

## **FROM THE DESK OF COMMISSIONER BRUCE G. ROBERTS**



Happy New Year! I hope everyone enjoyed the Holiday Season. The Downtown Countdown 2010, which was held New Year's Eve, was a huge success and ushered in our Centennial. Thousands of residents and visitors packed downtown Fort Lauderdale on New Year's Eve to ring in 2011 at the City of Fort Lauderdale Orange Bowl Downtown Countdown. Presented by Ford Motor Company, this year's event was bigger and better than ever! The free, 12-hour street festival kicked off with an array of family activities at Esplanade Park that included bounce houses, face painting, inflatables, and a DJ with music, games and contests. At 7:00 p.m., families gathered around the main stage to enjoy a special kids countdown and ball lighting. As midnight approached, the Mayor and City Commissioners took to the stage to begin the official countdown to 2011. When the clock struck midnight, thousands cheered as the "Downtown Countdown" ball, illuminated with more than 10,000 LED lights, dropped from the sky to officially kick off 2011. The ball drop was immediately followed by a five-minute fireworks display that brilliantly illuminated the sky above Downtown Fort Lauderdale with bursts of colorful pyrotechnics. In addition to the Ford Motor Company, the City would like to thank the Orange Bowl, Corona Light, Downtown Development Authority, Florida Power & Light, Sun-Sentinel and Tarpon Bend for their generous sponsorship of Downtown Countdown, and for helping the City provide a free, fun and family friendly event.

As we begin our Centennial in 2011, I believe it is a good time to pause and reflect on some of our achievements over the past year:

- 364 calls for service were logged into our office by concerned citizens of District 1 in 2010: 90 are still open and seeking action - 18 of which are awaiting input by City or County staff (road closures, traffic studies, code violations, etc.), and while completed, another 72 still remain open for additional action by City staff, or for future consideration by the City Commission. 274 calls have been completed.
- Once again, no increase in the current operating millage rate of 4.1193; we now have the 7th lowest operating millage rate of 31 municipalities in Broward County. This also equates to the 3rd lowest rate among Florida's fourteen largest cities.
- Also, for the second straight year, no increase in the fire assessment fee.
- In 2010, serious crime declined citywide by approximately 4% when compared to 2009. (Final official figures are not yet available.)
- Initiated Police/Fire pension reform in finalizing contract negotiations.
- Our reserve fund stands at 19% of the General Fund Budget; this exceeds the nationally recommended range of 7% to 15%.
- In the past two years, 145 vacant funded personnel positions were eliminated.
- 13 parks have been outfitted with lightning warning systems, and 2 new parks are scheduled to open within the next few weeks.
- We hosted approximately 200 special events, which were produced by other organizations.
- Decisions on major projects, which have lingered for years, are now being moved forward, e. g. Sistrunk Corridor, Bahia Mar and South Andrews Avenue Business District.
- Strong economic development support through partnerships such as the Chamber of Commerce's "Business First" initiative; the TMA's (Sun Trolley) plan to expand routes which will cater to hundreds of thousands of cruise ship passengers and bring them to our business and entertainment venues. (In the future, I will provide more details.)
- We have had meetings and public workshops with many of our advisory boards and committees, e.g. Budget Advisory Board, Centennial Committee, Sustainability Committee (now a board), Visioning Committee and Beach Redevelopment Board. Follow-up meetings are scheduled.

These are just a sampling of what your Commission has been working with you to accomplish in these tough economic times. It also demonstrates my focused commitment towards my previous promise to:

- Bring back citizen participation in government decisions
- Bring back effective and efficient public safety
- Bring back collegial leadership to the City Commission
- Bring back balanced development that will protect our neighborhoods and green space

I want to thank City staff for their constant dedication in addressing all of the concerns, issues and ideas that come through the Commission Office – not only for District 1, but also for the City as a whole. We still have much more that we can do. I am looking forward to another year of working for you.

**CITY MANAGER SEARCH UPDATE:** Our consultant has met with the Mayor and all of the Commissioners as well as with the Commission-appointed City Manager Search Committee to obtain input related to the qualities, experience and leadership skills deemed necessary for this position. The City Manager Search Committee has also met to develop their guidelines to proceed with their task of narrowing down finalists for Commission deliberations. In the future, I will keep you informed of public meetings to discuss the selection of the City Manager.

**PAIN CLINICS:** A few months ago, I mentioned that this problem continues to spread and disrupt the integrity of our community. Florida's crackdown on unscrupulous pain clinics has stalled again in Tallahassee, pending a review by the newly elected governor. Strict new rules for these pain clinics and their doctors were to take effect November 28. The rules have been in the works for 14 months. The delay appears to undercut State Department of Health plans to start detailed inspections of the approximately 1,000 pain clinics in Florida – especially ones in Broward and Palm Beach counties that have become a major source of millions of narcotic pills for drug dealers and addicts throughout the Southeast. To date, we have closed two clinics by Holy Cross, one by the Executive Airport, one on Oakland Park Boulevard, and "raided" the clinic near Broward General Hospital. I know there are several others in the City, but please be assured that this Commission is aggressively pursuing the elimination of ALL illegal pain clinic operations within our City. Our Police Department and Code Enforcement are actively involved in this undertaking along with federal agencies and the Florida Department of Health. At the 1/4/11 Commission Meeting, we requested our City Attorney to extend our moratorium prohibiting the licensing of new pain clinics. I will also be in contact with our lobbyists to make sure that this issue continues to move forward at the state level. Please contact our State legislators and the new Governor to make our voices heard on this important issue.

**CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION (FEBRUARY AND MARCH EVENTS):**

- February 5 – “Too Hot to Hide” one-hour walking tour starting at 2 p.m. at the Fort Lauderdale Woman's Club, featuring history of Annie Jumper, Katherine Rawls, Ivy Stranahan and Frankee Lewis
- February 7 - Centennial look at the Bonnet House in the 1930's
- February 10 – “My Soul is a Witness” - Centennial Celebration of the 10th anniversary of this book, which is a history of Black Fort Lauderdale - Old Dillard Museum at 6 p.m.
- February 19 – Mixed Doubles Tennis Tournament at the Jimmy Event Tennis Center
- February 25 - Pineapple Jazz Jam Centennial Celebration at the Stranahan House
- February 25 - Dixie Zone/18th Annual Masters Challenge featuring a Centennial tribute at the Fort Lauderdale Aquatic Complex
- February 26 - Sistrunk Centennial Parade and Street Festival hosted by Sistrunk Historical Festival cultural organization to celebrate the accomplishments of people of African descent, on the Sistrunk Corridor from 11 a.m. until 6 p.m.
- March 3 - Centennial Sue, a friend of Ivy (Stranahan) and Julia (Tuttle), shares memories 11:15 a.m. - 12:15 p.m. at the almost 100-year-old First Presbyterian Church of Fort Lauderdale
- March 4 - School Board of Broward County Centennial History Fair
- March 5 - Too Hot to Hide one-hour walking tour starting at 2 p.m. at the Fort Lauderdale Woman's Club, featuring history of Annie Jumper, Katherine Rawls, Ivy Stranahan and Frankee Lewis
- March 10 - Riverwalk Trust Centennial Tribute to the Seminole Tribe of Florida at Timpano Chophouse and Martini Bar
- March 12 - Centennial Parade and Festival celebrating St. Patrick's Day
- March 14 - Centennial Life in Fort Lauderdale 1911-1920 lecture at the Bonnet House
- March 17 - The Centennial and 49th Annual Mayor's Prayer Breakfast
- March 20 - Grand re-opening of the 1922 Southside School, located at 701 South Andrews Avenue, with a Centennial tribute to one of the first elementary schools in Broward County; it has been listed on the U.S. National Register of Historic Places since 2006
- March 22, 23, 24 - Business Fair demonstrating the economic development links between Fort Lauderdale and Medellin, Columbia, sponsored by Greater Fort Lauderdale Sister Cities International
- March 25 - Tropical Symphonic concert at the Broward Center for the Performing Arts commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Sister City relationship between Fort Lauderdale and Medellin, Columbia, sponsored by Greater Fort Lauderdale Sister Cities International. -This musical sound fusion is a tribute to our cultural similarities
- March 26 - Centennial Bonnet House Tour by Dr. George
- March 27 - Centennial Birthday Party! 100th Anniversary of the incorporation of Fort Lauderdale on the Riverwalk
- March 27 - 9:00 a.m. and again at 11:30 a.m. Dr. Paul George will host a Walking Tour of Historic Downtown Fort Lauderdale

- March 28 – Keith Hendee says the Gateway Theatre once was a zoo! These and other historic facts discussed with the Broward House Alliance lunch at the Bimini Boatyard, call (954) 772-9647

**DON'T FORGET** – if you have any photos of landmarks, people, events or otherwise from the past 100 years that you would like to share with the City (so that they can be used as part of the slideshow that will be shown throughout the City during our Centennial Celebration), let us know as soon as possible. We have only a few so far and we would really like to have District 1 represented! Thank you in advance.

**OFFICE CONTACT:** Robbi Uptegrove – 954-828-5033; email: [ruptegrove@fortlauderdale.gov](mailto:ruptegrove@fortlauderdale.gov). In addition to hosting two pre-agenda meetings twice a month, I am also available to attend your HOA meetings to update your neighborhood on what is going on in the City as well as answer any questions/concerns you may have. Please contact Robbi to schedule.