

MIAMI TODAY

WEEK OF THURSDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2016

A Singular Voice in an Evolving City

WWW.MIAMITODAYNEWS.COM \$4.00



Developers expect Congress to extend EB-5 visas, pg. 13

FINANCIAL TRENDS

Export-Import Bank sputters but exporters carry on, pg. 16



SERVING TICKETS, NOT CASH: International Players Championships Inc., which has failed to get the courts to give it the right to expand its space for the Miami Tennis Open in Key Biscayne's Crandon Park, has told county parks officials it will no longer pay the county \$102,000 a year under a site sponsorship benefits package. The package granted the county courtside boxes, tickets and passes for the annual tournament, and that's what the county will get again after four years of cash payments in lieu of the tournament freebies. That money was divided among the 13 county commissioners for their public-purpose use. Now, says a memo from Mayor **Carlos Gimenez**, the tournament passes and so forth will be divided among the commissioners and the mayor to give in a lottery procedure to charities and other organizations fulfilling a public purpose — the county has a long procedure for that. The next tournament runs from March 20 to April 2.

EXTENDING PENALTY EXCEPTION: County commissioners on Tuesday extended until July 2017 a limited exception from civil penalties and liens for building code violations upon a homeowner's compliance with the code. The amnesty was enacted in 2011, when the county was still in the midst of a severe recession, to encourage compliance with the building code while being mindful of potential financial hardships should strict application of Miami-Dade fines and penalties be enforced. The amnesty was subsequently extended and modified through several pieces of legislation. While the number of foreclosure registrations has declined significantly, according to Deputy Mayor **Jack Osterholt**, extending the amnesty period can benefit those who bought distressed homes with multiple violations who want to bring them into compliance. He said the extension would also improve the safety and values of surrounding properties.

RESTORING STREET TRAFFIC: A short section of a downtown Miami street closed to vehicles since 1986 is being reopened to traffic. City commissioners have authorized the restoration of traffic to Northwest Seventh Street between Northwest First Court and Northwest Second Avenue. The change is geared to facilitate the redevelopment of Blocks 45 and 56 within the Southeast Overtown/Park West Community Redevelopment Area, consistent with development agreements approved by the CRA board for the development on those blocks. The street being reopened to traffic is just north of 3 MiamiCentral, a mixed-use commercial building and parking garage now under construction from All Aboard Florida.

THE ACHIEVER



Photo by Cristina Sullivan

Ben Solomon

Builders Association president heads three law firms

The profile is on Page 4

Another try for marinas on city slate

BY JOHN CHARLES ROBBINS

Miami officials are working to request new proposals to redevelop and manage city-owned marinas on Virginia Key.

The first request in 2015 drew three bids. After controversy and a bid protest, commissioners rejected all three and began from scratch. Some residents fear over-development of the key that links Key Biscayne to the mainland.

This time around, the city manager and the Department of Real Estate and Asset Management will get input from a new review board, the Virginia Key Advisory Board. The board reviewed the latest draft request Nov. 29 and deferred it to Dec. 19 to let the public chime in.

A vote to authorize a new request for proposals is on today's (12/8) city commission agenda. But commissioners might await advice from the advisory board, whose members are spreading the word via social media and the web. The latest 35-page draft request is at <https://miami.nextrequest.com/documents/4671>

Blanca Mesa, Sierra Club designee on the board, posted information on the Facebook page of Friends of Virginia Key. Board members were also preparing to post an update on the website of the Urban Environment League of Greater Miami, a group following developments on the key, home to Marine Stadium. The city owns much of the island, including the stadium.

"What does the community want to see happen in this area? Here's your chance to comment, ask questions," Ms. Mesa wrote.

Comments on the request for proposals must reach lmorley@miamigov.com by 5 p.m. Dec. 9 to be included in feedback submitted to the Department of Real Estate and Asset Management.

Chairman Greg Bush said the advisory board extensively discussed the marinas and the area referred to as a flex park beside the Marine Stadium. "The city manager was there and we had a good dialogue with him," said Mr. Bush of Daniel Alfonso.

Fast-track transit, says new commission chair Bovo

BY SUSAN DANSEYAR

Esteban Bovo Jr., county commission vice chair and chair of the Transit and Mobility Services Committee, was chosen commission chair Tuesday by an 8-5 vote.

Time limits that commissioners recently established obligate them to work fast and achieve solutions, Mr. Bovo said after Rebeca Sosa nominated him.

"The time of procrastination, with studies and long deliberations, is over," he said, particularly in reference to the Strategic Miami Area Rapid Transit (SMART) plan, for which Mr. Bovo has led the charge to pick a corridor or risk what he fears is loss of the half-percent sales tax for transit projects. "I propose we have policy counsel to move policy discussions forward so this board can act."

Before the vote for him or Xavier Suarez, who Barbara Jordan nominated, Mr. Bovo said he was in an awkward position, given his great respect for Mr. Suarez, who echoed



Esteban Bovo Jr.

the sentiment, complimenting Mr. Bovo for procedural strength presiding over committee and commission meetings.

On substantive issues, however, Mr. Suarez spoke of himself with reference to words of the late Sen. Robert Kennedy. "Some people see things as they are and ask why," Mr. Suarez said. "Some see things as they could be and ask why not. That's how I am."

After votes were counted, Mr. Suarez moved to name the chair by acclamation. It was unanimous. Mr. Bovo in turn nominated Audrey Edmonson for vice chair, saying over the past two years, in particular, during critical times she has shown her dedication to the community. The board unanimously chose her.

Joe Martinez, newly elected and attending his first meeting in the term, asked both candidates for chair during deliberations how they would guide the commission and, in particular, if they had thought about committees and membership numbers.

Mr. Bovo said he believes commissioners should serve on three committees but, after much thought, hasn't determined how many committees to establish.

As for Ms. Jordan's question of how both candidates see the SMART plan moving for-

ward, Mr. Bovo said unless the county secures a sustainable funding mechanism, there are no corridors. "That's where we have policy discussions," he said. "All [six] corridors are important and must be completed but, without funding, all we can do is continue talking about them."

Mr. Bovo also spoke of social issues the commission must solve. "I don't know how I would react if a child in my neighborhood was shot while playing outside and if [the problem] became an epidemic in my district," he said. "It's not an easy problem to fix, but... we must empower families to take back their neighborhoods, whether it's improving police presence or just providing moral backing."

A profound education goes on when one sits in a commission seat, Mr. Bovo said. "I do not want to face kids years from now and say we failed."

Outgoing chairman Jean Monestime complimented the presentations of Mr. Bovo and Mr. Suarez in the selection process. "Gentlemen, that was a great job interview," he said. "And the position comes with extra work but not extra pay." All commissioners get \$6,000 a year.

AGENDA

MANDATORY WORKFORCE HOUSING PLAN SIDETRACKED ...	2	LESSONS LEARNED, BOAT SHOW ADDS SHUTTLE MANAGER ...	8
GABLES GARAGES MAY BECOME SPANISH-STYLE TOWERS ...	3	GABLES DRAFTS LEGISLATION TO SPEED 25 MPH CHANGE ...	9
VIEWPOINT: A NEED TO RUSH SEA LEVEL, TRANSIT PLANS ...	6	BEACH MOVES AHEAD WITH LIGHT RAIL AMID QUESTIONS ...	10
UPGRADED CAMP MATACUMBE TO SPOTLIGHT PEDRO PAN ...	7	GARAGE COULD SUPPORT EAST LITTLE HAVANA SHOPPING ...	11

THE INSIDER

ART OF THE AFRICAN DIASPORA: County commissioners Tuesday voted to express support for development of a Miami Museum of Contemporary Art of the African Diaspora and directed the administration to technically assist the Miami-Dade North Arts and Humanities Foundation toward the museum's development. Additionally, the administration is to report on funding strategies for the development. The resolution, sponsored by **Jean Monestime**, co-sponsored by **Barbara Jordan** and **Dennis Moss**, states Miami-Dade has a diverse population whose ancestors come from many areas including the Bahamas, Haiti, Cuba, Jamaica, the West Indies, other islands in the Caribbean basin, Africa and other nations with ties to the African Diaspora. A contemporary art museum focusing on the mass dispersion of peoples from Africa during the transatlantic slave trades from the 1500s to the 1800s, the resolution says, would "enrich the education and lives of residents, attract national and international tourism and become an anchor for economic development in Northwest Miami-Dade communities."



Jean Monestime

FUNDING ART OF AFRICAN DIASPORA: County commissioners passed a resolution Tuesday that allocates \$100,000 in carry-over funds from the 2015-2016 commission auditor's office to the Miami-Dade North Arts & Humanities Foundation toward supporting the creation of the Miami Museum of Contemporary Art of the African Diaspora.

BOAT SHOW SLIPS PAST CRITICS: As the county's Division of Environmental Resources Management works with the National Marine Manufacturers Association to pull together information needed to process a required permit modification for the 2017 Miami International Boat Show beside Miami Marine Stadium on Virginia Key, a report that Mayor **Carlos Gimenez** just issued on the 2016 show says that "the boat show did not result in adverse impacts to bay bottom resources," though the county did detect some compliance issues that staff attributed to "the challenges of organizing and managing such a large complex event during its first year in operation at this location" after years of operation on Miami Beach — which does not particularly seek the show's return after its convention center revamp is completed in several years. Critics of locating the show on the key had cited strong environmental concerns. While permits for the show on Virginia Key allowed for 830 wet slips for boats, the report notes that barely half that many — 417 in all — were installed. (Boat show adds infrastructure, pg. 8)



Carlos Gimenez

PROSPERITY FOR WOMEN: The first report on the status of women and girls in Miami-Dade was presented to the county commissioners Tuesday, with findings that shed light on areas where women and girls are succeeding or struggling: in education, health and safety and economic development. The report, authored by the FIU Metropolitan Center in conjunction with the county auditor, comes as a result of legislation sponsored by Commissioner **Daniella Levine Cava**. In 2015, commissioners adopted the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women. Ms. Levine Cava's ordinance requires a report be produced each year providing a benchmark for measuring gender equity in the county. Once completed, the Miami-Dade County Commission for Women gives recommendations that are aimed at improving the status of women in the county.

HEALTH OF BISCAYNE BAY: Miami leaders are encouraging the federal and state government to complete the first phase of the Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands project, considered a critical part of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan. City commissioners approved a resolution urging the US Army Corps of Engineers, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and the South Florida Water Management District to take all steps necessary to expedite and complete construction of Phase I and expedite planning for Phase II. The project's purpose is to improve the ecological health of Biscayne Bay by adjusting the quantity, quality, timing and distribution of freshwater entering the bay and Biscayne National Park through the redistribution of freshwater flow and the expansion and restoration of wetlands. The item was sponsored by Commissioner **Francis Suarez**.



Francis Suarez

NOW IT'S FORMAL: Baptist Health South Florida on Monday formally announced a partnership with Friends of The Underline to build a healing garden adjacent to US 1 near South Miami Hospital as "a peaceful area for people to relax, rest and reflect." The garden plan had been widely discussed since at least February. "Helping to make our community healthier is at the heart of Baptist Health's mission," said CEO and President **Brian Keeley**. The Underline is a 10-mile linear park planned under the Metrorail line.



Brian Keeley

ROCK MINING'S SPILLOVER EFFECTS: Newly elected County Commission Chair **Esteban Bovo Jr.** on Tuesday agreed to defer legislation that would monitor activity generated by rock mines in Northwest Miami-Dade and the effects on Miramar in Broward County, but just in order to locate the funding source for a study on the mining activity's compliance with regulations. He made clear the issue itself was not being deferred. The proposed resolution directs the administration to monitor the seismic activity generated by rock mines in that part of Miami-Dade to verify whether the activity is consistent with regulations and permits issued by the state fire marshal for those uses. At issue for some Miramar residents is that certain neighborhoods along with nursing homes and schools are being affected daily by vibrations and other disruptions from the blasts. Miramar has a no-blasting law. Although rock mining is an important industry in this county, the legislation states, it involves blasting that can impact residential properties in surrounding areas. The unanimous vote was to defer the resolution until funds are identified, but Mr. Bovo said it will not go past January.

GRINCH RAISES GAS PRICES: Average prices of gasoline could rise 5 to 15 cents a gallon here in the week ahead as oil prices rise as OPEC says it will cut oil production, GasBuddy price tracking service said Monday.

Mandatory workforce housing vote put off with vow to bring issue back

By SUSAN DANSEYAR

The Miami-Dade County Commission on Tuesday deferred its final vote on legislation that would create a mandatory workforce housing development program, but sponsor **Barbara Jordan** said if it fails at the next meeting, she'll be back with the same initiative in six months.

She is proposing a program requiring any new development over 20 units to set aside a 10% minimum for workforce housing. Should the legislation ultimately pass, there would be exclusive grandfathering for projects in the pipeline before the ordinance becomes effective. Ms. Jordan has said on several occasions the proposed ordinance was designed to assist middle-income individuals.

"What is workforce housing?" she asked Tuesday. "It's residential housing units that are between 60% to 140% of the Miami-Dade area median income for firefighters, teachers, nurses, law enforcement officers and public employees."

Ms. Jordan said this proposal would by right go to the administration, which would determine the project's location in terms of the units. She said impact fees could not be deferred for the entire project for the 10 units, but could be deferred for two years.

At issue for a number of her colleagues Tuesday were the numerous amendments made to the ordinance, which they said require additional time to thoroughly understand or, more controversial, that the program would be mandatory rather than voluntary.

The legislation, which would amend requirements for workforce housing units and modify density bonus and development intensity standards, is necessary, said Jose "Pepe" Diaz, but the mandatory side is something the commission must look at further. "When you try to dictate to the private sector what to do, you could run into issues that end up hurting" people you're trying to help.

Daniella Levine Cava, one of the ordinance's co-sponsors along with **Jean Monestime**, said the county drastically needs to do something about affordable housing. "It's not worked at all as voluntary," she said. "People cannot afford to live in this county and we need to do something



'When you try to dictate to the private sector what to do, you could run into issues that end up hurting' people you're trying to help.

Jose 'Pepe' Diaz



'I've met with the [Builders Association of South Florida] many times and have gone as far as I can go.'

Barbara Jordan

dramatic."

After a lengthy discussion, Ms. Jordan said with a smile that while teaching at Head Start, the early childhood learning and knowledge center, she learned to count. Therefore, she made a motion to defer the vote to the commission's next meeting in two weeks.

In the meantime, Ms. Jordan said she'll hold Sunshine meetings with whomever does not yet understand the amendments but pointed out she'll be saying the same things they could have heard at last Thursday's Sunshine meeting, one again on Monday and from reading the sheet that outlines the amendments.

Ms. Jordan at the beginning of the discussion said the Builders Association of South Florida (BASF) requested a deferral but any more issues with the proposed legislation need to be decided on the dais.

"I've met with the BASF many times and have gone as far as I can go," she said.

Rebeca Sosa said she was going to request a deferral because the proposed workforce housing development program "is unfair and unrealistic" to her community. **Sally Heyman**, who said a lot of work has gone into the ordinance, said municipalities should have their attorneys weigh in on the proposed program. Two weeks is enough time for that, she said, and then the commission can vote on the issue.

Ms. Jordan maintained most of the requests commissioners were making have already been done but she's willing to do it all again. She referred to the public hearing and all the people who spoke in favor of the program when the ordinance was in committee.

The legislation was amended and given favorable recommendation, 4-1, by the Economic Prosperity Committee Oct. 13. **Bruno Barreiro** voted No. He agreed that workforce housing, low-income housing and extremely-low income housing must be addressed but said a combination of the voluntary and mandatory workforce program would be adequate. Mr. Barreiro suggested a small percentage for mandatory workforce housing without the incentives; and a bigger percentage with attractive incentives.

Ms. Jordan said she'd schedule a Sunshine meeting with him.

Also at that meeting, Coral Gables City Attorney **Craig Leen**

voiced support for the legislation and said it's important for people to live near their workplace. He said the ordinance showed the cooperation between cities and the county toward addressing a Miami-Dade problem. A number of others also spoke in favor, saying the commission has an opportunity to assist the working class and that housing is a human right.

Those opposed included **Truly Burton** of the Builders Association of South Florida, who favored a strong voluntary incentive proposal. The executive vice president and governmental affairs director of the association, she said the proposed ordinance included complicated regulations; there was no government subsidy; and a community-wide problem required a community-wide solution.

Ben Solomon, president of the association, said the proposed ordinance had many unintended consequences; was a disincentive to the building industry; would pass costs on to consumers; was probably a tax on development; and was probably in violation under Supreme Court rulings.

At the conclusion of the public hearing, Ms. Jordan said the process for her proposed ordinance began in 2005, legislation for voluntary workforce housing was adopted in 2007 and she received input from stakeholders in order to develop what she believed was strong legislation.

Miami-Dade is one of the least affordable housing markets in the nation, Ms. Jordan said, and approximately 35% of Miami renters are seriously cost-burdened relative to housing, paying over 50% of their gross income for housing.



Sally Heyman said commission should take a vote in two weeks.

We want to hear from YOU!

Phone: (305) 358-2663

Staff Writers:

Camila Cepero
ccepero@miamitodaynews.com

Susan Danseyar
sdanseyar@miamitodaynews.com

John Charles Robbins
jrobbins@miamitodaynews.com

Letters to Editor
editor@miamitodaynews.com

People Column
people@miamitodaynews.com

Michael Lewis
mlewis@miamitodaynews.com

