Message from Village Council to residents: don’t text and drive

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After a young Key Biscayne man lost his life at the hands of a distracted driver, local leaders are imploring residents to put down their cell phone when they’re behind the wheel — and promising to do their part to push for laws against texting while driving.

Vice Mayor Frank Caplan took the opportunity of the Council’s return to action Tuesday, August 25, to introduce a special proclamation to the Village’s residents.

Caplan noted over the summer one of Key Biscayne’s fine young people, Patrick Wannikhof, was killed by a distracted driver as he was bicycling across the road. “It isn’t terribly effective,” he said — but the COUNCIL should reinvigorate its push to pressure the state to enact laws that ban texting while driving.

The proclamations notes Durham started servicing bikes from under a mangrove tree on the Key Biscayne Beach in 1973, and opened his store in 1976. Since then, the Ironman triathlete has been a part of the “fabric of the community,” serving as chair of the Key Biscayne Chamber of Commerce.

“42 years Bill Durham dedicated himself to promoting bicycling and healthy living for generations of residents while instructing us in the art of living. He also fostered a great spirit of community, encouraging residents to become involved in the affairs of the Village. And he has done so by promoting bicycling and healthy living for generations of residents while instructing us in the art of living.”

In other activity, Mayor Mayra Pena Lindsay said a special proclamation declaring August 25 “Bill Durham Day” in honor of longtime Village resident, Key Biscayne Chamber of Commerce, volunteer, and Business Manager of the Lighthouse for the Blind.

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In other news, Council member Ed Lon said he’d like to make sure the important safety issue is a focal point for the Council.

Meanwhile, in other news August 25, the Council discussed whether it should approve the artificial turf field at MAST, and approved appointments to the Key Biscayne Police and Firefighters Pension Board.

Don’t text and drive

Caplan urged residents to pay attention and put their phone down when behind the wheel, and said the Council should reinvigorate its push to pressure the state to enact laws that ban texting while driving.

He noted current legislation only makes the behavior a secondary offense, which means fines are minimal and drivers can only be cited if they’re pulled over for some other crime first. “It isn’t terribly effective,” he said. “We ought to keep it at it — it would be useful, and a great legacy.”

Caplan said he’ll look to keep the issue on the Council’s agenda in the months ahead.

Finance Director

In other news, Council member Ed Lon said he’s asked Village Attorney Steve Heffman to look into whether the Village could move the Finance Director under the Council’s management, rather than under the Village Manager’s.

Heffman said the change might require amending the Village Charter, but he’s looking into it if it can be accomplished via ordinance. He promised to provide answers to the Council — supervising the chief financial officer. “It’s a better management practice,” he said. “Private businesses are much more efficient than governments.”

Caplan said London has a good point — “In business, if a product is not competitive, it’s probably unheard of not to have the CFO report to the board,” he said — but Council member 

ARREST

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one man has an active warrant for grant theft, a second had a pair of metal cutters in his possession, and the third has an extensive criminal record for theft.

The report adds, “All three subjects were placed in custody (and) transported to the station.”

During processing, the report continues, police discovered the suspect carrying the metal cutters matched the description of a subject caught on video stealing a bike on Hampton Lane. After viewing the video, police positively identified the man in custody as the bike thief.

A detective then interviewed the men, and all three were charged accordingly, the report states.

The three were transported to Miami-Dade County jail for processing, and the area was canvassed for bicycles with negative result.

The first suspect, 20, was arrested for loitering and prowling, an active warrant and resisting arrest without violence. The second, 23, was charged with loitering and prowling, possession of burglary tools and grant theft. The third, 39, was charged with loitering and prowling.

Durham now plans to focus his energies on creating a place to learn meditation in Key Biscayne.

He thanked the Council for the recognition, and also applauded Village leaders for their role in promoting bicycling. “I appreciate you taking the time to recognize my efforts over the 42 years,” he said. "When I started, there weren’t that many bicycles out there. You wouldn’t see another person on a bicycle. Today, due to the hard work of Miami-Dade County and the Village of Key Biscayne, it’s a big thing.”

He also thanked long-term employees, customers and early supporters who helped him get his business going. “When I started out here on Key Biscayne, some people showed me some extreme acts of kindness,” he said.

Pension Board

Finally on the 25th, Pena Lindsay said Ramon Rodriguez recently resigned from the Police and Firefighters Pension Board, which oversees the pension plan for local cops and firefighters, and she has selected William Stephens to fill the spot.

Pena Lindsay also reappointed former Council member Martha Broucek to the board.

Both appointments are for two-year terms.