

APRIL 2012 INTELLIGENCE REPORT

April 14, 2012

RE: NEWS ALERT – FIRE TAX IS BACK !

At first, we thought it was an April Fool's joke. The Agenda for the upcoming Commission meeting next Tuesday April 17th calls for the approval of an agreement with the County Property Appraiser's Office related to the Fire Tax (oops, Fire Assessment Fee). This agreement allows the Property Appraiser's office to add a new assessment to your property tax bill. This is the same new tax that was turned down by the Commission 6 weeks ago. The Agreement is a preliminary step being put in place so that the Commission will have the "flexibility" to institute the new tax later this year if it chooses. If so, it will have to go through public hearings at that time.

You may recall that the tax on all households and businesses was proposed last fall to balance the budget. Only outrage from the residents prevented it from being introduced. The City Manager and all Commissioners promised drastic cutbacks in City services if it were not implemented. (There was no cutback in city services; in fact, staff was added to the City Hall payroll.) In January, just weeks ago before the recent election, the Commission bowed to the residents and voted it down. Is it a coincidence that the issue is reintroduced immediately after the election? And is it by chance that on Tuesday night the item will be voted as part of the Consent Agenda thereby avoiding any discussion?

It's very curious. It almost seems as if outside forces were in control. Just weeks ago both Commissioners Gray and Jacquet ran on platforms against the new tax. Commissioners Carney and Frankel are up for election next year.

We expect they will all say that this is only a procedural step and that there is no effort to introduce the tax at this point. But, we also expect that when budget discussions begin soon for the next fiscal year there will be the same doomsday predictions of reduced City services as were given last Fall. And the solution will be.....you guessed it... a Fire Assessment Fee.

We will have more to say about this matter in a future issue of the Intelligence Report, but wanted to keep you informed.

We at Friends of Delray have a sense of humor, but not when the joke is on the residents of Delray.

MARCH 27, 2012

March 2012 Post – Election Issue

Re: Thoughts on the Delray Municipal Election

As a new Commission is organized this week, we wish to congratulate Mrs. Gray and Mr. Jacquet on their victories. We would also like to congratulate Dr. Kirson, Ms. Morrison and Mrs. Archer on their races. Competition makes all candidates better, and makes elected officials better once in office. We are grateful for those who have stepped up to become candidates and put themselves on the line.

Commissioner Alperin will be retiring, and we would also like to thank him for his service. He stepped into an unfilled term on short notice. On occasion, the Intelligence Report has taken positions in opposition to those of Commissioner Alperin, but we have appreciated his independence and strong voice.

This gives us the opportunity to acknowledge the hard work of all Commissioners. We have been critical of many decisions. We would have done things differently in many cases. But we admire the effort they put in. Few residents understand the amount of time required to serve as a Mayor or Commissioner. In addition to Commission meetings, there are workshops, goal setting sessions, official functions, unofficial gatherings, correspondence with residents, study of upcoming agenda items, and contact with residents across the city. Not to mention the time to read our Intelligence Report each month!

Our criticism is meant to express a point of view which might help them in future deliberations. But we must stop from time to time and acknowledge that their jobs are harder than our job. It is easier to observe than to act; it is easier to comment than to decide.

We are fortunate to have residents willing to volunteer for City Boards, become candidates for election, and to serve.

Final thoughts on the Election:

The political establishment has been crushed. Six former Delray Mayors endorsed Pat Archer in two separate mailings to residents. In addition, on the eve of the election, the current Mayor sent out an email blast strongly endorsing Pat. She had the organizational support of a former County Commissioner. She had the financial backing of the political establishment. Yet she lost by a wide margin.

Christina Morrison had the backing of the traditional business establishment, including the endorsement and financial support of DELPAC and the Realtors Association. She came in a distant third.

Al Jacquet, a political newcomer with no establishment support and less money than his rivals, had an impressive victory. His campaign was based on ideas, not on endorsements.

Separately the proposal to extend term limits was turned down by a wide margin, nearly 2 to 1. This measure was proposed and supported by the political big-wigs. The Intelligence Report of Friends of Delray was alone in arguing against it. Voters expressed their opinion.

For many years people have complained about a political old-boy establishment in Delray. If it existed in the past it is now dead. This opens new prospects for the future.