

The Bad Penny of Islamorada

Why can't we retain top-tier talent at Village Hall? Is it our breath? Something we said?

We live in paradise. We're a friendly bunch. Islamorada Village Hall offers competitive salaries, benefits, and a great quality of life. The candidates for top positions excitedly sign on...only to leave, with no words, within months.

You'd be hard pressed to find any village, town or city in Florida that has gone through 11 village managers in 24 years! So, what is the deal? Maybe the good guys aren't too thrilled with some of our politicians' questionable behavior and ethics. There is more (there's always more) but let's look at one: Councilman Mark Gregg.

Islamorada Community Alliance (ICA) uncovers possible abuse of office by Councilman Mark Gregg

ICA became concerned about Councilman Mark Gregg's application for a Building Permit Allocation for a narrow un-platted jetty in front of his home. When the third quarter 2021 Building Permit Application System (BPAS) allocation list was presented to Village Council, this jetty property was near the top. ICA's subsequent investigation uncovered numerous irregularities outlined in a January 26, 2022, press release. [Click HERE to read Press Release.](#)

This wasn't the first time Councilman Gregg was the subject of local concern while in office. Remember the notorious Gimpy Gulch scandal? That was back when Councilman Mark Gregg was Mayor Mark Gregg.

The Gimpy Gulch Scandal and Mayor Mark Gregg

Before the Village of Islamorada incorporated in 1998, the Gimpy Gulch beachfront property adjoining Founders Park had some controversial questions lingering as to how many legitimate building rights existed on the property. Monroe County did extensive research and determined, while there were illegal units, there were just THREE permitted dwelling units. Gimpy Gulch's unpermitted work was acknowledged by the owner's representative.

Gregg bought the Gimpy Gulch property in December of 1999 knowing all the issues but asked the Village to acknowledge there were EIGHT building rights on the property.

At that time, Sheryl Bower was Village Planning Director and had previously worked for the County. She would only confirm THREE. Not to be deterred, Mayor Gregg went to Village Manager Charles Baldwin, who told Sheryl Bower to write a letter confirming the extra building rights. Bower refused and was fired. Next planner in line was Ed Koconis who agreed to write the letter confirming EIGHT building rights as requested by the Manager, though never acknowledged the EIGHT had been permitted.

Outcome: Mayor Gregg had paid \$579,000 for the two-acre tract and then flipped it with the EIGHT development rights for \$3,450,000.

Taking the “Millionaire Boat” to Micanopy

Speaking to the Sun Sentinel, Gregg “cashed out and took the millionaire boat to Central Florida” – his words.

By the time they (the Greggs) left Islamorada, it no longer resembled the quaint fishing village they had loved; nearly 40 percent of its 7,000 residents were millionaires, and at least two of them were billionaires, Gregg said.

“The character of the community changed and so did the environment. The transformation of the reefs and fishing was dramatic. We cashed out and took the millionaire boat to Central Florida.” [Click HERE to read the Sun Sentinel article](#)

Though residing in Micanopy for nearly a decade, Gregg kept his home and homestead exemption in Islamorada. [Click here](#) to read details of the Gimpy Gulch story.

Feeding at the trough, once again

In November 2020, the Man-from-Micanopy, Mark Gregg once again got elected to the Islamorada Village Council. And once again there is controversy surrounding another apparent attempt by Councilman Gregg to secure unjustified building rights for monetary gain while serving in public office.

Bottom Line: Unlike Captain Councilman Gregg of the S.S Millionaire, ethical professionals get seasick working for pillagers.