

GALT MILE NEWS

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE GMCA

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2017



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THE IRMA DIVIDEND

By Eric Berkowitz

On September 26, 2017, the Galt Mile Advisory Board convened an 11 a.m. luncheon meeting at Casa Calabria in the Ocean Manor Hotel. Not surprisingly, the meeting agenda was dominated Hurricane Irma. Following a series of association damage reports submitted by officials from a dozen member condominiums and cooperatives, GMCA President Pio Ieraci announced that Galt Mile homeowners, tenants and business owners are eligible for financial relief from FEMA, and could apply in person, online or by calling the agency. After detailing his experience with the process, Ieraci concluded, "If a claim is approved, funds can either be mailed to the applicant, or deposited directly into his or her bank account."

Recovery Resources

In fact, storm victims in 37 Florida counties have been invited to apply for federal disaster assistance for life-sustaining resources or to offset uninsured or under-insured damages and losses caused by Hurricane Irma. Although FEMA suggests that applicants register their claims by completing an online questionnaire at DisasterAssistance.gov, those who lack online access - or shun the internet as the devil's playground, can register by calling 1-800-621-3362 between 7 a.m. and 11 p.m. - seven days a week.

An applicant should be prepared to provide his or her Social Security number; daytime telephone number; current mailing address and the address and ZIP code of the property that sustained damages - or was the site of losses. If relevant, also provide private insurance information. Certain types of coverage, including Homeowners insurance, may reduce the amount of approved assistance. Although optional, FEMA will offer to electronically transfer funds for approved claims directly into an applicant's bank account. Those who select this option will be asked to provide the name of the institution, the type of account, the routing number and the account number.

Once the application is filed, FEMA assigns it a unique registration number, which can be used to check its status, get updates by text or email, and to upload documents supportive of the claim (such as before and after pictures to better illustrate damages). While under review, disaster victims may be asked to document proof of occupancy (i.e. homeowner deed, tenant lease), ownership, income loss, etc. Applicants who aren't U.S. citizens should be prepared to document status as a non-citizen national or qualified alien. By the way, save receipts from the replacement of hurricane-related losses or damage repairs - since such outlays are often reimbursable.

Within 10 days of submitting a claim, a FEMA representative will call to schedule an appointment for a home inspection. If the inspector qualifies your claim, FEMA will either mail a U.S. Treasury check or electronically transfer the funds into your account, along with a letter that outlines how the money should be used. Although the assistance is ordinarily limited to 18 months following the disaster declaration, depending on the circumstances, it can be extended. If funds are misused (a "4-1" Exacta at Gulfstream Park), FEMA will demand full reimbursement while assessing your competence to withstand a Second District fraud prosecution.

If the claim is denied, FEMA will mail a letter explaining why and describing how to appeal. Applicants who disagree with FEMA's reason for denying a claim or the limits imposed on fund expenditures, have the right to appeal within 60 days of the date on the award or denial letter from FEMA.

Bob Stafford Comes to Broward

On September 10, 2017, as Irma pounded Broward County, the White House issued a major disaster declaration under the authority of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. 5121 et seq. (the "Stafford Act"), authorizing FEMA to provide Individual Assistance, assistance for debris removal and emergency protective measures (Categories A and B) under the Public Assistance program in the designated areas, Hazard Mitigation throughout the State, and any other forms of assistance under the Stafford Act, subject to completion of Preliminary Damage Assessments (PDAs).



FEMA

Once the White House triggers the Stafford Act, FEMA tailors a menu of relief resources based on an algorithmic diagnosis of the named disaster, replacing the agency's former libretto of preconfigured responses – like the one that sent a "Chemical Attack" package filled with cases of the anti-Anthrax drug Cipro to thousands of dehydrated Katrina refugees desperately awaiting water in the Superdome.

Upon receipt of the Presidential Declaration, FEMA Administrator Brock Long posted the agency's initial notice (FEMA-4337-DR), declaring all 67 counties in the State of Florida eligible for debris removal, emergency protective measures and assistance under the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program while specifying Charlotte, Collier, Hillsborough, Lee, Manatee, Miami-Dade, Monroe, Pinellas, and Sarasota Counties for Individual Assistance.

Eligibility for individual assistance qualifies storm victims for resources critical to their survival and recovery. For instance, when the inhabitants of a storm devastated home are forced to seek the safety of a shelter, after the storm passes, qualifying for FEMA Individuals and Households Program (IHP) will entitle them to funding or reimbursement grants for temporary housing, home repairs, transportation, medical and dental expenses, childcare assistance, or funeral and burial costs. Funding is also allocated to uninsured or under-insured storm-related personal property losses.

FEMA claims to select counties for individual assistance based on hurricane forecasts. Although South Florida coastal counties were subject to largely identical threats from Irma, FEMA declared residents of Miami-Dade eligible while excluding storm victims in Broward and Palm Beach counties. Shortly after FEMA released the notice on Sunday, a bipartisan contingent of South Florida members of Congress began pressuring FEMA, the White House and the Governor's office to include Broward and Palm Beach in the list of counties eligible for individual assistance.

On Monday, September 11, Democrat U.S. Representatives Ted Deutch, Alcee Hastings, Debbie Wasserman Schultz, Frederica Wilson, Lois Frankel and Republican Brian Mast released a joint statement protesting the exclusion, exclaiming "When a hurricane stretches over 400 miles across the state, there is going to be devastation whether the eye crosses the county or not. Residents of Broward, Palm Beach, Martin, and St. Lucie counties, as well as residents of other counties not included on the list, have experienced severe wind and water damage to their homes and property." Later that day, in the second of nine amended notices filed by FEMA through September 21, 2017, Long additionally named Broward and Palm Beach Counties for Individual Assistance. Bingo!

Like Moths to a Flame

Of the 54 FEMA teams sent to knock on doors and proactively assist local residents in Florida communities deemed most at-risk, 6 were assigned to Miami-Dade and 2 navigated Broward neighborhoods in Sunrise (where looting was viral during the storm) and Lauderdale Lakes. Not surprisingly, dozens of slime balls are mimicking the outreach teams to line their pockets by squeezing storm victims.

By simply asking the same questions as the FEMA field personnel, each fraudulent encounter provides them with

social security and bank account numbers they can use to open bogus new credit accounts or monetize in a Dark Web fire sale. More ambitious scammers solicit exorbitant deposits to repair property damage, offer to process disaster applications for a fee, or automate phone bank "robo-calls" to hawk bogus insurance coverage.

FEMA specifically advised the public to beware of individuals posing as agency staffers. Broward Mayor Barbara Sharief added that the FEMA teams are adorned in clothing emblazoned with FEMA logos and will volunteer their official identification. Sharief also warned that scammers were asking to enter people's homes while impersonating Florida Power & Light Co. workers, admonishing "FPL workers do not ask to go into people's houses."

Temptation

In contrast with FEMA's historical predisposition for adopting unnavigable regulatory gauntlets, Pio confirmed that the application process is a cakewalk, although cautioning patience - given the huge number of impacted properties. Ascribing his insight to first-hand familiarity with the process, Ieraci remarked, "After I registered according to the agency's instructions, FEMA deposited a check into my account. The process is simple - anyone can do this." While many of our neighbors were inconvenienced or sailed through unscathed, hundreds more are flat out entitled to benefits. Galt Mile residents who sustained losses shouldn't hesitate to apply for relief, especially since it was funded by your prior contributions to Internal Revenue. That said, those of us with a tendency to embellish might take note the following:

In describing its anti-fraud machinery on the FEMA website, the agency states, "FEMA uses a number of methods to detect fraud among the applicants. An automated system crosschecks information with other agencies and insurance companies to weed out duplicate applications. Field inspections are conducted to verify losses and damages for every person who applies. Potential cases of fraud or misuse are referred to the U.S. Justice Department for prosecution." They conclude this thinly veiled threat by listing the kind of cases for which they nurture an affinity:

- People who fraudulently claim a property as their primary residence.
- Self-inflicted damages.
- Spouses claiming different addresses.
- People who fail to disclose insurance coverage.

If you still find yourself lusting for drama, consider this agency Post Script. "People who are caught trying to claim false losses can be charged with a felony and, if convicted, face a maximum five- to 10-year prison term and up to \$250,000 in fines."*





The Water & Sewer Rates Roller Coaster

By Eric Berkowitz

On August 28, 2017, Galt Mile officials Pio Ieraci, Eric Berkowitz and Fred Nesbitt met in City Hall with Commissioner Bruce Roberts, City Manager Lee Feldman and staffers from the utility billing department - specifically - those who generate invoices for water and sewer services. It was the latest in a series of meetings convened to correct a longstanding billing inequity that unfairly inflated water and sewer charges for association homeowners. Curbing this discriminatory invoicing policy should shave thousands of dollars from annual association budgets.

Seeding the Rate Rancor

In 2009, the City of Fort Lauderdale announced a new set of water and sewer rates for 250,000 customers in Fort Lauderdale, Port Everglades, Lauderdale-by-the-Sea, Oakland Park, Sea Ranch Lakes, Wilton Manors, parts of Davie and Tamarac and parts of unincorporated Broward County. To dilute blowback, an informational flyer inserted in monthly invoices, placed on the City website and shared with the local media exclaimed "The rate changes will result in an increase of less than \$10 per month for 72 percent of single family residential customers."

Within months of implementation, when association managers called the Water Department to inquire about skyrocketing water and sewer bills, department supervisors shot back a colorful array of transparently vapid rationales, including the prospect of a mysterious leak somewhere on the building premises, a broken water meter and finally, "Your unit owners must be using much more water than last year." With association invoices exceeding the prior year's charges by 60 - 80%, Galt Mile officials took a closer look at the City's new rate formula.

It was no accident that the City spin specified "single family resi-

dential customers" as beneficiaries of a relatively painless increase. Multi-family homeowners, such as those living in associations, were being charged far more for identical services than customers in single-family homes. Rate inquiries about the billing disparity between single family and multi-family homeowners were met with a boilerplate half-truth by Water Department officials, "The rates for single family homes and multi-family residences are identical."

While the rates are identical, how they are applied is not. Drawn from the billing formula first introduced in 2009 (and since inflated by 44% through a series of annual rate hikes), identical multi-tier rate scales that increase with consumption (water charges) - or discharge (sewer charges) - are applied to water & sewer customers in single family and multi-family homes. In FY 2017, the 5 tiers or "rate multipliers" for water usage are \$2.10, \$4.65, \$5.81, \$7.84 and \$11.37. The two tiers applicable to wastewater are \$3.71 and \$8.22. Used as billing coefficients, these rate tiers were uniformly applied to all Fort Lauderdale residential customers (along with fixed commodity charges, fees and taxes).

However, a second formula component that measures actual consumption and discharge (in gallons per month) openly punishes residents living in condominiums and cooperatives. This block rate formula, which differs for single- and multi-family homeowners, determines which of the 5 rate coefficients (or 2 for wastewater) is applied to each customer's usage totals.

Block Rates & Billing Coefficients

Since the monthly usage charges for single-family homeowners are based on every 1,000 gallons of water consumed (or dis-

charged) while associations are invoiced for the total amount of water (and wastewater) parsed by its membership (1000 gallons per month multiplied by the number of dwelling units), an "apples to apples" comparison requires some 3rd grade math. After eliminating fixed charges for commodities (i.e. water meters), service fees and taxes, dividing the association's usage charges for water and sewer by the number of dwelling units yields an average unit owner's consumption charges.

Except for customers who use or discharge less than 1000 gallons of water per month, rates from a higher tier are invoiced to multi-family homeowners who use or discharge the same amount of water as single-family homeowners. An association's unit owners, who pay for these water and sewer charges in their regular maintenance dues, can pay up to 86% more than a single-family homeowner for identical water consumption and sewer discharge.

For example, the block rate for a single-family homeowner who uses 2000 gallons per month is \$2.10 for each 1000 gallons (total of \$4.20). A condo owner who consumes the same 2000 gallons is billed at a block rate of \$2.10 for the first 1000 gallons, and at a block rate of \$4.65 for the second 1000 gallons (total of \$6.75) - 61% more than the single-family homeowner.

The disparity also applies when these 2 homeowners dump their 2000 gallons of water. The single-family homeowner is charged a sewer block rate of \$3.71 for every 1000 gallons expunged (total of \$7.42). The comparable sewer (wastewater) block rate for our condo owner is \$3.71 for draining the first 1000 gallons, and \$8.22 for the second 1000 gallons (total of \$11.93) or 61% more than the single-family homeowner. As monthly consumption and/or discharge increases, the discrepancy widens, forcing association customers to shoulder nearly twice the burden (a premium approaching 86%) placed on Single-family homeowners. Squaring this fiscal splinter will save the average association homeowner hundreds of dollars each year.

Shopping for Long Green

Shunning a titanic tax alternative, many municipalities issue bonds repaid by ratepayers to finance their utilities - a vehicle used by Fort Lauderdale to fund its mammoth "Waterworks 2011" modernization (which replaced widespread septic systems with modern sewers) and later to bolster the City's deteriorating water and sewer infrastructure. To help generate the nosebleed profit margins that intoxicate prospective bond investors, the City repeatedly retained the St. Augustine firm of Burton and Associates (acquired in May 2016 by Canadian design juggernaut Stantec) to compile a Rate Study before each venture into the bond market. These blueprints for enhancing the utility's bottom line are indispensable to attracting investment at terms favorable to the City.

In fact, it was Burton who advised the City to hike rates by 20% (a series of 5% annual increases) before entering the bond market in 2009, given how a 23% drop in water sales attributed to the



Michael Burton

City's successful 2005 conservation measures threatened to lower the bond rating, explode the cost of money and deter future investment. Since then, Burton's regular input has nurtured the utility's appeal to investors while providing most customers with one of the lowest rate scales in Broward County (as per GMCA Treasurer Fred Nesbitt - the 6th lowest in 2016).

To assure investors that the Water & Sewer Enterprise Fund is swimming in cash, each bond issue incorporates a bulletproof City agreement to adjust rates as required to sufficiently fund the system's operational needs while fleshing out special accounts for Renewal, Replacement and Improvement; Subordinated Indebtedness; Rate Stabilization; and an overstuffed reserves fund. Additionally, a Rate Covenant couched in the Bond Resolution contractually requires the City to cover 130% of its Olympian debt service.

Since the City plans to revisit the bond market for additional resources, it must also insure that the utility demonstrates profits minimally deserving of "AA+" bond ratings (Standard & Poor's). Given this menu of obligations and incentives, the fund balance generally approaches 200% of the outstanding debt.

Consistent with the Fund's organizing documents, "best practices" dictate the return of profits to customers in the form of a rate reduction, or funding non-emergency upgrades to the system. Also, on the City website "New Utility Rates" page, it states "The City's Water and Sewer Fund and the Stormwater Fund are enterprise funds. This means all funds collected are maintained within the Water and Sewer or Stormwater Funds and are used for water, wastewater, and stormwater related expenses only."

Unfortunately, its hogwash.

To circumvent these protocols, City officials turned to a 30-year old Florida Supreme Court decision that allows municipalities to earn a reasonable dividend from a City-owned utility (like any other shareholding investor), which the City could use for whatever purpose deemed in the public interest. The City has been moonwalking through this loophole for years.

Continued on page 8



Since there is no Florida statute or administrative code that restricts municipalities from using Enterprise Fund revenues for General Fund expenses, roughly \$20 million a year in water utility profits is diverted to plug unexpected budget deficits – ostensibly to preclude a millage increase. Of course, the \$18 million expended annually to beat back floods from broken water lines and clean up exploding sewage barely keeps the City from floating away on a river of sludge.

Two Bites at the Apple

After first learning of the billing inequity at the January 21, 2010 Advisory Board meeting, Commissioner Roberts brought several water department supervisors to the February 1, 2010 Presidents Council meeting, where they stonewalled an inquiry by association officials, claiming they were legally barred from discussing the invoices of single-family customers without their written permission. Preoccupied with the elusive beach renourishment, a threat to close the Galt Library, and a costly mandate to retrofit sprinklers, Galt officials shelved the issue.

Six years later, at the February 18, 2016 Advisory Board meeting, Playa del Mar President Fred Nesbitt (subsequently named Galt Mile Treasurer) complained about inexplicable spikes in the water bill invoiced to Playa del Mar – and several other associations. Galt officials asked Commissioner Bruce Roberts to arrange a meeting with the utility officials to explore these billing anomalies.

Accompanied by GMCA President Pio Ieraci and Vice President Eric Berkowitz, on February 25, Nesbitt aired his concerns to Roberts, City Manager Lee Feldman and Revenue Collection Supervisor Arnette Torrence, who agreed to look into Nesbitt's complaint. When the meeting was reconvened on June 9, 2016, after Torrence informed Nesbitt that the invoices appear to be accurate, Ieraci and Berkowitz revived the long-delayed inquiry into the department's discriminatory multi-family billing formula.

Investors vs. Ratepayers

Having altered the meeting agenda, Galt Mile officials addressed a Chinese menu of City trepidations about correcting the rate disparity, refuting attempts to either justify or marginalize the extra cost for condo customers. Finally, Commissioner Roberts and Director of Finance Kirk Buffington conceded that the formula is inequitable – and should be corrected – but not at the expense of the City's credibility in the bond market.

By the time Broward voters doused a City plan to fund infrastructure improvements with a sales tax increase, most of that eroding infrastructure had exceeded its serviceable life. Neck-deep in exploding water mains, after Reiss Engineering completed a \$1.9 million structural snapshot of the City's aging water and sewer infrastructure in April, Fort Lauderdale Public Works Director Paul Berg noted the "high price tags" on past-due capital improvements to seawalls, water and wastewater distribution and collection systems, treatment plants, pumping stations and well fields.

After reviewing the 839-page report, Berg affirmed that the immense expense of this endeavor will not be borne by taxpayers, but investors. The City finance team is walking on eggshells as it prepares to strap up for a \$1.4 billion 20-year bond issue – nearly twice the resources raised for the \$786 million Waterworks 2011 feedbag. To reel in the kind of whales required to fully subscribe this unprecedented bailout, the utility will need to radiate the impression that it prints money.

To help achieve rate parity without inadvertently belaboring the impending bond issue, City Manager Lee Feldman brought consultant Mike Burton to the meeting with Galt officials. Burton ex-

plained how he configures a rate schedule by combining consumption costs based on the class of a property with a base charge – which is determined by meter size for multi-family customers. Feldman and Roberts suggested that the Galt Mile contingent meet privately with Burton to hash out an understanding.

Burton's Fix

At an April 2017 meeting, Burton admitted to ignoring the rate disparity during the eight years since he first revised the rates in 2009. In 2008, Fort Lauderdale featured 3-tier rate schedules for residential customers, a relatively mild schedule for single-family homeowners and a tougher scale for multi-family homeowners. Instead of correcting the inequity, Burton simply expanded the 3-tier scales into 5-tier scales, while preserving the disparity. Burton explained that he expanded the scales to encourage conservation by penalizing extremely heavy usage. However, the same penalty was applied to multi-family residences that used 8,000 gallons and single-family residences that used 20,000 gallons.

Burton asserted that he could close the gap between the two residential schedules by redefining the base charge to "Recover a portion of the fixed costs of the water and sewer systems based upon the potential demands of the customer, such as debt service, a base level of staffing at the treatment plants, overhead, and management costs." Burton was particularly partial to including "...a cost for maintaining system readiness," as it isn't a factor impacted by usage.

Burton explained that since the cost of delivering water and sewer services to multi-family residences is significantly less than the comparable cost for single-family homes, a base charge reflecting that cost would diminish the differential by lowering the charges to condos.

Reminding Burton that Commissioner Bruce Roberts and Director of Finance Kirk Buffington had already agreed that water and wastewater usage charges should be identical for all residential customers in Fort Lauderdale, Galt Mile President Pio Ieraci suggested that he simply synchronize the consumption schedules for Multi- and Single-family homeowners. When Burton offered to achieve parity by revising both the consumption and base charges, Ieraci agreed.

Observing that monthly water and wastewater usage for a unit owner rarely exceeds 6000 gallons, Burton offered to connect the first 6000 gallons in the multi-family consumption schedule to the same rate tiers (billing coefficients) provided for single-family residences. The parties agreed that this minor adjustment would eliminate the inequity. As the meeting closed, Galt Mile Vice President Eric Berkowitz asked Burton to send a memo summarizing the revision.

Synchronizing the Schedules

On June 12, 2017, Finance Director Kirk Buffington forwarded a technical report from Burton containing a description and analysis of the proposed adjustment. Evidently, Burton was less than satisfied with simply leveling the playing field, and turned the base charge into a flexibly defined variable for the sole purpose of additionally manipulating the final charges.

Upon synchronizing the consumption schedules, Burton observed that condo homeowners used less water and much less wastewater than single-family residents, which would result in an unexpected incremental savings. To offset this unanticipated potential for lost revenues, Burton artificially boosted the gross multi-family cost by adding his largely arbitrary base charge. Galt Mile officials were skull-blocked by Burton's proposal to reverse engineer a financial penalty specifically for multi-family customers who conserve water.

At the August 28 meeting with Feldman and Roberts, Ieraci af-

firmed support for synchronizing the monthly residential consumption scales up to 6000 gallons while noting his concern about Burton's "other proposed changes."

Feldman's Quandary

Based on previous meetings, Galt officials anticipated that Feldman would aspire to a resolution that didn't lower overall fund revenues, and surmised that decreasing the system's planned income from association homeowners would require a comparable increase elsewhere - presumably from single-family ratepayers. However, the City Manager announced that parity would have to be achieved without burdening single-family homeowners.

Instead, Feldman would ask his financial staffers to estimate the projected loss of income. If the shortfall could be managed by tweaking the budget, the changes would be approved immediately, dodging the delays of a regulatory gauntlet. However, if savings postulated for multi-family homeowners exceeded a few \$million, the City would have to first order another Rate Study from Stantec (Mike Burton), ostensibly to confirm that the fiscal impact doesn't violate the City's bondholder obligations.

A few weeks later, Feldman informed Galt Mile Officials that the estimated lost revenue exceeded an amount that he could reasonably offset with budget tweaks, triggering the need for another rate study. Feldman's news is a mixed bag for the Galt Mile. While his staffers' findings seem to forecast a substantial savings for association customers, Galt officials must now wait until the rate study is completed before they can verify that it contains the corrected consumption schedule without unjustifiably inflating a multi-family "base charge" - as replacing one inequity with another could postpone the endgame.

Clearly cognizant of his constituents' disappointment with Feldman's prospective delay, when the meeting was adjourned, Roberts added a Post Script, "I know that eliminating this inequity is the right thing to do, and if I'm still here when the study is completed, I promise to see this through." Although Roberts' attempt at consolation was offered in good faith, Galt officials won't be happy campers until we can verify that Burton's handiwork was delivered as advertised. Hopefully, the book will close on this blood blister in the next few months. Stay tuned...•



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29 Halloween Spooktacular 5K TY Park 5K Run/Walk: 7:15 a.m. Kid's Dash: 8 a.m. Youth Mile: 8:15 a.m. Info: 954-461-5515 Trick-or-Treat on Second Street Esplanade Park 1 to 4 p.m. Info: 954-828-PARK	30 Spook-Tacular Party! The Signature Grand 7:30 to 11:30 p.m. Info: 954-390-0493	31 BINGO Galt Towers Social Room (4250 Galt Ocean Drive) 7:30 p.m. Info: Cyndi Songer: 954-563-7268 International Tuesdays at Gulfstream Park 7 to 9:30 p.m. Info: www.gulfstreampark.com	1 BINGO Regency South Party Room 7 p.m. Info: Bob Pearlman: 954-547-4063 Fort Lauderdale Int'l Boat Show (Through 11/5) 7:30 to 11:30 p.m. Info/Locations: 954-764-7642
5 Sunday Jazz Brunch Fairchild Tropical Garden 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Info: 954-396-3622 Daylight Saving Time ends Palm Beach No Kid Hungry Dinner Buccan (350 S County Road) in Palm Beach 6 p.m.: Cocktail Reception 7 p.m.: Multi-Course Seated Dinner and Live Auction Info: 202-478-6505	6 GMCA Presidents Council Meeting L'Hermitage II Condo Association 7:30 to 9 p.m. Commissioner Bruce Roberts: Pre-Agenda Meeting Beach Community Center, 6 p.m. Info: 954-828-5033	7 BINGO Galt Towers Social Room (4250 Galt Ocean Drive) 7:30 p.m. Info: Cyndi Songer: 954-563-7268 VOTE!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Limited Partnership Cigar & Wine Dinner Marriott Harbor Beach Resort & Spa 6:30 p.m. Info: 954-979-7124	8 BINGO Regency South Party Room 7 p.m. Info: Bob Pearlman: 954-547-4063 Coral Gables Food Wine & Spirits Festival The Falls in Miami 6 to 9 p.m. Info: 786-558-5234
12 Dig The Beach Volleyball Pompano Beach 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Info: 561-241-3801 Grace Jamaican Jerk Festival Markham Park, Noon to 9 p.m. Info: 754-273-9166 Camelot Days Medieval Festival T.Y. Park, Hollywood Info: 786-332-0047	13 5th Annual Red Shield ReDesign Bash Galleria Mall 6:30 to 9 p.m. Info: 954- 524-6991	14 BINGO Galt Towers Social Room (4250 Galt Ocean Drive) 7:30 p.m. Info: Cyndi Songer: 954-563-7268	15 BINGO Regency South Party Room 7 p.m. Info: Bob Pearlman: 954-547-4063
19 Flanigan's Rockin' Rib Run 10K Vista View Park in Davie 7 a.m. Info: 954-474-4074 Buckler's 43rd Annual "The Harvest Festival" Expo Dade Fair Expo Center Info: 386-860-0092	20 5th Annual Red Shield ReDesign Bash Galleria Mall 6:30 to 9 p.m. Info: 954- 524-6991	21 BINGO Galt Towers Social Room (4250 Galt Ocean Drive) 7:30 p.m. Info: Cyndi Songer: 954-563-7268	22 BINGO Regency South Party Room 7 p.m. Info: Bob Pearlman: 954-547-4063 Boca's Annual Holiday Tree Lighting Doors: 4:30 p.m., Event: 5:30 p.m. Info: https://www.myboca.us/

OCTOBER 22: Stranahan House Mini Pow Wow, Historic Stranahan House Museum, 7:30 to 9:30 p.m., Info: <http://www.stranahanhouse.org>

OCTOBER 24: Palm Beach Condo & HOA Expo, Palm Beach County Convention Center in WPB, 10:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., Info: 952-881-5030

OCTOBER 25: A Garden Party at Hugh Taylor Birch State Park, 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., Info: 954-566-0660

OCTOBER 28: Making Strides of Miami - Dade, Marlins Park, Registration: 7 a.m., Walk: 9 a.m., Info: 305-779-2847

OCTOBER 28-29: Harvest Festival - Halloween Story Time Weekend, Flamingo Gardens, 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., Info: 954-473-2955

OCTOBER 29: Garden Cars in the Garden, Fairchild Tropical Gardens, 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Info: 305-667-1651

NOVEMBER 3-4: American Indian Arts Celebration (AIAC), Big Cypress Seminole Indian Reservation, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Info: 877-902-1113

NOVEMBER 4: Household Hazardous Waste and Electronics Drop-off Events, Community Park (1660 NE 10th St.), Pompano, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., Info: 954-828-8000

NOVEMBER 4: 35th Annual Golf Tournament, Pompano Beach Municipal Signature Greg Norman Course (1101 N. Federal Hwy), Pompano, Info: 954-941-2940

NOVEMBER 4: Teamsters Local 769 - 11th Annual Car Show Picnic, Markham Park, Noon to 4:30 p.m., Info: 954.536.3492

NOVEMBER 4: Boca Raton Wine & Food Festival, Sanborn Square Park in Boca, 6 to 10 p.m., Info: 561-338-7594

NOVEMBER 4-5: RockFest 80's, C.B. Smith Park in Pembroke Pines, 11 a.m. to 10:30 p.m., Info: info@rockfestconcerts.com

NOVEMBER 6: The Best of Times Senior Expo, South County Civic Center (16700 Jog Road (South of Linton)) in Delray, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., Info: 754-246-2874

NOVEMBER 11: Denim & Diamonds Gala, Marriott Harbor Beach Resort & Spa, 6 to 10 p.m., Info: 954-564-3512

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<p>26 Salute to Business Awards 2017 Pier 66 5:30 to 8 p.m. Info.: 954-462-6000</p> <p>Riverland Halloween Party Riverland Park (950 SW 27th Ave.) 6:15 to 8:15 p.m. Info.: 954-828-5320</p>	<p>27 Music on Main Street Halloween Bash Oakland Park City Hall 6 to 10 p.m. Info.: 954-630-4507</p> <p>Winterfest White Party Fort Lauderdale Marriott Harbor Beach Resort & Spa 7 to 11 p.m. Info.: 954-767-0686</p>	<p>28 Making Strides of Broward Huizenga Plaza Registration: 6:30 a.m. Walk: 8:30 a.m. Info.: 954-200-7516</p> <p>Gateway Classic Cars Cars & Coffee Gateway Classic Cars of Ft Lauderdale Coral Springs 9 a.m. to Noon Info.: 954-227-4202</p>
<p>2 Film: Romeo is Bleeding Bailey Hall Broward College's A. Hugh Adams Central Campus 7:30 p.m. Info.: http://www.baileyhall.org</p> <p>Day of the Dead Celebration Huizenga Plaza 4 to 10 p.m. Info.: info@dayofthedeadflorida.com</p>	<p>3 LUNG FORCE Expo The Signature Grand 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Info.: 954-524-4931</p> <p>Rockin' at Provident Park Performer: Caribbean Waves Steel Drum Band Provident Park (1412 NW 6th St.) 7 to 10 p.m. Info.: 954-828-7275</p>	<p>4 Sallarulo's Race for Champions 5K Nova Southeastern University 8 to 11 a.m. Info.: 954-262-2150</p> <p>Ft Lauderdale Int'l Film Festival (Through 11/19) Festival HQ-503 SE 6th St. Info.: 954-525-FILM (3456)</p>
<p>9</p> <p>Light Up Lauderdale Esplanade Park 6 to 8:30 p.m. Info.: 954-468-1541, ext.208</p>	<p>10 Music by the Sea El Mar & Commercial Blvd. 6:30 TO 10:30 p.m. Info.: 954-776-5092</p> <p>Fall Garden Festival (Through 11/12) Fairchild Tropical Gardens, Miami Info.: 305-667-1651</p>	<p>11 Comeback Trail - Fort Lauderdale 5K Esplanade Plaza 7 a.m. to 1 p.m. Info.: 1-800-STROKES</p> <p>Veteran's Day Ceremony Jaco Pastorius Park, 11 a.m. Info.: 954-630-4507</p>
<p>16 Executive Sleep Out (Through 11/16) Esplanade Park 7 p.m. to 7 a.m. Info.: 954-568-7914</p> <p>G.M.C.A. Advisory Board Meeting Nick's Italian Restaurant, 11 a.m.</p>	<p>17 Music by the Sea El Mar & Commercial Blvd. 6:30 TO 10:30 p.m. Info.: 954-776-5092</p> <p>Fort Lauderdale Fall Home Design & Remodeling Show (Through 11/18) Broward County Convention Center Info.: 305-667-9299</p>	<p>18 Champagne Fun Festival Esplanade Plaza 4 to 9 p.m. Info.: info@champagneFunFestival.com</p> <p>Riverwalk Mutts & Martinis The Downtowner 2 to 5 p.m. Info.: 954-468-1541 Ext. 208</p>
<p>23</p> <p>Fort Lauderdale Turkey Trot & Paddle DC Alexander Park Start: 7:30 a.m. Info.: 954-767-8866 ext. 25</p>	<p>24 Music by the Sea El Mar & Commercial Blvd. 6:30 TO 10:30 p.m. Info.: 954-776-5092</p>	<p>25 Delray Beach Thanksgiving Weekend Art Festival 330 East Atlantic Ave., Delray 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Info.: 561-746-6615</p> <p>Turkey at Tradewinds Park Sprint Triathlon Duathlon Tradewinds Park Start: 7:30 a.m. Info.: 954-213-6699</p>

NOVEMBER 26

Winterfest Family Fun Day
Huizenga Plaza, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Info.: 954-767-0686

NOVEMBER 28

55th Annual Christmas on Las Olas - 2017
600 - 1100 East Las Olas Blvd.
5 to 10 p.m.
Info.: 954-258-8382

NOVEMBER 29

6th Annual Soaring for Children Cocktail Reception
Hyatt Regency Pier Sixty-Six
6 to 9 p.m.
Info.: 954-831-5952

NOVEMBER 30

11th Annual "Men of Style"
The Galleria Mall, 6 p.m.
Info.: 954-446-0806

DECEMBER 2

Winterfest Black Tie Ball
Seminole Hard Rock Hotel and Casino, 7 p.m.
Info.: 954-767-0686

DECEMBER 2-3

Bonnet House Orchid Festival
Bonnet House Museum and Gardens, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Info.: <http://www.bonnethouse.org/>

DECEMBER 2-3

Riptide Music Festival
Fort Lauderdale Beach at Harbor Dr. and A1A
Info.: 954-521-5280

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WWW.GALTMILE.COM**

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, Fort Lauderdale Beach Park, 1100 Seabreeze Blvd., 7 to 11 a.m., Info.: 954-593-8501

Second Saturday of Every Month: Burlock Coast Farmer's Market, Burlock Coast at The Ritz-Carlton, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Info.: myfortlauderdalebeach.com

Second Tuesday of Every Month: Orchid Greenhouse Tours, Bonnet House, 11 a.m. to Noon, Info.: 954-703-2606

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

Thursdays: BHIP Farmer's Market, Broward Health Imperial Point Medical Arts Pavilion (633 N Federal Hwy.), 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

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

Sundays: Las Olas Sunday Market, 333 East Las Olas Blvd. & SE 4th Ave., 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., Info.: 954-426-8436

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.: 754-701-0197 or 516-840-1455

EDITOR'S COMMENTARY:

Chip LaMarca's AUGUST 2017 Newsletter

By Eric Berkowitz

In his August 2017 LaMarca Letter, District 4 County Commissioner Chip LaMarca regrets the Broward Board's decision to decline a replay of the nominal FY 2017 millage reduction he successfully spearheaded last year; notes that WorldCity's annual compilation of Port Everglades' trade statistics heralds a rebound after several years of tentative growth; reviews the fast-growing number of new routes that contributed to FLL's status as the fastest growing large hub airport in the country; advises constituents to enroll in AlertBroward, a new emergency notification system that provides subscribers with important information about an emergency; and closes by inviting students to participate in the Mayor's Art Challenge, a competition sponsored by the Broward Cultural Division.

Broward Budget Bump

Although last year's increasing property values plumped revenues in the proposed FY 2018 Broward budget, LaMarca's Commission peers denied his efforts to implement a second millage reduction in as many years, fearful of how the Florida electorate's likely approval of a Constitutional amendment would mince County revenues.

House Speaker Richard Corcoran configured a plan to neuter "Home Rule" and shift the regulation of local issues to State lawmakers. In preparation, Corcoran would first fiscally destabilize local governments sufficiently to prompt tax increases and/or service cuts, which he would use to disparage City and County governments as "wasteful, unaccountable and lazy."

Solely conceived to starve City and County governments, House Joint Resolution 7105 (HJR 7105) will place an amendment on the November ballot proposing a third \$25,000 homestead exemption (on homes valued in excess of \$100,000). When a Statehouse analysis of the amendment's draconian fiscal impact concluded that it would wholly obliterate the local economies in 29 Florida Counties, lawmakers were forced to file a second bill (HB 7107) that would serve as a safety net – and replace the lost revenues in "fiscally constrained" counties.

Of the estimated \$645 million that would be lost to local governments across the State, a whopping \$73.5 million would be stripped from Broward County, its special taxing districts and 31 municipalities. Upon returning from an unsuccessful lobbying effort to dilute or quash the measure in Tallahassee, Broward Mayor Barbara Sharief assured Broward taxpayers that County Commissioners will not address lost revenues with a tax increase.

To avoid service cuts threatened by an estimated \$32 million General Fund shortfall in FY 2020, an \$11 million budget reserve (mentioned by LaMarca) will be repeated in the FY 2019 and FY 2020 spending plans, wholly mitigating the anticipated deficit.

WorldCity: Seaports Rebound as MIA Glows
Reviewing how the newly released U.S. Census Bureau trade statistics were analyzed by WorldCity (a Coral Gables media and data research company), LaMarca laments a 12.19 percent drop in trade at Port Everglades in 2016, while anticipating a rebound in 2017. This is, in fact, among the rosier versions of the trade picture for the area's most lucrative economic engines. WorldCity observations are derived in the US by crunching customs data at international trade hubs, about 450 of the nation's

busiest airports, seaports and border crossings.

In South Florida, where the "Miami Customs District" includes airports and seaports from Palm Beach County to Key West, the three major players include PortMiami (POM), Port Everglades (PEV), and Miami International Airport (MIA). 2016 was the fourth consecutive year that the US Customs Bureau reported a decline in South Florida's trade with the world, slipping from \$106.85 billion in 2015 to \$104.5 billion last year – a 2.2 percent loss of trade value. Although the region's collective exports decreased 4.23 percent last year, as imports gained .23 percent, the district still recorded a healthy 2016 trade surplus of \$7.76 billion.

Observing how the 2016 trade statistics generated by each of the District's three "Big Dogs" differ significantly, WorldCity notes that exports from Port Everglades tumbled 11.6 percent to \$11.7 billion while total imports dropped 12.8 percent to \$10.4 billion – comprising its trade total of \$22.14 billion. The value of exports departing PortMiami decreased by 7.8 percent to \$9.5 billion as imports fell 3.47 percent to \$14.5 billion – a total of \$24 billion in trade value. In contrast, exports from Miami International Airport increased .03 percent to \$32.8 billion, and imports jumped 22.4 percent to \$26.2 billion – adding an impressive \$59 billion to the District's total trade value.

The WorldCity analysis attributed the declining value of trade in both seaports and the increased trade value in MIA to shifting commodity prices. While both seaports handle comparable inventories of cargo containers, the value of Port Everglades' imports has been additionally pummeled by plummeting oil and gas prices, given how the port provides petroleum, including jet fuel, to 12 counties in Florida. Roughly 20% of the State's energy requirements are met by petroleum stored and distributed by companies located at Port Everglades.

WorldCity president Ken Roberts explained "Port Everglades depends on the prices of gas and oil. Lower fuel prices dropped the value of Port Everglades' imports." In 2016, Port Everglades' imports of gasoline and other fuels fell a whopping 61.4 percent to \$875.4 million.

In contrast, higher gold prices were largely responsible for the glowing trade stats at MIA. Miami has long been one of the nation's major hubs of the gold trade. Since local gold entrepreneurs generally maintain a low profile and many gold-related firms are family businesses, Floridians were taken by surprise when the Census Bureau trade data revealed that gold was the Miami District's top import and export in 2012 – most of which entered or departed the country via Miami International Airport.

Not surprisingly, gold was again MIA's top imported commodity last year, with the value of gold imports increasing 7.54 percent to \$4.55 billion. Gold exports were up 3.6 percent to \$1.8 billion. Gold mined in Colombia, Mexico, Bolivia and Peru – or from the Cu-
raçao-Multi Commodities Centre Worldwide (C-MCC) Free Trade Zone, are typically flown to Miami and then routed to Switzerland, the United Arab Emirates and/or the Dominican Republic. MIA also benefitted from imports of plasma, vaccines and blood, which increased 191 percent to \$1.4 billion.

What About the Steroidal Growth at FLL?
Why isn't Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport (FLL) – the fastest growing large hub airport in the country – among the region's top trading venues? Although separated by a mere 30 miles, the relative

strengths of the international airports in Miami and Fort Lauderdale are a world apart.

According to an American City Business Journals analysis of U.S. Department of Transportation statistics from 2010 to 2015, Miami International Airport is the No. 7 best-run airport in America, while Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport is No. 52. The "best run" analysis weighs productivity and growth metrics. To mitigate size disparity, these include revenue per employee, operating income per employee and overall growth rate in the past five years. MIA's total operating revenue grew 39 percent during the five-year period – more than double the revenue growth rate of FLL – at only 16 percent. MIA also generated more revenue and operating income per employee than FLL, despite a 12 percent reduction of its workforce. MIA reduced its debt by 4 percent during the five-year period, while FLL debt skyrocketed 107 percent as the airport embarked on large scale Master Plan renovations.

In a separate ranking that measured the impact of amenities and conveniences, FLL took the brass ring, receiving a grade of B+, while MIA only rated a C+. FLL's higher score was due to cheaper fees for parking and valet, and its proximity to the Greater Fort Lauderdale/Broward County Convention Center. FLL's Free Wi-Fi, which MIA is planning to install, was also a major factor.

However, planned improvements are likely to enhance FLL's trade standing in the near future. The analysis underscores how airports achieving the most growth and profitability are investing in modernization and an increasing inventory of retail and restaurants to better accommodate growing passenger traffic (as compared to larger, often outdated, air hubs).

In addition to undergoing comprehensive renovations, roughly 30 vendors are being replaced by 100 new food, beverage and retail locations in FLL's four terminals. Following the 2013 expiration of a decades-long exclusive contract with an FLL vendor that provided food, beverage and retail options within the airport, new concession agreements were executed with HMS Host and Delaware North, which offer much more variety for travelers passing through the airport's terminals. Between 2013 and 2016, the airport's total food and beverage gross sales grew to \$99.55 million – a 63 percent increase.

*Yasmi Govin, director of the airport's business and properties management division, explained "FLL has started to revamp its entire concession program in the past few years. Almost all of the food and beverage locations have been rebranded or refaced, with many of these locations to be completely replaced as we move through our terminal modernization project." FLL is also contemplating plans to develop the adjacent property with a common use club and an affiliated hotel. In the next few years, FLL may pilfer some spotlight from its high profile transportation siblings.**



Chip LaMarca's AUGUST 2017 Newsletter

roll used for the adopted FY17 budget. The County has recommended a budget reserves of 11 million (about 1 percent of recurring General Fund revenues) in FY18 due to the potential reduction of \$32 million in property tax revenues starting in FY20 if the legislative constitutional amendment to expand the homestead exemption passes in the fall of 2018.

Homestead properties are expected to see increases in tax bills of 2.1 percent. Therefore, median valued homestead property owners will see an increase for FY17 - FY18 of \$18. Based on the percent change in the average taxable value for all residential properties, other property owners will see an increase of \$89. Last year in FY2017, I spearheaded a millage rate decrease and the County Commission was able to reduce the millage rate by 1 percent (from 5.723 in FY2016 to 5.669) which provided property tax relief with no increase for homestead residents with a home valued at the median property value.

As your County Commissioner, I will continue to advocate for a decrease of the millage rate in order to cut your taxes and provide financial relief. It will require a \$9.5 million reduction from property-tax supported budgets to reduce the millage rate by 1 percent, which will still support the necessary government services for the community. Unfortunately, my colleagues have not supported this initiative for FY18. However, you will have two opportunities to make your voices heard. The first Public Budget Hearing is scheduled for September 14th at 5:01PM and the second Public Budget Hearing is scheduled for September 26th at 5:01PM at the Broward County Governmental Center in the Commission Chambers, Room 422.

For more information on Broward County's Budget, please visit Office of Management and Budget.

Port Everglades Trade Numbers

This year's edition of WorldCity's Port Everglades Trade Numbers provided interesting facts and figures about how Port Everglades (PEV) ranks nationally, the commodities traded through the port, imports and exports and where goods are coming from and going to. While this publication is completely independent, it does examine international trade through Broward County's PEV based on data from U.S. Customs and Border Protection in calendar year 2016.

Dear Broward County Residents,

I am honored to serve as your county commissioner, representing our coastal communities from Deerfield Beach to Fort Lauderdale and all of the amazing communities in between. Here are some recent highlights from around Broward County.

Broward County Budget Update

The Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 Broward County recommended budget will be discussed at the August 29th Final Budget Workshop. The total budget for FY18 is \$4.83 billion, which encompasses all tax-supported and non-tax supported funds. The overall total budget increases by \$48.5 million, with operation budgets higher by \$128.7 million, debt services relatively unchanged and capital budgets \$81.4 million lower than the budget for FY17. The tax roll for FY18 increases by 8.8 percent compared to the

According to the publication, Broward County's Port Everglades' trade with the world totaled \$22.14 billion in 2016. With exports of \$11.70 billion and imports of \$10.44 billion, PEV registered a \$1.27 billion surplus its ninth year in a row. Although the port's trade was down 12.19 percent in 2016, PEV's top 19 exports topped \$100 million in value with the top outbound shipments, printers, topping \$400 million. The publication also stated that while we are halfway through 2017, PEV's trade industry is shaping up to have a rebound year with a 2.32 percent increase in the port's trade, maritime operations and increasing revenue growth.

Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport Update

Broward's Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport (FLL) continues to grow with the addition of British Airways' inaugural flight from London's Gatwick Airport this past July. This is the second international carrier to offer nonstop flights between Fort Lauderdale and London. Additional services coming to FLL include: Norwegian with flights to Barcelona in August and Martinique in October, Jet-Blue and Delta with flights to Salt Lake City in November and Allegiant with flights to Milwaukee and Norfolk in November.

Broward County's FLL is the fastest growing large hub airport in the country. The total traffic for May 2017 was 2,629,156, which is up 9.9 percent over May 2016. Furthermore, domestic traffic was up 8.2 percent and international traffic was up 16.9 percent. May was the 38th consecutive month of growth in total traffic. It was also the 10th consecutive month of double digit growth in international passenger traffic. January to May 2017 traffic was up 11 percent.

New AlertBroward Emergency Notification System

Broward County has activated a new emergency notification system called AlertBroward. This system enables the County to contact residents within seconds so they can receive important information about an emergency. Residents with landlines listed in the Yellow or White Pages have been automatically subscribed to alerts by phone, but AlertBroward also allows members of the public to self-register and provide additional contact information. Unlisted numbers are not provided. Residents are encouraged to register to begin receiving alerts. Sign up is quick, easy and secure on the AlertBroward website.

County Wide Arts Challenge for High School Students

Broward residents in grades 9-12 who attend public, private or home school are eligible to submit work for the Mayor's Art Challenge. All Broward County Commissioners will select one first place winner and one runner up from each of the nine districts in the County. The deadline for students to submit their application is Friday, September 8th and the application can be found on the Cultural Division's Calls-for-Artists page. Students will need to submit their application with digital images of the artwork (up to two entries), a parental release form and indicate their County Commission District to llopez@broward.org.

The Resident's Guide to Government provides a convenient resource to help people stay connected to their local government. It includes contact information for County officials and Federal, State, and local agencies. Visitors can subscribe to eNews and social media sites. Please sign up at Broward.org/District4 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.

As always, it is my honor to serve you.

Best regards,

Chip

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