

May 2022 NEWS
Islamorada Community
Alliance

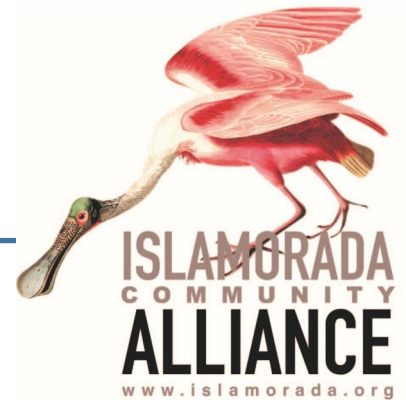
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**A huge thank you to
those who have sent
donations to the
Islamorada
Community Alliance
You are Appreciated!**



**Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I re-
member. Involve me and I learn.**

Village Manager Selected May 6, 2022



Thomas “Ted” Yates was unanimously selected as our new Village Manager at a special call meeting held at 1:30 pm Friday May 6, 2022. Ted is currently the Mayor of Twinsburg Ohio.

When applying for the position with the Village, he provided the principles and values that have led to his success as a city leader:

- Lead by example;
- utilize your team members;
- get your hands dirty;
- compassion for others;
- create a positive organizational culture

Ted is married to Sharon Yates and they have three children, two adults out on their own and one still in college.

Next step: Vice Mayor Henry Rosenthal was selected by Council to immediately negotiate the terms of a contract with Yates. Yates expects to be able to start work here by July 1.

When the process was finished Councilman Buddy Pinder commented about the fact that in the initial “straw” vote Yates received four first place votes and one second place vote. “I prayed for unity in making this decision. And we did work good together. The outcome was spectacular”

[Click here to watch](#)

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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.



End of BPAS lottery —The Winners? We have an idea about one possible winner.

Buildout: When the Environment and Infrastructure Can Take No More

Buildout currently is anticipated in July of 2023 when there will be no more allocations remaining for new homes. There are now 33 allocations left for new market rate homes, but 77 properties on the waiting list. Not even half of the property owners currently in the system will be able to get permits. What do we do? Do we set up arm wrestling matches, draw straws? Or do we say “No, you should have known!”

Enumerating several benefits of extending the 2023 date, in December 2021, all five members of council directed the staff to prepare changes in the Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Regulations that the Village Attorney said were needed to extend buildout. There have been no changes presented but numerous discussions have occurred.

At the March 31, 2022 Council meeting: A resolution was in the agenda to extend BPAS through 2025 by reducing the number of quarterly allocations. The proposal called for no market rate allocations until quarter 3 of 2022 to correct a date discrepancy and then allocate fewer awards for remaining quarters through 2025.

The decision was delayed until May. Now the issue is back on the agenda as a discussion item only, no resolution. But item 15 is awarding allocations for quarter 1—what the council was told in March would be delayed until quarter 3 because of calendar discrepancies.

Mark Gregg—Our very own poster child? While all five councilmen voiced agreement to extend BPAS in December of 2021, Councilman Gregg is now emphatically opposed, perhaps because the extension of BPAS will affect him personally. There are 77 properties in the system and hundreds of vacant lot owners who may be wanting permits in the future. Gregg has a property ranked #7 of 77. It would seem like he is determined to make certain he gets one of those 33 valued permits as soon as possible and before the Village runs out. This is an issue that impacts many lot owners in the Village. Fairness is critical to them and to the impact the end of BPAS allocations will have on all taxpayers if lawsuits follow.



The Jetty Parcel And speaking of Mark Gregg and BPAS —remember that at the December 16, 2021 Council meeting Gregg disclosed that he had withdrawn his application for a BPAS allocation for the narrow jetty in front of his home on E. Ridge Road. It was believed he withdrew the application because of prior manager Greg Oravec’s insistence that there were irregularities in scoring as reported by the Islamorada Community Alliance.

[Read the story](#)

The Jetty Application is Back? On Jan 11, 2022 the Council accepted the resignation of Mr. Oravec. His last day was January 27, 2022. On January 31, 2022, Mark Gregg paid the Village \$300 to resubmit his BPAS allocation for the jetty property. The status of the application in the Village CityView system simply says “in BPAS.”

And Gregg still has another BPAS allocation for a lot next to his house awarded a year ago. The permit was finally issued 4/2/2022 but it is now sitting in the CityView system listed as “on hold.” Is it for sale?



Brewery/Distillery/Bar/Music Venue Was the Process Correct?

Safety of the neighborhood children, quiet enjoyment, traffic?

At the last council meeting a liquor license was approved for the old bank building at 90184 Overseas Highway. For an Alcoholic Beverage license, a public hearing is required to determine if certain conditions are acceptable and if the specific location is appropriate.

Did the five members of council understand the factors they were to consider? At the hearing, the Council should have been considering the safety of the neighborhood children, proximity to the schools, whether noise has the potential/probability to disrupt quiet enjoyment of life for residents, and the traffic (concurrency) at the most congested U.S. One location in the Keys.

Several procedural concerns exist, even before this hearing. There was never a notice regarding the approval of the actual site plan for the property. The CityView system does not show there ever was site plan review. The site plan is a critical concern to the community and should absolutely go through proper review and notice.

With a 5 COP Alcoholic license granted, the use is no longer a “brewpub” but now it must be classified as “Bar, tavern, or drinking place 10,000 square feet or less” forcing a major conditional use hearing.

Council must understand that their decisions could forever change the quality of life for an established neighborhood and add to the drastic traffic problems of the entire Keys community.

The appropriate process must be followed and the decisions should be based on specific factors as provided by code: Location compatibility, intensity of use, site characteristics, concurrency (traffic), adverse effects on the neighborhood.





TRAFFIC: Our Everyday Nemesis

How much more can we tolerate? What are the contributing factors?



- Trips on the highway generated by local residents and businesses.
- Tourism and the TDC
- Vacation rentals

Highway Trip Generation - We have just one major road, critical to all of us. Local and state regulations require that we monitor the level of service on U.S. One. A traffic study is conducted by Monroe County every two years to judge the traffic capacity on all 24 segments of US 1. Islamorada has four of the segments, basically one on each island within the Village. **Three Islamorada segments are extremely congested; two are below acceptable standards.**

According to the 2021 study, all four Islamorada traffic segments should be given particular attention when approving development applications. Windley Key and Upper Matecumbe segments have no “reserve trips.” The traffic segment on Plantation Key is even worse, but a temporary speed limit sign when the 2021 study was conducted, made the results look better than the reality experienced by drivers.

Islamorada’s Comp Plan and Land Development Regulations do not require sufficient available highway capacity when developments are approved within a traffic segment where traffic falls below standards. Traffic standards however should be considered! Too much is too much. **The decisions of the Village Council should not make a bad problem worse.**

Tourism and TDC -Tourists pay an extra 4% “bed tax” for their overnight lodging. The money goes to the Tourist Development Council (TDC). By state law, most all of the 4% collected, must be spent on promoting tourism, for events attracting tourists, or for capital improvements that are tourist related. Revenue generated for the year 2021 for the Monroe County TDC was over \$30 million. Year after year, the funds for marketing for tourists continue to grow dramatically as room rates increase and more tourists visit, generating more traffic. Can’t we get Tallahassee to understand enough is enough. **The legislature should be lobbied to allow expenditure of some of the TDC funding for affordable housing initiatives, conservation of environmental land, restoration projects.**

Vacation Rentals— Islamorada limits the number of Vacation Rental licenses available. But there are many property owners who do short term rentals illegally. Last September the Council voted to purchase RentalScape—a software system to help identify the illegal rentals. **We desperately need Vacation rental enforcement. Let’s make the system work for us.**

Do vacation rentals impact traffic more than homes occupied long term? The occupancy allowed in a vacation rental is based on the number of bedrooms. The cost of rentals is so expensive, family and friends share homes to make their vacations a bit more affordable. A typical 4 bedroom SINGLE FAMILY home is likely to have two cars. A four bedroom VACATION RENTAL home is likely to be shared by four couples—four cars. And renters spend more time traveling about the Florida Keys. **Florida Legislature issue— they will not allow local governments to make vacation rental regulations more restrictive. We need to change that.**



Excuse my language but I'm talking some
TRASH!



Fills: The “Not a Park” Design:

Tale of Orange Cones: When will the beauty of the Fills be back? After scrapping the consultant's \$55,000 effort to turn the Fills into a park that very few wanted, Council decided to listen to what most residents had been saying for decades. “It's a roadway, not a park.”



At the February 17, 2022 council meeting, Vice Mayor Rosenthal suggested removing the orange cones on the Fills. Surely no parking signs with \$200 fines would eliminate the massive crowds gathering helter-skelter every weekend in past years, damaging the environment, disrupting traffic, and leaving tons of trash behind. The rest of the council insisted guardrails are the answer to assure adherence to the no parking signs.

Five Council meetings later and still no Fills progress report. If it takes this long to formulate a simple plan to “not create a park,” how long will it take to implement the “not a park” plan. It is the loveliest stretch of highway in the Village. But all those ugly orange cones destroy the vista! Please let's get this done. No more ugly!



The Big Exodus from Islamorada



The primary reasons people relocate is either for a new job or *the opportunity to move to their dream location*. Wait, isn't Islamorada paradise, the location everyone dreams of calling home? So why are so many in our community heading out of paradise? Is it traffic, cost of living, lack of housing, or the opportunity to sell your home at an extraordinary profit?

It isn't something new. Some of the really special Islamorada folks have been gone a few years, others have been packing it in more recently. As they say, “Who will turn out the lights when everyone is gone?”

Ron and Mary Jane O'Brien, Residents Emeritus. Ron was head Olympic coach seven times from 1972-96 always with Mary Jane at his side. He helped design and oversee construction of the aquatic center at Founders Park and helped recruit incredible coaches. The O'Briens left town a few years back, but return for frequent visits to check on the Village they love and the people that call them family. “We have moved 17 times in 60 years and Islamorada will always be our favorite home. It will be our final stop, off Lignum Vitae Key.”

Ted and Sara Blackburn moved a couple years ago but are greatly missed by so many here. Ted was on the Village Council and integral to the negotiating of the central sewer contract and so much more. Many locals who know the Blackburns had their fingers crossed that Ted would return as Village manager. What a special couple.

Jon and Julie Landau sold their Plantation Key paradise a few months ago. Jon is a film producer, known for producing Titanic and Avatar. The Landaus made a difference in Islamorada. And now they are gone..

Tiki and Ted D'Esposito, gone but will never be forgotten for the enormous community involvement that always made Islamorada shine a bit brighter.



South Florida Water Management (SFWMD) Comes to the Keys

On Thursday May 12, at 9:00 am at the Reefhouse Conference Center, 103800 Overseas Hwy, SFWMD will have a Governing Board meeting. We depend on SFWMD for fair distribution of the freshwater that travels south, so critical to the Everglades Restoration and Florida Bay. This is our opportunity to voice our appreciation and our concerns. Their meetings in the Keys are extremely rare... show appreciation! Plan to attend.

Change of Start Time: Thursday Council Meeting—May 12, 2022; 3 pm

With 20 tabs, even with a start time 2 1/2 hours earlier than normal, this looks like another marathon meeting.

Four or five items on the agenda this Thursday have been carried forward from the last two council meetings when the meetings continued past 11 pm. Several agenda items that were to be carried forward weren't: discussion about the legislative lobbyists in Tallahassee and the evaluation of the Village Attorney.

Lobbyists: Vice Mayor Rosenthal asked for a discussion about a competitive bid process for lobbying services last September and was told it was too close to the January legislative session. He put it on the agenda at the April 21, 2022 meeting. It was delayed then and is now missing from the May 12 meeting.

And speaking of our lobbying services. We have two contracts with Tallahassee lobbying firms... GrayRobinson and Peebles, Smith, and Matthews. Based on contracts signed last September, we have been paying GrayRobinson \$4000/month and Peebles, Smith and Matthews, \$6,250/month. But—Peebles, Smith and Matthews have no lobbyists registered with the state of Florida! Matthews now works for GrayRobinson. But our contracted lobbyist is Peebles. Shouldn't we have canceled the Peebles contract and saved taxpayers \$75,000?

Major Conditional Uses: The May 12 agenda contains several major conditional uses.

Treasure Village charter school on Plantation Key wants to install the modular classrooms that have been sitting along the highway for months and months. The plan is to place them in the existing parking lot on the school property. For safety reasons Village planning staff prefers that the school property located between the Old Highway and US 1 not be used for parking. The school hopes to use an adjoining vacant lot for parking but it is residentially zoned. Let's hope for the students' sake, a solution is found.

Hog Heaven is also hoping for a major conditional use approval to allow for the "continuation of an existing restaurant and apartment complex with the addition of a tiki hut bar with an outdoor seating area and swimming pool." So many issues! Windley Key has fallen below the acceptable level of service of US1 according to the 2021 traffic study, though not reported in the staff report. No mention is made of future access issues regarding the FDOT plan to replace the nearby drawbridge. The maximum floor area ratio may have been calculated incorrectly.

Status Report: an "Actions and Policies Report" has been added to the Village website under Village Council. The report includes tasks the Council directed staff to undertake. It does not include the status of work assigned to outside companies on projects the Village has undertaken. Thank you Maria Bassett for this addition to the website.

Did you know:

Holly Raschein is an Islamorada resident! She represents Monroe County as Commissioner for District 5, usually thought of as representing Tavernier and Key Largo, but there is a tiny portion of Islamorada near Tavernier Creek in District 5 and that is where Holly lives. She officially represents some of us! **County Commission David Rice, District 4**, is a Marathon resident, but a representative for most residents of Islamorada, except those in Holly's little corner.



Happy Mother's Day to Acting Manager and Finance Director Maria Bassett. Two of the most demanding jobs in Islamorada—filling in when we have a Village Manager vacancy and keeping track of our budget which in the current year includes (for all funds) Revenues of \$41,006,100, Expenditures of \$44,321,700 with a total fund balance over \$25,000,000. Staggering numbers and daunting task for a town our size.

We get comments! From Timothy Kinsella: "Being a proud resident of Twinsburg, Ohio I am very proud of Mr. **Ted Yates**. From the local Trunk or Treat activities to Family Fun events which featured BBQ! Islamorada will be happy to have Mr. Yates services. He's about helping people and is always ahead on projects. Kent State at Geauga had awarded him as well for his services. Helping our surrounding communities is also important to Mr. Yates. I know he will be a wonderful help to the people of Islamorada. With his knowledge and insight you will not be disappointed."



On December 1, 2021, **Dan Gulizio**, started working as the head of Islamorada's Planning and Development Services. To date he has done a remarkable job addressing the challenges the Islamorada community faces regarding the sustainability of our community, the environment and our limited infrastructure and resources.

Mr. Gulizio, with 25 years of planning experience in larger communities on Long Island, NY, came to Islamorada with a long history of efforts to protect the environment and particularly water quality. It hasn't taken him long to make a positive impact in Islamorada.

His often stated goals are to review and improve many of the planning and development policies and procedures to address issues that sometimes result in confusion and inconsistencies.



Islamorada Youth Council was established in 2013 to provide the youth of Islamorada with the opportunity to participate in the Village's decision-making process through recommendations to the Village Council regarding issues concerning the youth, as well as youth programs, projects and activities.

It was great to see, Simon Gutierrez, a junior at Coral Shores and a member of the Youth Council attend the May LPA meeting. He not only attended, he stayed for the entire 3 hour meeting and participated via public comment several times.