruce Roberts seamlessly stepped in as Chepo's "Rabbi" in City Hall. At his first Galt Mile Landscaping evaluation on June 22, 2009, Roberts met with Parks Department Superintendent Brian Hopper, Beach Foreman Mark Almy, GMCA President Pio Ieraci and Chepo at the Greek Isles Taverna, the starting gate for a 10 AM Community Walk-through. After identifying the neighborhood's landscaping deficiencies, their report became the official maintenance syllabus for Parks Department crews working along the Galt Mile.

Chepo and Brian Hopper got down to business. In his first report to the neighborhood association, Chepo summarized a recently completed two week project. Following another walk-through with Hopper and landscaping personnel, crews assigned to the project trimmed more than three dozen trees, cutting branches deemed dangerous to marginally attentive pedestrians and passing cyclists. Sizing stakes were installed to better control future growth and broken metal grates framing the block's trees were repaired and/or properly reinstalled.

Continued on page 13



Over the next seven years, this scenario was annually adapted to the neighborhood's evolving needs. Whenever the City slacked off, our block maintenance gadfly would politely raise hell. Two issues were at or near the top of an annual mantra of landscaping complaints, queries and suggestions from Galt Mile residents. The first mirrored Chepo's admonition to address trees along Galt Ocean Drive identified and marked as "severely bent towards the street," characterizing the eye-level low hanging branches as pedestrian threats. Secondly, Galt Mile residents questioned why trees along the Galt appear strangely distorted, frail and congenitally puny - as if on life support.

### Mysterious Mutant Trees

The trees planted along Galt Ocean Drive have two strikes against them. When Urban Forester Gene Dempsey addressed a 2005 Presidents Council meeting, he explained that a newly hired city horticulturist would supervise the planting of all new "environmentally compatible" flora along the block. The plan went awry in 2007 when Parks personnel discovered that the Green Buttonwoods planted years earlier had grown massive root systems, irreversibly entangling utility lines, communication cables and drain lines. Were they simply torn out, residents in the adjacent buildings would taste life in the 17th century. Having failed to pry out the roots, cut them away or selectively poison certain offshoots, former Parks Department Assistant Director Terry Rynard - who has since returned to hometown Kansas City - conceded that the Department's plans were in trouble. They would have to try rooting smaller trees in areas filled with irretrievable root balls.

During a June 2007 landscaping walk through with Rynard and Parks Foreman Tim Southby, GMCA President Pío Ieraci learned why hurricane-damaged trees were deliberately replaced with undersized trees plagued by abbreviated life spans. "The silver buttonwoods that we have planted on the walkway were chosen for their size for many reasons," exclaimed Southby. "The openings in the sidewalk are only so big. Many of the old root systems are still in the ground from the old trees and from other trees along the sidewalk. Electrical and irrigation for these trees runs through these openings, causing us to use smaller and not as mature specimens as we would like to have used." Southby elaborated, "For this reason we have had to stake and strap the trees in ways we normally would not like to have to use. We know that it isn't the most attractive method but it is working."

City officials had to find a way to plant new trees without first having to remove the stifling remnant root balls. Initially, unsupported trees were planted in whatever space was available amid the overcrowded root remnants. As often as not, they died. If they could have somehow been sustained following their initial implantation, the replacements' chances for survival would have increased substantially. Tim Southby explained steps taken by the Parks Department to accomplish this objective, "We are also currently topping off most of the buttonwoods to stop adding more stress to the lower trunk and the root system. This will allow the trunk to thicken up and give it the strength that we need to allow the strapping to come off and make the sidewalk area more appealing."

By initially keeping the trees small, their growth resources would be directed towards bulking up their trunks, enhancing their prospects for survival. Southby theorized that this strategy, in conjunction with concentrated fertilization, would shorten the period that the trees appeared undersized. Ieraci asked Southby how long the small silver buttonwoods would have to remain staked and strapped. "We hope by June of 2008 the strapping will come off most of the trees except for the ones that we have had to replace in the last few weeks," predicted Southby. Unfortunately, his plan hit a wall.

At the time, Rynard agreed with Southby's assessment, exclaiming "You won't have to wait ten years to see substantial growth. We're making the best out of a bad situation. We plan to intensively fertilize the new trees. Once they are firmly rooted, we should see some rapid growth." Southby also blamed the old root balls for damage sustained by the aggregate sidewalks originally installed as part of the Galt Mile Improvement Project. He explained "The root systems spread under the entire area. We found them wrapped around the tree cover

grates and they dislodged sidewalks."

To successfully fulfill the City's contractual obligation to maintain the block "in a Disney like fashion," Parks personnel admittedly should have meticulously micromanaged the immature plantings through their initial growth period. They didn't. When most of the trees succumbed to the Department's maintenance lapses, their replacements were also staked. Of those that ultimately survived, when the stakes were removed, growth spurts sent their crowns lunging toward or away from the street. In danger of toppling, they were restaked. By the time these trees were stabilized, many had become severely gnarled - strangely reminiscent of the contorted iconic specimen gracing the front yard of Carlos and Morticia Addams.

On the bright side, nature is reliably unpredictable. Once Chepo's oversight marshalled a sustained effort by the Parks Department, the City's recipe for mutant trees was retired. While the damage could not be undone, at least it would not be repeated. When trees unable to survive in beds compromised with rotting root balls were replaced by a new crop of undersized trees - anticipating that their smaller root systems would better tolerate the cramped rooting environment - Chepo insured they were nurtured - as originally prescribed years earlier by Rynard and Southby. After seven years of managing this mass rotation of browned out Buttonwoods, City crews finally filled every Galt Mile sidewalk grate with a tree - small, twisted - but alive.

### Sidewalks Still Safe

Chepo and Beach Foreman Mark Almy spent 2014 addressing landscaping issues observed during the annual walk-through. While identifying trees along the public right-of-way with threatening branches, Chepo added those on association property with low branches that overhang the sidewalk and/or street. Since City crews applied a "hands-off" policy to association landscaping, an Advisory Board member reported Chepo's dilemma to City Manager Lee Feldman. If informed about a tree on its property that poses a danger to pedestrians on the public sidewalk, and an association fails to correct the threat, Feldman clarified "Once I know the location, I can have our code compliance staff handle it."

On February 4, 2014, Almy emailed Commissioner Roberts, GMCA President Ieraci and Chepo, announcing "We are scheduling the trimming of the Silver Buttonwood trees along the sidewalk to begin in the next few weeks." City crews then set about filling in open spaces with Silver Buttonwood hedges and Indian Hawthorne, sodding irrigation boxes and treating sidewalk beds with "Weed and Feed". Responding to complaints from association managers, they trimmed trees and hedges that blocked the view of drivers pulling into the street from association driveways. However, many of the block's low-hanging branches remained unattended. Protests lodged by Chepo were buttressed by complaints emailed to the neighborhood association by Galt Mile pedestrians.

With the seasonal influx of vulnerable elderly snowbirds exacerbated by the horrific weather in Northern cities, by December, Chepo decided to reach out to Commissioner Roberts, explaining that the untrimmed trees were an accident in the making. It worked. On January 27, 2015, a jubilant Chepo popped off an email to the neighborhood association entitled "Good News is coming in," and referred to an attached message from Mark Almy:

"Hi Chepo. We did some extensive trimming today on the trees over the sidewalk. The brush is moved to the side and will be picked up by a truck. We went from 3550 to 3900 (sic - Ocean Riviera to Playa del Mar) today. We skipped one small area due to a moving truck being in the way and the most northerly part still has to be done as well. These areas will be done soon. Just wanted to give you a heads up that we were back on it. Thanks"

Since Chepo's Advisory Board appointment, this low profile volunteer has pressed, pushed, pulled and prodded City, County and association officials to elicit their cooperation. He works side-by-side with Park maintenance crews, personally oversees hard scape upgrades and continually bird dogs City officials. If you see Chepo strapping a tree or swimming in wood chips, and like the way your neighborhood looks, you might want to "pay it forward." A simple "thank you" should do the trick. •

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#### ***2015 Schedule***

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