

MAY 2021 NEWS

Islamorada Community Alliance

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Stay in Touch and Stay Involved

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Our Mission:

To provide Islamorada residents with information about events occurring in our community that will impact our quality of life, preservation of our native ecosystems, land development, lawful and transparent governance.

The **Islamorada Community Alliance** was formed because of the love we have for our community and our determination to make it the best it can be. Islamorada has always been special: the people, the environment, the places and the history.

Let us all join together as advocates, working to enhance the community of

Islamorada by preserving the quality of life of the residents as well as the beauty and vitality of our amazing environment, both land and sea.

There is still much that can be done to make life in Islamorada even better. By working together, we can make a difference.

Our Plans

- The **Islamorada Community Alliance** has created a **website:** Islamorada.org where there is already a wealth of information but there is so much more to come: stories about the people and places that make our community special, a complete analysis of some of the issues impacting our lives, information about our local government and the efforts of council and staff, island specific news and stories.
- ◆ “Like” us on **FaceBook** ([Click here](#)) and join our **Facebook group** ([Click here](#))
 - ◆ Enjoy our **newsletters** and forward them to your friends.
 - ◆ Watch for our **email “blasts”** when there are current issues we think will interest you.
 - ◆ Help us provide a forum for local condo and homeowner associations

Your Part

The **Islamorada Community Alliance** wants you to join our effort.

We want to hear from you! Send us an email at info@Islamorada.org.

The Islamorada Community Alliance is anxious to hear:

- ◆ your questions
- ◆ your ideas
- ◆ your stories
- ◆ your opinions

And we’d love your Islamorada photos too.

Welcome to Islamorada Community Alliance

Having Trouble with our Website?

Sign in troubles?

We hear you. And we are working to fix things. First we are planning to make our website public with no sign in required, just go to Islamorada.org and you can see all of the content with no joining, no sign-in and no trouble!

Need Help?

We are working on a “help” section to give you ideas on how to navigate the site and what there is to see so you don’t miss a thing!

Do you have suggestions?

What would make our website more useful for you? What do you like? What don’t you like?

Our Front Page

The website now has a “**Front Page**” with sections for breaking news, “Did you know,” most recent stories, quotes from emails we get, and a variety of the most important Village issues and concerns. We hope this makes navigating our website a bit easier!

Traffic, Traffic, Traffic and More Traffic

We have a problem! Too many vehicles on the road, too many accidents and no relief in sight.

The Tourist Development Council takes in nearly \$40 million each year in bed tax collected from overnight guests. By state law nearly all must be spent to bring in more tourists.

[Click here](#), go to our website, read about traffic.

New Manager Recruitment

We are well into the process of hiring a permanent replacement for Seth Lawless. There were 82 applicants from 30 states, by the recruitment deadline who are interested in being our manager!



The consultant, Colin Baenziger, is working to narrow the choices to approximately a dozen of the most likely candidates by May 10.

The finalists will be discussed via a **zoom special call meeting with Council on May 19**. A reception and interviews are scheduled for June 1st and 2nd, with a selection possible on June 2nd.

Have you been to the Green Turtle Hammock Preserve?



The 8.7-acre Green Turtle Hammock Preserve at MM81.2 was acquired by Islamorada in 2006 with grant funds from the Florida Communities Trust program.

This property was once the home of Councilman Henry Rosenthal.

A canoe launch is located at the boat basin. A short hiking trail winds through the hammock. Where Henry's home once sat, more improvements are planned for the property, including an elevated pavilion for viewing Florida Bay.

The preserve is open from 8 AM to 5 PM daily. It is worth a trip through the inconspicuous gates just north of MM81 on the bayside of U.S. One to see the preserve.

Go to Islamorada.org For Breaking News

Why the Roseate Spoonbill?



The Alliance is using the **roseate spoonbill** as a symbol demonstrating the need to stay involved in our community. Islamorada like the spoonbill is one of nature's beauties! Yet we must battle or adapt.

At one time spoonbill feathers were in such great demand, spoonbills neared extinction because of plume hunters. Then advocates recognized the need to protect them. Islamorada also needs advocates.

[Click here](#) to go to our website and read about the spoonbill and its way of handling its troubles.

Learn about the life of Councilman Henry Rosenthal!

What a background...

[Click here](#)



Lower Matecumbe Swim Zone: 4/21/21

It has been a long and tedious process to get the required permits to install buoys to delineate a swim zone in front of Port Antigua and White Marlin Beach approved by the Village Council on August 20, 2020.

The swim zone required authorizations from four agencies: Florida Fish and Wildlife (FWC), Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), and U.S. Coast Guard (USCG).

Eight months into the process, three of the four permits have been finalized. The FDEP permit proved to be the most difficult as they required a submerged land lease from the State, requiring numerous surveys and documentation on the makeup of the sea bottom where each anchor would be located. FDEP also required authorization from every property owner along the beach. All requirements have been met, but the Village is still awaiting finalization of the permit, expected in the next several weeks.

The Village has the buoys, chains and anchors on order so they will be ready to install as soon as that last permit is finalized.

Peter Frezza, the Village Environmental Resources Manager, has been coordinating this permitting effort. Councilman Dave Webb has stayed involved, assuring the process continues in the right direction.

There was significant concern this legislative session as the Senate bill 1086 had language that required that swim zones can only be created by municipalities if there is general public access by land. Mayor Pinder and Councilman Webb fought vigorously.

Senator Ana Maria Rodriguez offered a late amendment on 4/21/2021 eliminating the "general public access by land" and the bill passed as amended.

Perhaps the summer will see more peace and quiet.

Go to Islamorada.org



Why all
the
Signs?



Employers in the Keys are struggling to find help. Why? It's the cost of living, it's housing!

According to the property appraiser's records, in the last 12 months, 243 single family homes have sold in Islamorada. Only 7 of those sold for less than \$400,000. Most folks in the workforce cannot afford prices like that and investors paying \$400,000 or more want higher rents than workers here can afford. Certainly vacation rentals are more lucrative, legal or illegal.

What have we done to buck this trend?

- ◆ Our affordable housing program has seen minimal success in spite of significant expenditures by the Village.
- ◆ The Village has failed to demand compliance with affordable housing requirements.
- ◆ Code enforcement seems ineffective in dealing with illegal vacation rentals, enabling investors to maximize rents. End result: reduction in long term rentals that are available.
- ◆ Hundreds of mobile homes, once homes for our workforce, are now or soon will be accommodating tourists or parttime residents, often short term rentals charging \$\$\$\$ /night.

[Click here](#) to read the shocking story about Islamorada's affordable housing issues.



201 Dogwood

At the April 8, 2021 Council meeting, a procession of neighbors spoke during public comment about the commercial use that was being allowed in their quiet working class residential community. A single-family zoned lot became a commercial parking lot for the nearby Islamorada Beer Company on US One.

The very first page of the Village Comprehensive Plan, our own Constitution, is clear:

OBJECTIVE 1-1.1: PLAN AND DESIGN FOR RESIDENTIAL QUALITY. Land Development Regulations shall ensure stability, land use compatibility and conserve the integrity of residential areas.

Policy 1-1.1.1: Protect Residential Areas From Incompatible Development. Stable residential areas shall be protected from encroachment by incompatible development.

And thus the Village zoning regulations were written to be clear-cut:

From **Sec. 30-684 of the Village Code**, the purpose of the **residential single-family R1 zoning** district is to accommodate homes, homeowners' parks, and open space in single-family residential neighborhoods.

The Village Land Development Regulations do not mention commercial parking lot or any other commercial use as uses allowed in R1 zoning.

Seems clear enough that this is not a legal use of this residential lot and therefore is a violation of the Village code. End of story.

However, the Director of Development Services at the Village, Ty Harris, has the authority to interpret our code and he feels a commercial parking lot is just fine in R1 zoning. Neighbors remain determined and negotiations continue.

Share Our Newsletters with Friends and Neighbors



The Fills: Master Plan in the Works, But We Have Another Idea

A Fills “wish list” of 14 features will be the basis of a Master Plan of possible amenities on the Fill – primarily paid for by our taxpayers but to be enjoyed by the people creating havoc on weekends. The Council has acknowledged that many of the wish list features will never be implemented. So whose wish list is it?

When asked by council at their April 8, 2021 meeting when the staff expects critical features to be in place, Maria Bassett, Acting Village Manager, indicated she thought it would be a year.

Another summer of weekend traffic and trash? Why not a simple fix, a simple letter to FDOT requesting:

- ◆ The right to post new "No Parking" signs along swales (including amount of fine)
- ◆ Permission to have paid parking at the designated parking areas at existing driveway aprons.

Having already increased the penalty for parking illegally to \$200, there may be no need to install an ugly barrier. Using an online parking app, as previously discussed, would generate revenue at the Fills (and also at Anne's Beach) to reduce cleanup costs paid by local taxpayers.

The idea of parking on the driveway aprons and the "No Parking" signs on the swales was presented by FDOT in their presentation to the Village in 2016. Why would they object now? [Click here](#) to see the complete 2016 FDOT Presentation.

