

**Your article is the first piece of concise information on what actually happened. It has been hard to get answers.**



### **Call 311 and They'll Be There**

The December article by Erik Bojnansky regarding the incorporation referendum (“Northeast County Residents Reject Cityhood”) refers to complaints about improvements needed for Highland Oaks Park.

We have also heard, for many years, different Miami-Dade commissioners saying they *do* take care of the beautification, parks, potholes, among many other things in their areas. Remember, we can call 311 and place a complaint, speak with a supervisor, and call until the job gets done. And of course you can always contact Commissioner Sally Heyman.

We will also be glad to go with you and others, and speak before the county commission; these needs for the park are not major expenses. Please remember these county numbers: 53 percent of the former northeast “municipal advisory committee” area is non-taxable. Only 5-plus percent is undeveloped or commercial. We did not see in the budget the additional services the YES people promised, the \$575,000 mitigation fee to the county, or any funds for disaster or litigation, etc.

Even if things would have been the same [financially] the first year, they would *not* be in the following years. The article doesn't mention that some contributors to the “Yes to City” committee were law firms that work for developers.

*Brian Rook*  
*Greyknoll Lake*

## **Namaste, North Miami**

Regarding Mark Sell's story about the North Miami officials who traveled to India for a five-day "World Summit on Countering Violence and Extremism" ("Passage to India," December 2018), I suspect they could have done as well right here at home, saved themselves the jetlag, and saved us the bill.

The inaugural "summit" was sponsored by From India with Love, whose aim is to "offer customized leadership development programs for America's civic leaders to experience and study India's ancient culture and wisdom of nonviolence."

Partners included the Indo-American Chamber of Commerce and the Art of Living, which sells three-day courses and retreats in the U.S. for hundreds of dollars, and which is based in Bangalore, where the delegates spent the last two days of the summit.

The full experience is part travel and part education ("participants develop insights...that will promote compassion and nonviolence in their communities and neighborhoods"). Oh, and the organization offers workshops in the U.S. And you can buy their film on Amazon.

The 26 international delegates (and 44 India delegates) enjoyed a program that, per the website, listed two days of travel and cultural immersion, lessons in self-care and meditation, visioning, dinner conversations, a photo exhibit, a thought leadership session, story sharing, a master class led by spiritual leader and Art of Living founder Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, plus a full day of Ayurveda treatments.

India is a place of rich and complicated history, diverse scenery and cultures, with beautiful temples and holy sites. Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism all predate Christianity.

But India hardly has cornered the market on ancient wisdom and modern-day compassion -- not

this land where Hindu-Muslim or Hindu-Sikh violence abounds, where caste strife makes headlines, and where female infanticide and honor killings continue, despite criminalization.

The Miami delegates could have watched TED talks, gone to their local library, brought in speakers from local universities, or signed up with any of the numerous local meditation centers in North Miami.

Of course, I do commend their efforts to learn more about Gandhi's legacy of nonviolence and compassion, and his own complicated history. I hope they take to heart his commitment to nonviolent protest.

*Janis Carpenter  
North Miami*

### **Condo Protection Legislation Missed the Mark**

Francisco Alvarado's "A Tale of Two Condos: Skimming, Kickbacks, and Other Crimes" in your November issue is spot on. Sadly, the Florida Condominium Reform Act of 2017, once widely heralded for legislating criminal penalties for condominium wrongdoers, has fallen short of the mark.

Kudos to Alvarado for identifying current systemic challenges to combating condo corruption. As his article correctly points out, the new criminal penalties have not moved the needle at all.

Which begs the question, why not?

First, the criminal provisions, as currently worded, fail to provide adequate tools for the enforcement toolkit. Second, there's a continuing disconnect among the regulatory and enforcement agencies with respect to actual investigations and case development. At its core,

there's a giant problem of evidence.

As an elected official, I have listened to countless accounts by condo dwellers lacking the data, resources, or wherewithal to develop the evidence needed by the enforcement agencies to bring charges against wrongdoers.

The Coronado Condominium and Admiral's Point Condominium cases are the exception rather than the rule. In the Coronado case, a board member had unfettered access to the association's financial records, which gave her the ability to unravel the money transfers. Condominium unit owners are typically not so fortunate, despite the Condominium Act's core protections.

The Admiral's Point case is also unique due to the existence of video surveillance, wiretapping, and live testimony. Kickbacks and other mutually beneficial arrangements are notoriously difficult to prove.

On October 18, I moderated a "Condo Corruption: What Is the Municipal Response?" panel at the Miami-Dade County League of Cities Best Practices Conference, with esteemed panelists from the Miami-Dade Police Department's Bureau of Economic Crimes, the State Attorney's Office, and fellow Commissioners Michael Góngora of Miami Beach and Robert Yaffe of Bay Harbor Islands, discussing these very issues.

In our city, I have inaugurated a condo clinic series and am planning a future "Condo Corruption Town Hall Summit" with our neighboring municipalities. It's time to revisit the legislation and our regulatory and enforcement capacity.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at [dgoldman@sibfl.net](mailto:dgoldman@sibfl.net).

*Dana Robin Goldman, Vice Mayor  
City of Sunny Isles Beach*

## **Residents Need Your Help**

Please keep writing about the Aventura Coronado and Admiral's Port condos with updates on each case. I have a 93-year-old mother who lives in the Admiral's Port east condo building. It is helpful for all of the residents to know what is happening with the case against Donovan Staley per the December 5 hearing.

Your article is the first piece of concise information on what actually happened. It has been hard to get answers. Most of the residents are old and are stuck in the building.

It has been difficult to sell units since people cannot get refinancing while they are waiting for the property to complete its 40-year certification.

Thank you.

*Gloria Kaplan*  
*Aventura*

## **Annoyed with Activists**

The only points that make some sense in Francisco Alvarado's article "Out of Sync and Seeing Red" (August 2018) are the answers from the Miami-Dade County transportation bureaucrats. Why? Because they are the only people who know what they're talking about. Here is what Donald Wilson, a person with no background in traffic engineering, completely missed in this baseless article:

First, not long ago the FDOT, with the intention of improving traffic flow, wasted millions of taxpayers' dollars widening the Biscayne Boulevard traffic lanes. The results were zero improvements in traffic flow and devastating consequences for pedestrian traffic in the corridor.

Second, the only way to reduce traffic congestion is to decrease the number of cars on the road, common knowledge he is ignoring by choosing to add his car to the already congested corridor, instead of walking or taking the bus.

Third, the half-penny tax was never intended to synchronize traffic lights.

Fourth, you need a cape on that superhero photograph of Wilson trying reconquer the Boulevard from the hands of the stupid Dade County bureaucrats.

Finally, the City of Miami had a plan to create a tree canopy to mitigate the heat and encourage pedestrian traffic along the Boulevard. However, another "activist" (Elvis Cruz) decided to sue the city, on the grounds that Miami should plant palm trees to please the tourists; and that, according to him, palm trees also provide shade.

Our corridor has suffered enough from all these wannabe activists.

*Jorge Sanchez*  
*Palm Grove*