

Happy Holidays from your friends at the Intelligence Report!

We know your busy shopping and dodging pepper spray so our report will be brief this month. And speaking of shopping, we recommend that you visit our Delray merchants who are an important part of our town.

### **Fire Chief Resigns**

After a difficult four-year stint at chief, David James has resigned from the Delray Beach Fire Department.

James battled illness, which led to prolonged absences throughout his tenure as chief. As a result, according to our sources at the department, there has been “drift” at the agency. Interim Chief Danielle Connor has done a good job trying to keep things together but was put in a difficult position when James returned part-time. It’s hard to have two chiefs in an organization.

We hope the City Manager moves quickly to hire a new chief. Insiders believe Connor will get the nod.

If she does, we wish her well. There is some rebuilding to do, according to our sources in the department.

### **Economic Development Issues**

From the mid-1990s through 2007, Delray Beach was the economic development story in Southern Palm Beach County.

Much of the excitement surrounded the revitalization of downtown Delray Beach and the growth of areas such as Pineapple Grove. The city also stole headlines and imaginations with its plans for Congress Avenue and the “Four Corners” area (the intersection of West Atlantic Avenue and Military Trail).

But several of those promising ideas have languished because of the economic downturn and the city’s flat-out inaction on things such as expanding downtown incentives to include other parts of the city.

Local commercial realtors are still waiting for the promised retail incentives now that parking rules have been tightened on restaurant uses. Hello...city commission?

A new Economic Development Director, Vin Nolan, has been hired and has been making the rounds gathering ideas, input and history.

The CRA is also testing the community’s appetite for a new hotel on West Atlantic near the Interstate.

Regardless, of when or if the city gets serious about Congress Avenue or retail, Delray will be facing some competition.

Boca Raton's "MedUTech" initiative is gaining significant national buzz, with inserts placed in 11 different Business Journals in strategic markets throughout the country. MedUTech is an effort to brand Boca Raton's health care, universities and technology clusters—there about 150 tech companies in Boca, according to city officials. With a new football stadium at FAU and Lynn University winning the final presidential debate, lots of focus is on our fair neighbor to the south.

For decades, Delray Beach was referred to as "Dull Ray" and word has it that a sign once hung in Boca's planning department that said "do it our way, or do it in Delray." That kind of condescending attitude changed when Delray got its act together and all eyes were on our beloved "Village by the Sea." In fact, members of Boca's business community began talking to some of our previous mayors in an effort to learn Delray's "secret sauce" for downtown redevelopment.

But with MedUTech it feels like Boca has its groove back, just at a time when Delray seems stuck and living on past momentum.

Will we rise to the occasion? We sure hope so.

Meanwhile, west of the city, a dormant real estate project known as the "Marketplace of Delray" is finally out of mothballs and under construction. Nice name, but it's not in Delray.

The 258,000-square foot project will have a number of local and national retailers including Publix, Jos. A Bank, Chico's, White House/Black Market and more.

The project will also feature entertainment and several restaurants (including a new Don Shula burger concept) and may siphon—at least for the short term some patrons from Delray's downtown district.

Also planned: Frank Theatres, a 12-screen theater that will feature a 16-lane bowling alley, plus a family amphitheater; that may be a challenge to Regal Cinemas, which is beginning to show its age.

All of this a long-winded way of saying, that Delray Beach has to compete for jobs, investment, attention, buzz etc. That requires focus, leadership and ingenuity. Are we up to the challenge?

### **Candidacies begin to take shape**

It's that time of year again—time for commission candidates and wannabe's to begin posturing and positioning for public office.

This year, two seats are up for grabs: Angelita Gray has to defend her seat and so far Dr. Vic Kirson, a frequent speaker at commission meetings has announced his intention to run against Gray.

In press interviews, Kirson cited Gray's push to build a costly press/box concession stand at Pompey Park as one of his motives to run. (See the November Intelligence Report by clicking on the "Intelligence Reports" tab on the first page.)

Meanwhile, jockeying is taking place for the seat abandoned by Fred Fetzer a few months back. Interested candidates are: Christina Morrison, a local realtor and member of the city's Financial Review Board, Al Jacquet, a member of the Planning and Zoning Board and an aide to State Rep. Mack Bernard, (You might recall that Bernard now a State Representative abandoned his city commission seat less than a year after being appointed, then left town). Also intending to run: former commissioner Pat Archer, who has been largely invisible since leaving office in 2006.

As an interesting side note to this mix, for the first time a non-minority has expressed interest in running for the seat that has been traditionally set aside for a minority, and a minority intends to run for a seat never held by a minority. Is Delray entering the post-racial election era?

There is some speculation that there may be shifts in the field, with a candidate or two switching to a different race. Stay tuned.

### **DELPAC**

Meanwhile, DELPAC, the political action committee affiliated with the Chamber of Commerce that has been quiet for years is trying to find its mojo under the new leadership of Connor Lynch.

Recent meetings have been well-attended and the organization is beginning to raise funds to support candidates. The organization is restricted to giving \$500 per candidate, not a large amount. (Perhaps \$1,000 if an affiliate is also used) Regardless, the organization plans to introduce a relatively new concept to Delray politics—the notion of accountability. In other words, candidates will be interviewed and actually reminded of their positions should they stray once in office—which they have tended to do. Delray needs more resident involvement in elections, and we applaud DELPAC members for their renewed participation. A thought: other organizations, neighborhood associations etc. could form their own Pacs and have influence in future elections.

Meanwhile, if you want to see who is running for office, wander into City Oyster at lunch and watch who is kissing whose ring.

### **Artists Alley**

A number of Delray artists have set up studios to create and show art in warehouse space along the railroad tracks between NE 3<sup>rd</sup> Street and NE 4<sup>th</sup> Street. The warehouse units have been empty for years. With high ceilings, open space and delivery doors they lend themselves to artist studios. The area is adjacent to Pineapple Grove, which did not develop into the arts district that was originally planned. The latest to move there is Vincent Cacace, artist and owner of the successful Cacace Gallery that for ten years was on the second floor of the building facing Worthing Park. With rents on Atlantic Avenue skyrocketing, other cities are trying to lure Delray galleries to relocate to West Palm, Lake Worth and

Boynton. So it is a positive sign that the artists and galleries themselves have found exciting space in our downtown.

The warehouses are located on an unnamed alley to the east of NE 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue. Cacace has named it: Artists Alley and he has placed temporary hand-painted signs at the each end. The artists would like to get official recognition for the name in order to turn it into a destination. This was the original vision for Pineapple Grove, but it never happened. Now the City has a second chance to help develop a true arts district. Your Editor hopes that City Hall will make every effort to help.

### **Holiday cheer**

While we at the Intelligence Report have been known to take our fair share of shots at city officials—please know that this is an effort borne out of caring—caring for the community and caring for the taxpayer.

It would be far easier to let things slide if we didn't have a deep affection for our hometown Delray Beach. But when you care about your community, it is your duty to step up and be counted. Sometimes that means praise. Sometimes that means criticism, which we hope is constructive.

At the end of the day, we are rooting for this little city we call home.

Have a safe and wonderful holiday season. We will see you in the New Year.

### **Letters to the Editor**

Mr. Dole: Thank you for sending me your always-informative update of the Friends of Delray. In response to the piece on the Pompey Park, I had a few questions and a statement at the end. During these dire economic times, can we assume that nearly ½ million dollars was the lowest bid for the Concession /Press Stand at Pompey Park.? Can we assume that a cost benefit analysis showing the economic rate of return was presented to support such a frivolous amount being spent on this project? Could the City of Delray Beach have suggested that the \$200,000 provided by the CRA be the total amount of this project, perhaps thereby engaging the design staff of the Concession/Press Stand to place some constraints on their creativity? Could some of the additional \$256, 000 be given to our Police Department and Fire Department to handle the exorbitant amount of incidences as a result of the escalation of our fastest growing industry in Delray Beach known as the Recovery Business?

The Corner of 5th Avenue and Atlantic Avenue/ Starbucks Corner/Hanging Out Corner speaks in volumes of the effect that it will have on our businesses and tourism industry. We really need money invested in our Police and Fire Departments to help us with this growing problem.

I realize how rhetorical my questions may be, but I am not quite in the loop of the evolutions of Delray Beach and as a laymen. These were the questions that came to my mind.

McCall Credle Rosenthal

Delray Beach

To the Editor,

Initially, I was very suspicious of the core motivation of your group. Admirably there was little substance behind my original thought. However, having now read all the previous "Intelligence Reports" I am happy to report that your messages are fair and helpful. I have watched from the sidelines the dealings of the city for the better part of thirty years. The observations and comments of your information cannot be found in any newspaper or local/neighborhood platform.

Thank you!

PS, Delray Beach

To the Editor: As usual I always look forward to this monthly email!

Keep up the great job of letting us know the "real truth" about Delay Beach...The Pillage by the Sea.

Is the \$\$ for the hotel at W. Atlantic, concession stand at Pompey Park, the video, unethical mailing and the parking survey paid for by the voters "yes" vote for bond \$\$ for a badly needed Senior Center at Lake Ida and Congress? Is it possible for an investigation/inquiry as to where that bond \$\$ went? Very suspicious. Thank you.

SB, Delray Beach