

June 2011 Intelligence report

### **Reaction to Intelligence Report; swift and positive**

We are grateful for your interest.

For too long, the public square has been silent and vacant. That is not healthy for a city and we aim to change that.

Friends of Delray and our newsletter hope to fill the square with topics of interest that we hope will spur debate and accountability. We might ruffle a few feathers every once in a while but we think debate is healthy. And there's nothing wrong with ruffling a few feathers, especially if we educate and spur change.

When we launched formally last month, we received a flurry of subscription requests. Thank you, the reception was wonderful and validated our idea that citizens are hungry for information and accountability.

The Intelligence Report did warrant a story in the Sun-Sentinel online and print editions.

We were grateful for the coverage and happy that our Mayor weighed in with comments that were positive yet qualified. Mayor McDuffie seems to like the idea of this Intelligence Report as long as there is no "hidden agenda".

Well, our agenda is not hidden, its right here on these pages. We want residents, business owners and all those who care about Delray to know what's going on. We do not expect perfection. Just an honest accounting.

The Sentinel article said the Mayor took umbrage at the suggestion that he has not followed through on ethics reform as promised in his election in 2009 (such as his promise to appoint a citizens task force on ethics, which was not done).

Now, a couple of years later, the City seems to be working to enact the county ethics regime which has been criticized as draconian and expensive but at least fills a void. It is expected to cost the City about \$45,000 per year, and we wonder if that expense might have been avoided by implementing our own regulations as originally proposed by the Mayor in his campaign.

But we don't want to leave the Mayor in a state of umbrage. We know him as an affable man who plays a mean guitar and is a sportsman. Moreover, he is a former Board member of Friends of Delray and a long-time dinner companion of your Editor.

### **Where are the mentors?**

Delray Beach once had a proud tradition of its former elected officials helping the current group. No longer, it seems. And we find that sad.

While we understand that mentoring and meddling may be a fine line, the fact remains that those who have served have a unique understanding of the job and the issues facing the city.

Thanks to term limits of six years, when past elected officials cease to be involved, the institutional memory tends to lie almost solely with staff and lawyer/lobbyists. We don't think this is healthy.

Former Mayor Jeff Perlman constantly spoke of his relationship with his predecessors and once hosted a Mingle with the Mayors Event at Old School Square that put every living mayor on stage for an Inside the Actor's Studio style Q & A session/history lesson. Veterans like Tom Lynch and Leon Weekes able to coach and provide advice to their successors—without controlling them.

Mr. Perlman is still active in town—serving on boards and editing Atlantic Ave magazine. But he has not attended a commission meeting in over four years and seems to deliberately stay away from the commission. We understand that he may not like some of the current players – and hear that the feeling is mutual. That's disappointing.

Several other former elected officials—Mayor Schmidt, Commissioners Archer, Levinson and Costin have also disappeared in terms of providing meaningful input. We know former Commissioners Montague, Egan, Wright and Schwartz have moved away, but the others are in town and could provide important insight on issues they too dealt with. The very controversial Tennis Contract obligating the City to a 20 year, \$7,000,000 contract is one example. The use of public land for private purpose in Worthing Park is another example of issues that previous Commissions dealt with. Conversation between the former electeds and the current ones would benefit Delray.

### **Campaign funds follow-up**

Last month, we reported on the great campaign that never was. The election that was held without a vote because only one candidate appeared for each of the 3 positions open.

As a faithful reader you know the lack of competition did not stop candidates from raising money. But since there was no election, candidates are required to disburse the funds collected. The choices are: return the money to donors (less expenses) or donate to 501cs organizations or use the money to pay campaign expenses.

Mayor McDuffie donated a large amount of his funds to Delray Citizens for Delray Police with directions to support the family of Sgt. Adam Rosenthal, who was tragically killed in a car accident on his way to work.

Newly elected Commissioner Tom Carney returned the funds he raised to his donors.

Commissioner Adam Frankel used some of his funds to take out a two-page advertisement in Atlantic Avenue magazine. One full page featured a head shot of a smiling Frankel. The other page was an open letter to the community to thank non-existent voters for returning him to office. We do not know what he did with the remaining funds.

### **A First for Delray**

Delray has its first Bed and Breakfast. After many months of work, Jason and Benita Goldstein recently opened a 4 bedroom B&B at 300 NE 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The Goldsteins purchased the historic Hartman House with the idea of fixing it up and living in it. However, along the way Benita announced to her surprised husband that she had always wanted to be an inn-keeper. So after much work with local architect Roger Cope and with City staff (not to mention several hundred thousand dollars), the Goldstein's have renovated the historic property complete with Olympic length pool. We have visited the property and can testify that it is a terrific addition to our town. Word is that several other properties may follow their lead and convert to B&B's. For additional information: [www.historichartmanhouse.com](http://www.historichartmanhouse.com)

### **A new hotel for West Atlantic Avenue?**

In December 2010, the CRA issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for approximately 7.7 acres of CRA-owned property along the West Atlantic Avenue corridor. Prime Investors & Developers, who responded to the RFP, presented their submittal to the CRA board at the meeting of May 12th. The project as proposed would involve a long term lease of approximately 2 acres of the CRA's West Atlantic Avenue property.

Prime's concept includes the construction of a 4-story, 128-room flag hotel (such as a Fairfield Inn or Hampton) offering moderately priced rooms (approx. \$100/night), a limited service café, swimming pool, fitness center and meeting rooms. Additionally, the proposal includes the construction of 135 parking spaces on an adjacent CRA-owned lot, as well as the use of several of the CRA's new development incentive programs.

The CRA board was generally supportive of Prime Group's concept but expressed concerns regarding the terms of the proposed land lease and financing structure. The board voted to authorize CRA staff to begin negotiations with the developer on a land-lease that would include more favorable terms for the CRA, as well as improvements to the proposed hotel facade. As negotiations progress, the CRA will seek input about the project from residents and community stakeholders. Stay tuned for opportunities to get informed and submit feedback.

One thing to watch for is whether the deal will include a parking deck. Proponents of the deck say it will make CRA property to the east of the hotel deal more valuable and marketable. With construction and materials prices down it may make some sense to pursue the option, some say. But the devil is in the details and the overall costs.

The new hotel is expected to create 32 jobs. While they are not high-paying the deal would mark the first substantial investment on West Atlantic since Atlantic Grove nearly a decade ago.

### **Frances Carter honored**

Frances Carter has C.L.A.S.S.

That was the name of her long time tutoring and mentoring organization which spent decades working with kids at-risk.

Last month, the estimable Ms. Carter was honored by the Palm Beach County School Board for her dedication and accomplishments.

We congratulate Ms. Carter on her well-deserved honor.

### **Old Library site**

So what's really happening on the CRA's old library development site?

Inquiring minds want to know the fate of one of the most desirable redevelopment sites in town (old library, Chamber building and parking lot).

Apparently, according to our sources at Planning and Zoning, the developers of the project have not yet responded to questions raised by staff last September.

The redevelopment of the library site is critical for the downtown. The developers are supposed to close in September if not the CRA can put the property out for another RFP or negotiate terms to extend the deal

### **Atlantic High shines**

Congratulations to the Class of 2011.

Delray's best and brightest accounted for more than 24 years' worth of volunteer hours and donated more blood than any other high school in the county.

The schools valedictorian had the highest grade point average in the county and students earned several hundred thousand dollars' worth of scholarships.

Well done!

### **DMC re-invents**

The Downtown Marketing Cooperative has re-invented itself under the leadership of new director Sarah Martin.

The newly renamed Delray Marketing Cooperative reflects the DMC's focus on all of Delray Beach and its focus on destination marketing. The group has adopted the promising but still fragile Destination Delray effort.

Martin and her team are said to be studying downtown events in an effort to reinvigorate some now tired concepts.

We look forward to continued progress

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### **Questions for Future Issues**

Where's the follow-up to the South Federal Highway charrette?

What are the commission's goals coming out of their goal-setting meetings?

What's the future of the Economic Development Director position in Delray now that Francisco Perez Azua has resigned?

What's the follow-up to the recently released water report which said the city was losing money to leaking pipes and other issues?

Delray's property values declined 3 percent last year, what is the strategy to promote an expansion of our tax base?

Several months ago, Perez and CRA Commissioner Peter Arts asked the commission to expand the economic development incentives to the Congress Avenue corridor, what's been the response to that request? (To date, we hear there has been no follow-up).

Delray Police Department has no contract. What will be done to improve labor relations, achieve savings where possible and remain competitive with neighboring agencies?

In the following months, we will attempt to answer these and other questions that affect us all.

### **Letters from Readers**

The following letter was sent to us from Jim Tabeek, Lieutenant in the Delray Beach Fire Department. We are pleased to publish letters or comments from readers which are of interest to our community.

My name is James H. Tabeek. I have been a member of the Delray Beach Fire-Rescue Department since February 17, 1983, a little over twenty eight years. I currently serve our City of Delray Firefighter and Paramedics as their District Vice-President-19, of L-2928.

On March 8<sup>th</sup>, Gulfstream voted to increase their area and annexed more land into the Town of Gulfstream. Before the vote to annex this land, I posed a question to some of the Commissioners. I asked them about the potential for a growth in revenue regarding the annexation of more area in Gulf Stream since our emergency response area would be expanding. We would be responding to more medical and fire emergencies with our fire apparatus in the Town of Gulf Stream. The increase in responses impacts the vehicles, supplies, and cost to Delray Beach Fire-Rescue budgets. Requesting an increase in the cost of our response agreement could aid our city by offsetting the large deficiencies that we were facing.

At that time, I was not able to obtain any direction from some of the Commissioners whom I had spoken with *or* our City Manger, David Harden regarding this potential to increase revenue in our contract with Gulf Stream. It is my understanding that Mr. Harden would not approve an increase in fees with the Town of Gulf Stream based on the *Sun Sentinel Article* cited.

On June 2, 2011 an article was written titled "*Delray Fire-Rescue Covering More of Gulfstream for Free*".

It appears Mr. Harden has made the decision for the Commission.

**"City won't renegotiate its fire contract, even though Gulf Stream has annexed 16.6 acres"**

Mr. Harden also made a comment, which is quoted in the *Sun Sentinel* article mentioned in cited work below, that the additional calls to Gulfstream were "insignificant." He goes on to say regarding the addition of more calls to Gulf Stream that "will have no impact on the level of service provided to our residents," Harden said.

I would respectfully disagree with Mr. Harden regarding this issue and this is why. Station No. 2 (located on Andrews Ave) is the primary response to the Town of Gulf Stream. Currently we are only operating that station during peak hours. Rescue No. 2 is in service Monday through Friday from 0800 hours until 2000 hours, at 2000 hours Rescue No. 2 is taken *out of service*. Rescue No. 2 is also *out of service* on Saturday and Sunday. Any response to Gulf Stream during those hours that Rescue No. 2 is *out of service* would impact not only Station No. 2 but other units in our system because another unit has to come from another area to cover that emergency call. This has an impact on the level of service to our residents.

As far as the permit fees the City of Delray Beach would be receiving, that was already in place prior to the annexation and the permit fee is a onetime revenue source.

The City Commission had concerns with the original contract because of the way it was handled. It looks like this decision has been made.

I stand by my comment:

"[*Gulf Stream*] has annexed additional property and we're going to have to provide services to those properties," said Lt. Jim Tabeek, [Delray Beach](#) Fire-Rescue union representative. "The county received a fee for that property; we should at least be able to renegotiate the contract based on that annexation."

Sincerely,

James H. Tabeek

Lieutenant, Delray Beach Fire-Rescue Department

Distract Vice-President, Local-2928

Work cited:

Mehererra. "Delray-Fire Rescue coving more of Gulf Stream for free." Sun Sentinel.com. June 2, 2011, June 6, 2011. < [Sun-Sentinel.com/news/palm-beach/delray-beach/fl-delray-fire-contract-20110602,079734.story](http://Sun-Sentinel.com/news/palm-beach/delray-beach/fl-delray-fire-contract-20110602,079734.story)>

That's the June Intelligence Report. Your editor is now on his way to put on his bathing suit and go for a well deserved swim.

Send us your opinions, ideas and criticism at [info@friendsofdelray.com](mailto:info@friendsofdelray.com)

We enjoy hearing from you.

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