

## **Mayor's Report #2**

In the short time I've been mayor, I'm grateful for several things.

I have gotten to know Ivie and Kathi much better, and I appreciate their steadfast performance. They have helped hold down the fort while Kevin Lucas has been away for several weeks.

I especially appreciate all the support from residents who thank me for taking on this job. It means a lot to me.

Some neighbors have stepped up and we owe them our gratitude: Pam Rauch and Tony Prosser are serving with Dick and me on the time-consuming Police Chief Search Committee. Janet Saura is overseeing with Bill Doney the process that will result in a workshop and language for a proposal to change our charter to Commissioner/Town manager government at a referendum in March. Art Landro is helping us with cyber security of our Town documents as well as the process for adding steps to the north beach crossover. George Hines, Butch Harper and Ted Rauch have helped improve our Zoom meetings at the Beach Club. Former Commissioner Lisa Hines is working with Commissioner Busto on the budget preparation.

Every day I spend here, the more I am convinced that we should move to a Town Manager form of government.

We have made some progress in the three weeks I have been mayor. We are moving closer to selecting a Chief of Police. We have begun the process of proposing a Charter revision for a vote next March. Acting Chief Schultz, with Sgt. Folbrecht, has instituted an audit of police records. And, as I will enumerate, we are ensuring that our FY23 bookkeeping is accurate and have prepared a preliminary budget for FY24.

Running a Town in Florida is a complex task with more responsibilities each year. In truth, JIC has not kept up.

I have discovered that some processes and programs that should be in place are not, with real risks to our Town. For example, we have had lax enforcement of collection of building fees which are essential to the Town's finances since building is the primary "business" of the town and, outside of public safety, our largest expense. Some fees have not been collected on time and some not equitably.

I discovered in early June that, for the first time since I have been on the Commission, the budgeted surplus had been allocated to expenses. You may recall that I requested at the June meeting that the Budget be restored to what the Commission passed last September. The effect is that I discovered that spending this year exceeded the limits that the Commission had authorized and that it had been obfuscated by the misallocation of the budget surplus. It is also apparent that some expenses, such as a new generator for Town Hall had been expensed and should be paid from one of our nonoperating reserves. In addition, the budget for police

salaries and additional police personnel far exceeds the budget and were not authorized by the Commission.

We are in the process of cleaning up the books. I insist that all be transparent and done with the authorization of the Commission. This is a work in progress which will not be completed until we see the final numbers in October. The consequence is that I will ask for votes on specific changes in our bookkeeping tonight. I request your forbearance as we go through that process.

Since I have been focused on the task of cleaning up the books for FY23, I asked Commissioner Busto to help prepare the FY24 Budget. I thank him and Lisa Hines as well as John Pruitt for their hard work to get the 2024 budget in shape to present to you.

At the last meeting, we discussed asking our auditors to do a STUB audit. We will bring that to a vote at this meeting.

Also, to ensure that the Town is in the best shape possible, both financially and operationally, I recommend to my fellow commissioners that we hire a consultant experienced in all phases of municipal government to do an operations audit to look at current processes and procedures that can be updated and improved and that all state and county laws are being followed. The consultant will also be prepared to recommend areas where we can save money and grants for which we may be eligible.

The investment in this person's time will pay off no matter how the Town votes on the proposed March referendum. Whether we vote to have a town manager or keep a strong mayor system, we need to make sure that the Town is executing all functions according to the most up to date best practices. As mentioned in previous meetings, Dick and I intend to leave the Commission at the end of the year. Our goal is to ensure that the Town is in ship-shape condition for those who replace us.