

## Government Shut Up

Written by Jay Beskin, BT Contributor  
February 2019

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### Sometimes the wiser course is to say nothing



Sometimes people (and I myself have been guilty of this offense in these pages a time or two) refer to Aventura as the City of Excellence in a snarky way, as if to say that proclaiming one's excellence is the ultimate self-caricature.

The premises behind that premise are that (1) it is unlikely that the proclaimers of excellence and the practitioners of excellence are the same people, and (2) true excellence adorns itself with an aura of humility and refrains from proclaiming itself too loudly.

As King Solomon said in Proverbs: "Let a stranger praise you, not your own mouth."

Even so, Aventura has done a fairly good job (can you say "a goodly fair job?") of living up to its sobriquet. That was certainly the case when I was serving on the city commission. ("Jay, who's self-proclaiming now?").

But even in subsequent years, the housing, policing, and public spaces have been well managed. Traffic is an area that leaves too much space for improvement (and for parking), but if New York City is hailed as the pinnacle of municipal achievement, apparently traffic is not given a lot of weight in these rankings.

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So with things moving swimmingly along, and with the natural tendency of elected or appointed bodies of government to buzz busily about their business so that all the busybodies can see the body is busy, we have arrived at the critical stage of nonsense in governance. It is now time to turn from decisions that mean things to decisions that say things.

That is, to pass laws with language like:

*Whereas that brown stuff that oozes out of meatloaf congeals into an icky blob within a period of seven to ten minutes at room temperature, and whereas brown goopy blobs represent an unsightly, unsavory image undermining the appreciation of and appetite for nutriment, and whereas the City of Aventura seeks to complement its magnificent natural outdoor vistas with tasteful décor and ambiance in its indoor establishments, and whereas the low-budget independent throwaway film The Blob in 1958 surprised everyone by becoming a cult classic and making Steve McQueen a star,*

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF AVENTURA, FLORIDA, AS FOLLOWS:

*(1) That the foregoing WHEREAS clauses are ratified and confirmed as being true and correct, and are made a specific part of this Resolution,*

*(2) That the City Commission expresses its desire that all restaurants, eateries, and food courts within the city conduct all their businesses at all locations in a way that assures a lag time between cooking meatloaf and its consumption by customers of no longer than five minutes,*

*(3) That the City Commission hereby recommends that businesses with incompetent wait staff who cannot effectuate a meatloaf turnaround within said timeframe should remove meatloaf from the menu and replace it with something aesthetically pleasing, like sushi,*

*(4) That the City Commission hereby calls upon local laboratories to undertake research and experimentation to identify the factor, or combination of factors, which cause the goop to spew and to congeal, thereby to discover or invent a solution to achieve full nutritional and visual*

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*excellence as befitting the City of Aventura, Florida.*

One of the items on the current city council agenda is making a statement against the “movement” that seeks to revive the old Arab Boycott against Israel under the new name of BDS (“boycott, divestment, sanction”) as part of the larger project of reviving anti-Semitism under the new name of anti-Zionism.

We have commented in the past about the wisdom of municipalities engaging in such declarations, but at this point it’s fair to argue that if the pro-BDS creeps build their brand through procuring declarations, we have no choice but to compete by doing our own declaring in return.

Well, this brings us to the next stage of evolution, or devolution, of city government. Once the real laws are in place and the various pontifications have been promulgated, the only way for the bodies to be busy is to turn themselves into busybodies. At that point, we put our peddle to the meddle, and adopt the politics of noisome nostrums and buttinski utopianism, like New York forbidding 32-ounce soda cups and California eliminating plastic straws.

The medium becomes the message -- it is not that we really expect to save people from obesity by forcing them to buy two 16-ounce cups; we simply use the platform of government to shout down at all those unenlightened folks making poor choices with their freedom.

The City of Aventura is getting into that act, too, with an agenda item geared to rendering e-cigarettes and vaping illegal. Somehow the cigarette -- a product at once noxious and unhealthy and being sold by an unattractive cadre of tight-lipped guys in dark suits, coughing all the way to the bank -- has become a focus of secular hostility. Somehow the personal-choice narrative has gotten beaten down over the years, what with secondhand smoke delivering the downside of the cigarette without the enjoyment.

In an ultimate irony, states, including Florida, are now on the march toward legalizing marijuana, a product at once noxious and unhealthy that is being sold by an unattractive cadre of tight-lipped guys in dark shirts.

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By shedding the suits, they bring a romance to the trade that the cigarette guys lack, and if they have to fill the occasional mass grave in Mexico to keep the supply line healthy, we'll tote that up as having to break a few eggs to make the omelet.

Should the City of Aventura take the bold step of trying to stop e-cigarettes and vaping? Even assuming city leaders have the power to do so -- a question in its own right -- my answer is a resounding **no**.

My proud career as a civil libertarian would never allow me to accept the notion of a conglomerate entity of governance denying individuals so basic a liberty. Not to mention the insanity of creating an atmosphere where the pot smokers will be in the public square puffing heartily and the vapers will be hiding in dark alleys.

It seems to me that government needs to learn the same lesson a good parent, good teacher, or good employer must internalize: Only open your mouth if there's a problem, and only if it's a problem you have the power to solve -- and only if it's a problem that is any of your damned business.

Honestly, the city is so excellent, we are happy to pay you to do nothing, when nothing is what we need.

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