

Welcome 2021!

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 honoring the victims of this senseless violence, I am proud of our City Commission for partnering with the National League of Cities Race Equity And Leadership (REAL) Program. Our program start was actually the day Tropical Storm Eta came through our path, but we are now scheduled to begin next week at City Hall. This process is part of our commitment to conscientiously conduct a self examination of our City government and history so that we can provide real change for the future. There will be additional outreach to our citizens so we can continue the positive direction we have been following.
 The City also had to grapple with our annual Hurricane Season. This year, it was known as the COVID-cane season as the Pandemic created unique issues of how to plan for and deal with our annual parade of storms. Fortunately, we were mostly spared from the onslaught of so many storms that they had to use the Greek alphabet as back up for names!
 I hope you know that I have a passion for this city and its people. Having grown up in New York and attended public school K-12, I was never a stranger to diversity. In fact, it was one of the reasons I loved Lake Worth Beach so much and believe it to be one of our biggest assets. I've fought harder than any other Mayor in this city's history to restore dignity and self esteem by improving the quality of life for ALL its citizens, regardless of the color of your skin, where you live, your education, financial status, religious beliefs, gender or who you love. In 2012, after being newly elected, I brought my camera out to several of our neighborhoods I had never visited before and saw the blight, slum and ignored

needs of people of color for decades. I captured several pictures that I'd include in a powerpoint presentation to the then Commission during an upcoming "Visioning Session". After explaining basic needs and infrastructure as my vision for initially restoring the community, I was mocked by some members of the commission for not being "exciting enough" to fund. My response was to play my presentation and that I wanted them to guess where I had traveled to. There were pictures of a Haitian woman carrying a basket of laundry through a trash filled field. Black and Hispanic children playing in a dirt lot and lots of dirt pathways that were actually supposed to be streets many years ago. When asked where we were, some guessed Guatamala and Haiti, and I then informed them that the photos were taken less than a mile from downtown Lake Worth. I was fortunate to gain the support of Commissioners Maxwell and Amoroso to use all the unspent and future CDBG funds designed for use in these neighborhoods, and to date over 30 million dollars has been used to add street lights and fire hydrants, improve water pressure, create safe routes to schools, improve and add parks, our gym and ball fields and improve water, sewer and drainage as well as create new roads and greenways on most of those unimproved rights of way. I couldn't imagine that people were still being deprived of basic life safety issues in certain sections of our city for decades! It is my hope to continue the infrastructure and quality of life improvements, while adding programs and structures and/or additions for our community center and gym to accommodate our VPK through middle school needs in the coming years. Our kids

need a safe place to learn, play and grow. Thank you to our community Pastors, For the Children and Groups like our Jazzy Seniors for helping to spread the word and the love.
 The COVID Pandemic, protests for racial equity, and hurricane season did not stop the need to keep the City operating and providing necessary services and programs. I'm very proud of our commission and staff for setting an example built on passion, teamwork and professionalism. Two examples of this resulted in changes to important areas of operations. One was the Compassionate Code Program and the other was the Suspension of Utility Disconnections. The economic impacts of the COVID Pandemic shut down forced the City to look at how minor code issues could be addressed without forcing residents to spend vital money on addressing them, while facing uncertainty of the future. The Compassionate Code Program lifted that burden in favor of providing additional time for violations to be addressed. The suspension of Water and Electric Utility Disconnections gave our residents a much needed lifeline while they waited for assistance from Federal, State and County sources. Our Electric Utility has been recognized statewide by the Florida Municipal Power Agency and commended for its creation and enforcement.
 In other areas of City Operations, we continued to build on the successes we were seeing before the COVID Pandemic. The reputation of Lake Worth Beach as a great place to live and work continues and that confidence is resulting in new investment. There are several projects that came into the City process in 2020. They include:
The Historic Gulfstream Hotel;
 "The One" (14 one- and two-bedroom units and about 2,000 sq. ft. of commercial space);
 Alora" (12 one- and two-bedroom units and about 900 sq. ft. of commercial space);
 MID on Dixie Highway near 17th Ave North (230 one- and two- bedroom units market rental); and
 Bohemian (200 studio, one- and two- bedroom units project on Lake Avenue along the east side of the FEC Railroad) This project will also have approximately 2,500 sq. ft. of commercial space, an outdoor pool, a gym co-work space, a community room, plus a 300 space-parking garage with 120 spaces for the public.
 Refinancing debt at much lower rates, lobbying for monies deserving of our city from the state and federal governments, and preparing for the worst while still hoping for the best, has done us well. Home property sales have doubled and tripled in recent years and the total Taxable Valuations of all property that hit bottom in 2012 at just \$990 million, is estimated to more than double to over \$1.8 billion this year- over a 60% increase! Our CRA's acquisitions of land downtown and on Dixie Highway has resulted in over 250 million dollars in new projects. Construction permits from

single family homeowners to commercial properties and new development are up over 30% in the middle of a global pandemic! This is a stark difference from my first days in late 2011, with ZERO investment in a 2 to 3 year period.
 Other major efforts by the City during the past year involved our Utilities. We continue to harden our electric utility system using our Capital Improvement dollars and in partnership with FPL we are working on plans to install a long awaited tie line that doubles our reliability from the grid even during the strongest of storms. Along with keeping our residential rates as low as FPL's, we also will be addressing Commercial Utility rates. All this while becoming a shining example of one of the first cities in the country to reduce our carbon footprint over 50% in the next two years. It is our goal to have the lowest carbon footprint in the state by 2024!
 Did you know that the City has built its own solar farm that provides 10 megawatts of power into our grid, and paid for it with the savings we achieved? Did you know that we recently contracted to purchase power from two statewide solar farms to help us achieve our green energy commitment while at the same time reducing costs to you the consumer? This will grow our solar portfolio from today's 64 watts of solar per customer, to more than 1,400 watts of solar for every customer we serve. This is the equivalent of every one of our customers installing a 1.4 kilowatt solar system on their roof. Did you know that over the last few years we have converted the City's streetlights to lower wattage LED versions, replaced HVAC equipment in City buildings with more efficient equipment, added electric vehicles to our fleet, added charging stations, and installed simple devices such as motion sensors for indoor lighting in City buildings?
 Have you heard the astounding news we are also spearheading, along with FAU, the creation of a docking station off our shoreline,

that will allow scientists to transform the Gulfstream ocean current into electricity, revolutionizing the renewable energy frontier. Please see our city website for my presentation. Outside of solar and wind, The US Department of Energy is looking to seriously invest in water solutions and we are at the very top of the list with FAU by our side. I'll be lobbying our state legislators to assist us in this groundbreaking new technology that originates right here in our backyard! Look for details about our upcoming symposium with world leaders in the field, in the coming months.
 This coming year we have several exciting projects and issues we will be working on. As we continue the process of how to address the Beach Complex and Pool through possible Public Private Partnerships, (while retaining full ownership rights) there will be many opportunities for your input and advice.
 Sea Level Rise and our longstanding drainage issues are also part of our work plan. It is vital that we work to find creative ways to reduce the duration and severity of flooding caused by high tides, storms and excessive rainfall. We have been working with regional partners to develop solutions to the long term issue of sea level rise.
 Problems along South Federal Highway going back to when the numerous hotels along that roadway started to economically fail in the 80's will be the topic of upcoming workshops. Figuring out how to promote exciting new infill redevelopment and changing the character will result in less crime, improved safety and opportunity.
Other issues I am eager to address soon include: vacation rentals, new infrastructure improvements, economic development, housing and job creation within our city limits
improvements to our Community facilities
 Maybe some of this is news to you, but we have been improving our methods of communication to link you

with the goings on in our amazing city. We now offer numerous new ways you can follow and learn what's happening each and every week at city hall. We have monthly newsletters in your utility bills and online, email blasts you can sign up for, emergency text alerts and we post regularly on all the major social media sites. We've also added cameras and were the first city to broadcast every meeting live or on zoom, and hopefully soon you'll be able to return to the commission chambers. If you have ideas to increase the lines of communication, please call me at 561.586.1735 and please let me know. I would love to hear your input.
 We've worked extremely hard and come a long, long way. People are now choosing Lake Worth Beach FIRST, our staff is trained, challenged and rewarded for doing a good job and I am so proud of the professional team we have all become. Is there still work to do? Of course there is, no city is perfect and certainly this last year has been challenging. From worrying about the effects of the Coronavirus on each of us and our loved ones, our jobs, our finances and having enough food to feed our families, the "what ifs" have plagued our very being. From social injustices to fears about our country's democracy, our constitution there's a social media page or news agency to help you vent or cry or rage. But 2021 is our new beginning and now more than ever, we need to do it together. As many of you know, one of my favorite quotes is from Dr. Martin Luther King Junior and it is "Darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can. Hate cannot drive out hate only LOVE can." This community of Lake Worth Beach is our home and we are family. I've always said that my brother and I might fight, but if anyone tries to hurt him, they'd better run!
 Let's show 'em what we've got, and Happy 2021 Lake Worth Beach. I love you more than the day I arrived here so many years ago. God bless you all, keep safe and please WEAR YOUR MASKS!



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