



Spring 2019

CITY OF STUART

Quarterly Newsletter



Roosevelt Bridge at night.

ZERO TOLERANCE

CITY COMMISSIONERS OFFER DIVERSE VIEWS, UNIFIED CALL TO END DISCHARGES AT ARMY CORPS HEARING ON LAKE LEVELS

STUART—Shortly before its recent rounds of Lake Okeechobee releases to “potentially avoid significant releases during the hot summer months,” the Army Corps of Engineers sought input on its system operating manual at public hearings across the region.

Before an overflow audience at Indian River State College in Stuart, all five city commissioners spoke. Each one addressed various aspects of the impact inflicted on the local environment and economy.



To illustrate the discharges' impacts on marine businesses, Mayor Becky Bruner read from the owner of American Custom Yachts

Whether highlighting health hazards, citing economic impacts or raising pointed questions, each commissioner urged reversal of policies that cause the damage, emphasizing a two-word phrase that proved popular among subsequent speakers: “Zero discharges.”

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ZERO

To spotlight the struggles facing local businesses, Mayor Becky Bruner read a letter from Dominick LaCombe, Jr., general manager of American Custom Yachts in Stuart.

“As an employer, we must set environmentally responsible examples in our industry, as well as provide a federally mandated safe work environment for all of our employees,” Bruner read. “The Okeechobee Waterway is a lifeline for our business, and when it suffers, ACY and its employees suffer. The absolute neglect and disregard for an updated discharge schedule is unacceptable. Our employees and subcontractors deserve better than the decisions our state and federal government have made in the past.”

Vice Mayor Eula Clarke cited concerns about potential hazards of consuming fish caught in the St. Lucie River.

“My major concern is to help maintain a way of life where persons who fish along the St. Lucie Waterway,” she said, “both inside and outside the city limits can be assured that there will be healthy fish to catch and eat and that they can enjoy the water safely and breathe the air without grave concerns for their health and safety.”

Speaking at both the afternoon and evening sessions, Commissioner Merritt Matheson, who’s also a fishing guide, credited the leadership of U.S. Rep Brian Mast in driving the discussion on lake levels.

“I would like to thank Congressman Mast for clarifying last year with SFWMD that no matter how low the height of Lake O gets, the populations around the lake that depend on it for drinking water will always get it,” Matheson said. “This is an incredibly important point. Water for human needs must always have a priority. Yet the lake must be managed without harming our health and safety.”

Commissioner Mike Meier cited the dangers of cyanobacteria arriving in our waterways and releasing harmful toxins.

“Lake discharges harm our local ecology and bring cyanobacteria toxins to our local waterways,” he said. “Those toxins are in our water, aerosolized in our air, in our local fish, our pets and in our bodies. The harmful effects of these toxins are documented. The evidence is clear. Discharges harm our health.”

Rather than wait on relief, the city and its residents have taken strong measures to protect all they can directly influence, said Commissioner Kelli Glass Leighton.

“For decades, we held out hope that this project or that project would make a major difference for the better—to no avail,” she said. “At the city we have embraced responsibility for what we can directly affect, passing fertilizer ordinances, converting septic tanks, expanding stormwater treatment areas, even testing innovative new technologies to clean the water. Yet the discharges continue.

“How much more,” she asked, “should our city withstand?”



Mayor Becky Bruner



Vice Mayor Eula Clarke



Comm Kelli Glass Leighton



Comm Mike Meier



Comm Merritt Matheson



Runners take off at the Sailfish Sprint.

COMMUNITY WINS BIG IN SAILFISH SPRINT

Whether or not they ran in the Sailfish Sprint, the real winners of the 5k and 10k are the residents and visitors who enjoy the wide variety of programs the City of Stuart offers.

A total of 333 runners participated in the Sailfish Sprint, with 236 runners in the 5k and 97 in the 10k, making the City of Stuart Sailfish Sprint the fifth largest race of its kind on the Treasure Coast.

"Although this is only the second year for the event, it raised over \$4,000," said Jim Chrulski, community services director. "Producing large-scale special events like these allows the Community Services Department to offer other activities such as our free family movie nights and health cooking classes. It also supports our department's commitment to provide public wellness opportunities."

Tim Hernandez, principal of event co-sponsor New Urban Communities, which aims to open its downtown Azul Apartments in July, also ran in the race along with his wife, Liz.

"This was a really fun race that we were pleased to help sponsor," Hernandez said. "We know the city does a lot of remarkable things for the community with its special events, enrichment classes and afterschool activities at the 10th Street Center, and we're happy to help support those programs."

New Urban Communities' Azul Apartments served as lead co-sponsor with Seacoast Bank. Additional sponsors included Fleet Feet Stuart, Natalie's Orchid Island Juice Company, Holdy Realty, JD Parker Running Rockets, Gehring Group, Team Fit, Voxx Life, Whole Body Performance & Fitness, BenTek, Cigna and Adam's Workout.



Tim Hernandez and Jim Chrulski



Deb Daley and Jessica Tharp

HUNDREDS SHOW LOVE FOR EAST STUART

More than 400 volunteers kickstarted a communitywide spring cleaning effort as part of the East Stuart Partnership's Love Thy Neighborhood program.

City commissioners and officials worked alongside church members, neighbors and concerned, involved citizens to help remove trash and paint the exterior of 14 houses.

"It was a great day," said Thelma Washington, president of the East Stuart Partnership. "Some families had three and four generations out there volunteering together.



Volunteers with the East Stuart Partnership.

"So many of the senior citizens were grateful," Washington added. "It beautifies the neighborhood. And it helps the homeowners who want their homes painted but don't have the manpower to paint it. The residents like it and they keep it up. It's just a win-win for everybody."

IT PAYS (LITERALLY) TO IMPROVE YOUR BUSINESS' EXTERIOR

City of Stuart Business Reimbursement Program

Up to
\$10,000



Building
exterior

www.cityofstuart.us/programs

772-283-2532

The Stuart CRA Business Improvement Reimbursement Program is an incentive program designed to encourage visible, exterior improvements to commercial businesses in the Stuart Community Redevelopment Area.

The program provides a reimbursement grant of up to \$10,000 of public funds per property to match private funds to pay for the design and completion of property improvements. Call or visit the city website to find out more.

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT: MILTON LEGGETT

by Staff



Mayor Bruner grants award to Milton Leggett.

The spotlight holds no allure for Milton Leggett.

“Personally,” he says, “I don’t care for it.”

So when recently awarded City of Stuart Employee of the Year, the deputy public works director characteristically tried to turn the attention to his team.

“I like to see my guys get all the accolades,” he says. “That’s what I always push for. I like to get the job done behind the scenes. It’s not about me—but working for the public.”

That sincere selflessness—only display in his dedication to some of the city’s most essential yet unsung tasks—is precisely why Milton was an easy selection for recognition.

“Whatever is needed, whatever is asked, he’s not only willing to do but he does it with a great attitude.”

- David Dyess, city manager

“We’re so fortunate to have a city staff filled with dedicated professionals,” says David Dyess, city manager. “That said, it’s hard to imagine a professional more dedicated than Milton. Whatever is needed, whatever is asked, he’s not only willing to do, but he does it well and with a great attitude.”

In addition to Public Works, Milton manages four other departments —Transportation, Stormwater, Park Maintenance, Building Maintenance and the micro-transit system. Overseeing 42 employees, the 56-year-old Stuart native who lives in Vero Beach started with the city 36 years ago. Back then, the city owned Fern Hill Cemetery. Milton kept the grounds, ran the office, and even sold cemetery plots.

A Martin County High grad who also studied at Indian River State College, he’s the father of one daughter, 36. He serves on the executive committee of the Treasure Coast chapter of the American Public Works Association and the board of directors of the Southeast Stormwater Association.

What’s the biggest misconception people have about Public Works? “If they got a problem, they always call me for some reason. They think I run the whole city—but I don’t.”

If you were to explain your responsibilities to someone, how would you start? “‘Have a seat, ‘cause you’re gonna be here for a while.’”

What are some of the strongest memories you have on the job? “The hurricanes, we’re always here for the hurricanes. I haven’t missed a hurricane (in 36 years).”

What do you love most about your job? “I love the challenges. I think that’s why I’ve lasted so long. I like the diversity of the department. There’s always something happening. You never get bored.”

Did you have any idea you were getting the award? “I didn’t even consider myself in the running.”

How did your staff react? “They said, ‘You deserve it.’ I said, ‘No. Thanks to you guys, I am where I am, and that’s it.’”