

November Update

The last thing you want to hear is another election story, but I did want to report that working as a clerk on Election Day was more challenging than usual. My precinct was the one where we had misprinted ballots, and the replacements sent to us were also misprinted. We think everyone did get to vote, and that their vote counted, but it was a little tense at the David Park Community Center.

Of course, all are saddened by the death of Officer Alex Del Rio Saturday evening. The fact that this was a line of duty event only makes it harder to bear and reminds us that there are moments of sheer terror in a police officers life, and this was one.

COMMISSION MEETINGS. These are some of the issues we dealt with.

There was a change in zoning for a small portion of the Sheridan Station project (Sheridan and I-95) from "trailer park" to Planned Development. This project continues to move forward slowly and methodically.

Incidentally, there is a fabulous scale model of the Sheridan Station project on display in the second floor lobby at City Hall. If you have time, you should come see it.

The Police Department received approval to purchase two specially equipped cars for use with the two new K-9's they just acquired. These are drug sniffing dogs, and are really beautiful animals. The cars have to have bigger engines and special air conditioning equipment to keep the dogs cool and safe.

Final approval was given to a change in zoning for several small and isolated neighborhoods that are more or less in transition. Among them is the south side of Sheridan Street from 56th to 441. The new regulations focus on parking, which will control the size and scope of what is allowable and still be compatible with the residential community.

The Commission also ok'd going out for proposals for Red Light Running Cameras. This is somewhat controversial, but the Commission is in agreement that running red lights is potentially life threatening, and at a minimum results in significant property damage. There are some who are opposed based on privacy issues, but seems to me that it is a long gone conclusion...lots of people are watching us. And remember, the Madrid and London train bombing perpetrators were eventually tracked down with cameras.

The big issue that was resolved was whether to keep Sanitation in house, or privatize. This has been under discussion for at least three months, and by a 6 – 1 vote, the decision was to keep Sanitation in house. I was the lone "no" vote.

My decision was based on several factors. (1). The cost to the consumer increased 10%. (2). Bulk pick up was eliminated. (3). While the union made some modest changes and concessions, they did not address the burdensome pension and health care cost issues that will haunt us for a long time.

In addition, 23 Sanitation workers will lose their jobs, but because of union rules allowing bumping, it is possible 23 other people will lose their jobs, replaced by the sanitation workers.

I think this is an issue that will come back to haunt us, and given the projected difficulties in the upcoming budget year (2010), this could resurface. All I know is that we are getting a lot of emails from people who are unhappy with the higher cost, lower service levels.

What do you think?

Finally, it looks like there is some (not a lot) of progress in the plans for the hotel and garage at Johnson Street. And some said I wouldn't live long enough?

Speaking of the beach, take a look at Connecticut Street, along side the Garfield Street Garage, for how many beach east/west running streets will look some day. What a difference.

New restaurant downtown...Sage. Many of you have enjoyed delicious dinners at their Ft. Lauderdale location, and early reports are that the Hollywood location, on Harrison St. and 20th (site of the lamented Michaels) is excellent. Grand opening is the first week in December... not sure of the date.

Candy Cane Parade, a perennial favorite, is December 6, on the Broadwalk. Always a great event. The new Rotary Park grand opening will be sometime in the next week or two...delayed due to the funeral for Office Del Rio.

Hope you have a wonderful holiday season...and this year, please be even more generous and caring than ever. There are lots of fine folks who need our help.

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