

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



**City Manager Update:** Lee Feldman has been hard at work since June reorganizing City staff and preparing the next budget. Part of his reorganization has involved the elimination of an Assistant City Manager while bringing on board two new Assistant City Managers: Stanley Hawthorne and Susanne Torriente. Their brief bios are provided below:

**Stanley Hawthorne:** Prior to accepting his new position with the City, Mr. Hawthorne served six years as the Assistant City Manager of Lakeland, FL where he oversaw the departments of Human Resources, Information Technology, Risk Management/Purchasing, Internal Audit and the Lakeland Center. He also led the city's Performance Excellence Division where he focused on enhancing operations through performance efficiencies and process improvements. In addition, he directed Lakeland's strategic operating plan, \$600 million operating budget, and capital improvement

program. Mr. Hawthorne has more than 25 years experience in government. He previously served as City Manager of Lauderdale Lakes, Assistant City Manager and Director of Finance for Tamarac, and Director of Management and Budget for the City of Hollywood, FL. He began his career in municipal government in 1985 in the City of Saginaw, Michigan where he worked for seven years advancing to the position of Assistant to the City Manager. Mr. Hawthorne holds an undergraduate degree from Troy State University in Alabama and a Master of Arts degree in Public Administration from the University of Virginia.

**Susanne Torriente:** Ms. Torriente comes to the City of Fort Lauderdale from Miami-Dade County where she most recently served as Director of the Office of Sustainability. In this position, she was responsible for overseeing major departments critical to achieving the County's sustainability goals including Solid Waste Management, Environmental Resources Management, Water and Sewer, and Community Image. Ms. Torriente directed Miami-Dade County's policy formulation, grants, energy management and reduction strategies, alternative energy options, sustainable capital developed processes, water conservation, and other sustainability-related programs and initiatives. Under her leadership, the County developed and implemented its first sustainability plan, which also includes the County's first climate action plan. Prior to being appointed as Director of the Office of Sustainability, Ms. Torriente served as Chief of Staff and Chief Assistant County Manager. Her 20-year career with Miami-Dade County also includes overseeing Police, Fire-Rescue, Corrections and Emergency Management. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in English and a Master's degree in Public Administration from the University of Miami.

**Budget News:** As indicated above, we are in the process of preparing the budget for FY 2011/2012. At our July 6<sup>th</sup> Commission Meeting, the City Manager introduced a very preliminary budget proposal. At this meeting, your Commission again held the line by adopting the current millage rate cap for the next year. This will make it three consecutive years that we have not increased the millage rate. Of Florida's twenty largest cities, we have the second lowest millage rate. In the past two years, we have reduced the General Fund Operating Budget by \$12.5 million. We further directed staff to maintain our healthy General Fund Balance, which is currently at 19%. Lastly, we intend to keep delivering vital City services at the levels expected by our neighborhoods. If you would like to read it in its entirety, go to [http://www.fortlauderdale.gov/2012Budget\\_Book/11-12budget.htm](http://www.fortlauderdale.gov/2012Budget_Book/11-12budget.htm).

**Mark You Calendar:** These budget issues and other important matters will be discussed in several public forums on the following dates:

- August 23 at 7:00p.m.: Quarterly Joint Workshop with our Budget Advisory Board; 8<sup>th</sup> floor conference room
- August 23: next regularly scheduled Commission Meeting
- August 25 at 5:30p.m.: Re-districting Special Commission Meeting for public input; City Hall Chambers
- September 7: regularly scheduled Commission Meeting including a Public Hearing on the budget
- September 13 at 6:00p.m.: Special Meeting for public input regarding proposed Fire Assessment Rate Increase of \$15 per year
- September 20: regularly scheduled Commission Meeting, which includes a final Public Hearing on the budget and the Commission adoption of the new budget

At the beginning of the year, I thought it worthwhile to reflect on our accomplishments, which have been brought about through a dynamic partnership with our neighborhoods. With so much negative news out there nowadays, I again want to take the opportunity to focus on some good news and encourage everyone to stay focused on the positive.

- We celebrated our Centennial.
- 364 calls for service were logged into our office by concerned citizens of District 1 in 2010. We are on pace to at least repeat that volume.
- Once again, no increase in the current operating millage rate of 4.1193; this equates to the 2<sup>nd</sup> lowest rate among Florida's twenty largest cities.
- For two consecutive years, there was no increase in the fire assessment fee.
- In 2010, serious crime declined citywide by approximately 4% when compared to 2009.
- Initiated Police/Fire pension reform in finalizing contract negotiations. This is already saving us hundreds of thousands of dollars.
- Our reserve fund stands at 19% of the General Fund Budget, which 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, Executive Airport stadium issues, and South Andrews Avenue Business District.
- Strong economic development support through partnerships such as the Chamber of Commerce's "Business First" initiative, and 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.
- 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 samplings 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 continue working for you.

**Pain Clinics:** It has been some time since reporting to you about this issue. I am sure you are aware of the Governor's decision to support and sign into law a state statute which finally established a drug registration system and restrictions for dispensing certain drugs. Your Commission also enacted an ordinance which further regulates the operation of pain clinics. Some of the highlights include parking space requirements, office and examining room square footage space requirements, no queuing of customers outside, no employees with felony or drug related conviction backgrounds for five years, inspection of premises, annual license renewal and located at least 500 feet from schools, churches, parks, libraries or daycare facilities.

**Recent Technology Innovations:** The City Manger and staff have recently introduced some new technology enhancements to improve communication with our neighbors:

- **WWW.RAIDSONLINE.COM** provides citywide crime data, maps and analysis.
- **WWW.FORTLAUDERDALE.GOV/LAUDERSERV** is a free application for Android-based mobile devices which provides 24 hour access to the City's Customer Service Center. The application also has several customer service-friendly features:
  - Makes the City of Fort Lauderdale more accessible to citizens.
  - Interfaces with Google Maps and GPS technology to automatically detect report location information.
  - Provides the option of attaching photos to reports.
  - Offers categories to streamline reports to help ensure information gets to the appropriate department.
  - Provides users with the flexibility to customize each report.
  - Connects citizens to the City!

- **Quick Response (QR) Codes:** We are also starting to use QR codes, which are the small black and white squares that, when scanned with a smart phone, will take you directly to a website. Adding QR codes to our marketing efforts will provide our neighbors with more detailed information about special events, new programs and services, green initiatives, grant opportunities, public workshops and town hall meetings. Similarly, placing QR codes on informational materials, signage and vehicles, will enable us to communicate details about employment opportunities, economic development initiatives, construction projects, parking, sports leagues, dockage rates, beach conditions, crime prevention, road closures, recycling, sanitation, bulk trash and more. The codes can be read with a QR code reader application (app). Some of these apps are preloaded on mobile phones, while others may be downloaded for free. The app scans the QR code and converts it to the appropriate content (i.e., a website, video link, contact information, data, etc.). For example, by scanning the QR code below, you will be directed to the City's Starlight Musicals webpage. There, you can quickly find information about the event schedule, upcoming performers, weather updates, participation of non-profit groups, recycling and Holiday Park. QR codes can be created and read at no cost. They represent an economical way to supplement our marketing efforts, reach our neighbors with salient information, and generate increased awareness, visibility and exposure for the City. Making information easily accessible through QR codes will foster greater transparency in government and create a stronger connection between our neighbors and our City. The City of Fort Lauderdale is committed to continually developing innovative ways to engage and assist citizens, especially through new and expanding technologies.



**Florida Neighborhoods Conference:** Thanks to all who attended the just concluded Florida Neighborhoods Conference here in Fort Lauderdale. We especially want to congratulate Vice President and longtime Council stalwart Betty Shelley (Imperial Point HOA President) on her induction to the All-State Neighborhood Team. This is an award given annually by the FNC State Planning Committee to "recognize the dedication and commitment of neighborhood leaders...for their unwavering efforts to improve the neighborhoods and communities where they live." This certainly fits Betty to a "T." We are proud of her and happy that she got the recognition she so richly deserves but would never seek for herself. Congratulations Betty!!!

**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.