

## FROM COMMISSIONER BRUCE G. ROBERTS SEPTEMBER 2012



I hope everyone has had a relaxing summer! Your Commission is in the middle of preparing the City's annual budget for FY 2013. While some improvements have occurred in the economy, they have not been significant, and we still face the same challenges for a fourth consecutive year. A major staff reorganization has followed a large reduction in personnel and pension reform continues. Your Commission has again decided against raising the millage rate and the fire assessment fee, while striving to maintain essential City services. We continue to work closely with our Budget Advisory Board to finalize the upcoming budget. Before adoption, there will be two Public Hearings on the budget: the Regular Agenda Commission Meetings of September 5th and September 18th at 6:00 P. M.

**Public Safety Dispatch System:** I am sure that you have been aware of the ongoing dispute as it relates to the development and implementation of a county-wide consolidated closest unit response system. First and foremost, I want to assure everyone that this Commission will never risk placing our neighborhoods in jeopardy. We are, however, very concerned about coming to terms with the County on the implementation of an equitably funded system which does not unduly drain our public safety assets. Negotiations with the County are continuing. Failing to reach an agreement will result in litigation. Again, and I cannot stress it enough, this process will not result in diminishing our public safety services.

**Implementation of "Robocalling" for Illegal Signs:** The Code Enforcement Division of the Department of Sustainable Development is tasked to enforce all City Ordinances for the health, safety and welfare of our neighbors. Illegal signs are just one of the issues that affect our City, contributing to visible blight and unnecessary trash and debris within our community. In an effort to reduce sign pollution, staff has looked at other city's efforts to enforce illegal signage. Some jurisdictions are using "RoboCalling" to help in the enforcement of signs. This computer driven software is an automatic calling feature that is used to call the number listed on the illegal sign up to 100 times a day. In the recorded message the City informs the sign owner that the sign is not permitted and must be removed or a citation will be issued. The automated call is made until the sign is removed. In the other cities who have utilized this program, the sign owners generally remove the illegal signs within five days and do not replace them within the City. In addition, implementing and maintaining the RoboCalling effort does not require any substantial additional staff resources, as one employee enters the phone number listed on the illegal sign, and the software automatically calls the number. Once the software has been purchased (anticipated to be less than \$500), staff will deploy a test implementation period for 90-days. I will follow up with more information once the results of the testing are shared with Commission.

**NEXTDOOR Website for Neighbors:** In continuation of our efforts to increase communication with our neighbors as well as communication between neighbors, the City is launching NEXTDOOR, a free, private social networking website for neighborhoods. Nextdoor creates private neighborhood sites off of our existing neighborhood boundaries and allows only those neighbors with addresses within the neighborhood to join. Neighbors are able to use the site to get to know their neighbors; share information about traffic, lost pets, crime and emergency preparedness; ask questions or get advise on babysitters, restaurants, carpet cleaners and more; sell, borrow and give away tools, furniture, bicycles and other items; and receive and comment on important information from City officials! This program has been introduced by City staff to the Council of Ft. Lauderdale Civic Associations where it was well received. All information will be sent to all HOA presidents introducing the program and inviting them to join. For a preview, please go to [www.Nextdoor.com](http://www.Nextdoor.com). If you should have any questions, please contact Hal Barnes in Neighbor Support (954-828-5065).

**Nuisance Abatement Launches Webpage:** The Police Department's Special Investigation Division just announced the launching of a new webpage to help our residents, neighborhood associations and landlords in deterring illegal activity in their neighborhoods. This webpage has photos and addresses of properties where nuisance abatement warning letters have been sent, and the properties that are

currently under the jurisdiction of the Nuisance Abatement Board (NAB) are now available on [www.flpd.org](http://www.flpd.org) under the community tab. The NAB is an advisory board of the City and meets at 7pm in the first floor Chambers on the second Thursday of every month. The Board provides the agendas and minutes of past meetings on their webpage. Some of nuisance reports that are not addressed are noise complaints, barking dogs, and loud music. The webpage provides residents with the requirements for a property to be sent to the NAB and a clear understanding of the process. Residents are encouraged to browse this webpage as there are many links to useful resources to help them stay informed. Anyone interested in filing a nuisance related complaint, should email the following information to the Board ([flnab@fortlauderdale.gov](mailto:flnab@fortlauderdale.gov)): the address of the property, type of complaint (i.e. drug activity, prostitution, etc.) and the time of day which the activity takes place.

**Advanced Transportation Management System (ATMS):** FDOT, BC Traffic Engineering Division and BC Transit recently announced the expansion of the ATMS to include Broward County. This is a pilot project that will include 32 miles of arterial roadways in Ft. Lauderdale and six other municipalities. Some of the benefits of this project include signs that will provide travel times and incident information in real time; improved incident response time resulting in 30% faster clearing of incidents that will also help prevent secondary incidents; data collection used to adjust traffic signals; and an overall increased motorist awareness of conditions. Ft. Lauderdale project areas include Oakland Park Blvd. from University to US 1, which started July 2012; US 1 from Broward Blvd. to Oakland Park Blvd. commencing November 2012; Broward Blvd. from University Drive to US 1 commencing January 2013; and Sunrise Blvd. from US 441 to US 1 commencing May 2013. There will be no scheduled lane closures during the morning or afternoon rush hours, 7-9am and 4-6pm, respectively. Construction information and updates are available on the project website at [www.d4fdot.com/bcfdot/home/asp](http://www.d4fdot.com/bcfdot/home/asp).

**Miami-Orlando Passenger Rail Project Overview:** The Florida East Coast Industries (FECI) is building a privately owned, operated and maintained intercity passenger rail system from South FL to Orlando. The system will travel 240 miles (tracks already in place for 200 of the 240 miles); stations will be in Miami, Ft. Lauderdale, West Palm Beach and Orlando; will have significant transit oriented development opportunities; and be operational in 2014. One of the positive notes is that it will be faster, cheaper, cleaner, safer and more enjoyable than other modes of transportation. It will travel up to 110 mph with potential service hours from 6am to 9pm departures. It will offer first and economy class seating; will have Wi-Fi service, quality meal service and downtown departure locations! This service will tie into existing and future infrastructure with direct connections to Metrorail (MIA), SunRail (ORL), Miami People Mover, future Fast Start/SFECC passenger rail service (S. Florida), and future WAVE service (Fort Lauderdale); express connection to existing Tri-rail service and Amtrak stations; access to 4 international airports and 3 seaports; and may have a potential future extension to Tampa and Jacksonville. The creation of an intercity passenger rail network in Florida will have a transformational effect on the state with over 1,200 new construction jobs, over 400 new permanent jobs, substantial environmental benefits; relieve road congestion, and reduce accidents and decrease highway maintenance. As this project continues, I will continue to update you.

**Meeting in a Box – Our City, Our Vision:** Do you have thoughts on Fort Lauderdale's future? Then sign up to host a "meeting in a box." This is a portable version of a community meeting; it is a chance for you to host a small gathering with your neighbors to get their input on the future of our City. Best of all you can host the meeting at a time and place that is convenient for you. Inside each box are instructions for the facilitators and the participants to guide them through the process of holding the meeting. It is an excellent facilitation technique for thoughtful communication and idea generation for the development of our Vision 2035. Call 954-828-5289 to reserve your box today – you can also go online for more information at [http://www.fortlauderdale.gov/vision/pdf/Meeting-in-a-Box\\_Flier.pdf](http://www.fortlauderdale.gov/vision/pdf/Meeting-in-a-Box_Flier.pdf).

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