



SIB *islander*

CITY OF SUNNY ISLES BEACH

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FEBRUARY 2021

MAYOR'S 2021

State OF THE City

“ I am pleased to present the 2021 State of the City address to our community. This is my seventh State of the City. To say that 2020 was an unprecedented year would be an understatement. The coronavirus pandemic tested us on a scale we never anticipated. But Sunny Isles Beach and our citizens stepped up. I am proud of our staff's response efforts and our residents' support. ”



George "Bud" Scholl
Mayor

To start on a promising note, the City's financial condition remains strong with our assessed value increasing by nearly 4% from \$11.5 billion to \$11.9 billion. Our budget kept the same millage rate at 2.2 mils per \$1,000 of assessed value. For an unprecedented fourth year, our city proposed a tax rate below the roll back rate. As a result of reduced revenues and additional expenses due to the pandemic, we experienced operating shortfalls of an estimated \$2 million and capital fund shortfalls of an estimated \$6 million. To make up for these shortfalls, we are delaying certain capital projects and cutting back where possible in the operating budget while not impacting city services.

A couple of long-awaited development projects were completed this year, which helped maintain our financial health. In 2020, the Milton Tower and the Armani Casa both received certificates of occupancy (CO). Ritz Carlton Residences and Turnberry Ocean Club were issued temporary certificates of occupancy, and their COs are expected in 2021.

When we entered 2020, hopes were high, but unfortunately, the coronavirus pandemic hindered most of our plans. Like the rest of the world, COVID-19 changed the way our government functioned. We were thrust into an unknown situation and learned as we went. South Florida was first affected on March 9 when the State of Florida declared a State of Emergency. Shortly after, Miami-Dade County and the City of Sunny Isles Beach declared local states of emergency, which awarded us certain authorities to put restrictions in place such as a stricter curfew, limiting construction activities and additional rules when in

public places, as well as to be eligible for state and federal funding for assistance programs. But we also had to follow the hierarchical structure of government, meaning our city must adhere to the rules put in place by Miami-Dade County and the State of Florida. By the end of March, Miami-Dade County and the State issued orders closing all non-essential businesses and services including parks, beaches and recreation facilities. The County urged residents to stay at home, and the City took their order one step further by ordering residents to remain at home except for engaging in essential activities. We took a firm proactive approach in order to mitigate the spread of the coronavirus in our community. However, when the State and County began their phased reopening in May, we complied and assisted in the enforcement of all mandates and guidelines.

Despite the disruption the pandemic caused, city operations remained largely uninterrupted with City Hall remaining open at all times. Every department became essential in keeping the government running in the safest manner possible. Although the pandemic required us to cut back costs, departments utilized cross training and reallocated staff to provide support in the areas needed rather than lay off employees. The Public Works department kept our city facilities and public spaces sanitized and safe for staff and, eventually, residents. The Building department began conducting inspections virtually, and the City Clerk's office moved our regular City Commission Meetings to a safe virtual and then hybrid format. Code Compliance was on the front lines to ensure compliance and a safe and successful reopening for all businesses. I want to also commend the

State OF THE City

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Police Department for their work on the front lines enforcing closures and the curfew, as well as educating the public about safety guidelines.

The Cultural and Community Services (CCS) department was tasked with finding socially distanced alternatives to engage with the community. This resulted in several successful virtual and socially distanced events such as a drive-thru graduation celebration, back-to-school backpack giveaway, month-long Halloween activities, and a walk-through holiday display. CCS was able to quickly move programs intended to be in-person to a video format available to view on YouTube or SIBTV. They offered an assortment of virtual classes for all ages. Our monthly Mount Sinai Lecture Series transitioned to Facebook Live and teens were given monthly opportunities to hang out virtually.

Media became a necessity in keeping us connected to our community when we were all staying home and in-person socializing was barred. It was imperative that we provided the community with timely, engaging and important information while being transparent and forthcoming when it came to safety guidelines, closures, restrictions and reopening. From social media and emails to the website and emergency alerts, our media team shared as much as possible, as often as possible.

Assisting our community was also a top priority for us. We made more than 2,000 food deliveries to seniors and low-income families since March and partnered with Farm Share to

host a drive-thru food distribution, staff made welfare check phone calls to nearly 350 residents, particularly seniors, and we set up a dedicated COVID-19 hotline. The City also partnered with the University of Miami to host free pediatric COVID-19 testing. The Code Compliance and Police departments distributed masks to residents and Code also extended Business Tax Receipt renewals until February 2021 to grant extra time for local businesses to submit payments. Our Finance department managed FEMA and CARES Act funding reimbursements and the City was able to provide up to \$200,000 in grants for housing assistance through Miami-Dade County CARES Act funding. We also received aid from our friends around the world. Pingtung County in Taiwan, home of our Sister City, Hengchun, graciously donated PPE to us during the early months of the pandemic when supplies were scarce.

The pandemic brought our world to a halt, and Sunny Isles Beach has tactfully weathered the storm. Though we are not out of the woods yet, we've learned some critical lessons and will take some of the adjustments we made to our operations and incorporate them on a permanent basis. Throughout 2020 we were challenged to be better and I am confident that we, as a community, will come out stronger.

2020 also brought forth some of our most prevalent community conversations. One being pedestrian safety and traffic. Traffic and speeding on Collins Avenue are a constant citizen concern and the City Manager's office petitioned the

Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) to reduce the speed limit for the fourth time since 2002. Once again, our request was denied, keeping the speed limit on Collins Avenue at 35 mph. However, our Police Department increased visibility in the community and is always promoting best practices through safety campaigns and education. Radar speed detection signs were placed in densely trafficked locations throughout the City, and PD participated in multi-agency traffic safety enforcement and educational detail focused on aggressive & distracted driving, speeding, and bike/pedestrian safety.

We took another step forward in improving the safety of the city with the installation of License Plate Reader (LPR) cameras at the three Golden Shores neighborhood entrances. Looking to the future, we plan to place LPR cameras on all public roads leading to our major thoroughfares. Safety along Collins Avenue will improve with the two new pedestrian bridges in the works. The permit and plans for the bridge at 180 Street are expected to be approved by FDOT by March 2021 with the City going out to bid for construction in the third quarter of the year.

In 2021, FDOT will commence several projects in our city beginning with preventative maintenance on the William Lehman Causeway and the installation of a signalized pedestrian crosswalk at 189 Street. FDOT will also be starting the Sunny Isles Boulevard bridge project, focused on rehabilitating the bridge at 163 Street. Once that is complete,

they will move on to a Roadway Rehabilitation and Repaving project on Sunny Isles Boulevard.

Along Collins Avenue, there are currently 131 new operational streetlights with completion of all 161 new fixtures expected by mid 2021. You may have noticed some additional light and festive cheer on the road this winter, and that décor was a direct result of the progress of the street lighting project. The Golden Shores undergrounding and street lighting are progressing as planned, with engineers working alongside Florida Power & Light (FPL) to prepare the detailed plans and bid documents for the undergrounding project. In December 2020, we awarded a contract for the Golden Shores street lighting, with estimated completion in 2021.

Flood control is always top of mind. This past year we received relentless amounts of rain, however, our forward-thinking flood control efforts mitigated widespread flooding. In 2020, we purchased four high-capacity portable pumps that are available to relieve flooding anywhere in the city when needed. Our Public Works department maintained the storm drains, ensuring they are regularly cleaned of debris and other obstructions. Because of shortfalls in our capital budget from pandemic-related costs, we have reevaluated our current capital projects. One significant saving is coming from repairs of the existing Golden Shores pump station instead of a complete rebuild of the entire facility, which is not necessary at this time to maintain proper function. We have also resurrected the original plans for a new storm water pump station to service the central island of the City. This is the only remaining area of significant flooding in Sunny Isles Beach, but even this flooding dissipates rather quickly.

2020 was a record year for sustainability in Sunny Isles Beach. At the start of the year, we launched our new campaign 'ECOmmitted,' with the purpose of promoting and fostering

more eco-driven adjustments that everyone can make in their daily lives. Subsequently, we passed an ordinance that prohibits specific uses of plastic straws and also added reusable buckets along the beach for beachgoers to fill with trash during their strolls. The City partnered with FPL to install electric vehicle charging stations at several municipal lots around the city where residents and visitors can charge their vehicle for free. Sunny Isles Beach received the Tree City USA designation as a result of our participation in the Miami-Dade County Neat Streets program with their goal of planting one million trees in the County. Another beach renourishment project took place in 2020 at the north end of the City south to 185 Street, adding 48,000 cubic yards of sand to the shore.

Through the Public Art program, the City benefited from two new privately-owned pieces. At the Milton Tower on the corner of Sunny Isles Boulevard and Collins Avenue is 'Mariposas' by artist Manolo Valdes. And the Ritz Carlton Residences is home to the 11-and-a-half-foot marble sculpture 'Dreaming the Future' by renowned sculptor Pablo Atchugarry.

In 2020, the country experienced the most active hurricane season in history, which resulted in 30 named storms. We are fortunate that we only

experienced minor effects from the two storms that impacted us, resulting in some heavy rain, wind and flooding. With proven preparedness, we were able to provide community outreach, sharing and receiving information with the public as it came in.

The Cultural and Community Services department was off to a running start at the beginning of 2020 with new program offerings before halting due to COVID-19. They successfully executed an all-girls youth soccer program that reached capacity in the first two

seasons, eclipsed 95 participants in youth volleyball and implemented a new youth fitness program. And after 15 years of providing a successful and coveted after school program for the NSE/SIB K-8 School, we transferred management to the school with the intention of bringing our focus to more specialized programming for the community.

The plans for Pelican Community Park improvements are completed, which provide for additional storage and upgraded lobby space. Construction will be completed in early 2021. The project design for the Newport Fishing Pier shade structure is near completion with construction slated to start in 2021.

The Gateway Center buildout was completed in October 2020 and we are looking forward to opening the new facility and moving select programming here in 2021. The Center features a 3,600 square foot banquet space, classrooms, catering kitchen, top-of-the-line technology, and a social hallway for mingling when we are able to safely do so.

Despite delays due to the coronavirus, the citywide rebranding project moved forward to the public outreach phase.

We completed three focus groups, over 300 phone surveys and more than 600 online surveys. The presentation of final survey results, including brand positioning and strategic plan, is expected by spring of 2021 with the final brand launch in

the summer of 2021. With an increase in digital activity in response to the pandemic, our social media accounts grew by 23% in 2020 with more than 3 million total impressions. And our eSIBi email notification subscribers grew by 12% throughout the year with an average open rate of 39% during the first three months of the pandemic. Subscribers to our emergency notification system, SIBAlert, increased by 20%, and we received a record number of photo contest submissions that resulted in a newly designed desktop calendar.

“Throughout 2020 we were challenged to be better and I am confident that we, as a community, will come out stronger.”



The City succeeded in petitioning the Department of Business and Professional Regulation to have a representative of the Office of the Condominium Ombudsman provide services in our city. Vice Mayor Larisa Svechin and Commissioner Jeniffer Viscarra went to Tallahassee to lobby for this important service for our residents. After much correspondence and several follow-up calls, they were successful. Now the Ombudsman works out of the Government Center every other Monday, available to meet with residents regarding condominium issues.

The U.S. Government conducted the 2020 Census this past year,

an undertaking that happens every 10 years. The pandemic impeded outreach by both our city and the Census Bureau, but we spent months promoting the Census digitally and with signage citywide.

Another prevalent issue for our community has been determining the future of the Town Center District. We were fortunate to host three in-person events before gatherings were suspended in March, and despite this setback, the Planning and Zoning department continued with

online surveys and virtual workshops to gain additional public input while keeping the community safe. At the September 2020 Commission Meeting, the moratorium was extended until March 19, 2021, and this January, we will discuss extending the moratorium for an additional six months. During this time, the City is completing research, analysis, and considering various options to address issues relating to future development within the Town Center District.

This year, we lost a woman who was integral to Sunny Isles Beach's history, Senator Gwen Margolis. She was a lead supporter of the citizen group that advocated to incorporate our area

and later appointed the City's charter commission. We mourn the loss of a strong leader who broke barriers in Miami-Dade County and Florida.

In 2020, our city elected two incumbent commissioners, Dana Goldman and Larisa Svechin, who will remain the Vice Mayor in 2021. I want to thank our entire Commission, including Vice Mayor Svechin, Commissioners Dana Goldman, Alex Lama, and Jeniffer Viscarra, for their work this past year. Throughout the pandemic Vice Mayor Svechin, City Manager Russo and City staff have done an exceptional job assisting me and coordinating with other agencies at times when I was unavailable due to my position as CEO of OneBlood. It wasn't easy, but their commitment to serve the residents of Sunny Isles Beach, at times putting themselves at risk, was honorable. I want to publicly thank them for their efforts and dedication.

I also want to thank all of our residents, businesses, visitors, and City staff for your patience, support and community involvement. I do not know when we will go back to what we considered 'normal,' but we will stay the course and put in the work to keep everyone safe and healthy. On behalf of myself, Vice Mayor Svechin, and Commissioners Goldman, Lama and Viscarra, I wish everyone health and prosperity in 2021.

MISSING ISLANDER IN YOUR MAILBOX?

In response to the coronavirus pandemic, the SIBislander went digital to provide residents with the timeliest news and information. This issue, featuring the Mayor's State of the City, will be the only newsletter mailed during this time. However, if you would like a printed copy of the newsletter mailed to your home each month, please let us know by calling the Cultural and Community Services department at 305.792.1706 or online at sibfl.net/sib-islander.

Residents can always view current and past issues online at sibfl.net/sib-islander.

To receive the newsletter straight to your email inbox, sign up today at sibfl.net/notifyme.





WEAR A MASK

Commissioner Alex Lama

Commissioner Jeniffer Viscarra

PROTECT YOUR COMMUNITY **PROTECT YOUR FAMILY** **PROTECT YOURSELF**

COVID-19 SAFETY TIPS



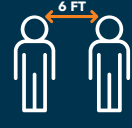
GET TESTED

You should get tested if you are experiencing symptoms or have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19. Visit Miami-Dade County's COVID-19 testing location finder to find the testing sites closest to you at bit.ly/3bpma1c.



VACCINES

Miami-Dade County is coordinating closely with hospital and healthcare partners, the Florida Department of Health, municipalities, and private partners to vaccinate the community against the coronavirus as quickly and efficiently as possible. View who can get tested and how to make an appointment at sibfl.net/vaccines.



SOCIAL DISTANCE

Put six feet of distance between yourself and those who don't live in your household. Since the virus can spread by people without symptoms, it is important to always keep a safe distance from others. And remember, a properly fitted face mask does not replace social distancing.



AVOID CROWDED PLACES

The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to COVID-19. Since the virus is spread mainly from person-to-person in close contact with one another, avoid situations that would put you or your family in a crowded public place.



WASH YOUR HANDS

Use soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.



CORONAVIRUS RESOURCES

Resources and assistance for businesses, landlords, tenants, military/veterans, and residents are available on the City's website at sibfl.net/coronavirus.

STAY INFORMED



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SPECIAL EDITION

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February 2021



Mayor George "Bud" Scholl

WEAR A MASK

We all have a reason to wear a mask. Whether it be to protect your family, friends or even yourself, remember to always wear your mask when in public or common areas.

Read more COVID-19 safety tips along with Mayor Scholl's 2021 State of the City inside this special edition of the *SIBislander*.