

July 2021 NEWS
Islamorada Community Alliance

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We Have a New Village Manager

On Thursday July 1, 2021, Greg Oravec was sworn in as Islamorada’s tenth manager since we incorporated 23 years ago. The Village welcomes Greg with open arms, optimism, and an eye toward solutions and progress.

For nearly a year, Maria Bassett had her hands full serving both as Acting Manager and Finance Director. And she did admirably dealing with a pandemic the entire time, five new members of council, critical Village issues, while still successfully finalizing the 2020-2021 budget and launching the development of the new 2021-2022 budget.

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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.

Oravec was already spending time at the Village, attending meetings and learning the ropes, weeks before his first official day, July 1. His contract called for him to have an Islamorada place to call home within 3 months, but he found a home in Safety Harbor and moved in before being sworn in. Before his first week ended, he was already facing the possibility of a tropical storm heading our way. But Oravec was ready, having previously dealt with 11 tropical storms at Port St Lucie in his years there.

There are challenges ahead: 2023, the Fills, traffic, affordable housing, vacation rentals. Perhaps the biggest challenge: uniting a divided community.

Welcome to Islamorada Community Alliance



The History of Diving Museum

Over more than four decades, Drs. Joe and Sally Bauer traveled the world, focusing on areas that would enrich their knowledge and love of diving and its history. Along the way, they amassed a huge collection of diving helmets, dive suits, books, photographs, and videos from all over the world. They did intense diving history research everywhere they went.

The Bauers had a vacation home in Islamorada. When they retired from their medical careers in Ohio, they headed for the Florida Keys and decided to share their diving experiences and their incredible collection with the public, by creating a diving museum in Islamorada. And thus was born **The History of Diving Museum**.

The museum began full-time operation in September 2006. Sadly, in 2007, Dr. Joseph Bauer died. His death left a large void, but Dr. Sally Bauer demonstrated her strength and dedication and saw to it that the museum would grow to become an award winning attraction and outstanding educational facility. It is certainly a must see for Islamorada residents and visitors.

[Click here](#) to read the amazing story of Sally Bauer.



Islamorada Fire-Rescue Fun

History tells us that over the years, many fire stations all over the country have adopted dalmations as their mascot.

Not Islamorada! A rooster rules the roost at Station #21 at Founders Park. The rooster travels to weekly meetings at Station #20 with the fire crew. No doubt it is a good listener, sitting quietly in the front seat of the fire truck, for it is stuffed!

There's no early morning cock-a-doodle-dos to disturb the neighbors!

[Click here](#) to read the story.



Lucky to live in a Small Town

Our Village is made special by the people who live and work here. The fire-rescue team cares about us when we need them during difficult times. And they also take time to make us smile.

Summer tradition—spraying the school kids from the fire truck to launch the summer season!



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Send an email to info@islamorada.org

We never share your personal info
or email address.

Islamorada Community Alliance

We have a new office!

91655 Overseas Highway, oceanside

As the Islamorada Community Alliance grows, we have great plans for future meetings and workshops. And we have the ideal meeting hall and office to work from. We hope you will visit us in the near future as we equip our new space. We know you will feel right at home.



Pay Attention to the Spoonbill

Remember, Roseate Spoonbills warn us when the environment is struggling. [Click here](#) to read about this amazing bird.

Tree Cactus Preserve

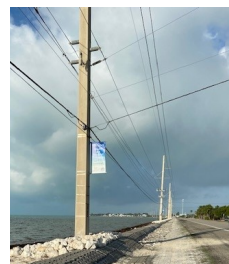
The endangered Key Tree Cactus population at the preserve is one of only eight such populations in the world.

In 2008-2009, with Florida Forever grant assistance received from the Florida Com-



munities Trust, Islamorada partnered with The Conservation Fund to purchase approximately 9 acres of uplands and mangrove wetlands with frontage along the Florida Bay on the lower end of Upper Matecumbe Key, now known as the Key Tree Cactus Preserve. [Click here](#) to read more

FKEC to Move 37 Lower Mat Poles



A \$4.7 million grant was approved to pay to relocate 37 main power poles from the ocean side of the highway to the bay side starting just north of Sea Oats Beach, to mitigate erosion and reduce the vulnerability of the main transmission line.



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Our Comp Plan was designed to protect our community, not to provide creative ways to get rich at the community's expense

2023: End of BPAS

Traffic is unacceptable, our potable water supply is critically low, our environment is struggling: we have exceeded our "Carrying Capacity." Should we still be issuing permits? Do we need more people here? We are scheduled to end issuing permits for new development in 2023. At the July 1 council meeting, Ty Harris, Director of Development Services, provided counts of the number of permits remaining in the Building Permit Allocation System (BPAS):

10 affordable allocations plus 17 reserved for the Village

55 market rate

36 administrative relief (for property owners in the system more than 4 years.)

Harris estimated there are approximately 50 unassigned TDRs that are being held by property owners.

Harris said there are nearly 650 vacant residential lots in Islamorada. How many will the Village/State need to buy if they cannot be developed? [Click here](#) to read more about 2023.

And Then There is the Greed

It appears the BPAS allocations for waterfront properties are worth about \$180,000. Sad there are clever property owners, in the know, with lots they never intend to develop. But by applying for a BPAS allocation, they can sit on the BPAS waiting list, get an allocation and make a quick \$180,000 by selling it to a property owner who just wants to build his dream home and wasn't high enough on the BPAS list. Or a developer to use as another lucrative vacation rental.

Vacation Rentals: More Greed?

Vacation rentals have become a lucrative business. In some cases, very lucrative.

At the last Local Planning Agency meeting two property owners wanted to down-zone their property. It appeared downzoning provided only one advantage. The new zoning would allow a vacation rental license.

Numerous developers have redeveloped mobile home parks, re-zoned mobile home parks, or transferred development rights from mobile home parks, to build a cluster of large 3-5 bedroom single family homes to replace tiny trailers used by our workforce, in fact creating a mini-resort of vacation rentals available 365 days a year. Can't we close that loophole?

If a hotel expands the size or number of rooms, the fee due to the affordable housing fund to offset the impact is \$25/sq ft of increased size. Yet when a single family home intended as a full time vacation rental is built, the fee is approximately 10% per square foot of the impact fee for a hotel room. The Village code never considered that single family homes would in fact be used to create a resort.

And enforcement does not play a key role in controlling vacation rental regulations. In 2020 there were 38 property owners who were cited for not adhering to our rental regulations. None of the 38 had vacation rental licenses but advertised rentals online using the term "weekly." Removing the word "weekly" from their ads brought them into compliance. Total fines collected for the year: \$12,000.

[Click here](#) to read about the problems.