



Islander

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MARCH 2023

A MESSAGE FROM Mayor

Larisa Svechin

“ Each day more families are choosing South Florida as a new permanent home. Sunny Isles Beach is the most desirable location for settling down, for numerous reasons. ”

Our school is a top reason many young families move here. It is also the most overcrowded K-8 in Miami-Dade County.

Like many, I myself moved back to Sunny Isles Beach once my husband and I started thinking about schools for the kids. Back when NSE SIB K-8 was built in 2008, there was a fear that the city did not have enough students to fill the building. By 2010, the school was already over capacity. The argument has always been that “out of district” students were being registered to attend. Actually, in the schools founding, students from Ojus Elementary were encouraged to attend and Eastern Shores was part of our boundary. The teachers from Ojus were heavily recruited. Children of teachers and city staff were allowed to register. The founding principal was fiercely competitive and knew that an A school needed talented teachers, as well as the highest scoring students. Therefore, she curated the school to exceed those standards. We were an A school instantly. And so, the registration continued, sometimes at a rate of 20 new students per day.

When I was first elected in 2016, I knew this was a growing problem that required immediate control measures. But the school does not belong to our city; it is governed by the Miami Dade County Public School (MDCPS) system. So, the only option was to force their hand. In October 2017 I wrote an article in this publication about the city’s solution to this problem of overcrowding—strict address verification. That process began at that time and worked - somewhat. Fast forward to today, five years later, and the overcrowding has mushroomed. An excerpt from that 2017 article holds true today:

“While we love visitors who enjoy the beach, local restaurants, hotels, and City events, our school is for SIB kids first. Our children deserve classrooms that are not overcrowded, aftercare and sports programs that are not sold out, and resources that are not overextended.”

History tells us that the school will continue to be overcrowded unless drastic measures are taken. I, along with the Commissioners, parents, and neighbors, have been fervently working with MDCPS to alleviate the overcrowding. But before you know where to start you need to assess the options and pick the one with the highest return on your efforts. The district took a radical measure to immediately cap the school, which means that except for incoming kindergarteners, no other students may register for this school year. Further, they have begun checking every single address associated with each student. This means each family must bring in person proof of Sunny Isles Beach residence. I ask for residents to cooperate and be patient, as this is for the benefit of all. The idea is that those who have moved since registering, and those who registered using an address where they do not live, withdraw and register at their home schools. Further innovative measures are being discussed and will be implemented soon.

The goal is that with the start of the 2023-2024 school year, ONLY Sunny Isles Beach residents are attending the school this city has invested so heavily in. This true count will be noticeable to all residents and businesses, not just families. Success will mean: less traffic during school drop off, less congestion at Publix, and less back up at the RK plazas. Most importantly, our school returns to the vision of the founders, the late Dr. Weissman, Honorable Norman Edelcup, and many others who helped build our community school. Once again, class sizes will be limited as required, teachers will have a lesser load, hallways will be safer, bathrooms cleaner, talented teachers will return, and students will once again be proud of calling NSE SIB K-8 their school.

I look forward to meeting with anyone who has questions or suggestions.

Contact Mayor Larisa Svechin at mayor@sibfl.net or [305.792.1753](tel:305.792.1753).

COMMUNITY RESOURCE UNIT

by Officer David Toledo

Since the start of the Community Resource Unit in September of 2022, Officers Toledo and Carulo have identified and documented over 80 different homeless individuals in our city. We have also made strides in assisting the homeless population towards obtaining housing and benefits through our resources to better assist them in becoming self-sufficient.

To date we have placed approximately 10 individuals in shelters and regularly follow up on their progress.

We have personally toured several of the largest shelters in Miami-Dade County, Camillus House, Lotus House and Chapman Properties. Through this we have been able to create awareness of the resources and services they can provide to the homeless community. They also offer services to those who are disadvantaged to prevent them from becoming impoverished. They provide financial as well as emotional support for those individuals in need.

All of these resources are possible through the Miami Dade Homeless Trust. We have had the opportunity to work alongside and utilize these resources through the many contacts we have acquired. We meet with the Lazarus Project team on a weekly basis to assist with any needs our homeless population might require. For example, if they need medications, rides to the doctor or any other medical attention, the Lazarus Project Team is always willing to assist.

We have also had the opportunity to assist them as well. For instance, this past holiday season we provided toys through our toy drive to the City of Miami Homeless Trust for the many children who otherwise would not have had anything for the holidays. It has been tremendously fulfilling as well as a great learning opportunity to aid the underserved.

We have always taken pride in our work with this great city and now welcome this opportunity and challenge to serve in this capacity as Community Resource Officers.



Keeping Local Dining Smoke Free

Vice Mayor Jerry Joseph



One of my goals as a Sunny Isles Beach Commissioner is to advance smoke free dining throughout our city, though we are on our own regarding state assistance. As the current State Statute regarding indoor smoking stands, restaurants with outdoor seating under cover, fall under the 50% or less open air scenario. This being said, I have been successful at having “No Smoking” signs posted at Matryoshka Deli Food Grocery Store and Buffet, as the store manager was delighted to do so. Since posting the state-sponsored signs, their business has only increased, and patrons that I have spoken with are happier for the smoke free eating environment.

Baires Argentinian Grill is another smoke free eating establishment that has adopted a smoke free outdoor covered eating area.

There are some other restaurants that although having “No Smoking” signs posted, still allow for smoking under outdoor

covered areas, which falls under the State Statute as indoor space. As a patron and noticing several people smoking, causes me to leave and seek another establishment. It is my hope that through my efforts, these other restaurants will see the benefits that those above have and will join us in creating a healthier environment for all of our dining patrons.

Second hand smoke is a health hazard which is recognized nationwide, and Florida needs to do more in the area of enforcement of its Statute, or allow cities to have more control as the issue is now at our parks and beaches. I am working along with our State Representative, Fabian Basabe to enact Smoke Free Florida legislation which would allow cities the right to regulate smoking within its city limits.

Contact Vice Mayor Jerry Joseph at seat1@sibfl.net or 305.792.1754.

Resources from Miami-Dade County

Commissioner Alex Lama

Hello, dear friends and neighbors - it's been a while. I hope that you are doing well. 2022 sure tested our spirits and further trained us to be resilient. I am positive that 2023 will be a better year for us in Sunny Isles Beach and our surrounding communities. Based on conversations and calls I had with residents, I would like to share some important information about resources being offered by Miami-Dade County.

Condominium Special Assessment Program:

This Program will assist owner occupied condominium homeowners with limited finances, address special assessment requirements associated with repairs due to recertification. Surtax funds will be in the form of a loan at zero interest rate and a household income up to 140% of the Area Median Income. The monthly payment for moderate income families will be calculated at 0% interest rate for 40 years.

Home Buyer Loan Program:

The Homebuyer Loan Program (HLP) assists qualified individuals and families in the purchase of a primary residence. The HLP's goal is to encourage homeownership as a foundation for financial independence for low and moderate-income families in Miami-Dade County. The loan term is 30 years with a maximum loan amount of up to \$100,000 at 1% interest or

\$80,000 at 2% interest – rate based on vulnerability ranked areas.

Down Payment Assistance Program:

The Miami-Dade County Public Housing and Community Development Department assists very low to moderate income families with down payment and closing costs by providing zero interest deferred loans. The program will provide a maximum loan amount of \$35,000 up to 30 years.

Unfortunately, as of this writing, the rental assistance program offered by Miami-Dade County is not receiving new applications due to high volume of applicants and lack of funds. The county will resume taking applications pending the approval of \$35 million in funding from the US Treasury Department.

For additional information or questions, visit www.miamidade.gov/global/housing/affordable-homeownership-program.page#CondominiumSpecialAssessmentProgram or contact Shawn Topps at 786.469.2209.



Contact Commissioner Alex Lama at seat2@sibfl.net or 305.792.1752.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

MARCH



March 1, 8, 15, 22, 29
Wednesdays | 3 - 4 PM
 Gateway Center, 151 Sunny Isles Blvd.

Gateway Market
March 1, 8, 15, 22, 29
Wednesdays
5:30 - 10 PM | FREE
 Gateway Park, 151 Sunny Isles Blvd.

Parks & Recreation Master Plan Community Meeting

Thursday, March 2
6 - 8 PM | FREE
 Pelican Community Park, 18115 North Bay Rd.

AARP Tax Aide: Tax Return Preparation & Filing
Thursday, March 2
& Thursday, March 9
10 AM - 2 PM | FREE
Pre-registration required in-person at Gateway Center.



Bike to School Day with Sunny Isles Beach PD
Friday, March 3
7 - 8:15 AM | FREE
 Senator Gwen Margolis Park, 17185 North Bay Rd.
Pre-registration required.

Family Movie Night: The Bad Guys
Saturday, March 4
7 - 9 PM | FREE
 Pelican Community Park, 18115 North Bay Rd.



Special Commission Meeting
Monday, March 6
6 PM
 Commission Chambers, Government Center, 18070 Collins Ave.

Full Moon Yoga on the Beach
Tuesday, March 7
5:45 - 6:45 PM | FREE
 Ellen Wynne Beach Access 192 St. & Collins Ave.
Pre-registration is encouraged.

Beach Cleanup
Saturday, March 11
8 AM - 12 PM
 Samson Oceanfront Park, 17425 Collins Ave.

Lunch n' Learn with Florida Historian Cesar Becerra
Tuesday, March 14
11 AM - 12 PM | FREE
 Gateway Center, 151 Sunny Isles Blvd.
Lunch is included. Pre-registration required.



Teen Talk
Tuesday, March 14
6 - 8 PM | FREE
 The Spot, 215 185 St.



Regular City Commission Meeting
Thursday, March 16
6:30 PM
 Commission Chambers, Government Center, 18070 Collins Ave.

Teens Only: 70s Prom
Friday, March 17
7 PM | FREE
 The Spot, 215 185 St.
Pre-registration required.



Cultural Trips: Museum of Contemporary Art
Tuesday, March 21
10 AM - 3 PM
Bus departs Gateway Center at 10 AM. 770 NE 125th St., North Miami, FL
Residents: \$10
Non-Residents: \$15
Pre-registration required.



Transit Study Town Hall
Tuesday, March 21
6 - 8 PM
 Gateway Center, 151 Sunny Isles Blvd.

Senior Roundtable
Wednesday, March 22 | 12 - 1 PM
 Gateway Center, 151 Sunny Isles Blvd.
Pre-registration required.

Midday Movies: Jurassic World
Monday, March 27
11:30 AM - 1:30 PM
 Gateway Center, 151 Sunny Isles Blvd.
Pre-registration is required.



AARP Smart Driver Safety Course
Friday, March 31
9 AM - 4 PM | FREE
 Gateway Center, 151 Sunny Isles Blvd.
Pre-registration required.

FOR A COMPLETE LIST OF EVENTS, VISIT
sibfl.net/events

SPOTLIGHT ON...

PUBLIC WORKS

This month we shine a light on our Public Works department who operates across the city to maintain our streets, facilities, fleet, construction, stormwater and electrical infrastructure. Every day, Public Works is constructing, inspecting and improving countless areas of the city to ensure safety and usability of all city buildings and public spaces.

While there are countless tasks the department regularly completes, below are just a few projects you may not know Public Works manages:

- Widening the sidewalk on Collins Avenue near 172-174 Street, which allows greater walkability for pedestrians.
- Installing new bus stop benches.
- Maintaining lifeguard towers.
- Testing stormwater pumps and generators. Inspecting drainage wells, storm manholes, and gutters.
- Purchasing and maintaining vehicles for the Police Department, Ocean Rescue, and other city departments, including buses/vans for the City's shuttle service.
- Renovating "The Spot" for our teen residents.
- Repairing and replacing street and parking lighting, and ensuring public beach lighting is turtle-friendly.

For more information about the Public Works department, visit sibfl.net/public-works.

INSIDE THE *Isles*

Parks Update

New improvements are coming to Senator Gwen Margolis Park this spring. Brand new lights were recently installed and light up the soccer field from sunset until the field closes at 8 p.m. The soccer field is one of the City's most popular facilities and is now an even safer space with ideal lighting during the evenings, especially for our youth soccer programs.

The design features four towers using energy efficient LED lighting located around the perimeter of the field to maximize an even spread of light while also dramatically eliminating impact to the surrounding neighborhood.

New fencing surrounding the park is also being installed at Margolis Park as we work to actively improve our parks and facilities for patrons. And we want to know any additional projects you want to see at our parks. Share your feedback online at oursibparksplan.com by taking our online survey and visiting our virtual open house.

Registration is required and available online at activities.sibfl.net.

CITY OF SUNNY ISLES BEACH

SPRING PROGRAMS

Our spring programs are blooming this season. From youth activities like baseball, Code Ninjas, YogaArt & Meditation to adult and senior programs including arts and crafts and our SIBeHealthy fitness programs, this spring is the time to invest in YOU.

Staying in town, but want your kids to have a memorable spring break? Register now for Spring Break Camp! Participants will go on exciting field trips to Galaxy Skate Way and Xtreme Action Park, and participate in fun activities like laser tag, games, and art classes.

YOUTH PROGRAMS

ADULT & SENIOR PROGRAMS

SPRING *break*

CAMP

MARCH 20 – 24
8 AM – 6 PM

March 21 | Laser tag and Game Truck

March 22 | Galaxy Skate Way (Field Trip)

March 23 | Xtreme Action Park (Field Trip)

March 24 | Kid Create Art Studio

REGISTER TODAY!

Registration for all programs and Spring Break Camp is available online at activities.sibfl.net.

CELEBRATING WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

Women's History Month is an opportunity to share the stories of the strong and independent women who live and work in our community. Throughout March we will be highlighting some incredible women serving and leading our local government.



Be sure to follow us on social media
@cityofsib and **@sibpd**.

**To all the women living and working in
Sunny Isles Beach, we celebrate you!**



TRANSIT STUDY



A Transit Study is underway as we look at ways to improve transportation in Sunny Isles Beach. Share your input about the SIBshuttle and other transportation options to help us provide improved transit service throughout our community.

An online survey is available in English,
Spanish and Russian at sibshuttle.net.

Residents are also invited to
provide feedback at a Transit
Study Town Hall:

Tuesday, March 21
6 - 8 PM
Gateway Center, 151 Sunny Isles Blvd.



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