

COLIN BAENZIGER  ASSOCIATES

EXECUTIVE RECRUITING

Section 12

Gregory “Greg” J. Oravec

*Islamorada Village Manager
Candidate Report*

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Cover Letter and Resume

Gregory J. Oravec

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Sent via e-mail

April 9, 2021

Mayor & Village Council
Islamorada, Village of Islands
c/o Colin Baenziger, MPA
2055 South Atlantic Avenue, Suite 504
Daytona Beach Shores, FL 32118

Re: Village Manager Position

Dear Mayor, Councilmembers and Mr. Baenziger,

Ever since I left the Village of Islands in 1999 to advance my career, I have been hoping that the right opportunity would present itself at the right time to bring me back. Please know that everything that I have found in the recruitment package, under "Challenges and Opportunities" and the "Ideal Candidate," and in my independent research leads me to believe that the open Village Manager Position is that opportunity and that there is no better time than now. Accordingly, it is with great enthusiasm that I send this letter formally expressing my interest in being the Village Council's next Village Manager and submitting the enclosed resume for your consideration.

While I have no doubt that Mr. Baenziger will present many exceptional candidates for what should be considered a dream job by anyone in this profession who loves public service, the Keys, water, environment and Florida, I hope that your final analysis reveals that I am uniquely qualified and the best fit to serve you. Some of the reasons why I am hopeful and excited about my candidacy for this position are:

- Demonstrated excellence and achievement. As touched upon by my resume and as can be further explored as part of the selection process, I believe that I can demonstrate not only experience, but, more importantly, success with each of the challenges, opportunities and desired qualities articulated by the recruitment brochure. In fact, I have already started building a matrix of concrete exhibits and hope that I win the opportunity to share the details with you soon.
- Rare combination of experiences have led to a valuable skillset. The entirety of my professional life has been dedicated to serving the people and communities of coastal Florida, and I feel incredibly lucky to have been able to answer the call to serve in several different and meaningful capacities, bridging the divides between appointed and elected officials, the public and private sectors and all of the foregoing and members of the public. The hard-won

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knowledge of these first-hand experiences on the many sides of the table (or dais, as the case may be) has allowed me to refine several important abilities and skills, including: listening, empathizing, communicating in multiple mediums, strategic planning, consensus building, problem-solving, project management and, ultimately, achieving the desired results.

Utilizing these abilities and drawing on my experiences as a mayor, city manager, assistant city manager, community redevelopment director, planner, private sector project manager, small business owner, native Floridian and alumnus of the University of Miami's marine environmental studies program, I believe that I can serve the Village Council, employees and residents with distinction and ensure that the organization lives up to its values and mission statement, achieves the strategic goals set by the Village Council and always meets or exceeds the needs of the moment, regardless of whether that moment could be anticipated or was the result of the whims of Mother Nature or Tallahassee. For me, there would be no greater honor than helping you make the Village of Islands an even better place in the eyes of those who are lucky enough to call it "home."

I greatly appreciate your consideration of my candidacy and look forward to your reply. If you have any questions or I can be of any service, please do not hesitate to call.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Gregory J. Oravec', with a stylized, cursive script.

Gregory J. Oravec

Resume

Gregory J. Oravec

2628 SE Morningside Boulevard
Port St. Lucie, Florida 34952
Telephone: (772) 342-6072 (C)
e-mail: goravec@comcast.net

RELEVANT EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE

November 2014 - Present Mayor, City of Port St. Lucie, Florida

Work for the citizens of Port St. Lucie, with our City Council, staff and all interested parties, to make Port St. Lucie (120+ square miles and population of 206,000+) a safe, beautiful and prosperous city for all people, not just in political rhetoric but in measurable real-world results. Some of my duties and responsibilities include: serving as the head of the city for all ceremonial purposes, attending and presiding at council meetings, representing the city in intergovernmental relationships, overseeing the performance of the City Manager and City Attorney, appointing members of citizen advisory boards, presenting an annual state of the city message, reviewing and approving the annual budget, shepherding our strategic planning process, participating in all aspects of the policymaking process and working through constituent cases.

Organizational and personal highlights and accomplishments during my tenure include:

- Slashed city debt, which is down 30% from its peak, saving taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars, lowered the property tax rate every year since FY 16-17 and enhanced the City's credit rating.
- Remained Safest Large City in Florida. The crime rate is down 62% since the reorganization I instituted as then City Manager in 2012.
- Oversaw an economic expansion where the unemployment rate was cut in half; median household income increased; property valuation increased by more than 35%; our manufacturing sector outperformed the state; and the Tradition medical and healthcare cluster developed, employing thousands at above median wages. Please see www.cityofpsl.com/southern Grove.
- Completed complex permitting, repelled legal challenges and completed construction of the Crosstown Bridge, a multigenerational \$300+ million project. Please see www.crosstownextension.com.
- Focused on urgent infrastructure needs (roads, sidewalks, stormwater) by working with our citizens and team on a comprehensive \$100+ million infrastructure program funded by a ½ cent sales tax approved by our voters. Please see www.cityofpsl.com/salestax.
- Broke ground on the McCarty Ranch Water Project, which will help to save the St. Lucie River and Indian River Lagoon by removing up to 9 billion gallons of water, 89,000 lbs of nitrogen and 18,500 lbs of phosphorus per year out of the C-23 canal and making the biologically filtered water available for drinking water at a to be constructed onsite water treatment plant. Please see www.cityofpsl.com/c23project.
- Developed a destination riverfront known as Pioneer Park at the Port (please see www.cityofpsl.com/thePort) as a cornerstone of a recently adopted Parks Master Plan (<https://www.cityofpsl.com/home/showpublisheddocument?id=9173>).
- Championed a strategic planning process that systematically incorporates citizen input through the National Research Center's National Citizen Survey, an annual Citizen Summit and other public forums to help our team continuously improve our community and organization as we strive to fulfill our great promise and achieve our articulated citizen-driven vision and goals. Please see <https://icma.org/blog-posts/results-oriented-strategic-planning> and www.cityofpsl.com/strategicplan.
- Promoted citizen participation as reflected in the implementation of an award-winning Citizens Academy and the reestablishment of the Citizens Budget Advisory Committee and Public Arts Advisory Board.
- Implemented a 311 call system to better serve our citizens and drive data-based continuous improvement. Please see www.cityofpsl.com/1psl.
- Prepared, sheltered and recovered from numerous hurricanes, including Matthew and Irma.

- Awarded tens of millions of dollars in grants and/or appropriations from the federal and state governments and private institutions for a wide-range of priorities, including stormwater, water & sewer, emergency management, parks and the arts.
- Cultivated an award-winning communications department to build our brand and citizen engagement and to foster accountability, transparency and public education through all mediums including social media.
- In response to national and international hate-based violence, established the award-winning Forum on Race Relations & Inclusion. Please see www.cityofpsl.com/frri.
- Won numerous awards and accolades, including being named by US News and World Report as one of the safest, best for retirement, best near the beach and most desirable places in the United States. Please see www.cityofpsl.com/goodnews.
- First mayor in our City's history to be reelected without opposition.

Feb. 2013 - Present

Managing Member, Oravec & Company

Utilizing skills developed, and drawing off my experiences, as a mayor, city manager, assistant city manager, community redevelopment director, planner, private sector project manager, native Floridian and community leader in the Treasure Coast and South Florida, I help people find solutions to their government, business, development, environment and community-related challenges and achieve the win-win outcomes which are at the heart of making businesses more profitable and our communities better places to live, learn, work and play. Recent projects have included: drafting a voter's guide for what turned out to be winning referenda; drafting a new ordinance regulating tattoo studios; negotiating grant funding agreements between a city and its nonprofits; completing an operational review of a municipal procurement department; managing a website and marketing roll out for a Top 50 pool builder; planning a Section-sized mixed use neighborhood; preparing land use and zoning applications; and providing project representation.

2012-13 **City Manager, City of Port St. Lucie**

Responsible to the City Council, I was the Chief Administrative Officer of the City of Port St. Lucie. Having a population of approximately 167,000 and an area of more than 116 square miles at the time, the City, then and now, provides a full range of public services through its approximately 1,000 employees and \$500 million budget. Major Departments and operations include: Police (approximately 225 sworn officers) with designated Animal Control Division; Utilities (Water & Sewer); Public Works which also includes Emergency Management, a Stormwater Utility and a Keep Port St. Lucie Beautiful Committee; Parks & Recreation which includes the Civic Center, a 100,000 square foot convention and recreation center, and Saints Golf Course; Planning & Zoning; Building; Code Enforcement; Community Services; Finance, Human Resources, Risk Management, City Clerk, MIS, Office of Management and Budget; Communications, Public Information and PSLTV 20; the City Attorney's Office; and waste hauling services through a private contractor. Some of the highlights of my tenure include:

- Budget. Despite a continuing decrease in property valuation as a result of the Great Recession, we lowered the millage rate, increased contingency from 8% to 17% in the General Fund and provided for increasing reserves.
- Reorganizations of the Police Department, Public Works Department, MIS Department, Utility Systems Department and Community Services Department. Though we lost more than 20% of our workforce due to the Great Recession and the corresponding 51.5% decrease in property values, many of the early cuts were focused on workers and not managers. As a result, the organization had become too top heavy and was ripe for a more comprehensive restructuring. Accordingly, I pared management and professional positions, saving approximately \$3.4 million in operating costs. Some of the savings were reallocated towards funding street level positions, especially in the Police Department where eighteen police officers were added to the budget, and other savings went towards improving the bottom line.
- Crisis Management.
 - Public Safety. At the onset of my appointment, we had a young man shot and killed at the park over a disagreement on the basketball court. The staff and I worked with the City Council and the community to receive input, propose and then implement safety improvements, including the staffing of a court

- attendant, court pass registration system, Parks Police Officers and a camera monitoring system.
- Natural Disasters. Prepared for and responded to Tropical Storm Isaac, one of many tropical systems to impact Port St. Lucie and result in the declaration of a disaster area. Isaac dumped up to 13" rain over parts of the City in a 24 hour period, destroying roads and drainage facilities.
- Economic Disaster. Digital Domain, a company which had received State and local incentives, went bankrupt, leaving the City with a digital animation studio and \$40 million of debt it had guaranteed. We engaged short term budgeting strategies to meet the annual debt service payment of \$3.5 million, which provided the City with more than a year to dispose of the building before it impacted the General Fund.
- Project Management. Provided leadership on a number of important projects, including:
 - Crosstown Bridge. A six-lane bridge over State lands and the St. Lucie River.
 - Eastern Watershed Improvement Project. \$40 million flood control, stormwater treatment, water quality, wetland creation, preservation and recreation project.
 - McCarty Ranch Property. Acquired from a bank which recently completed a foreclosure action, we purchased over 3,000 acres at the western edge of the City to ensure drinking water supplies through the City's buildout. In addition to drinking water, the property provides the opportunity to filter nutrient-rich water before it enters the St. Lucie River and Indian River Lagoon and to create stormwater treatment credits, eco-tourism, a fishing and hunting destination and preservation/recreation areas.
 - Asbestos Cement Pipe Replacement. Multimillion dollar project to replace asbestos cement utility water pipes in established neighborhoods.
 - Fairgreen Road Extension. Found the money and enjoyed the partnership of a developer and local engineering professionals to complete a previously "un-doable" strategic roadway extension project.
 - Port St. Lucie Boulevard Landscaping Improvements. Partnering with FDOT, we made the City's main boulevard inviting and attractive.
- Accountability. In order to hit the administrative goal of providing excellent municipal services at the best value, we started the process of implementing comprehensive benchmarking and performance measures. Additionally, we prepared a constituent case/request for service database.
- Hired excellent new team members, including Police Chief, Assistant City Manager and Special Assistant to the City Manager.

2007-12 Assistant City Manager/CRA Director, City of Port St. Lucie

Led a team of approximately 240 employees and was responsible for the implementation of a \$26.1 million operating budget dedicated to the provision of municipal services and the operation of public facilities across the following departments and divisions: Parks & Recreation, Building, Planning & Zoning, Community Services, Community Redevelopment Agency, Code Enforcement and Animal Control. Conceptualized, proposed, garnered support for, and managed special programs and projects, overseeing the design and construction of approximately \$125 million worth of capital improvements, including but not limited to: roadway, water, sewer, stormwater and landscaping improvements; buildings and parking garages. Coordinated the City's economic development activities; served as the Community Redevelopment Agency Director; assumed the duties of the City Manager in his absence; resolved constituent cases; and worked with the City Manager, Mayor and City Council, department heads, employees and citizens to realize the City's goals and vision.

Highlights include:

- The construction of roadway, sidewalk, stormwater, water, sewer and landscaping improvements as part of the City Center and Peacock Boulevard Special Assessment Districts and Westmoreland Boulevard and Rosser Boulevard Road Widening Projects.
- The construction of vertical improvements and facilities, including the Civic Center (100,000 square foot recreation and banquet facility), Village Square (covered stage and interactive play fountain) and City Center Parking Garage (6 level, 803 spaces).
- The Wood Stork Trail. A multi-faceted project intended to provide a dedicated pedestrian and bicycle trail throughout the Community Redevelopment Area; recreational opportunities; an improved stormwater system; better water quality; and environmental restoration and education. To date, more than 3 miles of trails have been constructed and over 30,000 plants and trees have been installed.

2005-07 Senior Project Manager, Culpepper & Terpening, Inc.

As part of a full-service planning, engineering, surveying, construction management and development firm, provided expert project management services to private and public clients on residential, office, retail, institutional, recreational and mixed-use projects, including oversight of the following activities: due diligence, financing, entitlements, community outreach, horizontal construction, vertical construction, marketing and sales. Descriptions of key projects are available upon request.

2002-05 Community Redevelopment Agency Director, City of Port St. Lucie

Served as first Director of the City of Port St. Lucie Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA). Planned, financed and administered the redevelopment activities of the CRA. Advised the CRA Board, Mayor & City Council, Executive Director/City Manager and the public on the Community Redevelopment Plan and redevelopment activities.

Key experiences: Became skilled in managing and successfully completing multimillion dollar capital improvement projects; quarterbacked the issuance and rating of municipal bonds; led the effort to form Special Assessment Districts; collaborated with community partners to create popular cultural and special events; honed place making skills; and participated in multi-party negotiations. As a member of the senior management team located in the City Manager's Office, I was able to study a successful and highly intelligent City Manager, learning many new skills, including how to prepare for, respond to and recover from hurricanes (thanks to Frances and Jeanne). A list of major accomplishments and projects is available upon request.

2000-02 Community Redevelopment Agency Director, City of South Miami

Planned and administered the redevelopment activities of the City of South Miami Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA). Advised the CRA Board, Executive Director/City Manager, Mayor & City Commission, CRA Advisory Board and the public on the CRA Plan, County/City Interlocal Agreement and status of redevelopment activities. A list of major accomplishments and key experiences is available upon request.

1999-2000 Assistant to the City Manager, City of South Miami

Performed a variety of highly responsible analytical and administrative work as a member of the City's senior staff, assisting the City Manager with priority initiatives, taking lead responsibility on legislative affairs, intergovernmental relations, grant writing, annexation and interdepartmental reports. Served as an advisor to the City Manager and as an official contact point for the City, meeting with elected and appointed officials; municipal, county, state and federal staff; and community stakeholders. A list of major accomplishments and key experiences is available upon request.

1999 Assistant Planner, Village of Islamorada

Assisted the newly incorporated Village of Islamorada establish, develop and streamline its planning and zoning functions; drafted proposed state legislation for the Village's legislative agenda; supervised an administrative staff, biologist and consultants; and presented planning and zoning reports to the Mayor & Village Council, Local Planning Agency and the public.

Key experiences: Observed the dynamics of a newly formed municipality and a unique local culture; became well-versed in the Florida laws relating to an Area of Critical State Concern; administered a rate of growth ordinance, studied development's impact on important natural and ecological resources; and realized that a position of greater scope was fundamentally important to keeping me fully engaged.

1996-99 Acting Planning & Zoning Director/other P&Z positions, City of South Miami

Served in several capacities for the Planning and Zoning Department during this time period. As the Acting Director, I administered the planning and zoning activities of a small, urban city of 10,500 residents located in Miami-Dade County; and advised the City Manager, Mayor & City Commission, Planning Board, Environmental Review and Preservation Board, Historic Preservation Board and the public on planning and zoning issues affecting the City. Responsibilities included the preparation of resolutions, ordinances and comprehensive plan amendments; monitoring and negotiating development orders; drafting and utilizing an annual budget of \$236,000; and supervising a staff of four.

Key experiences: Gained a full understanding of the public policy, planning and zoning processes; successfully facilitated design charrettes and public workshops; became well-versed in many Chapters of Florida Statutes, especially growth management regulations; learned how to work with diverse stakeholders, including elected and appointed public officials, the City Manager, City Attorney, staff, volunteers and citizens; was exposed to new urbanism, place making, mixed use development and transit oriented development; studied and appreciated a living and breathing walkable downtown; and began to learn the ropes of managing people.

EDUCATION & LICENSES

BA in Marine Environmental Systems [Environmental Policy], University of Miami, 1996
Minor in Political Science
Graduated cum laude from the Honors Program, 3.71 GPA
Florida Real Estate Sales Associate, SL 3276825 expired
Will gladly commence work on MPA or MBA as condition of employment

PROFESSIONAL & COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

US Conference of Mayors	St. Lucie Chamber of Commerce
Florida League of Cities, Board of Directors	St. Lucie Tourist Development Council
Florida League of Mayors, Board of Directors	Lions Club
American Planning Association	Elks
ICMA (had to cancel upon election)	Rotary Club
Economic Development Council	Keep PSL Beautiful/Adopt-a-Street
TPO	St. Lucie Soars (Youth Reading)
St. Lucie County Fire District	Numerous Others

REFERENCES

Available upon Request

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Marital Status: Married to Tonia Oravec
Children: Alex (20), Christian (19) and Kaitlyn (17)
Hobbies: Home Improvement, weight lifting, cooking, fishing, surfing, gardening and reading.

Candidate Introduction

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EDUCATION

BA in Marine Environmental Systems [Environmental Policy], University of Miami, 1996

Graduated cum laude from the Honors Program

Florida Real Estate Sales Associate, SL 3276825 expired

Other professional training, including but not limited to: FEMA, real estate, leadership, customer service, strategic planning and placemaking

EXPERIENCE

Small Business Owner/Consultant-Client Services	2013 – present
Mayor, Port St. Lucie, FL	2014 – present
City Manager, Port St. Lucie, FL	2012 – 2013
Assistant City Manager, Port St. Lucie, FL	2007 – 2012
Senior Project Manager, Culpepper & Terpening, Inc.	2005 – 2007
CRA Director, Port St. Lucie Florida	2002 – 2005
CRA Director, South Miami, FL	2000 – 2002
Assistant to the City Manager, South Miami, FL	1999 – 2000
Assistant Planner, Village of Islamorada, FL	1999 – 1999
Planner, South Miami, FL	1996 – 1999

BACKGROUND

Port St. Lucie is located on the Treasure Coast and connects southeast and central Florida. Incorporated in 1961, the City has come a long way in a short time. Originally marketed around the world, and especially in the northeast, as a retirement haven, PSL has gone from a sales pitch and bedroom community, where only 330 people lived in 1970, to an award-winning, full-service city that is home to more than 206,000 and counting. There are many things to love about PSL. It is blessed by natural resources that epitomize the Florida lifestyle, such as the Indian River Lagoon, St. Lucie River and Savannas State Preserve. It is the safest large city in Florida and has one of the highest rates of homeownership in the nation. According to US News & World Report, it is one of the best places to live near a beach, one of the best places to retire, and the 23rd most desirable place to live in the entire country.

To deliver on the City’s great promise, at City Hall and across our more than 120 square miles, the elected City Council and I, along with the appointed City Manager and City Administration (1,173+ FTEs), are focused on carrying out a strategic plan that is updated every year based upon citizen input (www.cityofpsl.com/strategicplan). An important part of bringing the plan to life is measuring our performance through objective indicators and reporting our results to our citizens. Over the year, we try to stay in constant contact, reporting important information and stories through all mainstream mediums, including PSL TV 20, www.cityofpsl.com, radio, print, digital

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newsletters, social media and news outlets; and, at the end of every year, starting with the 2017 issue, we began publishing an annual report to highlight our accomplishments (<https://www.cityofpsl.com/government/departments/city-manager/annual-report>). Some of the more notable accomplishments have been listed in my resume. However, I think one of the biggest things to happen was that the officials elected at the end of 2016 joined with the Vice Mayor and I, and a newly appointed City Manager and City Attorney, to form a real team, one whose sole focus is on making Port St. Lucie the best it can be—a safe, beautiful, and prosperous City for All People. We hope that our accomplishments give our citizens a sense of pride in our City, and we encourage them to join us in making each year better than the last.

Before my run as mayor, I oversaw these efforts and our organization as City Manager and, before that, as Assistant City Manager. Although the community and organization grew in the interim periods, the broad contours remained the same. As City Manager, I prepared and oversaw a \$478 million budget (\$75 million GF) and more than 967 FTEs. As Assistant City Manager, I oversaw a \$26 million operating budget, more than \$125 million of capital improvements and a workforce of 240+ employees.

Looking to the future, the three most important issues facing PSL are: 1) continuing to overcome GDC's (incorporating developer's) legacy; 2) managing the explosive growth; and 3) staying committed to the strategic plan and continuous improvement. Both one and two have a lot to do with infrastructure (roads, stormwater, utilities, multimodal trails, transit, parks) and the ability to plan, design, permit, finance and build that infrastructure concurrently or just in advance of the need, but also conservation, not losing the hometown feel and economic development (capitalizing on Cleveland Clinic, the Florida Research and Innovation Center, Torrey Pines/FIU, Tamco, FedEx and upcoming announcements). As to "staying committed," the community and organization have had a great deal of success over the last six years; and, as with any championship-winning team, for that success to continue, the team has to keep working hard, smart and together. It can't lose the eye of the tiger or fall into common pitfalls.

GENERAL, MANAGEMENT STYLE AND EXPERIENCE

Over the course of my career, I have demonstrated that I am an innovative, award-winning leader and dedicated public servant who draws off experiences as a mayor, city manager, assistant city manager, redevelopment director, planner, private sector project manager and native Floridian to help elected officials, municipal staff members, stakeholders and citizens improve their communities through strategic problem-solving, planning, solution implementation, project management and results-oriented continuous improvement. Most good job candidates are going to have a diverse range of experience; but how many city managers know what it's really like to walk in the shoes of their Council? Vice versa, how many elected officials have experienced what their managers go through? Rather uniquely, I have experienced these roles from both sides of the table (dais), and can say something similar about serving and operating in both the public and private sectors. These diverse experiences give me the ability to actively listen,

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relate, identify opportunities, build trust, better plan, anticipate problems before they happen, deescalate and solve problems when they do happen, build consensus, communicate and succeed. Perhaps more than anything else, it allows me to apply the Golden Rule in a very real and practical way and to effectively resolve constituent cases.

I have been very fortunate to help lead multiple award-winning teams and to even lecture on leadership. In my experience and study, I have found that the best managers adapt to the circumstances in order to successfully lead their teams to the best possible outcomes in the moment/near-term while simultaneously building the capacity of the team to achieve even greater aspirations and results in the future. I think my management style could be fairly characterized as being a combination of Visionary, Transformational and Coaching; and you can count on me to listen, to abide by the Golden Rule and to apply the following approaches in every aspect of my job as manager.

- Aligning values and the mission with hard work, strategic planning/problem solving and leveraging the power of a united team.
- Making sure that people know that they matter, are valued and part of something bigger than themselves.
- Communicating and being accessible.
- Getting out into the departments and into the field with all employees.
- Incorporating input and celebrating important contributions and success.
- Balancing relaying knowledge and developing others.
- Being self-aware and objective as possible, open and honest.

I have worked with municipal employees and elected officials of all sorts, and I would hope that the vast majority of them would use adjectives and phrases similar to those that I use to describe myself (highly ethical, values-oriented, hardworking, knowledgeable, visionary, problem-solver, can-do attitude, exceptional communicator and consensus builder, dedicated public servant), and, at worst, would say that I was tough but fair, and perhaps too hardworking and open.

In Islamorada, I would look to utilize objective measurable performance indicators that were aligned with the Council's vision and policy decisions. In my experience, it is impossible to build and sustain a high-performing organization without them. Could you imagine if a company in the private sector claimed it was successful without measuring profit? In fact, I believe that performance indicators in government are even more important and require more thought than in the private sector because government doesn't have the luxury of making and selling widgets at a profit of \$x/widget. Our citizens value the various municipal services differently, which requires us to prioritize competing priorities. Getting this mostly right for the majority of a community's residents is the difference between moving in the right direction and the voters getting out the torches and pitchforks. The right performance indicators help to drive meaningful continuous improvement of the team and community and also to show progress.

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Please visit <https://dashboards.mysidewalk.com/port-st-lucie-fl-strategic-plan> to see some of the performance indicators we use in PSL. The National Community Survey has been great for PSL.

I find the thought of naming my biggest achievement to be like trying to pick my favorite child—impossible! I love them all equally in different ways; but, given its possible applicability to Islamorada, I would like to share the ongoing water quality initiatives I have helped lead over the last ten years. In fact, I just got word that we are in the state legislative budget for another \$1+ million appropriation for our C-23 Area 4 water quality project.

There are a number of ways to improve water quality, big and small, from multimillion dollar stormwater treatment areas to planting the right trees in the right places, and we utilize almost all of these techniques in PSL. However, as further detailed at www.cityofpsl.com/waterquality, I have been lucky to help lead some of the largest, most impactful municipal water quality projects in the state, including one of the largest septic to sewer conversions in the country, the \$34+ million Eastern Watershed Improvement Project (EWIP), and the 2,000+-acre St. Lucie River/C-23 Project. Since Islamorada has already completed the bulk of its conversion project and Colin is making me pick only one, EWIP it is.

In 2008, Tropical Storm Fay dumped more than 13 inches of rain on the City in about 24 hours, turning cars into submarines on US 1 and leaving many roads on the City's east side impassable for weeks, demonstrating the inadequacy of the area's stormwater system. While most of the citizens were unhappy and wanted it fixed, less people wanted to pay for it and the area was already built out. In response, we commissioned an engineer's report on the problematic stormwater basins; used the report for the basis of a public planning process; finalized a plan that would not only address the flooding concerns but also improve water quality, restore ecosystems, create parks and improve property values; completed detailed design, engineering and permitting; funded the plan utilizing grants, stimulus funds and a stormwater utility fee increase; and constructed the project on time and on budget. Strangely, the 1-in-100 year storm seems to happen much more frequently than that. As a result, we have been through several more super soaker events since completion of EWIP, and the system has delivered even better than expected (knock on wood) on flood control and all other aspects.

As to my biggest failures or mistakes, I had to lay several people off as part of the downsizing of the organization due to the Great Recession. In one case, I had to choose between two employees, and I made the mistake of going with an advisor's recommendation over my personal assessment. Almost immediately, I had real reasons to regret it and learned the tough lesson that although it is important to listen to your team members and incorporate their viewpoints, a manager, alone, has to live with some decisions and should make the final call in these cases. Fortunately, I was able to correct the situation after the fact, and the employee I brought back is a leading Department Head.

My first six months in Islamorada can be summed up in three words: listening, listening, listening. It is really important for me to hear firsthand from the Council, staff and citizens

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(residents, businesses, institutions, other stakeholders), as I get a lay of the land, build relationships and develop a deeper feel for the vision, mission, values and priorities of these constituencies. There is a danger in making assumptions before doing the work. However, based upon my research to date, I would anticipate that there will be an overlap of my initial activities with some of our greatest challenges/opportunities, including:

- Hurricane Season. We have to be ready. Accordingly, I will want to assess our playbook, including mitigation, preparedness, response, recovery and hazard vulnerability analysis.
- Stormwater/Exhaustion of Building Permits. I do not see the desire to improve stormwater and the exhaustion of building permits/the possibility of takings claims as separate challenges. We might find that there is an incredible opportunity to use what will be unbuildable lots for stormwater treatment and storage and resiliency (mitigation of sea level rise). Further, in an area of critical state concern, there is a compelling state interest that should warrant state investment in the proper solutions. Right now, the stars are aligned. We have a federal government preparing to invest in infrastructure and a state government, both the Legislature and Governor included (not to mention that Islamorada is represented on the SFWMD), focused on water quality. If we do not strike while the iron is hot, we will miss a generational opportunity to leverage state and federal monies in Islamorada.
- Budget. We are in the heart of budget season, and drafting the budget is one of the most important things a manager does because it is a spending plan for operating and capital and should also be a strategic plan with performance indicators.
- Building trust and an organizational reputation of excellence, professionalism and stability.

As someone who successfully ran for office, was reelected without opposition and been an integral part of an award-winning Communications team, I hope that I can point to hundreds of examples of communicating with the press and the public and through all mediums, including social media, especially television, print, Facebook, Nextdoor, newsletter, Op-Eds and more.

As someone who has held the highest appointed and elected offices in a large and growing city, it is possible that someone could contact the City in the hopes of disrupting my candidacy, including a past elected official who faced Sunshine violations, a failed mayoral candidate and a police captain who was laid off as part of an administrative reorganization in 2012.

In my down time, I like to read, fish, surf, garden and try to new healthy recipes.

GREGORY J. ORAVEC

SIX ADJECTIVES OR PHRASES I WOULD USE TO DESCRIBE MYSELF

- Highly ethical and someone who believes in the importance of values.
- Hardworking, proactive, multi-tasking, team-oriented achiever.
- Knowledgeable.
- Visionary strategic problem solver.
- Exceptional communicator and consensus builder.
- Mission-driven, dedicated public servant committed to excellence and customer service.

REASON FOR DEPARTING CURRENT POSITION

My family and I have given everything we could to Port St. Lucie over the last twenty years and serving as mayor has been one of the greatest honors of my life. I'm incredibly proud of how far PSL has come since its incorporation, the depths of the Great Recession and my election in 2014.

As I approach the last 18 months of my second term and as we finally get to the other side of the COVID-induced state of emergency, my mind has turned to what comes next. While a part of me would like to be mayor for as long as the people would have me and while many supporters have encouraged me to seek higher office, after careful reflection, I have determined that I have no interest in pursuing a partisan elected office in today's political climate and that I owe it to my family to evaluate select public service employment opportunities in which I could continue serving the public (what I love and what I'm good at) while also doing a better job of taking care of my family financially.

Quite frankly, I wouldn't leave PSL for "just a job." I am only interested in exploring special opportunities that would allow me to serve a great Florida community in an executive capacity, where we (the legislative body, staff, citizens and I) could work hard, smart and together on making our community even greater, not in political rhetoric but real-world results. I have been very fortunate to have long tenures in two different award-winning Florida communities; and, once again, I would like to be a part of, and help build, something special, something that stands the test of time.

Being a native Floridian with a degree in marine environmental systems, someone who grew up on the water and who already worked for and loves Islamorada, I consider the Village Manager position a dream job and one that, hopefully, would keep me engaged for the next twenty years, as I: serve the Village Council, employees and residents with distinction; and ensure that the organization lives up to its values and mission statement, achieves the strategic goals set by the Village Council and always meets or exceeds the needs of the moment, regardless of whether that moment could be anticipated or was the result of the whims of Mother Nature or Tallahassee. For me, there would be no greater honor than having "what comes next" be helping

GREGORY J. ORAVEC

you make the Village of Islands an even better place in the eyes of those who are lucky enough to call it “home.”

CURRENT / MOST RECENT SALARY

My current compensation as mayor is \$85,000 plus benefits, including a vehicle allowance; and my last salary as city manager of Port St. Lucie was \$170,000 plus benefits.

CB&A Background Checks

**Background Check Summary for
GREGORY "GREG" J. ORAVEC**

Criminal Records Checks:

Nationwide Criminal Records Search	No Records Found
County St. Lucie County, FL	No Records Found
State Florida	No Records Found

Civil Records Checks:

County St. Lucie County, FL	<i>*See Federal Records Below.</i>
Federal Florida	June 2012 – Civil Lawsuit filed against the City of Port Saint Lucie including Mr. Oravec in his capacity as City Manager. Disposition: November 2012 , Terminated <i>*See Personal Disclosure for Candidate Explanation for Records Found</i>

Motor Vehicle Florida	No Records Found
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Credit	Recently Very Good
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Bankruptcy	No Records Found
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Education	Confirmed
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Employment	Confirmed
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Social Media	Nothing of Concern Found
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**Background Check Summary for
GREGORY "GREG" J. ORAVEC**

Under the Fair Credit Reporting Act, 15 U.S.C. 1681-1681Y, credit and bankruptcy information are very sensitive and should not be used in the consideration of hiring. The information is included for each candidate because we do not want you to be surprised if third parties raise what they consider to be a concern. Also, some states have limited the reporting to seven years, so any records older than that will not be available in those states. In addition, motor vehicle reports are limited to three to seven years, depending on the state.

**Background Check Summary for
GREGORY "GREG" J. ORAVEC
Personal Disclosure**

Personal Disclosure Questionnaire

Name of Applicant: Gregory James Oravec

The following questions are designed so that we will be able to make full disclosure to our client concerning your background. Please answer them honestly. Cutting corners or misrepresenting your past will result in you being eliminated from all further searches conducted by this firm. We understand that frivolous charges are sometimes made and that charges do not mean you were guilty. We also understand that you may have been wronged and needed to seek compensation. The bottom line is that we want to be certain that our client is fully informed. If you have any questions, please contact us for clarification.

Please explain any yes answers on a separate sheet of paper.

1. Have you ever been charged or convicted of a felony?
Yes No
2. Have you ever been accused of or have been involved in a domestic violence or abuse incident?
Yes No
3. Have you ever declared bankruptcy or been an owner in a business that did so?
Yes No
4. Have you ever been the subject of a civil rights violation complaint that was investigated or resulted in a lawsuit?
Yes No I have been named in complaints and lawsuits over the years in my official capacities as City Manager and Mayor. At no time have any complaints against me, personally, been founded according to a court or authority.
5. Have you ever been the subject of a sexual harassment complaint that was investigated or resulted in a lawsuit?
Yes No
6. Have you ever been charged with driving while intoxicated?
Yes No
7. Have you ever sued a current or former employer?
Yes No
8. Please list all your social media accounts (Facebook / Instagram / LinkedIn / Twitter, etc.) and your personal web page if you have one. I have downsized to just Facebook. I have a personal one (Gregory J Oravec) that I rarely use, and a Mayoral one that I use to interact with the public regularly (Mayor Gregory J. Oravec).
9. Is there anything else in your background that, if made public, would cause you, our client or our firm embarrassment if it came to light through the press or any other mechanism?
Yes No Not to my knowledge, but I do want to disclose that I have one or two mean-spirited critics, some of whom have followed my family, sat outside of our house, harassed us online, etc.
10. Please provide a list of any lawsuits in which you are or have been a party either as plaintiff or defendant.

As per my previous note, I have been named in complaints and lawsuits over the years in my official capacities as City Manager and Mayor. However, the only two that stand out to me relate to the reorganization of the PSL Police Department in 2012, which generated two main cases: D'Agostino v. PSL and Kryak, et al v. PSL.

Attested to: _____



Signature of Applicant

Please email this form via PDF DOCUMENT to Lynelle@cb-asso.com or via fax to (561) 621-5965 no later than 5:00 PM PST 04/19/2021.

(Note: Please be sure to sign the form with your actual signature if you are sending Fax or PDF Document)

CB&A Reference Notes

Reference Notes
Gregory “Greg” J. Oravec

Jack Kelly – Former Council Member, City of Port St. Lucie, FL 772-284-1970

Mr. Kelly has known Mr. Oravec since 2002. Mr. Kelly created the CRA and was part of the hiring panel that hired Mr. Oravec. He did a great job at the CRA and a great job as the assistant city manager so Mr. Kelly made the motion to promote Mr. Oravec to be the manager. After he resigned as manager, he was elected Mayor by a large majority which is significant because he ran as an independent and not affiliated with a party. No one ran against him in the last election. He is very popular with the residents.

Mr. Oravec not only made good hiring decisions, but he also made good decisions with existing personnel. They reorganized the entire police department when he was the Manager and let five captains go. He hired a new Chief and Assistant Chief. The City was sued by the captains, but they backed Mr. Oravec. Because of this reorganization, crime has decreased 42% and the department is more unified.

While Mr. Oravec is rarely wrong when making a decision, when you show him he is wrong he will do an about face. He has common sense. He was always visible in the community and participated in the Lion’s Club. The public loves him, he is a great speaker and comes off even better on TV. He worked for the Council and kept everyone informed. He provided all the information whether it was good or bad. He does not let anger surface and is very tame.

Mr. Kelly’s district faced significant floods in the mid 2000s. The water was inches from the front door of about 7,000 homes. Mr. Oravec had a great engineering eye and he worked well with the contractors. They put in 35 to 40 retention ponds and straightened the road. None of the houses in the community have experienced any flooding since. This project was significant and he did very well. Also, when they built the Civic Center the City put down a \$13 million dollar down payment, which indicates how well he does from a budget and finance perspective.

Port St. Lucie has a higher income than Vero Beach but is not as wealthy as West Palm. Even with limited resources the City is clean. Mr. Oravec enforced policy because he is big on the environment. He also paid extra to make sure the medians were attractive.

Reorganizing the police department and an investment were both controversial, but Mr. Oravec did what he was instructed to do in these instances. The Board wanted Digital Domain and they went bankrupt which cost the City millions but that was the Board’s decision.

Mr. Kelly would hire Mr. Oravec in a second for any job. He is a great manager who is trustworthy and keeps confidences.

Words or phrases used to describe Greg Oravec:

- Honest,
- Proud,

Reference Notes
Gregory “Greg” J. Oravec

- Educated,
- Knowledgeable,
- Thrifty,
- Very personable, and
- Trustworthy most of all.

Strengths: Finishes everything he starts, studies everything before making a decision, very tenacious, smart, one of the best people Mr. Kelly knows. He is a principled family man who follows the rules and laws. Hard worker.

Weaknesses: Could take more time off. Can be stubborn in his opinions, but he does not hold a grudge. Ethical and has a sense of responsibility.

Michelle Berger – Former Councilmember, Port St. Lucie, FL 772-801-3254

Ms. Berger has known Mr. Oravec since 2005. She was elected to the Council in 2004 but they did not work together until 2005. He was a hired as a planner. He worked his way up through the organization. Excellence is his motto and he puts service above self. He made good decisions both when hiring and in general. He keeps everyone informed.

Mr. Oravec was constantly in the community. He worked very well with the public. During his campaign people remarked that he had the most public support that the community has seen in decades. The last time this level of support for a candidate occurred was when a popular senator ran for office. He helps employees and communicates in a way that makes them want to stay. He treats the janitor and the CEO the same. People see and remember that.

The CRA was absolutely failing. Mr. Oravec met with every elected official to learn their individual goals and then in a public meeting, per the sunshine law, he shared what he viewed as their common goals and interests. Then from a commonalities standpoint he started to connect what they wanted to accomplish that was more realistic. Elected officials do not always know what is possible, but he knew from a governance standpoint and also because he follows market trends. He brought the Council into the process and held public informational sessions to get everyone involved. The Civics Center, which came from this process, is the heart of the entire city and he led the entire project. The CRA was negative a million dollars when he took over and it is now a few million dollars positive from a tax revenue standpoint.

While Mr. Oravec has good financial skills, he also knows to hire employees with better financial skills than he has. He never stops working so he always meets deadlines. He works until something is done but perhaps should have more balance. In challenging or stressful circumstances, he becomes quiet. He is transparent to the public and remains peaceful while letting the process happen around him. He has learned to be a mediator and facilitator in a way that he never had to do as a manager. He has matured into a different type of leadership.

Reference Notes
Gregory “Greg” J. Oravec

A new council did not like Mr. Oravec and eliminated his position, but this was more about the Mayor than anyone else. This particular Mayor only served one term and was an embarrassment. Ms. Berger is not aware of anything involving Mr. Oravec that is controversial.

Ms. Berger has hired Mr. Oravec as a manager and would do so again. He is excellent. He is a family man. He puts the community first. He is proud of the work he does and the family that supports him. Going back to the Keys is his dream job.

Words or phrases used to describe Greg Oravec:

- Relentless,
- Strategic,
- Approachable,
- Interactive,
- Leader, and
- Futuristic thinker.

Strengths: Resilience, focus, ability to pull the team together to get the job done, believes in collective wins and not individual wins, creates a shared vision, does his best to see and avoid obstacles before they impede progress.

Weaknesses: He is so smart and driven that in the beginning he had to learn how to bring everyone with him. He has greatly improved in this area but has had to be mindful along the way.

Patricia Christensen – Former Mayor, City of Port St. Lucie, FL 772-370-8122

Ms. Christensen has known Mr. Oravec since 2020 when he was hired as the CRA Director. She was on the City Council when he was promoted to assistant city manager. She left office in 2010 but follows the City closely. They have some interactions currently as she is the Executive Director for the Treasure Coast Regional League of Cities.

Mr. Oravec is a very intelligent individual. He is hard working to a fault and makes sure that the job is done and done timely. He is very efficient. He has this drive and when he feels strongly about something he sees it through to completion. He is very efficient and very passionate.

While no one makes great decisions 100% of the time but Mr. Oravec is very close to that number. He was not only involved in the community, but he was also visible in the state. He attends Chamber and Economic Development Council events. If you pick up a paper, you see him at most city sponsored events. Residents know him, he was reelected by affirmation as no one ran against him, which speaks volumes. The community feels he is doing a good job.

Reference Notes
Gregory “Greg” J. Oravec

When you call city hall Mr. Oravec will call you back in a very short period of time. If not within an hour or so, it is always the same day. He returns everyone’s phone calls, not just the Mayors. He is very responsive and very well versed. If he does not know the answer, he finds it quickly and gets back to you.

A very visible industrial development on the turnpike was unkempt and had code violations. Mr. Oravec worked with the businesses to come up with a plan to clean up the area so it looks nicer. Now they are moving to the next phase of cleaning up that same area with landscaping and such. When Mr. Oravec became the manager, it was during the worst economic time at the tail end of the recession. The City had major financial losses. He worked diligently to find a way to cut the budget and reduce spending without impacting services and this has continued to be his primary goal as Mayor. The City has reduced its deficit by over \$400 million during his tenure.

Mr. Oravec relieves stress through exercise. He never blows up or loses his temper. He holds everyone accountable. When he was manager, he made the staff feel like a team. Everyone works together. They might have silos but they have to communicate and work together to ensure that projects are done efficiently.

When Mr. Oravec was the manager there was an incident between him and a councilmember. Ms. Christensen knows this Councilmember and believes that 99% of what happened was brought on by the Councilmember and not Mr. Oravec. Mr. Oravec handled it professional. He resigned because this Councilmember had ulterior motives and attacked him publicly which was affecting his family. She tried to talk him out of resigning because the City was losing a great asset. His background does not contain anything that would concern an employer.

Ms. Christensen would hire Mr. Oravec. He is a great manager and he would have done extremely well had he remained the manager. Running for Mayor was a good move at the time, he knew where he wanted to take the City. If he could not move forward as the manager, he could as Mayor and he has done a great job. His departure will be a great loss to the City.

Words or phrases used to describe Greg Oravec:

- Hard working,
- Professional,
- Sense of humor,
- Family man,
- Team player, and
- Consensus builder.

Strengths: Great leadership skills, professionalism, takes on projects and sees them through, very strong, very passionate.

Weaknesses: Time management, he probably works 24 hours a day. He loves and lives his job. He takes it very seriously and wants things done properly.

Reference Notes
Gregory “Greg” J. Oravec

Julio Robaina – Former Mayor, City of South Miami, FL 305-343-0776

Mr. Robaina is the former Mayor of South Miami. Mr. Oravec worked for the City in a variety of capacities and was quickly elevated to be Assistant City Manager. They assigned Mr. Oravec all the large projects through the commission and manager’s office. They met in 1999 and have had a long-standing relationship. Mr. Robaina has enjoyed watching Mr. Oravec grow.

Mr. Oravec is excellent. He helped South Miami win an award to become an All American City in 2001, which is given to only ten cities a year that are the most advanced, progressive, and productive. Mr. Oravec researched the award and put the plan together.

They had a diverse commission and Mr. Oravec brought everyone together, put ideas on the table, and then built consensus. He works well with everyone. He has rounded out his experience so well that he has nothing left to improve upon. He is innovative while keeping the organization at a high level.

As Mayor Mr. Oravec is only responsible for screening certain positions. He makes good decisions because he is a consensus builder. He is knowledgeable and educated but his greatest strength is building consensus.

Of his own initiative Mr. Oravec was out in the community, which helped them win the award. He asked the elected officials to ride with public works employees and police officers. They were hands on to see the job functions which also helped to create sensitivity. Mr. Oravec was involved in non-profit groups that were integral to the City.

One strength Mr. Oravec has is constant communication, the Commission was always informed. He calls, texts, and emails, his motto is integrity and inclusion. He did well in growing their tax base during his tenure, his financial skills were proven in South Miami. His nickname in the organization was Superman because he finished his work so quickly. He took projects home and completed them in an incredibly short amount of time. Stress does not faze him at all, he does his best work in the face of adversity. If you watch Commission meetings you will see that the people love him.

The downtown district felt the City was not listening to them. Mr. Oravec created outreach programs. He was a problem solver. He did the leg work on constituent cases, which was core to his role as assistant city manager. He helped residents with services and answered questions that elected officials had on planning and zoning. He taught them a great deal because he was so well versed. They depended on him and considered him a close aid to the elected body.

There was not a single controversial incident related to Mr. Oravec while at South Miami. Mr. Robaina is not aware of anything controversial in Mr. Oravec’s background. When Mr. Robaina was elected as a state representative the team dismantled and went in other directions, Mr. Oravec left at this time. The elected body in South Miami was very happy with the performance of Mr. Oravec.

Reference Notes
Gregory “Greg” J. Oravec

Mr. Robaina would hire Mr. Oravec in a heartbeat. They have worked closely together and he will be a great manager. He has an incredible family that supports him. Whatever position he pursues, he will excel in. Mr. Robaina highly recommends Mr. Oravec, you will not be disappointed. He is the model manager that you would want to run any municipality.

Words or phrases used to describe Greg Oravec:

- Committed,
- Intelligent,
- Integrity,
- Loyal,
- Responsible, and
- Involved.

Strengths: Researches, builds consensus, gets along with everyone.

Weaknesses: None identified.

Jim Stokes – City Attorney, City of Port St. Lucie, FL 772-333-0242

Mr. Stokes met Mr. Oravec in 2016. Mr. Stokes was a finalist for the City Attorney position, but another candidate was hired. Eventually that candidate was let go and Mr. Stokes became the City Attorney for Port St. Lucie. Mr. Oravec’s knowledge base is so thorough, he had good insight and suggestions. He pushes employees to perform at a higher level, which benefits the individual and organization.

Because Mr. Oravec is so smart he has a really in-depth way of looking at matters. His decisions might appear to be shooting from the hip, but they never are. He has thought through the situation thoroughly.

Not only is Mr. Oravec active in the community, it really bothers him when he has conflicts and cannot be somewhere. For instance, a groundbreaking event in the community occurred during the Mayor’s conference in Washington DC. He really hated to miss the groundbreaking. The public loves him. The city has 200,000 people and he ran unopposed because he is so loved. He does public events, is so involved in the community, and is responsive to the public. He calls the attorney’s office every week to ask them to look into something for a member of the public.

Mr. Oravec keeps a list for the attorney and manager, and perhaps others. At the weekly meeting he pulls out the list to hear updates on work in progress. When he talks to a staff member about any project or task, he puts it on the list and follows up to make sure he has closure on the issue. He is always thoroughly prepared with the agenda. When employees bring matters to him, he

Reference Notes
Gregory “Greg” J. Oravec

always sees something that they have missed. Their work is fast paced but Mr. Oravec never appears nervous because he handles stress well, even in high profile issues.

A company owned 2,800 acres along I-95 and they decided to walk away from it. A builder wanted half of it and if the City did not take the other half it would go for unpaid taxes and 100 people would buy pieces. The land would be undeveloped for years. Mr. Oravec was the first to bring the matter to the table and they brainstormed. The Company not only signed it over to the City, they also paid a little over a million dollars in back taxes thanks to the deal that Mr. Oravec brokered. The City essentially got the land free and clear, and 1/3 of the land is built out already. He has a good ambassador quality, he reaches out to developers and businesses.

When a project is in the works Mr. Oravec always manages to make the right calls and squeeze out the best deal. Palm Bay and Port St. Lucie are almost sister cities. They were products of a general development corporation meant for retirement homes. They were all pre-platted, the roads were put in, but no infrastructure. However, they were managed quite differently. Palm Bay is half the size and not nearly as developed. Mr. Oravec played a big part in the growth and development of the community. Also, when he became Mayor he wanted to lower the tax rate and he has done so five years in a row. Palm Bay’s millage rate goes up every year. Even though the communities started out the same, Port St. Lucie’s millage rate is 5.3 while Palm Bay’s millage rate is almost double at 9.85. Mr. Oravec knows the budget and numbers off the top of his head for any item in the budget or in process.

Mr. Oravec made a pitch to bring Costco to the community, as well as another business and took some criticism for it because he did not first get buy in from staff and Council, and these opportunities did not pan out. However, he had a dozen times where it did work out to benefit the community. He is not afraid to ask and see what will happen. He is a big advocate for the City and will be the same way wherever he goes.

Mr. Stokes trusts Mr. Oravec and is not aware of anything in his background that is concerning. Employees who do not want to work hard might find him tough to work for because he demands excellence, but the Council and community that hires him will have what they need from him and from City Hall. Mr. Stokes would live in any community where Mr. Oravec is the manager. He does a great deal for the City and they work well together. He will take any organization up a level. His departure will be a great loss to Port St. Lucie.

Words or phrases used to describe Greg Oravec:

- Intelligent,
- Thorough,
- Workaholic,
- Prepared,
- Personable,
- Consensus builder, and
- Family man who cares about the family unit of employees as well.

Reference Notes
Gregory “Greg” J. Oravec

Strengths: Wants everything done right and pushes staff to be better, thorough knowledge base, good insights and suggestions, smart, thorough, does not miss much.

Weaknesses: He went from being City Manager to Mayor. He is really good about not crossing the line between the roles. He plays close to the line but does not cross it. Also, he is a workaholic and pushes everyone else to be. He told Mr. Stokes during the interview that he expects the attorney and manager to be at the office before the other employees and also to leave after them. City Hall closes at 5, Mr. Stokes leaves at 6 or 7 and Mr. Oravec’s car is still in the parking lot.

Kristina Ciuperger – Chief Communications Officer, Port St. Lucie, FL 561-319-8603

Ms. Ciuperger has known Mr. Oravec since 2016. She is a special assistant to the city manager and assistant city manager. He has a strong connection to the communication department, and they work daily on projects that are near and dear to his heart.

Mr. Oravec is one of the most brilliant people that you will come across. If he does not know the answer, then he does his homework. He is the most prepared and most intelligent person in the room when discussing a topic. He takes what he does very seriously and is very passionate about the work. He is very thorough, and he is also incredibly insightful. He is factual and brings research and documentation to back his recommendation up. He is well rounded in that he worked as a department head, city manager, and mayor.

When hiring Mr. Oravec makes good decisions, he is an organizational development junkie. Typically, the Mayor does not join the staff book club, but they were reading a Brene Brown book and he has read every leadership book you can think of. It was wonderful to have the Mayor discussing the books with rank and file employees and department heads. He understands that to create a high performing organization, you have to know how to identify and develop talent. Successful planning was a big topic and they introduced a training program that he was a champion of. He makes very calculated decisions rather than shooting from the hip.

When Ms. Ciuperger was hired communications was outdated. One of their strategic goals was to have a top-notch organization. Mr. Oravec not only supported the concept but pushed and expected it. He communicates with the public through town halls, social media, the local TV station, and any other possible outlet. The public loves him, he has a strong following.

Mr. Oravec has a list and it is never ending. He has a constant communication cycle and never forgets anything. If you tell him you will deliver by 5 on Thursday, he is waiting for it. He has a sense of urgency and expects employees to keep their word. If staff tells the public that they will do something and it is not moving forward, he will remind them that they promised the community they would do this and then try to find a way to yes.

Reference Notes
Gregory “Greg” J. Oravec

The first initiative they worked on involved the night club shooting because the family was from Port St. Lucie. Her first few weeks on the job Mr. Oravec asked Ms. Ciuperger to come in 20 minutes for a press conference because he wanted to get ahead of the situation, but she was not sure it was a good idea. They brainstormed and decided to hold a forum where he brought in subject matter experts to talk about bias, hate crimes, the model traffic stop, diversity, and discrimination. He gave the project to the staff and let them run free. The shooting was in June and in November they had the forum which was an incredible success. It was informative and interactive. The City was recognized for this initiative. The diversity committee reviews these subjects every year. They work with high schools to educate the students on what to do when they are pulled over. Any community will be very lucky to have his vision.

Mr. Oravec knows every detail of what is happening in finance. They are about to go out for a big project from the strategic plan and he knows the details to the penny. He also understands what you can and cannot do, which helps them make better financial decisions. He reduced the City’s debt by millions of dollars, which was a priority of his. He holds employees to the goals.

A collaborator, Mr. Oravec wants to bring the parties together to reach a resolution. He works very well under pressure. They had 47 items on a recent agenda related to planning, zoning, and growth. He handles stress well because he works hard. He sends emails in the middle of the night because he loves what he does.

While Mr. Oravec has been involved in controversy over the course of his work, nothing has occurred that relates to him or his actions. Every elected official has detractors but he handles them well.

Ms. Ciuperger would definitely hire Mr. Oravec, he is very well rounded and has matured tremendously over the years. He knows everything about the City and what it stands for. He has served in so many roles that he can connect all the dots. His foundational knowledge is impressive and gives him so much insight. His depth of knowledge is very rare. He has a demeanor that people gravitate towards. Whoever hires him will be incredibly lucky.

Words or phrases used to describe Greg Oravec:

- Passionate,
- Very loyal,
- Incredibly committed to the cause,
- Honest,
- Integrity,
- Keeps his work, and
- Authentic.

Reference Notes
Gregory “Greg” J. Oravec

Strengths: Brilliant, does his homework, always prepared, very passionate, very thorough, incredibly insightful, factual, has documentation to support his recommendation, very well rounded, unique perspective.

Weaknesses: He holds the bar high and expects the best from people which is difficult for employees who are not high performing. However, it makes the staff better and they grow as professionals.

Maureen Saltzer – Publisher, Fort Pierce / Port St. Lucie Tribune, FL 772-359-5011

Ms. Saltzer has known Mr. Oravec since around 2011. She runs a 28,000 subscriber newsletter that includes St. Lucie County. She works with many Mayors and elected officials. Mr. Oravec is one of the most forthcoming elected officials that she has worked with.

Mr. Oravec works hard and is everywhere and at every event. Ms. Saltzer almost feels like she is married to him because she sees him so often. He pours his heart and soul into his work. He does not dodge questions or phone calls. He is available to the media and tells the truth even when it is not pretty, but a City fares much better if the truth is told in the beginning. He really dives into topics because he likes knowing how things work. The staff may not appreciate his depth of research, but she does as a constituent. It is his job to represent the citizens.

Mr. Oravec makes informed decisions because he really does his research. The City has had many hard decisions to make. He keeps everyone informed. When covid first started some of the most impacted were those in assisted living and nursing homes, and older people at home by themselves whose relatives could not visit them. Mr. Oravec asked people to send him phone numbers of relatives who needed a call. He called them just to talk, so they had someone different to talk to. Actions like this have really endeared him to the community.

Every other week Mr. Oravec leads the Council in resolving problems, which is challenging when everyone is not on the same page, but he does well. He understands the City’s budget. He is very responsive, if he does not respond it is because he is tied up and cannot respond. However, 9 times out of 10 he responds very quickly.

Port St. Lucie has had many controversial issues including some debt problems. The recession, in combination with this debt, really impacted the City. They were one of the worse hit areas for closures and had a litany of problems. Mr. Oravec dug them out of that hole with hard and sometimes controversial decisions. While the solution has not been 100% his effort, he has played a significant role in the process.

While everyone has detractors, Mr. Oravec plays it straight which is the right way to go. None of the complaints about him have been credible. Ms. Saltzer would hire Mr. Oravec. He is a good manager.

Reference Notes
Gregory “Greg” J. Oravec

Words or phrases used to describe Greg Oravec:

- Communicator,
- Involved,
- Informed,
- Outgoing,
- Heart is in the right place, and
- Hard worker.

Strengths: Really good communicator, dives into the agenda packet and wants to know how things work.

Weaknesses: Can be a long winded communicator at times but she would rather have more information than less.

Shannon Martin – Vice Mayor, City of Port St. Lucie, FL 772-418-9022

Ms. Martin has known Mr. Oravec since 2007. He reported to her while he was the manager and they currently work together on the Council. He has been a great Mayor. He is really in tune with the community. He does public engagement and is always looking for a way to get to yes. He makes sure there is continuous improvement in the community. He is really good at building consensus and when the Council goes on tangents, he brings them back around to the topic. He rates an A+ in his performance.

As manager Mr. Oravec definitely made good hiring decisions. He hired a great assistant manager and public works director. As Mayor he works with the Council to hire the manager and attorney. They currently have the best attorney and manager that the City has ever had. He was very supportive in the process. He makes good decisions because he thinks them through.

The Council was divisive and facing many issues. When Mr. Oravec was elected Ms. Martin knew they would work together for the betterment of the community and that is what has happened. Mr. Oravec is innovative and visionary. He looks for the future and what it will look like in 5, 10, and 20 years. He helped formulate the culture and mindset of employees and the city at large. When she sees another community that is not in shape, she always teases him that he would work wonders for them. He is a change agent and a fixer. He tackles problems and comes out with great results.

While the pandemic has slowed down community interactions, Mr. Oravec is always out there. He is very engaging with the public and likes to educate people. He can take someone angry or upset and explain the situation to them so they have an understanding, which ends up being a great experience for everyone involved. He communicates well with others.

Reference Notes
Gregory “Greg” J. Oravec

Residents along a river were complaining about muck build up. Mr. Oravec formulated a group including the manager and public works director and met on site with residents to listen to their concerns and issues. By bringing the right staff members to the site they were able to immediately determine a solution that he then brought to the Council for consideration.

Mr. Oravec ran a budget and understands the inner workings of government finance which has been a plus. If he gets an email, he responds immediately, sometimes at 1:00 in the morning. He is always on top of everything. He works well with stress in the moment, and then processes the information and really thinks through the issues. He handles it very well.

The only controversy involving Mr. Oravec was after a change in the Council when he was the manager. He tried very hard to get along with this Councilmember who did not reciprocate. They decided it was best for Mr. Oravec to separate. Ms. Martin does not know anyone who would disagree with the remarks in this reference but acknowledges that there may be someone.

Ms. Martin would definitely consider hiring Mr. Oravec again. He is a good manager because he holds the employees’ feet to the fire.

Words or phrases used to describe Greg Oravec:

- Extremely intelligent,
- Innovative,
- Visionary,
- Great orator,
- Very welcoming, and
- Always willing to sit down and talk about a situation to resolve it.

Strengths: Visionary, innovative, always looks for a way to get to yes, does his homework, looks for best practices, finds benchmarks to ensure they are doing the best they can, excellent communicator and speaker.

Weaknesses: In the past he could sometimes be a little reactionary but that has completely changed. He goes above and beyond to get to yes and he needs to realize that no is sometimes no.

John Bolduc – Police Chief, City of Port St. Lucie, FL 772-528-9145

Mr. Bolduc has known Mr. Oravec since around 2001 and they have worked together since 2012. Mr. Oravec makes good decisions both when hiring and in general. His decisions are always well thought out. He is definitely a change agent and he maintains the organization at a high level. He communicates well and keeps others informed. He leads the organization towards the vision of the elected body.

Reference Notes
Gregory “Greg” J. Oravec

Mr. Oravec is definitely visible in the community. He is really good with the public. He has good financial skills. He is very responsive and he requires his staff to be, he asks them to respond to citizens within 24 hours. He handles stress very well and sometimes it almost seems like he thrives on it. He is never rattled and he does not cave in.

In 2012 they were coming out of the downturn. After a series of tight budgets, much of the line staff had been laid off. They lost 50 positions in the police department alone. Morale was low because of budget restrictions, layoffs and how old the cars and equipment were. They were discussing disbanding the department and turning police services over to the Sheriff. Mr. Oravec met with every department head. He reorganized the structure of the police department. He removed a few levels of rank, which freed up resources to put more officers and investigators on the streets. He went back to basic law enforcement. Through the plan that they executed, the crime rate decreased 55% from 2012 to 2021. He makes tough decisions that are not popular at the time but are necessary to execute the mission.

The streets were flooding because of the storm water situation. Mr. Oravec goes for the win/win. He solved the flooding problems by installing a really neat system that is good for the environment. Instead of just a catchment, people can canoe and fish in this area. He leveraged funds after a hurricane to fund the project.

The reorganization of the police department was very controversial, but Mr. Oravec does not shy away from controversy. He does not act in a way that could cause an employer embarrassment. The only people who criticize him are those who want to keep the status quo rather than putting in extra hours or effort.

Mr. Bolduc would absolutely hire Mr. Oravec. He is the best manager that Mr. Bolduc has worked for. Mr. Oravec has experience as a manager, with local government, and working with the public while also having a keen eye for environmental issues. He will find win/win solutions. He can see the long term future for a community. You cannot do better than Mr. Oravec.

Words or phrases used to describe Greg Oravec:

- Conscientious,
- Transparent,
- Innovative,
- Driven in all connotations,
- Creative, and
- Sees the big picture.

Strengths: Very goal oriented, sets the bar high, all about excellence, very transparent, responds to the customer quickly.

Weaknesses: He is so driven and goal oriented that sometimes you have to warm him up a little. He needs to slow down and let the staff catch up every once in a while. He could compromise more.

Reference Notes
Gregory “Greg” J. Oravec

Ken Pruitt – President, P5 Group, St. Lucie County, FL 772-971-5760

Mr. Pruitt was a legislator in the area. He has known Mr. Oravec since the early 2000s. Even without a curve Mr. Oravec exceeds every expectation that a community could hope for. When you look at how the community started and where it is going now, you will see that he is a big part of its success. Those before him did a good job, but he grabbed the handles of leadership in a good way and has done a great job.

Mr. Oravec does not want a 3-2 vote, he wants a 5-0 vote. He has built a camaraderie with the Council and staff, and the reason the organization operates so well is in large part because of his management and leadership style. Even when he has the three votes, he wants to bring everyone to a common and unified decision.

Part of Mr. Oravec’s success is that he surrounds himself with those who are smarter and better than him. He is not about mediocrity. His hiring decisions are excellent, as are his decisions in general. Communication is one of his strongest attributes. He is very transparent and everyone knows what is going on.

Mr. Oravec is everywhere in the community, he blankets the community. He is excellent with the public and is never demeaning. He is always very patient and gracious. He is accommodating and fair, but also firm. While he gives the public time to speak, he does not allow them to abuse the forum which is a positive.

At planning retreats and workshops Mr. Oravec will tell you how he feels about an issue, and then let the other councilmembers and staff have their say. Some leaders are almost forceful in their opinion and pressure staff to follow them. Mr. Oravec is not like that. He wants the team to make a decision and while you may know how he feels, he does not jam it down your throat.

Mr. Oravec has excellent financial skills and what he has been able to accomplish is remarkable. He responds extremely well to stress and his tolerance levels are very high.

Controversial issues come before the Council all the time, but nothing has occurred related to Mr. Oravec that is ethically controversial. He handles controversy with clarity and dignity. Mr. Oravec has the best interests of the City at heart. If someone does not care about the City, they might have a conflicting opinion than the one in this reference.

Mr. Pruitt would hire Mr. Oravec but cannot afford him. He is an excellent manager and an all-around good person. He will be very adaptable to any environment. He could easily walk into any City and do just as good of a job there as he has done in Port St. Lucie.

Reference Notes
Gregory “Greg” J. Oravec

Words or phrases used to describe Greg Oravec:

- Empathetic,
- Gracious,
- Courteous,
- Firm,
- Fair,
- Deliberate, and
- Thoughtful.

Strengths: Very protective of the Council, brings everyone to consensus, not confrontational.

Weaknesses: He genuinely cares to a fault. Some feel that you have to be strong and not show emotion but Mr. Pruitt does not agree so he does not find this trait a weakness.

Terrissa Aronson – President, St. Lucie County Chamber of Commerce, FL 772-240-4022

Ms. Aronson has known Mr. Oravec since 2012. They started a television show in 2014 called Coffee with the Mayor. It plays on the local public access television station.

Mr. Oravec is very beloved. People respond to him because he is straight forward and very smart. He works strategically and people trust him. He is a beacon for the City. In the past the City had issues with infighting, and he pulled everyone together. He really united the City with common goals and pride. During his tenure the City has grown so much. When he was hired 75% of their residents worked outside of town but that number is under 60% now. He brought more business into what was a bedroom community. One of his greatest strengths is vision, he sees the impacts of decisions for the next 10, 20, and 30 years.

Because Mr. Oravec spends 23 hours a day pondering, thinking, and strategizing he makes good decisions. He is also very innovative. He communicates any time of the day to relay information. He is also very responsive. He is very visible in the community. The public loves him because he speaks in a way that they can respond to. He is strategic and thinks before he speaks.

During strategic planning sessions with the city Mr. Oravec really tries to highlight each member of the Council and their input. He crafts his response after listening to all of them, which is very beneficial in the Mayor / Council relationship. He is very even keeled in public.

Fiscally Mr. Oravec has been a God send for the City. Prior to his arrival they bought companies that ended up as bad investments and were costly to the city. They use bonds and he drafted policy about bonding and investments, which included benchmarks. The changes he made have really improved the process. His policies have prevented these types of losses from recurring.

Reference Notes
Gregory “Greg” J. Oravec

Everything in government is controversial. The City made bad investments previous to his tenure and they had to clean it up with large purchases of properties. Through Mr. Oravec’s leadership they utilized the land for development and the Civic Center. Costco was very high profile. Nothing on a personal level has been controversial about Mr. Oravec. Everyone that Ms. Aronson knows would agree that Mr. Oravec has done a great job for the City.

Ms. Aronson tried to hire Mr. Oravec but could not do so because it was a conflict of interest. While he loves being the Mayor, management is his forte and passion. He would be a good hire.

Words or phrases used to describe Greg Oravec:

- Smart,
- Strategic,
- Forward thinker,
- Poised in public,
- Leader, and
- Determined.

Strengths: Straightforward, really smart, strategic, united the community, forward thinker.

Weaknesses: Can be determined to a fault at times. He spent much time trying to coax Costco to the community when the community did not meet Costco’s benchmarks.

Charles Scurr – Former City Manager, City of South Miami, FL 305-283-6721

Mr. Scurr has known Mr. Oravec since the late 1990s. Mr. Oravec was one of Mr. Scurr’s finest employees. He played a major role in South Miami becoming an All American City, which is a significant achievement. Mr. Oravec was their CRA Director at the time and he did a stellar job.

Being intuitive, Mr. Oravec makes good hiring decisions. His decisions in general are excellent because he is incredibly intelligent and does not hesitate. He is very adaptable to the environment and can be an agent of change when needed. He is really good at incremental improvement. He keeps people informed.

In South Miami Mr. Oravec was very hands on in the community. He has also been very engaged and involved in Port St. Lucie. One of his strengths is working with the public, which in South Miami was an incredibly diverse group of people and some activists.

To establish a housing program Mr. Oravec brought a team together. He worked with the county, other cities, and CRA groups. He established a TIF district and helped it become operational, which helped South Miami to be selected as an All American City.

Reference Notes
Gregory “Greg” J. Oravec

CRA's are built on very complicated financing mechanisms with short term operations and long term capital financing. Mr. Oravec is excellent in this regard. He has an incredibly strong work ethic and is good with stress. His handling of the downturn and covid have been excellent.

Much of what they do in the public sector is controversial. The TIF was controversial because some in the community wanted to spend the money in other ways. Mr. Oravec deals with the controversy in a positive way. He does not have anything embarrassing in his background. He left South Miami for promotional opportunities. At the time, he was a young man on his way up.

Mr. Scurr would absolutely hire Mr. Oravec. He has been and will continue to be a good manager. He is uniquely qualified to manage a community in the Keys as his degree is in Marine Biology which will be extremely beneficial to their environmental issues. He has experience with saltwater intrusion, storm water, sanitary sewers, and reef restoration. He is a strong candidate, a better asset, and an outstanding manager.

Words or phrases used to describe Greg Oravec:

- Extremely focused,
- Incredible work ethic,
- Ethical,
- Innovative, and
- Intelligent.

Strengths: Really strong, highly intelligent, credible, ethical, incredibly strong work ethic.

Weaknesses: He is very intense and focused, and while this trait is not a weakness it can be perceived as a weakness to some.

Sherman Conrad – Parks & Recreation Director, City of Port St. Lucie, FL 772-201-5628

Mr. Conrad has known Mr. Oravec since around 2002 when Mr. Oravec was the CRA Director. He hired Mr. Conrad as a Director when he was the manager.

Mr. Oravec's job performance is excellent. He is a high performing individual who expects excellence. He has done a great job leading the City to where they are today. He has made exceptional hiring decisions and does well making decisions in general. While he can be innovative and a change agent, he excels at maintaining an organization at a high level.

Working more hours than their current city manager, Mr. Oravec runs all the special events. He works very well with the public and hands his business card to everyone. He wants to be the person they contact when they need something.

Reference Notes
Gregory “Greg” J. Oravec

Mr. Oravec is not only good about keeping employees informed, but he is also very transparent with the public. He rallies employees around the vision of the elected body. He wants the organization to excel in all areas. He has excellent financial skills. He responds very well to stress. In those moments he listens and gives an educated answer to their questions and concerns.

Mr. Conrad is not aware of any controversy involving Mr. Oravec, nor does he know anyone with a negative opinion of Mr. Oravec. Mr. Conrad would hire Mr. Oravec if he had the funds to do so. Mr. Oravec is an excellent manager. Through his leadership, Port St. Lucie is a high functioning city in a really good place.

Words or phrases used to describe Greg Oravec:

- Dependable,
- High expectations,
- Reliable,
- Organized, and
- impressive.

Strengths: Knowledge, extremely bright, organized, expects the city to perform at a high level.

Weaknesses: He expects the city to perform at a high level and it is not always easy to get everyone on the staff to that level of customer service.

Prepared by: Lynelle Klein
Colin Baenziger & Associates

Section 12

CB&A Internet Research

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Hometown News

March 25, 2021

PSL says proposed impact fees need revision

City Council kicks draft impact fee proposal back to the Budget Advisory Committee for more debate

Author: Donald Rodrigue

PORT ST. LUCIE – Not wanting the city to boast having one of the highest impact fee schedules in the state, the City Council agreed by unanimous consent March 8 to postpone a decision on a consultant’s suggestions until the city’s Budget Advisory Committee can weigh-in on his two competing proposals. Deputy City Manager Teresa Lamar Sarno launched the discussion, emphasizing the need for Port St. Lucie to update its impact fees while keeping in mind staff were also currently drafting a mobility fee proposal to potentially replace a chunk of those by this fall.

“The last time the city did do an impact fee study was back in 2013, and we are a little bit overdue,” she said. “One of the requests is not only to get input from the Council, but also to see if the Council would consider taking this back to the Budget Advisory Committee to analyze and dig a little deeper into what the study has provided and provide additional guidance. In December, the Council did ask the city to start looking at mobility fees, so something for the Council to consider is whether you want to implement the impact fee update this year or maybe push that out for Fiscal Year 2022/2023.”

The Bethesda, Md.-based consultant, Ben Griffin, then provided the Council an overview of the findings gleaned from his study via the Zoom digital platform. He offered the Board a choice of either a conservative or a more aggressive option for funding the city’s future infrastructural needs over the next decade.

“So, Option A on the land-use assumptions, with the residential projections, we’re actually looking at the previous five years’ permit data, and we’re assuming the average annual increase over the last five years will be the same average annual increase that you would have for the next 10 years,” he said. “With Option B, we’re actually looking at the previous three years’ residential development. So, you’ve grown more over the last three years on average than you did during the previous five years. So, really the only difference between options A or B is [on] the residential side.”

Mr. Griffin’s presentation briefly detailed his projections for both options in the categories of law enforcement, parks and recreation, public facilities and economic development. His cumulative figures demonstrated that while both might show a slight decrease from the current impact fees tacked onto the cost of a new, single-family home, those could potentially drop further if the city decides to implement its own mobility fee this October.

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Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

“Today a single-family dwelling is paying about \$19,600,” he explained. “Under Option A, the combined city and county fees would be about \$19,540, whereas under Option B, the proposed fees would be \$19,118. What this is showing is that, if you adopted the mobility fees at 95 percent of the current city and county road fees, then under Option A, your city fees would be about \$9,500 and under Option B, your city fees would be a little but under \$9,100 for a single-family fee.”

In addition, Mr. Griffin provided the Council a projected timeline of his draft impact fee approvals, which including sending the two option choices to the Budget Advisory Committee two days later. That discussion would be followed by community meetings in April, a Planning & Zoning Board presentation in May and then a final hearing by the City Council in June. Mayor **Gregory Oravec** immediately waded into the debate upon the conclusion of the consultant’s presentation, reminding his fellow Board members that Mr. Griffin’s calculations were also based upon the city’s desired mobility fees ultimately replacing the existing road impact-fee agreement with St. Lucie County.

“In the absence of that going away or something else happening there, it’s a huge increase,” he said. “If we would adopt the proposal before us, we would have one of the highest impact fees in the State of Florida. I kind of like the idea of sending it to the Budget Advisory Committee and getting their thoughts on the underlying assumptions that went into this study. Impact fee discussions are usually what we call a heavy lift for our community, and so if you’re doing multiple heavy lifts at a time, it gets hard to juggle, and I have a concern about that.”

Vice-Mayor Shannon Martin agreed. “I’m very happy to have our Budget Advisory Committee take this on and take a deeper dive into it,” she said. “In addition to having those stakeholder meetings and hearing back from our community partners and what they have to say. I know I have some concerns as well, and I’ll be looking forward to sharing some of those with our esteemed Budget Advisory Committee.” For her part, Councilwoman Stefanie Morgan believed Mr. Griffin’s relatively tight timeline would put everyone involved under a strain, in particular the volunteer members of the Budget Advisory Committee. “I want to make sure this is not rushed,” she said. “So, if it’s going to push this back a few months, be [that as] it may. “I think it’s unfair for them to do everything at one meeting.”

Mayor **Oravec** concurred with that sentiment. “It would seem just based on the preliminary feedback, this timeline wouldn’t work,” he agreed. “March 10 might be an introduction, it might start scoping the questions the Budget Advisory Committee might hope to address and make recommendations on, but it’s going to take multiple meetings.”

Councilwoman Jolien Caraballo – one of the biggest proponents of implanting mobility fees in the city – insisted Port St. Lucie had “the highest impact fee” and encouraged her fellow Board members to go beyond their previous decision to replace the city’s controversial road impact fee agreement with St. Lucie County to include other areas such as parks and public buildings. Last January, the City Council voted unanimously to have staff draft a mobility plan and contract in

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Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

order to secure new transportation mitigation funding after deciding last December to cancel the agreement with the county.

“I’m going to want to look at other aspects of the different impact fees that we share to ensure the city is actually being addressed in the impacts being created and we’re in negotiation with those discussions,” she said. “The county impact fee for parks is \$1,707 for a single-family [home], and our park fee is \$782. So, when we have this broader discussion of lowering fees and renegotiating county agreements, the city has a 10-year master plan for parks and we have many, many priorities.”

Vice-Mayor Martin once again tossed the ball back into the advisory board’s court for more debate. “It’s important to not just focus on the number, but focus on what the needs and true impacts are,” she said. Mayor **Oravec** agreed with all his fellow Council members, suggesting the city analyze how multifamily housing projects are impacting infrastructure versus single-family homes. “You’re hitting on this important dynamic that impact fees have to be based on the level of impact and then offsetting that impact,” he said. “You can’t just take an index. The methodology is the methodology, and then the Council could adopt a percentage of that methodology if it wanted to, but it has to be fair and has to be able to withstand judicial scrutiny.”

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

TC Palm

March 24, 2021

Port St. Lucie, Boys & Girls Club partner for mobile educational program in local neighborhoods

Author: Olivia McKelvey

PORT ST. LUCIE— The city will partner with the Boys & Girls Club of St. Lucie County to provide a mobile tutoring and education program to low- and moderate-income areas. The City Council Monday gave the green light to the "Club in a Bus" program — which would be funded by federal grants up to \$150,000 — so children can have access to internet, laptops, tutoring and other educational activities. The grants would finance tents, chairs, Wi-Fi, laptops and other equipment. The city also would provide either a bus, van or trailer.

The program would aim to address the education gap that has widened as a result of the pandemic, as many students have stayed home and participated in virtual learning, according to Mayor **Greg Oravec**. "Sometimes in more affluent households, you have a parent who can stay at home or work from home, but a lot of times with our low-to-moderate-income households both parents have to work," **Oravec** said. "So if a child was at home due to fear of contracting the (COVID-19) virus, there might have not been oversight or it might not have been a good fit."

Almost 60% of low-income parents nationwide fear their kids will be unable to finish their school work, will have to work on a cellphone or will need to use public Wi-Fi because they lack a computer or reliable internet, according to a Pew Research study released in April. Low-to-moderate-income households, as defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, are those making less than 80% of the area median income. In St. Lucie county, that's no more than \$55,600 for a family of four, according to the Florida Housing Finance Corp.

The program would be available to everyone in the city regardless of income, according to city Community Programs Administrator Alessandra Tasca. The low-and-moderate income areas the city hopes to target have yet to be determined, Tasca said. The Boys & Girls Club of St. Lucie County — part of a national nonprofit organization that provides voluntary after-school programs to the youth — has 15 school-based clubs throughout the county and two neighborhood clubs in Port St. Lucie. "The goal is to really work with the city and the community to figure out where we need to go and what low-to-moderate-income neighborhoods the public wants us to reach," said Will Armstead, CEO of the Boys & Girls Club of St. Lucie County.

The "Club in a Bus" program is a offering from the Boys & Girls Club of St. Lucie County, according to city officials. Kids will learn things using non-conventional teaching methods, Armstead said. For example, the Boys & Girls Club works with First Tee — a nonprofit with locations throughout the Treasure Coast that aims to teach kids life skills through golf lessons — so youth can learn things such as the diameter of the golf hole, the measurement of different slopes across the green or why a ball goes left or right.

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Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Science and math projects also could be offered to kids in the "Club in a Bus" program, Armstead said. City officials said they hope to launch the program this summer, and socially-distanced guidelines would be in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19. "We want to make sure that no child gets left behind," **Oravec** said.

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Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

<https://knowwherenews.com/tc/event/AXdu7gwEgaWmPMqENcf2>

Knowwherenews.com

February 4, 2021

Port St. Lucie's mayor reaches out to Congress, governor for vaccine assistance

Author: Maureen Saltzer

Port St. Lucie's mayor, **Gregory J. Oravec**, has fielded hundreds of cries for help from city residents wanting to sign up for COVID-19 vaccines. "People are crying out for help and you find yourself unable to provide that help," said the mayor of Florida's seventh largest city. The city can coordinate with the Department of Health (DOH) but "does not drive the process," **Oravec** said. "It is frustrating that we hear the outcry from residents and can't answer the call in a more meaningful way." "We've offered buildings, to buy freezers, our clinic resources, staff support," he said, but the process is out of his hands. What he has been doing, however, is advocating for his residents.

Oravec was the only Treasure Coast mayor to sign the Feb. 4 United States Conference of Mayors letter to U.S. Senate and House leadership urging swift action on pending relief legislation. "On behalf of The United States Conference of Mayors, we urge you to take immediate action on comprehensive coronavirus relief legislation, including providing direct fiscal assistance to all cities, which is long overdue. President Biden's American Rescue Plan contains such assistance as part of an aggressive strategy to contain the virus, increase access to life-saving vaccines, and create a foundation for sustainable and inclusive recovery," reads the letter in part.

Oravec also penned a Jan. 22 letter to Gov. Ron DeSantis asking for help improving the state's vaccination efforts in Port St. Lucie. He asked for a state-supported mass vaccination site in the city, noting that converting mass testing sites to vaccination sites will not help Treasure Coast residents since the region does not have a mass testing site to convert.

In emails to Clint Sperber, the DOH-St. Lucie administrator, **Oravec** asked why vaccinations per capita in St. Lucie County lag behind Martin and Indian River counties. Knowhere's analysis of the Feb. 3 state report shows Indian River vaccinating 126 and Martin 125 residents per thousand population while St. Lucie has vaccinated only 79 per thousand. Sperber replied that, as of Jan. 28, St. Lucie had outpaced Dade, Hillsborough, and Polk counties.

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Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

WPTV.com

January 27, 2021

Port St. Lucie mayor delivers State of the City Address, says city is destined for economic boom

Southern Grove development will create thousands of new jobs

Author: Derek Lowe

PORT ST. LUCIE, Fla. — Mayor **Gregory Oravec** delivered his State of the City address Wednesday. Topics included the coronavirus pandemic, as well as future projects such as the City Center and Southern Grove. "Think of Southern Grove and think about how we're turning liability and potential into something special," said **Oravec**. **Oravec** said the new area, nearly 1,200 acres in size, will bring thousands of jobs to the city. "You see a lot of the health industry coming in," said Cesar Trujillo, Realtor and resident of Port St. Lucie. "I like the progress."

The area spanning from Becker Road to the north side of Village Parkway will be made up of three districts -- town center, bio-health and workplace. "People post their wish list of what they would like to see and it's everything from more restaurants to Trader Joe's," said Trujillo. **Oravec** said the timeline for Southern Grove to be complete will take years and that despite challenges, the future of the city is bright. "It didn't magically go away when the calendar changed," said **Oravec** about the COVID-19 pandemic. "I think it's good because it brings us all a good quality of life, convenience, goods and services nearby," said Trujillo. "It's really like living in a small town on the edge of a small city."

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Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

WPTV.com

November 10, 2020

Port St. Lucie to purchase City Center land

20 years ago, the 21-acre site was envisioned as the city's first downtown

Author: Jon Shainman

PORT ST. LUCIE, Fla. — Port St. Lucie City Council has decided to spend \$400,000 on 22 parcels of land at US 1 and Walton Road around the MidFlorida Credit Union Event Center. "We're able to step in there and facilitate a deal in a way that others can't to make something happen," said Mayor **Greg Oravec** on Tuesday. 20 years ago, this 21-acre site was envisioned as the city's first downtown. The city built the Event Center, a parking garage, stage, and fountain, but the initial developer defaulted. The property had been tied up in federal court the past five years.

The Securities and Exchange Commission seized it from a successive owner, who was accused of making false representations to potential investors. "We want to get this property into the hands of a private developer who will develop the master plan our community wants," said **Oravec**. A big hurdle is the \$46 million in back taxes and assessments owed, something the city could consider waiving or negotiating with a future buyer. "So there are some big picture, real world marketing issues, private market issues... that we have to work through," said **Oravec**.

Last year, the mayor said the city's downtown should be focused on the Southern Grove area, where the city also purchased languishing acreage, and sold much of it off into what is now a burgeoning jobs corridor. So City Center might become a "Downtown East." "It was going to be **the** central gathering place for the city. Now I think it's fair to say it will be **a** central gathering place for the city," said **Oravec**. If you'd like to share your thoughts about the future of City Center, the City is hosting a Zoom meeting Tuesday, November 17 - we've got the details [here](#).

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Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

TC Palm

July 17, 2020

Port St. Lucie forum examines race relations through lens of police, new- business development

Author: Keona Gardner

PORT ST. LUCIE — It has been 1½ years since police here stopped Alex Oge for speeding, and the assistant principal of Treasure Coast High School still is bothered by the officer's line of questioning. “When was the last time you smoked weed?” Oge said he was asked. “I believe that officer used what I called implicit bias. I don’t even smoke cigarettes. At that point, he failed to serve and protect.”

Oge on Thursday addressed the city’s Forum on Race Relations and Inclusion and a panel comprising Mayor **Greg Oravec**, Police Chief John Bolduc, City Manager Russ Blackburn and Teresa Bishop, executive director of The Roundtable of St. Lucie County. The Oge incident, Bolduc said, “never should have happened.” Anyone who has a negative encounter with law enforcement should file a formal complaint, he said. “If we don’t hear about it, then we will assume all is right,” said Bolduc. “If you call and a supervisor attempts to talk you out of filing a complaint, then ask to speak to an administrator, a lieutenant or above.”

About two dozen people at the forum gave their suggestions on how the city could be more inclusive. Others offered thoughts and submitted statements by email and on Facebook Live and Zoom because of social-distancing guidelines. The city has missed an opportunity to bring in businesses that racial and ethnic minorities want here, Amber Martin wrote in an email. Instead, she wrote, Port St. Lucie has chosen to work with a predominantly white retail consultant group to recruit businesses. “How do we ensure that we are bringing businesses to the city that represent the needs and wants of all citizens and income levels if we are only strategizing from the perspective of white citizens?” Martin asked.

The company chosen, **Oravec** explained, has experience with national and global retailers, such as Costco, that the city would like to have here. Some residents said they saw no need for the forum and accused city officials of using race to divide the community. “Anyone who attempts to state the city has a racial problem is misinformed,” resident Michael Glennon wrote. “This city is a melting pot of all nationalities, and it is impossible to say that any ethnic or racial group lives in any specific area of the city.” “I, as a St. Lucie County resident, would love to know why there is so much racism against white people like me who have done nothing wrong?” Charlene Blake wrote in an email.

Fort Pierce Pastor Pinkie Hendley said the forum should be expanded to include all of St. Lucie County. “We are blended together,” Hendley said. “Whatever happens in Port St. Lucie doesn’t stay in Port St. Lucie.”

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Gregory J. Oravec
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

TCPalm.com
May 20, 2020

Will Elon Musk move Tesla manufacturing plant to Port St. Lucie? Mayor trying to lure him here

Author: Keona Gardner

PORT ST. LUCIE — Still no word back yet from Elon. Mayor **Greg Oravec** wants eccentric entrepreneur Elon Musk to relocate his Tesla electric-vehicle company to Port St. Lucie from Fremont, California. **Oravec** extended the invitation May 14 on Twitter. Musk took to Twitter on May 9 to say he was considering moving his company out of California after a dispute with public-health officials in Alameda County over whether the factory could remain open in light of the COVID-19 crisis.

"This is an affordable, very convenient car," said Evan Berry, of Port St. Lucie, who charges his Tesla Model 3 on Wednesday, Oct. 23, 2019, at a Tesla charging station in Port St. Lucie. Berry says the electric vehicle has added \$20-\$30 on his home electric bill, which he considers a savings from the \$300 he used to spend on gas monthly. He said he might move to Texas or Nevada.

Alameda officials classified the 5.3-million-square-foot factory in Fremont — with its 10,000 employees — as non-essential and ordered it closed. Musk, however, reopened for production and has been making cars since Mother's Day weekend in defiance of local health orders, USA Today reported. **Oravec** responded to Musk's tweet, asking him to consider relocating to Port St. Lucie, seeing how the Tesla founder already is familiar with Florida through SpaceX, his private aerospace manufacturer and space-transportation services company. SpaceZ has launch sites in Cape Canaveral and at Kennedy Space Center, less than 2-hour drive away.

SpaceX is scheduled transport two U.S. astronauts to the International Space Station May 27, the first manned space launch from U.S. soil since 2011. "If this idea gains traction, you will undoubtedly see many suitors line up behind the places you mentioned specifically; but, if you are going to leave an overtaxed sunshine state, why not move to The Sunshine State and more particularly to the city of Port St. Lucie?" **Oravec** tweeted. The city has yet to receive a response from Musk or Tesla, but that doesn't matter to **Oravec**.

"Let's file this attempt under the category of 'long shot but why not?'" **Oravec** wrote in an email, "and appreciate that, in this case, there is no harm in trying. The amount we invested in drafting and sending the letter has already been returned with interest in the form of marketing and celebrating all the good things that are already happening in Southern Grove." The Southern Grove corridor already home to Cleveland Clinic, Florida International University, Keiser University, Oculus Surgical Accel to name a few. The city's tweet to Musk had received 492 likes and 145 retweets as of Wednesday.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

A majority of the replies supported **Oravec**'s effort to lure Tesla here. "That's how business gets done," Jeff Reineke tweeted. William Wood wrote, "Yes, please I'll be the first in the employment line." Added Heidi Condon, "It is a well-found request for Mr. Musk to look at PSL for the reason of the location, taxes and available space. Manpower and intellect are also readily available." Still, some people were critical of **Oravec**'s pitch. "Hurricanes maybe the deal breaker on this one," Tevin Anglin wrote. "Would suck to have to repair the factory every year."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

TC Palm
April 27, 2020

Port St. Lucie renters and homeowners hurt by pandemic may see the city help with payments

Author: Melissa E. Holsman

PORT ST. LUCIE — For some renters and homeowners in Port St. Lucie unable to make their monthly payments because of the coronavirus pandemic, limited help may soon be on the way. City commissioners on Monday night endorsed tapping a pot of affordable housing money and expected federal dollars that could create a fund of nearly \$1 million to help qualified residents pay up to two months in rent or mortgage payments.

The Emergency Rental and Mortgage Assistance Program, which could begin in the coming days, is designed as a foreclosure and eviction prevention measure to assist people experiencing an economic hardship related to COVID-19. Mayor **Gregory J. Oravec** announced he wants the program to launch before May 17, when the state’s moratorium on evictions and mortgage foreclosures ends. Gov. Ron DeSantis on April 2 issued an emergency order that stopped all evictions and mortgage foreclosures from being filed for 45 days. “This is going to help a lot of people,” **Oravec** said. “The only problem is we’re not going to be able to help enough people with this, but this is very impactful.”

Carmen A. Capezzuto, the city’s director of neighborhood services, said the program would begin with about \$270,000 — enough to provide up to 90 Port St. Lucie households with mortgage or rental assistance not to exceed two month’s payments with a maximum of \$3,000 per recipient. Assistance would only be provided for payments due on or after April 1, he noted. The plan is to use money in the city’s affordable housing fund, called the 128 Fund, which has about \$400,000 set aside for payment assistance, land acquisition and construction of affordable housing. “We’re proposing to begin a rental and mortgage assistance program with guidelines that have been collaborated with St. Lucie County and the city of Fort Pierce,” he said.

It appeared Capezzuto was about to announce that the program, if approved, could begin Monday. But that was before council members peppered him with questions about who will get the funds, how the money will be distributed and how they’ll ensure the program will be fair. “We know that demand is going to be a lot higher than what we could service with the amount of money that we have,” Capezzuto noted. “We’re looking to partner with a not-for-profit agency to help us spend this money — get it to the people, and we look to start that on May 11.” He recommended launching the program drawing from the city’s affordable housing fund in combination with \$643,773 coming from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in the form of a community development block grant.

After Capezzuto’s presentation, Vice Mayor Shannon M. Martin said she was concerned about “making sure the people who need it really need it.” “Going back to the (Payroll Protection Plan) all these businesses got money and they had to get shamed into giving it back,” she said. “So, we

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Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

need to get close focus on that because if we are giving out funds, we need to make sure it's going to the right people." She warned against getting "bogged down in red tape," while making sure the people who are helped needed it because of the pandemic. Councilwoman Jolien Caraballo suggested holding off for now and using the program as a "post-COVID strategy" to help residents. "Maybe this is something that we do ... once the storm has passed of COVID, who really needs the funding at that point?" Martin asked. "Who hasn't gotten help from their mortgage company in three months? Who can we really help?"

Oravec, though, pushed back on Caraballo's timing suggestion because of the soon-to-end eviction moratorium. "There's your crisis. You're not going to be able to go a month or two after it gets quiet," he said. "There's going to be a crisis the second that moratorium is lifted because you're going to have landlords who've been waiting to kick out tenants for nonpayment, because they stopped paying in March."

After council members all voted to back the program, **Oravec** instructed City Manager Russ Blackburn to return with answers to a host of questions detailing how the program will roll out. "The second you are prepared to make a recommendation of approval on program parameters, I will work with the council to call a special meeting," **Oravec** said. "We are all understanding that May 17 right now is the end of the moratorium on evictions and there could be just a monumental, crushing demand on that date." At **Oravec**'s suggestion, the council also supported writing a letter to Gov. Ron DeSantis asking that he extend the eviction and foreclosure moratorium. Caraballo suggested they ask other cities to join in the request.

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Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Florida Today
March 28, 2020

Port St. Lucie Mayor Oravec wants shelter-in-place order, plans to ask City Council to act
Author: Keona Gardner

PORT ST. LUCIE — Mayor **Greg Oravec** wants the city locked down with a shelter-in-place order to help stop spread of COVID-19, and plans to ask the City Council to authorize it for the largest city on the Treasure Coast. “If I had the power in my capacity as mayor to impose a 'safer-at-home order,' with appropriate carve-outs for essential businesses, it would already have been in place,” **Oravec** said in a Facebook Live video Friday night.

Oravec has asked City Attorney Jim Stokes for a legal opinion on whether the city could enact a shelter-in-place order without St. Lucie County doing the same. Armed with the opinion, he said, he would call for a special City Council meeting and ask it to authorize the order. If the council does not pass the order, **Oravec** said, he would ask it to formally ask the county for a countywide shelter-in-place order.

The county “is not interested in issuing an ordinance like that at this time,” spokesman Erick Gill said. So far, the county has closed its beaches and libraries and has limited gatherings to 10 people. The Fort Pierce City Commission on Friday rejected enacting its own order independently of the county, saying it wanted to present a united front with the county. More than 3,000 people across Florida have tested positive for the coronavirus, according to state Department of Health. On Friday, St. Lucie County recorded its first death from the virus.

“My job is to protect you, and that is what I’m going to keep doing,” said **Oravec**, who has been under a quarantine for about 10 days after coming down with a fever and flu-like symptoms. He is awaiting test results to determine if he has the novel coronavirus. **Oravec** said he initially was told his test results would be ready in three to five days, but because of a backlog at the laboratory used by Cleveland Clinic Tradition Hospital, it now will be longer. More than 300 people have contacted him in support of a shelter-in-place order, **Oravec** said.

TCPalm

March 19, 2020

Port St. Lucie Mayor Greg Oravec shares his experience of receiving a coronavirus test

Author: Max Chesnes

PORT ST. LUCIE — It started with a slight tickle in the throat. Then came the fever and the chills. As of noon Thursday, there were nine "persons under investigation" tested for the novel coronavirus in St. Lucie County, according to Florida Department of Health data. Four of those tests came back negative. Five were still pending. Port St. Lucie Mayor **Greg Oravec** is among those who are awaiting results after he received a drive-thru COVID-19 test at Cleveland Clinic Martin Health Tuesday morning at 8:30 a.m. When **Oravec's** symptoms worsened and he started to sweat through his sheets, he said he felt conflicted. "I can't be sick, you know I have to be there for the community, especially in a time of need," **Oravec** told TCPalm Wednesday afternoon. "I left it alone."

Oravec said his plan was to wait until the new COVID-19 testing site opened at the Cleveland Clinic Tradition Hospital at 10000 Southwest Innovation Way in Port St. Lucie. He consulted with a health care provider at the city's clinic, but as his health diminished, the choice became clear. "I got worse and worse, and just like so many people out there, you want to know 'When can I go back to work?' Should my family stay in the opposite side of the house or should they leave?" **Oravec** said. "After a few days and really feeling terrible, I wanted to figure out my return time." At first, **Oravec** said there was no real chance of receiving a test when he first started feeling ill March 10. The testing criteria was tight: He wasn't technically at risk, he hadn't traveled and didn't know of having any direct contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19, he said. "It was impossible to satisfy this criteria," **Oravec** said. "I was miserable all weekend."

Eventually, **Oravec** was able to connect with Cleveland Clinic Martin Health, who gave him his drive-thru appointment time for Tuesday morning, he said. Still, **Oravec** said he was conflicted. "Even though I am on the first line and I have the responsibility as part of emergency response, I don't want to be the only person who got a test because I have the number for someone," **Oravec** said. "I was sensitive to that." "On one hand, I have an obligation to represent the city in times of crisis," **Oravec** said. "But at the same time, I'm also sensitive to people saying 'Hey why did the mayor get a test, when I can't get a test?'"

The total number of confirmed Florida COVID-19 cases has increased to 390, according to Thursday morning's advisory from the state Department of Health. Eight people have died from the virus. Martin County health officials announced Thursday afternoon a woman living in the county tested positive for the coronavirus and is self-quarantined. She had traveled, officials said, but didn't say where. No other details about the woman were available. As of Thursday afternoon, **Oravec** said he has not yet received his results. "It's going to be interesting to see what it is," **Oravec** said. Who knows what it is."

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Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The testing process

Oravec said the COVID-19 testing process is, in his experience, exactly like a flu test. The only exception is that he took the test from his car, he said. "Once I was vetted and scheduled for an appointment, it could not have been more professional, courteous or run more smoothly,"

Oravec said. Message boards posted on the roadways near the hospital prompted **Oravec** in the right direction, he said. He was then greeted by a security officer at a testing checkpoint. **Oravec** showed his license, verified his initials and approached the testing spot, he said. From up ahead, health care officials donned their protective shields and "splash suits" to prevent contracting any illnesses.

"They give you the signal to drive up, you roll down your window, they verify who you are,"

Oravec said. "They ask you for a release, then they take a swab, a very long one." "They try to clean the back of your eyeball or something," **Oravec** joked. "To me it's not the greatest feeling in the world, but it's no big deal." **Oravec** was then advised he would receive results in three to five days, he said. If positive, they will contact him with a phone call. Otherwise, he can check his status on an online dashboard.

Until then, **Oravec** is working from isolation at his house, he said. He is logging hours until 1 a.m., and then wakes up at 7:30 a.m. to continue his duties. "Everyone who's alive appreciates their health, and when your health fails and you get sick, you want to get better," **Oravec** said. "In this case, we have something that's very abnormal, and it's caused a disruption to our society." Nobody wants to hurt their loved ones, **Oravec** said. We all have grandparents, and anyone who is showing symptoms should have the ability to get tested. "We don't want our seniors and immuno-compromised at risk, the number of infected citizens to overwhelm our medical system or to shut down essential services because too many people are out sick."

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Gregory J. Oravec
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

TC Palm
March 6, 2020

PSL debt still over \$700 million; how does that compare to other Florida cities?

Author: Gil Smart

Here's a stupid question, and I've got a million of 'em: Port St. Lucie city officials predict that by Sept. 30, the city's debt will total \$716 million. Is that a lot? Now, OK, chill: Yes, in general terms, \$716 million is an astronomical sum. It's the value of company stock owned by Walmart heir Jim Walton. Slightly more than what Queen Elizabeth spent on recent renovations to Buckingham Palace. Big bucks. But for Port St. Lucie, we're talking significantly smaller bucks than was the case a decade ago.

In 2010, as the city reeled from the Great Recession, its debt hit \$1.04 billion. Since then, the city has chipped away at this this monumental figure, reducing it to \$755.1 million as of Jan. 1. But at the same time, city officials are asking, "How low should we go?" In other words — how much debt SHOULD a city like Port St. Lucie have? And boy, that's a loaded question if there ever was one.

First, a little context: I wanted to know if Port St. Lucie's debt was high relative to other Florida cities, so I queried the 10 largest in the state, plus others on the Treasure Coast. Some responded, some didn't, some gave me figures that are at least two years old, some gave me up-to-the-moment numbers (thank you, Naples and Tallahassee). So we're ballparking it. But in general: Port St. Lucie's is in the middle of the pack. Jacksonville, Florida's largest city, reported cumulative debt of \$2.4 billion; Tallahassee, with a population only slightly bigger than PSL's, clocked in at \$998.9 million. Orlando: \$972.4 million. Hialeah: \$849.3 million. Fort Lauderdale: \$845.2 million. Cape Coral: \$810.1 million. St. Petersburg: \$783.8 million. Tampa: \$714.2 million. And locally: Fort Piece, \$82 million; Stuart, \$30.1 million; Sebastian, \$4.5 million.

Got it? Good. Now ignore all of it. Because not all debt is created equal. Specifically, as PSL Mayor **Greg Oravec** and City Manager Russ Blackburn pointed out in a Thursday interview, cities that run their own utilities are going to have more debt than cities that don't. Port St. Lucie borrowed and spent \$64 million to construct the Vaccine & Gene Therapy Institute Florida building in the Tradition Center for Innovation, then had to assume ownership in 2017 after VGTI Florida lost its funding. It's now leasing the building to Cleveland Clinic.

Half of what PSL owes is money borrowed — and spent — to expand and maintain the city's water and sewer system. "In a new city incorporated in 1961, we built a brand new utility across 120 square miles," said **Oravec**. "There's no way to do that without taking on debt." In fact, two or three years from now, the city will need to borrow some more for work on the system, somewhere "in the less than \$20 million range," said Blackburn. But by that time, the city is expected to have paid down its current debt by another \$60 million to \$70 million and be "down in the \$600 million range," said **Oravec**.

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Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Another big chunk of the city's debt is classified as "governmental," loans used for infrastructure — including the Crosstown Parkway bridge that "89 percent of people in Port St. Lucie voted for," said **Oravec**. "You can't call that debt bad," he said. Ah, but there is a big chunk of debt we can call bad, poor investments at City Center, Digital Domain, Vaccine & Gene Therapy Institute of Florida and Torrey Pines Institute for Molecular Studies that left the city — that is, city taxpayers, i.e. you — holding the bag.

But the former Digital Domain was sold to Christ Fellowship Church, the ex-VGTI building leased to Cleveland Clinic. Torrey Pines has merged with Florida International University to create a research center. And even the \$121 million the city borrowed and spent to pay for roads and utilities in the Tradition Commerce Center looks a little better these days as development ramps up in the area. City Council took ownership of the land after Tradition Land Co. bailed out in 2018. "If that (acreage) was performing as it should, private property owners would be paying the special assessments," **Oravec** said. But "it may be the silver lining, that we wound up with that property long-term," said **Oravec**.

So OK. All cities have debt, and paying down the debt takes money that could otherwise be used on other things. And that's bad. But Port St. Lucie and every other city is going to have some. So "what's the appropriate debt level for a city that's 60 years old and growing by about 5,000 people per year?" said Blackburn. Those people, after all, are going to want parks. Good roads. Water and sewer. "You have to borrow to meet citizens' needs," said **Oravec**. But not too much. Thread that needle, PSL.

City critics still want to crucify Port St. Lucie officials for the fiscal mistakes of the past. Indeed, every time I write about how things seem to be going pretty well in PSL, I'm peppered with responses from people who want to "educate" me about how wrong I am. But it's obvious Port St. Lucie is moving in the right direction on its debt. And if the city's able to get it down somewhere between zero and that \$600 million range, it'll be in good company, right around where other comparable Florida cities are. And maybe we can say those mistakes of the past have finally been paid off for good.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

WFLX.com

January 28, 2020

New manufacturing facility highlights rapid PSL growth

When this year's Census numbers are complete, there's a good chance Port St. Lucie will eclipse 200,000 people, keeping it the biggest city in our viewing area and the seventh largest in Florida. Tamco Group unveiled its brand new manufacturing hub Tuesday in the Tradition Center for Commerce. "To see it come together, the warehouse full of inventory. The factory full of machinery. The people living in the space, it's really a special experience," said CEO of City Electric Supply Thomas Hartland-Mackie.

The company consolidated its six locations under one roof. "We've had a great experience with our team and it's taken us to a 100-million dollar revenue business this year, so it's a great place to call home," said Hartland-Mackie. The 38-million dollar, 411-thousand square foot facility will add another 150 jobs to the 220 already working here. "To the manufacturing industry, this is really critical to economic prosperity," said Pete Tesch, the President of the Economic Development Council of St. Lucie County.

The TAMCO building is part of the Southern Grove development -- 1220 acres of Port St. Lucie that the mayor hopes will become a new downtown. Mayor **Greg Oravec** sees TAMCO as an anchor in the city's jobs corridor. "This is really a special piece of property. We have 4 miles of property along I-95 where Central Florida connects with South Florida," said **Oravec**. Go anywhere on the west side of the city and it's hard not to see the growth. City figures show the number of building permits on the rise from 32,000 in 2017 to over 41,000 last year.

"We are in one of those special moments in time where all right ingredients are coming together in right proportion at right time and you have to appreciate it," added the mayor. For a city that took it on the chin with several failed economic ventures during the Great Recession, the mayor says right now, the sky's the limit.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

WPTV.com

November 25, 2019

Hundreds protest new Planned Parenthood in Port St. Lucie

Author: Meghan McRoberts

PORT ST. LUCIE, Fla. — Nearly 200 pro-life advocates in Port St. Lucie packed a Port St. Lucie commission meeting Monday night. They wanted to tell city commissioners to stop Planned Parenthood from coming to the city at a new location on Hillmoor Road. However, Mayor **Greg Oravec**, while appreciative of their passion, told the crowd they were not bringing their concerns to the right place. The city has no say in whether or not Planned Parenthood comes to Port St. Lucie. They are already moving into a building zoned appropriately for their use.

“You’re going to be advocating to a group that has no power to intervene on this application. So, I would personally encourage you to continue to be passionate and advocate at the state and federal level where you can actually influence the laws that control it,” **Oravec** said.

That did not stop some people from still sharing their concerns and deeply personal stories during public comment. That included women like Clair Faunce. She explained the story behind her own abortion, and the decision she made later in a second pregnancy to give up a child for adoption. “And now she’s (the child she gave up for adoption) an actress and singer on Broadway ... she sent me the most beautiful thank you letter thanking me for giving her life. And an amazing life,” Faunce said. “Any kind of information that’s given will make a difference. I always say to people together we make a difference,” said advocate Rob Stevens.

The Stuart Health Center is a Planned Parenthood location, closing on Jan. 14 and relocating to Port St. Lucie on Jan. 22. In a statement Planned Parenthood of South, East and North Florida said the following:

For more than 100 years, Planned Parenthood has been America’s most trusted provider for reproductive health care and is committed to providing women, men and young people with high-quality, affordable services. Planned Parenthood of South, East and North Florida (PPSENFL) provides health care and education to more than 57,000 women, men and teens across our service area and has proudly served patients on the Treasure Coast for more than 40 years.

In response to the pressing need for reproductive health care services in St. Lucie County, PPSNFL is excited to announce we will be relocating our existing Stuart Health Center to a nearby location in Port St. Lucie. We will continue to offer a full range of reproductive health care services, including lifesaving cancer screenings, birth control, testing and treatment for sexually transmitted infections, breast exams, and pap tests. We are committed to ensuring that women have accurate information about, and access to, all of their health care options.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Unfortunately, those who oppose the mission of Planned Parenthood continue to make false claims intended to mislead the public and ban safe and legal abortion. The truth is nearly 1 in 4 women will have an abortion in her lifetime, and the majority of Floridians stand with Planned Parenthood and believe in a woman's right to control her own body. We will continue to provide care for the patients who rely on us. If those who oppose our mission were serious about reducing the rate of abortion, they would work with us to reduce unintended pregnancy rates and increase access to vital preventive health care.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

<https://pslbw.com/port-st-lucie-business-women-honored-with-proclamation-from-city-2019/>

Port St. Lucie Business Women

October 22, 2019

Port St. Lucie Business Women Honored With Proclamation From City 2019

Author: PSLBW

The Port St. Lucie Business Women received a proclamation from the city of Port St. Lucie in honor of National Business Women Week. At its October 14 meeting the city recognized the Port St. Lucie Business Women, which was the first professional women’s organization in this area, for its outstanding community service efforts and for their economic and civic impact on the local community.

National Business Women’s Week occurs October 14 through October 20. According to the proclamation, National Business Women’s Week provides an opportunity to call attention to women entrepreneurs, facilitate discussions on the needs of working women, share information about successful workplace policies, and raise awareness of the resources available for working women in their communities.

Mayor **Gregory J. Oravec** read highlights from the Proclamation, noting that, “Working women constitute 72 million, or almost half, of the nation’s workforce. Women-owned businesses account for approximately 30 percent of all U.S. businesses, generating \$1.9 trillion in sales and employing 9.2 million people.” Mayor **Oravec** further noted that working women should be recognized for their contributions to the workplace and the financial stability of their families. He continued, “The Port St. Lucie Business Women has positively impacted our community in countless ways, including painting walls at the Pace Center for Girls and SafeSpace, swinging hammers for Habitat for Humanity and participating in the American Cancer Society’s Making Strides Against Breast Cancer . . . it is fitting for us to join with the Port St. Lucie Business Women and to recognize the work its members do all year.”

Port St. Lucie Business Women President Angela Hayle accepted the award. “The Port St. Lucie Business Women offer our sincere appreciation to each one of you for honoring us with this Proclamation in recognition of National Business Women Week,” said Hayle. “Since 1980 the Port St. Lucie Business Women have promoted the interests of businesswomen and served the community in an effective way, awarding tens of thousands of dollars in grants to local non-profit organizations and more than \$100,000 in scholarships to women attending Indian River State College. The organization has tripled from its 21 charter members. The commitment, generosity and self-sacrifices of these amazing women tell the story of our remarkable growth.”

The Port St. Lucie Business Women is a 39-year-old professional organization dedicated to promoting the interests of businesswomen and serving our community. For more information visit www.pslbw.com. Follow their Facebook page for updates about events, programs and community involvement.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Gregory J. Oravec
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

VeroNews.com
October 18, 2019

City Council approves hefty raises for itself

Author: George Andreassi

Port St. Lucie Mayor **Greg Oravec**'s annual pay will rise to more than \$80,000 per year, matching the pay of the St. Lucie County commissioners, starting in November 2020. The city will pay Vice Mayor Shannon Martin and City Councilwoman Stephanie Morgan more than \$48,000 per year starting in November 2020. The city will also pay that much – about 61 percent of the county commissioners' annual salary – to Councilmembers John Carvelli and Jolien Caraballo, if they win re-election in 2020.

The City Council voted 4-to-1 Monday night to award themselves substantial raises – 61 percent for the mayor and 38 percent for the councilmembers. The final vote is Oct. 28. Caraballo, the lone dissenter, said, "I'm not in philosophic agreement," but didn't explain why during the council meeting. **Oravec**, Martin and Carvelli defended the raises, while Morgan said she would explain her position during the final public hearing. "The office should never enrich you, but it should allow you to make ends meet and attract talented, professional people," **Oravec** said.

Port St. Lucie is Florida's eighth most populous city with an annual budget of \$450 million and 1,130 employees. Two St. Lucie County Republican Party leaders criticized the raises during Monday's hearing, while eight other city residents defended them. "I can't believe somebody would ask for a 60 percent increase in salary," said Mary Anne Russell, a Republican state committee woman from St. Lucie West. "If I did that to my employers, they would be laughing hysterically as they escorted me out the front door." "An increase, perhaps," Russell said. "Sixty percent? It's got to only come back to bite the taxpayers. I think it's absurd. I think it's outrageous. I don't think it's deserving of a part time job."

Mark Gotz, who lost a close race for state House in District 84 in 2018, said "this ordinance is a greedy con job on the citizens of Port St. Lucie to increase the salaries of the council and mayor." "The council and mayor get a cost of living increase just like all regular employees do, plus the council and mayor get a car allowance of \$6,000 per year, but it's not enough," Gotz said. "To increase your own salaries really looks terrible." But John Richardson, developer at Motor Coach Resort in St. Lucie West, said the mayors of the six Florida cities larger than Port St. Lucie all earn about three times **Oravec**'s city pay, so he deserves a raise. "I was absolutely shocked we had a mayor that was working for under \$50,000 a year," Richardson said. "I don't know how anybody can do that. If we want to continue to grow, we need visionaries. You don't get visionaries for \$50,000."

Dan Wire of Tradition said increasing the pay of the mayor and council would improve the quality of leadership in the city. "You've got to pay for good leadership," Wire said. "Good leaders are expensive; poor leaders are very expensive." The proposed raise for the mayor mirrored the approach of Tallahassee, the state's seventh largest city, where the mayor's salary

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

matches the county commissioners' annual pay. However the Tallahassee city commissioners make half the annual pay of the Leon County commissioners.

The Port St. Lucie councilmembers' annual pay will be based on a comparison of the city's population to the county's population. For example, Port St. Lucie's population was 195,248 as of July 1, 2018, U.S. Census records show, and St. Lucie County's was 321,128. Since the city's population amounts to about 61 percent of the county's, the City Council's annual salary will be about 61 percent of the county commissioners' yearly pay. Until November 2020, the city will continue to pay **Oravec** \$49,843 annually and the councilmembers \$35,431 per year. The raises will cost the city more than \$84,000 annually starting in the 2020-2021 budget year.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Cbs12.com

September 28, 2019

Port St. Lucie residents turn out in droves for Crosstown Pkwy Extension grand opening

Author: AJ Walker

PORT ST. LUCIE, Fla. (CBS12) — Saturday was the long-awaited grand opening of the Crosstown Parkway Bridge in Port St Lucie. Before the Crosstown Parkway Extension opening, many said getting around Port St. Lucie was a bit of a hassle. David Wood, a Port St Lucie resident complained of the traffic backup. "Well, if we went Port St. Lucie west, it was like a parking lot, and if you go Port St. Lucie, it's kind of like a racetrack," said Wood. "So yeah this will be a lot nicer."

That might be why the turnout for the grand opening was so substantial. "As a resident, I think this extension is fabulous," said Melody Fletcher. "It will alleviate a lot of the traffic issues that our city has dealt with and it will just help people to get around a lot faster in our town." In addition to relieving traffic congestion, the six-lane highway, and bridge, will include accommodations for automobiles, bicycles and pedestrians.

City officials said it will also improve safety and emergency response times and provide a new evacuation route for hurricanes and other emergencies. Mayor **Greg Oravec** said the project is 40 years in the making. "In 1980, our community leaders had the foresight to look into the future and say 'Hey this growing community is going to need another crossing over the river,'" said **Oravec**.

The happy faces in the jam-packed room celebrating its completion sent a message it was well worth the wait. "The people in Port St. Lucie should be excited," said **Oravec**. "They should be proud they made this happen. This is a testament to what people can do when there are united and focused on building a better future." "I'm looking forward to the opportunity to get to U.S. 1 without going around the country," said Gertrude Walker, Port St. Lucie Supervisor of Elections with a chuckle.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Gregory J. Oravec
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

NPR.org
August 30, 2019

Port St. Lucie Mayor Greg Oravec On Hurricane Preparation
Heard on Morning Edition

NPR's Noel King speaks to Port St. Lucie, Fla., Mayor **Greg Oravec** about the city's preparations for Hurricane Dorian, which is on track to hit Florida.

NOEL KING, HOST: The National Hurricane Center has made an extreme prediction. It says Hurricane Dorian is on course to hit Florida as a Category 4 storm early next week. The city of Port St. Lucie is on the Atlantic Coast, and it's in the storm's path. Kim Reardon (ph) moved there from Kentucky in May. She says she knows about tornadoes, but this would be her first hurricane.

KIM REARDON: Well, husband brought home 20 gallons of water yesterday, flashlights, batteries. My daughter's in a wheelchair, so we got her a headlamp. Canned goods - just preparing for at least a week without being able to get out of our condominium complex.

KING: Reardon talked to us via Skype from her condo, which is on the ground floor. And she says her biggest fear is water pooling inside.

REARDON: I'm a little apprehensive. But, you know, I'm one of those girls that, when a tornado is headed her way, walks out on the back porch and watches as the funnel cloud comes before I ditch downstairs to the basement. So I will probably be at the patio doors, watching the wind and the rain whip around the creek that's behind us.

KING: All right. **Greg Oravec** is the mayor of Port St. Lucie. Good morning, sir.

GREG ORAVEC: Good morning, ma'am.

KING: Is your city ready?

ORAVEC: We're fully mobilized to get as ready as we can be. In just about an hour, we'll formally declare a local state of emergency. Obviously, we've been preparing for essentially the last week. But as this forecast comes into greater focus, it changes the nature of our advice and recommendations and, perhaps ultimately, evacuation orders.

KING: Yeah. Let's talk about that. At what point would you order an evacuation? What would prompt you to make that decision?

ORAVEC: The track and exact landfall come into greater focus and saying - having a better idea of where landfall is going to occur. As you know, it makes a difference. And history has shown us that sheltering in place can be very, very effective. But ultimately, if you have a Category 4

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Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

and up about to make landfall where you have expectations of catastrophic damage, it changes the nature of your preparation and your response.

KING: Well, we just heard how one resident, Kim Reardon, is preparing. She says she's got a lot of water. She says she's one of those people who's probably going to be drawn to watch the storm. What advice do you have for residents of your city, especially new people like her who just haven't been through a hurricane before?

ORAVEC: Thank you for that. And Kim should know that her mayor loves her and so glad that she is in Port St. Lucie. But just listening to that segment, obviously, in Florida, we don't have very many basements because of the water table. And the water table is going to be up during this event, so there'll be no basement to run to. She probably understands that.

But we want all of our structures - hurricane shutters up, right? We want all of our structures protected to the greatest extent possible. So regardless of the exact course and as this projected track changes, we know we're going to have a tropical event. So at this point, everyone should be taking Friday and Saturday and putting up their shutters. And if they don't have shutters - proper plywood shutters and protecting their structures to the greatest extent possible with, in addition, having that seven days of food and water and being able to be self-sufficient for that seven days.

And we can't stress that even - make sure medicine is part of your checklist - right? - not just food and water but medicine, the things that keep you healthy and keep you going. We want you to have that. But we don't want you - if you can see the wind and the storm, that means that you haven't hardened your structure as much as possible. And just unfortunately, no one's that fast to be able to react to some debris flying through your window and into your home.

So that's - it's understandable. We know that people do it. But that's not what we would ask. You know, we would ask you to be in a safe place in your house, especially as it continues to deteriorate.

KING: In the last couple seconds we have left, Port St. Lucie took a hit from Hurricane Irma a couple years ago. Has the community recovered?

ORAVEC: Absolutely. And I'm very glad that you asked this question because it's a really important point. So the people of Port St. Lucie - and in my time here, we've dealt with a Category 3, Frances, a Category 2, Jeanne, and Hurricane Irma, Hurricane Wilma, Tropical Storm Fay. None of - excuse me. Hurricane Frances was a 2 at 105. Jeanne was the 3 at 120. None of these storms were a Category 4.

KING: **Greg Oravec**, the mayor of Port St. Lucie, Fla. Thank you so much.

ORAVEC: Thank you very much.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

WPTV.com

July 2, 2019

**Port St Lucie mayor wants Costco to open its doors in city-owned Southern Grove area
Port St. Lucie is rolling out the welcome mat for a future Costco.**

Author: Chris Gilmore

PORT ST. LUCIE, Fla. — The city of Port St Lucie is rolling out the welcome mat for a future Costco, but city leaders are leaving it to the superstore to open the door. This isn't the first time the city has tried to entice the wholesale store. Now, Mayor **Greg Oravec** is taking to YouTube to get the company's attention. Addressing Costco leaders he said, "I think we can work out a deal. You can have a premier site in the southern grove portion of tradition, for a purchase price of zero dollars. Zero dollars, subject only to taxes and assessments."

Costco has faced roadblocks in the past in Martin County. In 2017, they pulled out of Palm City because of opposition. Another attempt near Kanner Highway fizzled after a failure to reach a purchasing deal. The latest sales pitch from Port Saint Lucie includes a deal for land in the city-owned Southern Grove area where there are 11 hundred acres available for commercial development.

The surrounding community is growing at a rate Mayor **Oravec** describes as "meteoric," and residents of neighboring Valencia Cay agree. Port St. Lucie resident, Frank Franze says, "The area we're talking about has at least 10,000 homes, so that's 10,000 fewer people who are going to have to go to the east side of 95 if the Costco comes over here." The mayor was out of town at the time this story aired but in messages with WPTV when asked about how soon this can happen he says, there are not many obstacles to moving forward.

"That's the thing...there are no roadblocks in Port St. Lucie. Once Costco would express interest we would be off to the races. If they chose a city-owned site in Southern Grove, it would be very straightforward, and I always like to point to examples that we can touch and see. For instance, look at City Electric, which is 400,000 ft.², even bigger than a Costco. Its groundbreaking was in September 2018, and it is completely dried in and well on its way to completion." Over the last nine months, according to the mayor, more than 500 homes were sold in Valencia Cay.

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Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

TC Palm

February 15, 2019

For millennial homebuyers, the price is right in Port St. Lucie

Author: Gil Smart

Anthony Bonna was born when I was a rising junior in college, which makes him a millennial and makes me... old. Bonna, who served a stint as a St. Lucie County Commissioner last year, grew up (mostly) in Port St. Lucie; as a kid, he recalls "riding along a dirt road called Becker." After college he returned to Florida, thinking maybe someday he'd return home. If he could afford it. That is, he and his wife "were very committed to living within our means," said Bonna, 32. In most of our region, that might have meant a condo or an older, smaller home.

In Port St. Lucie it gave him the pick of the litter. With a median home price of \$225,000, Bonna and his wife easily found a home close to family and "just a 5-minute walk from my church, my gym, a Duffy's, good takeout, and a Publix." Port St. Lucie was ranked the No. 10 city in the nation for millennial homeownership by SmartAsset.com. What's not to like? And indeed, homebuyers Bonna's age like Port St. Lucie more than almost any other city in America.

In its 2019 ranking of "Where Millennials are Buying Homes," the personal finance firm SmartAsset ranked PSL 10th in the nation, with a reported 53 percent of millennials who own their homes. The city — which has actually topped the list in years past — would have ranked higher on the list but for the fact it's long had a high rate of millennial homeownership; points were given to cities that saw big jumps.

For context, an Urban Institute study last year reported that in 2015, just 37 percent those between ages 24 and 34 owned their own home — far below the Baby Boomers and my generation, Generation X, at a similar point in their lives. So why is Port St. Lucie bucking that trend? It's all about the price tag. According to the Realtors Association of the Palm Beaches, which covers St. Lucie County, the median sales price in Martin County was \$360,000 in 2018, 60 percent higher than the Port St. Lucie median; the median in Palm Beach County was \$345,000.

So what happens — and we see this in the traffic — is that people who work in those counties but can't afford to live there buy in Port St. Lucie, which is bisected by U.S. 1, I-95 and the Florida Turnpike and makes for a (relatively) easy commute. "We see a lot of teachers, police officers, firefighters," said Jason Coley of the "Team Coley" Realty Group with Atlantic Shores Realty, headquartered along St. Lucie West Boulevard. "Where else are you going to go and get new construction for \$250,000?" said Coley.

Prices remain so low in part because so many new homes are being built; Mayor **Greg Oravec** said another 50,000 "dwelling units" that are "entitled" - as in, can legally be built. "So even if there was political will to say 'We don't want any more development, the supply pipeline will continue for the foreseeable future," he said. But there are, he stresses, other reasons younger

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Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

buyers flock to his city. It's the safest large city in Florida, according to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement; the school district's on the rise; there's plenty of shopping and dining and lots to do.

Realtor Coley said the only complaints he hears are about traffic (of course) and the fact there aren't a whole lot of high-paying jobs in town. But city officials are confident employers will eventually follow all the potential employees, perhaps along the Tradition "jobs corridor." Bottom line, said **Oravec**, is "we're a place where the American dream is alive and well."

And that dream would seem to be on life support in communities to the south. For where younger homebuyers can put down roots, they invest not just in their own homes but in the community. They pay taxes, they get involved civically, they become the leaders that shape an area's future. That's always been one of the worrying things about a Martin or a Palm Beach County; where "the future" can't afford to live there, where's that future going to come from?

And while Martin County's environmental problems in particular make a strong case for keeping growth in check, by capping new residential construction you drive prices up. That's great for existing homeowners. It's not so great in terms of a diverse community or a diversified local economy. It's not great for service industry folks who can't afford to live where they work. So while other South Florida communities struggle to find answers to their affordable housing crises — Port St. Lucie doesn't have one. And that's good both for young homeowners — and the city itself.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Wpbf.com

September 25, 2018

**Port St. Lucie City leaders continue to look for solutions for better water quality
City conducts second water quality study**

Author: Angela Rozier

PORT ST. LUCIE, Fla. — The City of Port St. Lucie is once again partnering with local scientists to work on another in-depth water quality study. The city and Florida Atlantic University's Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute teamed up for the first phase of the city's microbial source tracking study in June 2016.

The first phase, which was completed in April 2018, involved the collection and study of water samples at several tributaries of the North Fork of the St. Lucie River. Experts determined at some sites that the data suggested that septic systems are likely contributing to the bacterial pollution. At other sites, the data showed that wastewater from nearby communities and storm-water runoff may be critical issues.

Officials said the second phase, which is expected to start immediately, will allow scientists to continue their investigations into the sources contributing to the bacterial and nutrient impairment of the North Fork of the St. Lucie River. Mayor **Gregory J. Oravec** said they will use the results of the second phase of the study to create local solutions.

"We need good science to objectively measure the health of our river, to direct our limited resources to where we can do the greatest good and to measure our progress in a continuous loop. Our ongoing partnership with a leading scientist, like Dr. LaPointe, and a preeminent marine science institution, like FAU Harbor Branch, helps us meet these needs and more," said **Oravec**. "We should expect Phase II to bring about projects that measurably improve water quality along our stretch of the North Fork and build on our other river-related initiatives, like our septic to sewer conversion program, the Eastern Watershed Improvement Project and the McCarty Ranch Water Storage Project."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Stuart News
September 12, 2018

Shaping our future - Deal to sell former VGTI building gets approval - Port St. Lucie may close \$14.5 sale in December

Author: George Andreassi

PORT ST. LUCIE - The city may finally be able to unload the former Vaccine & Gene Therapy Institute Florida building before the new year. The City Council voted 4-1 Monday to approve an agreement to sell the high-tech laboratory and office building for \$14.5 million to RER Ventures LLC, a distressed real estate firm based in Coral Gables. The delivery of the agreement to RER Ventures will trigger a 90-day due diligence period. After that, the sale would close within 30 days.

Christopher Kallivokas, the chairman of RER Ventures, said he hopes to complete the due diligence investigation early and close the deal in December. "I put the energy in it this year and want to get started," Kallivokas said in an interview after the vote. "I'm excited about the property. Once we reach the final decision to go forward, we should go forward." Moments earlier, Kallivokas told the council, "This is a good opportunity for us. I hope we will stabilize the building and create some good jobs for this community and I look forward to being a part of this community."

The December closing would finalize the public's \$49.5 million loss on the building, which was custom built for VGTI. Mayor **Greg Oravec**, the lone dissenter on the vote, said he had confidence in Kallivokas, but certain aspects of the deal bothered him. "I think he's the real deal, he's a bona fide developer, the kind of investor we want in the city, but I will not be supporting this deal," **Oravec** said. **Oravec** said he was surprised to learn Kallivokas is a business partner in a separate deal with a principal in the Avison Young brokerage firm that lined up Kallivokas as a buyer for VGTI. But **Oravec** acknowledged, "There is no technical conflict of interest."

A subsequent conversation with a prominent Realtor convinced him there was a flaw in the \$14.5 million independent appraisal of the building, **Oravec** said. "It would be worth a lot more once it's leased with A-rated or dependable tenants where the building could be sold to a (Real Estate Investment Trust) or another real estate investor at the going capitalization rate at the time," **Oravec** said. "I think he's going to get tenants in the building and I think in the next three to five years, or whenever he decides to sell, he's going to sell it for somewhere between \$24 and \$34 million," **Oravec** said.

VGTI opened in 2012 and went out of business in 2015 after it ran out of money because of the loss of National Institutes of Health funding and the burden of loan repayments. The city took ownership of the building in August 2017 because it had guaranteed the \$64 million in bonds used to finance the construction. The city still owes \$57.3 million in principal on the bonds with annual payments of \$4.1 million. The city is also paying \$1.5 million this year to maintain and operate the building. The city intends to use the proceeds from the sale to refinance the bonds.

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Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

RTT Molecular Dx had also offered \$14.5 million for the VGTI building, but could not provide proof it had the finances to complete the purchase, City Manager Russ Blackburn said Monday. During the July 20 council meeting, RTT Molecular Dx's chairman, Robert M. Lloyd Jr., described the building as "the Taj Mahal of diagnostics."

Florida Center for Bio-Sciences

Address: 9801 S.W. Discovery Way, Port St. Lucie

Building size: 107,000 square feet

Campus size: 8 acres

Facilities: Nine state-of-the-art laboratories, private offices, conference and lecture spaces, private cafe, vivarium

Annual loan payment: \$4.1 million

2017-18 operating costs: \$1.5 million

Source: City of Port St. Lucie

RER Ventures offer

\$14.5 million; \$2.9 million down

\$11.6M million balloon payment paid after five years

\$580,000 per year interest (5 percent)

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Treasure Coast Palm: Web Edition Articles (FL)

August 23, 2018

Port St. Lucie shops for charter-school developer to build vo-tech academy

Author: George Andreassi

PORT ST. LUCIE — It could cost at least \$50 million to establish a state-of-the-art vocational-technical career academy in the Tradition Commerce Center. A charter-school developer would pay \$1 per year on a 99-year land lease for 20 acres. Startup and operating costs would be shouldered by the state, according to John Carvelli said. The estimated cost and proposed lease terms were among the new details about the vo-tech project revealed in a draft solicitation the City Council is to review Monday. If the council approves, the solicitation would be posted publicly Thursday and sent to charter-school organizations. The project timeline calls for the council to pick a developer for negotiations on Oct. 22 and execute a contract Nov. 13.

If all goes smoothly, a free, public vo-tech school for grades 6 through 12 could open as soon as August 2019. "The proposed career academy has the potential to be one of the most transformative projects the city has ever undertaken, simultaneously enhancing our local education opportunities, economy and ultimately our community's prosperity," said Mayor **Greg Oravec**. The school curriculum would be designed to train workers for jobs at the businesses being developed in the Tradition Jobs Corridor as well as regional employers.

The city took control of 1,223 acres in the Tradition Jobs Corridor in June and has been working on a variety of development initiatives for the land along Interstate 95 between Becker Road and Tradition Parkway. City officials unveiled the initial outline of the vo-tech project July 27 at the council retreat. The council wants the vo-tech school to train students to take jobs in the health care, manufacturing and skilled trade industries that employers are having difficulty filling, according to the city's draft solicitation.

The 2017 Treasure Coast Skills Gap Study reported a need for qualified workers for 1,404 health care jobs, 230 manufacturing jobs and 251 skilled trades jobs in the two-year period ending in February 2019. The solicitation asks developers to "Tell us what success looks like academically and how this will address our economic needs within the jobs corridor." Among the health care employers in Tradition are Tradition Medical Center and several medical offices. Three manufacturing-and-distribution facilities also are under development in the commerce park.

The solicitation requires detailed plans for school security, education, organization and business and finance. That includes timetables for construction, hiring, recruiting students and opening for the first day of school. The vo-tech school could open as soon as the 2019-2020 school year, said city spokeswoman Sarah Prohaska. That would require submitting a charter-school application to the Florida Department of Education by the Feb. 1 deadline. The school would run entirely on state funding, which would include money for construction and operation based on enrollment, according to Carvelli. The operator would make money by spending less per student than provided by the state.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

VeroNews.com

July 27, 2018

Southern Grove action heats up as city gets bids

Author: Debbie Carson

Plans are moving forward that could take the City of Port St. Lucie out of the development business – at least in the Tradition Center for Commerce, also known as Southern Grove. The city found itself holding title to more than 1,200 undeveloped acres south of Tradition proper last month when the land management company walked away. The city is now responsible for covering the costs of taxes and special assessments on the property. The sooner the property moves into private sector hands, the sooner the city can write it off the books. “There’s substantial and substantive interest in Southern Grove,” said **Gregory Oravec**, president of the City’s Governmental Finance Corporation board. **Oravec** is also the city’s mayor. The City Council sits as the GFC’s board of directors.

The board debated several proposals that ranged from a 3-acre outright purchase of property to a hybrid purchase-joint venture partnership, and ultimately decided three of the four proposals had merit. The board approved negotiating two outright purchases of property, one involving a 20-acre Publix-anchored retail center, and the other being the 3-acre purchase, which is also expected to be retail. Publix would be located on the northeast corner of Becker Road and Village Parkway. The smaller parcel would be near the intersection of Discovery Way and Village Parkway.

Brandon Structures Inc. presented the Publix project, offering \$3 million for the 20-acre parcel. SLC Commercial, representing Capital Brands LLC, has offered \$450,000 for its requested 3-acre site. The hybrid offer was also green-lighted for negotiation. While the board supports the proposed joint venture partnership with Tambone Companies, of Palm Beach Gardens, it rejected the offer price for the 210 acres the company wants to buy. “I really think they are first class,” **Oravec** said of Tambone. “I think they’re the right team. I just think right now we have the wrong price.”

While the developers of the Publix and smaller parcels were offering approximately \$3.50 per square foot, Tambone offered 58 cents per square foot. Tambone offered \$5.2 million for the 210 acres it wants to buy outright. **Oravec** said he hopes the city can negotiate a better price for the land purchase. The fourth offer, which was briefly discussed during the meeting, came from Port St. Lucie resident Mark Gotz, who also is a member of the St. Lucie Fire Board. Gotz’s proposal called for a joint venture partnership with the city for the entire 1,200-plus acres. Profits would be split 49-51, with Gotz receiving the majority share. His plan called for marketing more than 400 acres to a private university and didn’t address the remaining property.

“We should take advantage of having additional interest in the property,” **Oravec** told his fellow board members. He suggested they move forward with negotiating with Tambone and exclude the Publix and 3-acre parcels as well as two other sites earmarked for two incoming economic

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Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

development projects. “It seems like a no-brainer,” **Oravec** said of negotiating a purchase and sale agreement for the Publix parcel, as well as for the smaller site. “We’re making the most of the situation ... We’re selling property straight up.” “It’s nice to have this problem that we have multiple offers kind of tripping over each other,” board member John Carvelli said.

City staff was directed to enter into negotiations with all three entities and bring back the respective purchase and sale agreements as soon as possible. From there, the city will draft ordinances to convey the properties to the buyers once the agreements are signed. The sales won’t be final until the approval of the second reading of the ordinances.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

TC Palm

June 1, 2018

Medical marijuana comes to Port St. Lucie with Liberty Health Sciences dispensary

Author: George Andreassi

PORT ST. LUCIE — Cindi Aliberti said she was glad to be the first customer Friday morning at the Liberty Health Sciences Cannabis Education Center, the first medical-marijuana dispensary in St. Lucie County. “It made me feel good to be in there and have it all done,” Aliberti said. “I went in and I picked out my products. They were kind enough to give me a free T-shirt and 20 percent off today. I’m going to go home and make some cookies for my dessert later.”

Aliberti, 48, of Jensen Beach, said she has been recommended for medical marijuana to treat anxiety, pain and post-traumatic stress disorder. She said she mixes concentrated liquids — containing chemicals in marijuana that have a medicinal effect — into homemade desserts such as cookies, chocolate and brownies. Aliberti and several other dispensary patrons said medical marijuana products enabled them stop taking opiate painkillers and other pharmaceuticals.

“Cannabis literally saved my life,” said Keith Hyne, 58, of Port St. Lucie. “I use that for the inflammation and the pain. I have degenerative disc disease in my back. So my back is crumbling away. I was in a nursing home sleeping over 18 hours a day because of all the opioids I was taking. I don’t even take Advil anymore.”

Dispensary manager Luis Hernandez said Liberty Health Sciences decided to open its fourth outlet in Port St. Lucie because of the dense population, central location on the Treasure Coast and the welcoming attitude of city officials. “Honestly, of all the areas, Port St. Lucie was the most receptive,” Hernandez said. “It allowed us to find the right location. Other counties or cities might have been a little more stringent. Port St. Lucie kind of just made it easy for us.”

Mayor **Greg Oravec** welcomed Liberty Health Sciences to the city, noting strong support in the city for a 2016 state referendum on legalizing medical marijuana to treat debilitating medical conditions. “Its opening is a logical and anticipated outcome of the people’s overwhelming support of the 2016 Amendment 2 and subsequent enabling state legislation,” **Oravec** said in an email.

Police Sgt. Rick Schichtel and Crime Prevention Specialist Tom Reuther surveyed the shop Friday morning to make sure it complied with state regulations and city security standards. “At this point everything looks good,” Reuther said. A security guard checks in all patrons when they enter the dispensary to verify they have a state medical marijuana card, Hernandez said. Next, a patient liaison consults with the patron, determines the appropriate medication and asks a manager to retrieve the product from a vault, Hernandez said.

Finally, a security guard rings up the sale and hands the patron the medication, Hernandez said. The dispensary offers products following state-approved methods of cannabis consumption,

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

including vapes, oils, tinctures and capsules. Prices range from \$25 for a 250 mg vape unit to \$110 for a bottle of 30 capsules of 25 mg capsules. Liberty Health Science also operates dispensaries in The Villages, St. Petersburg and Tampa, Hernandez said. Dispensaries are planned for Boca Raton and Fort Lauderdale and a second location in Tampa.

Each medical-marijuana dispensing company in Florida is allowed to open up to 25 locations. The state Office of Medical Marijuana has authorized 75 doctors in Martin, St. Lucie, Indian River and Brevard counties to recommend medical marijuana to their patients as a treatment for glaucoma, pain management, anxiety and other conditions.

The other medical marijuana dispensary on the Treasure Coast is operated by Trulieve on Commerce Avenue in Vero Beach. Hernandez said he does not believe Liberty Health Sciences is competing with Trulieve. "Even if they opened two doors down, I wouldn't consider it competition," Hernandez said. "We have our way and they have theirs, and we let the patients decide what they want to do. I think there's plenty out there for everybody."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Gregory J. Oravec
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

TC Palm
May 18, 2018

Will anyone challenge Port St. Lucie Mayor Greg Oravec's bid for re-election?

Author: George Andreassi

PORT ST. LUCIE — **Greg Oravec** could become the first mayor here to win re-election without opposition since at least 1977 unless a candidate steps forward in the next month. **Oravec** so far is the only candidate to open a campaign account for the mayoral election, and several political observers said they have not heard of anyone even considering a challenge. The dearth of mayoral candidates in Port St. Lucie is unusual at this stage of the campaign. At least four candidates have run for mayor in each of the past five city elections dating back to 2000, records show. The qualifying period to officially enter the city elections is June 18-22. A mayoral primary would be Aug. 28; the general election is Nov. 6. Former Mayor Bob Minsky, a Democrat who led the city for 10 years between 1992 and 2004, said he's surprised no one yet has challenged **Oravec**, and credited him with running a scandal-free administration.

No rumored opponents

"Maybe it's a credit to **Greg** that he's done a good job and he hasn't given people any reason to go up against him," Minsky said. "Nobody I've talked to has heard any kind of a rumor about somebody running, so I just have to assume that nobody is going to run against him." It's probably too late for anyone to mount a serious challenge against **Oravec**, Minsky and other political observers said. "It's surprising to me because I remember back when I first ran, I think there were 13 candidates running for mayor," Minsky said. "I had opponents the day after I got elected." No Port St. Lucie mayor has won re-election unopposed dating back to 1977, said Supervisor of Elections Gertrude Walker.

Mayor Greg Oravec.

Oravec declined to address specific questions about his lack of an opponent so far. But he touted a new sense of teamwork in city government. "I think there is a spirit of cooperation and positivity in our community right now, and there is a dramatic difference at City Hall," **Oravec** said in an emailed statement. "Our new City Council and city manager are doing an incredible job of focusing on what's important — helping our citizens live better lives — and staying away from the politics that too often bog our governmental institutions down." **Oravec** has been registered to vote in St. Lucie County with no party affiliation since 2003, Walker said. About 29 percent of the city's voters also are registered with no party affiliation. The other four City Council members are registered Republicans. **Oravec**, 43, is married with three children. He owns a real estate-development consulting firm.

City employee

Oravec started working for the city in 2002 as community redevelopment director and worked his way up to assistant city manager and then city manager. He resigned in February 2013 after clashing with Mayor JoAnn Faiella and Councilman Ron Bowen. Faiella and Bowen were charged in December 2013 with a civil violation of the state public-meetings law stemming from

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

their communications about **Oravec's** severance. The charges against Faiella were dropped. Bowen was adjudicated guilty and paid a \$350 fine. Faiella lost her re-election bid to **Oravec** in 2014. Jim Rich, a Republican who ran for mayor in 2010 and 2014, said both of those races attracted several candidates because of scandals involving the sitting mayors. That's not the case with **Oravec**, he said. "Overall, in general, I've not heard that much negative about Mr. **Oravec's** tenure," Rich said. "There have been no major blunders, no situations that he hasn't handled adequately. With the two previous mayors ... we really had some controversy. I think that really spurred people on to file (for election)." Faiella's predecessor, Pat Christensen, resigned as mayor in September 2010 after prosecutors charged her with misusing her campaign funds. Christensen pleaded no contest to official misconduct and received five years probation.

Performance praised

Two other 2014 candidates — Republican S.N. "Rocky" Tinto and then-Democrat Chauncelor Howell, who now is registered with no party affiliation — said they believe **Oravec** has done a good job and they support his re-election. Howell and Tinto both said the City Council performs more like a team under **Oravec's** leadership, praised him for shepherding Crosstown Parkway toward completion and credited him with reaching out to the public. Joe Castro, board president of the PSL Hispanic American Club, and Port St. Lucie Mayor **Greg Oravec**. "I think he's run a tight ship," Howell said. "He's been made out to be the 'Big Bad Wolf,' but Mayor **Oravec** is very approachable. He didn't get in this to win a popularity contest. I believe he ran for mayor so that he could do something of significance here in the city." Joe Edge, a Republican who ran for mayor in 2010 and 2014 and has been sharply critical of **Oravec**, said he believes **Oravec** likely would defeat any candidate who comes forward so late in the process. "I just don't see anyone challenging him this late in the game, anyone of quality who poses a threat," Edge said. "It takes money, it takes a person that has name recognition. There's nobody that has those two qualities that's willing to do it." While the odds against a challenger defeating **Oravec** seem slim, some political observers said they think someone still will enter the mayoral race by the time the qualifying period ends. "I've been here 24 years and I can't remember a mayor's race not being opposed," said Frank Lillo, a Republican Party activist who ran for mayor in 2010. "I'd still be surprised if somebody doesn't pop up during the qualifying period. It's an attractive position. It's the mayor and we're a big city."

How to run for mayor

File petitions: Submit 1,206 candidate petitions, signed by registered voters, to the Supervisor of Elections (1 percent of total number of registered voters in previous city election.) Pay a fee: \$509.22 to the City Clerk (1 percent of salary plus \$25.)

- Port St. Lucie voter registrations
- Democrats: 48,842, 39.3 percent
- Republicans: 38,320, 30.1 percent
- No Party Affiliation, 36,444, 29.3 percent
- Other party: 628, less than 1 percent
- Total: 124,234
- Source: St. Lucie County Supervisor of Elections

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Gregory J. Oravec
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

TC Palm
April 24, 2018

Florida appeals decision sends 2013 Port St. Lucie Sunshine Law violation case back to court

Author: Colleen Wixon

PORT ST. LUCIE — An appeals court decision, issued last week, could end up forcing the city to revisit its 2013 separation agreement with former city manager and now Mayor **Greg Oravec**.

At issue is:

- Whether then-City Attorney Roger Orr discussed **Oravec's** termination and subsequent \$92,000 separation agreement in private, individual conversations with council members.
- Whether proper notice was given for a February 2013 meeting designed to "cure" any Sunshine Law violations.
- Whether that meeting effectively cured any violations by allowing public discussion of the separation agreement.

A lawsuit against the city by Lakeland-based Transparency for Florida contended the violations occurred and the public did not have enough notice about the meeting. The group's lawsuit named the city, Orr and former council members Ron Bowen, Shannon Martin and Joann Faiella as defendants. On Tuesday, Transparency for Florida attorney Megan Lazenby did not return phone calls seeking comment on the appeals court ruling. Attorneys for Orr, Bowen, Martin and Faiella also did not return calls seeking comment. Initially, a Circuit Court determined the notice given for the meeting "cured" any Sunshine Law violation, but it was inconclusive in determining whether a Sunshine Law violation had occurred. Transparency for Florida appealed, saying the meeting notice of less than 24 hours was inadequate. The group also argued the meeting could not cure a violation unless the violation was specifically addressed, according to court documents.

In its April 18 decision, the 4th District Court of Appeal agreed with Transparency for Florida. The appeals court reviewed videotape of the 15-minute council meeting but was unable to determine whether the packed room was members of the public, media or city staff. The appeals court also questioned the council's lack of discussion of the finalized separation agreement or reasons for **Oravec's** termination. "(The appeals court) is kicking it back to the trial court and saying, 'You didn't do your job,'" explained Barbara Petersen, president of the First Amendment Foundation in Tallahassee. "We see this as a positive decision."

The issue is now sent back to the trial court, Petersen said. If the court decides a violation occurred — either because council members were polled or because the meeting was not an effective cure to any violation — **Oravec's** separation agreement could be nullified, she said. If that happens, the issue could end up back in the city council's lap, she said. Transparency for Florida, a nonprofit organization, was incorporated on Dec. 9, 2013, the day before it filed its lawsuit, and remains active, according to state corporation records.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

TC Palm

March 1, 2018

Port St. Lucie City Council members downplay blame for acrimony in City Attorney's Office

Author: George Andreassi

PORT ST. LUCIE — Mayor **Greg Oravec** made Reggie Osenton his top pick for city attorney, negotiated Osenton's contract and provided regular feedback on Osenton's performance, including a strongly worded annual review. But **Oravec** deflected any blame for himself or other City Council members while overseeing Osenton, who was pressured to resign suddenly Feb. 22 in the wake of an internal investigation which found he violated city hiring policy and presided over a dysfunctional staff. It was the third time in four years a city attorney has left under a cloud and the second time during **Oravec's** three-year tenure as mayor. Under the city charter, the council appoints the city attorney, who serves at the council's pleasure.

Blame Osenton

Oravec placed all the blame for the recent breakdown in the City Attorney's Office squarely on Osenton. "The City Council does not engage in the day-to-day management of the city attorney or any employees," **Oravec** wrote in an email response to TCPalm's questions about who was at fault. "The city attorney is responsible for managing the City Attorney's Office and all its employees. "What we can and will continue to do is learn from our experience, get better as a result and do everything we can to move our community forward," **Oravec** wrote.

But **Oravec** did not say what went wrong, what lessons council members learned from the debacle, what they could have done differently or what steps they would take to better oversee the City Attorney's Office in the future. Council members communicated regularly with Osenton during his 17 months as city attorney. Four council members gave Osenton passing grades on his annual review in November, while **Oravec's** evaluation called Osenton's customer service and performance at council meetings poor.

Investigation findings

The city's internal investigation of the City Attorney's Office found Osenton violated hiring policy by listing the word "attractive" among the 10 qualities he was seeking in staff-attorney candidates. The investigation also revealed a staff generally divided between veteran female employees and new male employees hired by Osenton. Osenton took responsibility for his policy violation, telling TCPalm it was "my mistake."

He said he first developed the list of 10 qualities many years ago while he was in private practice and never updated it. "As far as the word 'attractive' on that form, it was stupid of me to use the form that had that word on it," Osenton said. "If I had just read it at first blush, and I didn't know the whole story, it would knock my hat off. "But knowing the whole story and knowing what's in my character and in my heart, I know that's not what it was about," Osenton said. "I can tell you with 100 percent certainty, attractiveness had nothing to do with any of the hires. There's not

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Gregory J. Oravec

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a sexist bone in my body.” Osenton declined to discuss the investigation's findings related to the gender divisions in his staff. “I don’t care to rebut them. I just want to move on,” Osenton said.

Port St. Lucie City Manager Russ Blackburn

Osenton said City Manager Russ Blackburn let him know the council wanted him gone.

“Council asked me to resign,” Osenton said. “The contact went through the city manager, who was asking on behalf of the City Council. I don’t really want to go into the specific conversations I had with anybody.” Blackburn, however, disputed that assertion: “No one asked for Mr. Osenton's resignation.” Osenton said he was looking for a new job, but declined to disclose his prospects.

Unreported problems

Vice Mayor Shannon Martin — who with **Oravec** is a holdover from the council that hired Osenton in July 2016 — also blamed Osenton for allowing staff relations in the City Attorney's Office to deteriorate. “I think it’s unfortunate that there was so much mismanagement going on,” Martin said. “It was up to Reggie, really, as the leader of that department to notify the council, his bosses, of things going on. And obviously, he didn’t do that for his own reasons.” “Maybe he thought he could handle it. Maybe he thought he was handling it. I don’t know,” Martin said. “I really can’t answer as to why he didn’t deal with it.”

Councilman John Carvelli also said the problems in the City Attorney's Office were not apparent to him. “I don’t know how it happened on our watch, but when we found out there was a complaint, action was taken,” Carvelli said. “We rely on people to run the departments on day-to-day operations.” Councilwomen Jolien Caraballo and Stephanie Morgan did not respond to questions about the council's accountability for Osenton's failings and the deterioration of staff relations in the City Attorney's Office.

Port St. Lucie Mayor **Greg Oravec** delivers his State of the City address Feb. 26, 2018.

It was **Oravec** who triggered the first downward spiral of the City Attorney's Office in February 2014, when he blew the whistle on suspected Sunshine Law violations by three City Council members. Longtime City Attorney Roger Orr resigned in April 2014 after a State Attorney's Office investigation found he acted as an intermediary in private council talks about whether to offer **Oravec** a severance package to resign as city manager.

Pam Booker

That June, the council promoted longtime Assistant City Attorney Pam Booker to the city attorney job. **Oravec** was elected mayor in November 2014 and Martin won a second four-year term.

Predecessor fired

The **Oravec**-led council fired Booker in February 2016 for poor communications and for providing bad legal advice. The council hired a Palm Beach Gardens law firm as acting city attorneys until the new city attorney took office. That was Osenton on Sept. 1, 2016. In the wake of Osenton's ouster last week, the City Council named Jim Stokes interim city attorney. He took

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Gregory J. Oravec

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the oath of office Monday, becoming Port St. Lucie's fourth city attorney in four years. The council wants to find a permanent city attorney, its fifth in five years, by the time Stokes' one-year contract is up.

City Attorney's Office timeline

Feb. 8, 2014: **Greg Oravec** resigns as city manager amid conflicts with Mayor JoAnn Faiella and Councilman Ron Bowen

Feb. 14, 2014: **Oravec** reports suspected City Council Sunshine Law violations to State Attorney's Office

April 14, 2014: Longtime City Attorney Roger Orr announces his retirement after being implicated as intermediary between two council members in Sunshine violations

June 2014: City Council promotes Assistant City Attorney Pam Booker to city attorney

Nov. 4, 2014: **Oravec** elected mayor, Shannon Martin re-elected to the council.

February 2016: City Council fires Booker

July 11, 2016: Council selects Osenton as top city-attorney candidate

Sept. 1, 2016: Osenton assumes command of City Attorney's Office.

Nov. 8, 2016: John Carvelli, Jolien Caraballo and Stephanie Morgan elected to the council.

Nov. 20, 2017: Council gives Osenton mixed reviews, with **Oravec** providing the most critical comments, and a 5 percent raise in annual performance evaluation.

Jan. 22: Paralegal Jennyfer Ladouceur lodges complaint with Human Resources Department alleging favoritism towards paralegal Charles Snyderman and poor treatment of Office Manager Betty Bollinger by men in the office.

Feb. 20: Human Resources investigation finds Osenton violated city hiring policy and oversaw the deterioration of staff relations; Osenton submits proposed severance agreement.

Feb. 22: City Council accepts Osenton's resignation, approves severance agreement and hires James Stokes as interim city attorney for one year.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Gregory J. Oravec
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

TC Palm
February 20, 2018

\$750,000 to settle suit against Port St. Lucie by six former Police Department supervisors
Author: George Andreassi

PORT ST. LUCIE — Six former police supervisors, who waged a legal battle against the city since being laid off in 2012, will receive a total of \$750,000 under a settlement deal approved by the City Council. Former Maj. Scott Barta and former captains Steven Claus Sr. and Don Kryak will receive \$200,000 each, city records show. The remaining \$150,000 will be split among former Maj. Gary Robinson and two former communications division administrators, Sheila Bronger and Sheila O'Sullivan.

The settlement was negotiated by the city's insurer, TRICO, and required no admission of fault or liability by the city, City Attorney Reggie Osenton said in a memo to the council. TRICO will pay the plaintiffs. It would have cost the city about \$100,000 to go to trial, Osenton said. Losing at trial could have cost the city damages plus another \$500,000 in legal fees for the six former police supervisors. The council approved the settlement agreement by a 4-1 vote Feb. 12, with Mayor **Greg Oravec** dissenting.

Oravec, who initiated the layoffs in April 2012 while serving as city manager, said he reduced the city workforce to cope with the drop in property-tax revenue as real estate values plummeted during the Great Recession. Cutting back on police supervisors enabled the city to put more officers on the beat, **Oravec** said. "All of our employees ... who were laid off dealt with a difficult situation with grace," **Oravec** said before the vote. "It hurts me that there's a small handful of our employees that took a different path and that there's any settlement at all. It pains me that I think our system is predisposed to settling." Lawyers for the six supervisors did not return phone messages and emails seeking comment.

Councilman John Carvelli said he learned the value of settling lawsuits, rather than risking a costly legal defeat, while serving on the School Board. "Oftentimes, for the good of the organization, you want to settle because ultimately it can drag down a lot of resources, cost a lot of money, cost a lot of time," Carvelli said "Ultimately, I looked at this as a business decision." The lawsuit was filed in state court on May 3, 2012, and amended several times. The suit claimed age- and gender-based discrimination, breach of contract and violation of free-speech rights, among other allegations.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Stuart News
November 30, 2017

Shaping Our Future - Tax hike may return to ballot - Port St. Lucie City Council works with county to poll public

Author: Janet Begley

ST. LUCIE COUNTY – It could be several more months before the county and its cities can decide whether to again ask residents to increase the sales tax here. At a meeting Wednesday between the County Commission and the Port St. Lucie City Council, consultant Steven Vancore promised to develop polling data for the county and Fort Pierce, Port St. Lucie and St. Lucie Village by the end of January. Officials say they need that information to help determine if a tax hike has a chance of passing in 2018. If the proposed tax increase moves forward, it would appear on the Nov. 6, 2018, ballot.

In 2016, 53 percent of St. Lucie County voters said no to raising the sales tax to 7 percent from 6.5 percent for 20 years. The additional money would have been used for roads, sidewalks, public safety and water-quality projects. By asking a sample of about 400 residents throughout the county, Vancore said, he hopes to learn which version of a sales-tax increase – 1 percent for 10 years or a half-percent over 20 years – has the best chance of being approved by voters. The amount of an increase, rather than how long it would run, plays a more important role in whether an increase is approved by the public, Vancore said.

A sales-tax increase would help the county undertake some \$600 million in overdue road projects. Fort Pierce, Port St. Lucie and St. Lucie Village have a combined backlog of about \$645 million. Each municipality wants to develop its own list of projects that could be paid with new sales-tax revenue. Port St. Lucie Mayor **Gregory Oravec** said he thinks meeting with the county early in the process is critical so voters understand how each municipality will benefit individually from the county tax increase. "Last time, we didn't personally campaign for it," **Oravec** told City Council and County Commission members. "We're here today to join with you because that's the only way it gets approved. If we move forward together, I would take the materials out on as many roadshows as possible."

Port St. Lucie Councilwoman Shannon Martin agreed, but went a step further. Telling voters exactly what projects would be paid for with the additional revenue is critical, she said. Moreover, she said, anyone speaking about the project should undergo training to assure everyone has the same message. Lining up support for the increase within the business community will be critical, commissioners and council members said. They will gauge the response from groups such as the Chamber of Commerce, Realtors and builders once more information is available. Officials would hope to start a public-information campaign at least six months before the referendum.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Allthingstreasurecoast.com

June 27, 2017

**Mayor Oravec and City of Port St. Lucie recognized with City Livability Award
U.S. Conference of Mayors Announces 2017 City Livability Award Winners at 85th
Annual Meeting**

Mayor **Gregory J. Oravec** received national recognition this weekend for Port St. Lucie's efforts to confront issues on race relations, unity, inclusion - and to enhance our promise to be a City for all people. Mayor **Oravec** received an Outstanding Achievement Large City 2017 Livability Award in support of the Forum on Race Relations & Inclusion at the U.S. Conference of Mayor's 85th Annual Meeting in Miami Beach on Saturday June 24. The award recognizes mayoral leadership in developing and implementing programs that improve the quality of life in America's cities, focusing on the leadership, creativity, and innovation demonstrated by mayors. This year's winning cities were selected by former mayors from a pool of more than 150 applicants.

"Our City Livability Awards Program gives us the chance to express our pride in cities' mayoral leadership in making urban areas cleaner, safer, and more livable," said Tom Cochran, CEO and Executive Director of the Conference of Mayors. "We are grateful to Waste Management for its many years of support for the City Livability Awards Program, and for the opportunity to showcase the innovation and commitment of mayors and city governments across the country."

The Port St. Lucie City Council agreed to move forward with the Forum on Race Relations & Inclusion in response to acts of violence in the United States stemming from racial tension, terrorism, hate and a lack of understanding. The Forum was an opportunity for the public to engage in honest dialogue, express ideas and learn about others. The Forum's mission is to bring the people of Port St. Lucie together to listen, share concerns, learn, plan and act and report progress on maintaining and enhancing the City's promise of being a City for all people.

"Since our founding fathers declared independence, our citizens' safety and prosperity have been the primary mission of American governments at all levels, including cities. Here in the City of Port St. Lucie, we have much to be proud of in fulfilling this mission. We are the safest large City in Florida and a growing City for all people, not just in words but in statistical facts," **Oravec** said. "However, if we are to maintain and enhance these high standards, we can never take our success for granted. We must be prepared to proactively address the great challenges of our day, and one of the largest challenges currently facing us and the world is hate-based violence. The Forum on Race Relations & Inclusion was an important waypoint in our effort to confront hate and to maintain and enhance the unity of our community."

This year, the City will build off of the Forum by conducting additional "bridging the gap" training and reviewing our internal administrative policies as we strive for continuous improvement. This is the 38th year in which cities have competed for the Livability Award, which is sponsored by the Conference of Mayors and Waste Management, Inc., the nation's

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Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

largest environmental solution provider. Alex Gonzalez, Waste Management's Florida Area Public Affairs Director, presented the City Livability awards during the annual luncheon in Miami Beach.

"Through the City Livability Awards, Waste Management is immensely proud to honor US Mayors who are committed to strengthening our communities and enhancing the lives of their residents across the nation," said Susan Moulton, Waste Management's Senior Corporate Director of Public Sector Solutions. "For more than 28 years, Waste Management has sponsored the Awards, because the work these Mayors do to keep our communities safe, healthy, and vibrant aligns directly with our commitment to community vitality by providing innovative, safe and sustainable recycling and waste services."

In addition to the two top awards, Outstanding Achievement Awards were given to five cities with populations of 100,000 or more: Irvine (CA), Gresham (OR), Phoenix (AZ), Pembroke Pines (FL), Port St. Lucie (FL) -- and five cities with populations of less than 100,000 - Aguadilla (PR), Doral (FL), Dubuque (IA), East Orange (NJ) and Greenville (MS). Honorable Mention citations for cities with populations of 100,000 or more went to: Allentown (PA), Bridgeport (CT), Las Vegas (NV), and Plano (TX). Citations for cities with populations of less than 100,000 went to Bethlehem (PA), Carmel (IN), Johns Creek (GA), and Orland Park (IL).

"We are grateful for the USCM's partnership and recognition and Waste Management's sponsorship of the Livability Awards Program," **Oravec** said. "I am proud of our community, City Council and staff members for making our first Forum a great success."

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Gregory J. Oravec
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

CBS12.com
April 25, 2017

Religion rift in Port St. Lucie as Muslim group plans to build mosque

Author: Michael Buczyner

PORT ST. LUCIE, Fla. (CBS12) — Religion is under attack on the Treasure Coast after a group of residents spoke out against Muslims wanting to open a house of worship, 12 miles from the same mosque where Pulse Nightclub shooter Omar Mateen attended. Mohammad Hussein is the President of the Treasure Coast Islamic Society in Stuart. His group of 30 to 40 weekly worshippers wanted to buy a building several miles north in Port St. Lucie near Gatlin Blvd. to create he says a house of worship and Islamic school.

“These people are doctors are different professionals, are they terrorists? How can you judge people you don’t even know?,” Hussein said. “I just don’t see what’s the big deal of having a place to worship.”

We checked and it turns out this plan actually died months ago after the owner of the building took a higher offer for the property. That didn’t stop people from speaking out at Monday night’s Port St. Lucie City Commission meeting. “I think it’s a bad idea. I don’t think it should happen. We are a Christian nation, we always have been and that should be respected.” “Are you prepared to tell me as a citizen of Port St. Lucie that these individuals coming to this Islamic center are going to be properly vetted?”

A city spokesperson claims several of the speakers are not from Port St. Lucie. The mayor also addressed comments made by speakers. “Take your comments about the mosque, replace them with one of those other places of worship, say it out loud, and if it sounds wrong, it is wrong,” Mayor **Greg Oravec** said.

Unaware of the controversy until we visited him at his place of business, Hussein says he plans to find a new location to open a house of worship. “We need a better place to meet, to practice our faith. I don’t see where that is wrong,” he said. The real-estate agent selling the property told CBS12 over the phone that a Haitian church is now buying the property and is expected to close in June.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Stuart News

March 7, 2017

Delay could cost city \$2M more - Port St. Lucie's VGTI takeover adds unexpected budget expenses

Author: Nicole Rodriguez

PORT ST. LUCIE – A delay in the city taking control of the vacant Vaccine & Gene Therapy Institute of Florida building likely will cost local taxpayers roughly \$2 million more than anticipated this year. Operating costs could be about \$3.4 million for the current budget year because a judge has yet to allow the city to take over a court-appointed receiver's duties of maintaining the empty laboratory, city officials said. That's about \$2 million more than Port St. Lucie put in its 2016-2017 budget for VGTI because officials expected a ruling by now, they said.

A New York-based crisis-management firm was appointed by the court in January 2016 as receiver over the failed age-related-disease research lab to run the building – which is up for sale – until it's handed over to the city, comb through VGTI financial documents and ensure city-bought and state-bought equipment is preserved. City officials, the bank representing VGTI bond holders, the building's receiver and a judge are working to allow the city to take over. City officials have no timeline as to when that could occur, they said Monday.

The budget provides about \$1.4 million for VGTI maintenance. The city pays varying amounts each month to the receiver for fluctuating costs of legal fees incurred by the receiver or for one-time costs such as property taxes and insurance, city officials said. In the past three months, the city's paid the receiver roughly \$127,000 a month for maintenance of the building, landscaping, security and housekeeping, city officials said. The higher costs this year are the same as the \$3.4 million the city paid for VGTI in the 2015-16 budget year.

The delayed court ruling leads city officials to under-budget this year, city spokeswoman Sarah Prohaska said. "Essentially, this is a budgeting issue and not a costs-rising issue," Prohaska said in an email Friday. Officials believe the city could maintain the building for less money, Prohaska said. "City staff may be able to obtain lower prices by utilizing our local vendors for some maintenance issues than the receiver," Prohaska said. "The city would still have a local representative to fulfill the legal requirements of the receiver. However, the maintenance could be handled by the city."

Mayor **Greg Oravec** is hopeful the building will sell soon, sparing the city taxes and maintenance costs, he said. "Clearly we don't want to be putting any more money into VGTI, just the minimum that's required to keep it in proper working condition until we can sell it and transform that asset into a positive," **Oravec** said. The 107,000-square-foot laboratory – last appraised at \$11 million, according to the St. Lucie County property appraiser's website – has attracted strong interest from companies in the office-product, life-sciences and medical industries, said Kevin McCarthy, senior vice president of commercial real estate firm Colliers

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Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

International. "We think we have qualified buyers," McCarthy said. McCarthy said he is marketing the building without an asking price.

VGTI shut down in October 2015. The city in 2010 borrowed \$64 million to build and outfit VGTI's facility. The biotech was required to repay the money over 30 years with interest. In the event it couldn't cover the cost, the city was responsible. The city has paid the debt down to roughly \$55.8 million. Annual debt payments, which exclude operating costs, are approximately \$4.1 million, city officials said.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Gregory J. Oravec
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Stuart News
February 26, 2017

Analysis - Drama on Port St. Lucie city council dissipates after months of turmoil
Author: Nicole Rodriguez

PORT ST. LUCIE – Civility and constructive conversations have replaced the circus-like atmosphere – marked by eye rolling and verbal jabs – since three new council members were sworn in nearly 100 days ago. For two years, City Council members often berated one another at cringe-worthy meetings, but it seems the new blood has pushed the bad blood out of Council Chambers. Mayor **Greg Oravec** characterizes the shift in the council dynamic as "night and day." **Oravec** – the former city manager who left his post in 2013 after revealing a rocky relationship with the council in a public release of memos, letters and emails – fought his way back to City Hall in 2014 in the most expensive mayor's race in city history, promising to restore civility and honor to the mayor's office and unite the divided council. Yet he fell short of that campaign promise, often clashing with council members who voted to part ways with him four years ago. He also quarreled with fired City Attorney Pam Booker and ousted City Manager Jeff Bremer. Their replacements – City Attorney Reggie Osenton and City Manager Russ Blackburn – already have bolstered morale, adding to the new civil atmosphere, **Oravec** told Treasure Coast Newspapers.

The mayor now vows to keep the new council united, although he acknowledged the council still is in "the honeymoon phase." "Communicate as much as possible. Communication is the key to any relationship," **Oravec** said of his plans to perpetuate the unity. "When I sense that there are divisions, to fairly and constructively moderate." The positive shift has improved the council's ability to seamlessly conduct city business, **Oravec** stressed. "When there are bonds of mutual respect, there's a willingness to collaborate," **Oravec** said. "When things don't always go right, there's a willingness to forgive, to cut someone a break and take a deep breath, to understand." **Oravec** and Vice Mayor Shannon Martin, the lone holdover from the previous council, even have managed to mend their fractured relationship – a major component of the amiable atmosphere. Martin once criticized **Oravec** for being condescending and accused him of being controlling. "Both the vice mayor and I have made a concerted effort to have the best relationship we can, and that effort has resulted in our relationship being rock-solid," **Oravec** said.

For her part, Martin attributes the newfound harmony to the new faces. "It's an opportunity for a fresh start," Martin said. Times also are different, according to Martin. The current council isn't burdened by the aftershocks of the downfall of Digital Domain, the collapse of the Vaccine & Gene Therapy Institute of Florida and the Great Recession, Martin added. The stress of those economic failures added to tension on the council, she said. Newest council members Jolien Caraballo and John Carvelli said they plan to keep the momentum going by remaining respectful, professional and focused on the city's goals. Both declined to comment on the council theatrics of the past.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Gregory J. Oravec
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

TC Palm
September 19, 2016

Feud with Port St. Lucie Mayor Greg Oravec results in city manager's ouster
Author: Nicole Rodriguez

PORT ST. LUCIE — City Manager Jeff Bremer — who already had resigned, effective at the end of the year — was forced out of office Monday, victim of his increasingly toxic relationship with Mayor **Greg Oravec**. Bremer's ouster was effective immediately. Animosity between **Oravec** and Bremer had reached a fever pitch, leaving Bremer ineffective, Councilwoman Michelle Berger said at a special City Council meeting Monday. Bremer left the meeting during a break and did not return. He could not be reached for comment.

Discussions with Bremer over the weekend lead Berger to believe he was incapable of being effective, she said. Berger requested the special meeting Friday, city officials said. “I’ve lost confidence that he has the ability to lead this organization,” Berger said. “That’s disheartening, but it’s the reality that we have.” The council voted 4-1 — with **Oravec** dissenting — to allow Bremer to resign effective Tuesday and end what could have been a tumultuous 3½ months between the pair. **Oravec** objected to paying for Bremer’s severance beyond Dec. 31.

The City Council named Assistant City Manager Patricia Roebing interim city manager. Earlier Monday, Assistant City Manager Daniel Holbrook submitted his resignation, effective in 30 days.

Bremer had announced his resignation in June, saying he wanted to spend more time with his family. Under the separation agreement, Bremer will get 20 weeks pay, a payout for his unused vacation time and health insurance through February. Bremer earned more than \$174,000 last year.

Councilman Ron Bowen accused **Oravec** of a relentless pursuit to oust Bremer, saying Bremer has been “treated like garbage.” Bowen charged that since taking office nearly two years ago, **Oravec** has been seeking revenge for his own departure as city manager. Former City Attorney Pam Booker, who was fired; Holbrook; and Bremer all were targeted by **Oravec**, Bowen said. “You’ve done your best at cleaning house, and I pity the next City Council that sits here,” said Bowen, who lost his re-election bid last month. “Mr. Bremer was being crucified every week by you, sir. The new city manager won’t have a chance. I welcome (the new city attorney) here, but he’ll be gone in six months, too, because you micromanage and you still think you’re city manager, but you’re not. You’re just the mayor.”

In February 2013, by mutual agreement with the City Council, **Oravec** resigned as city manager after less than a year on the job. Shortly before that, **Oravec** released 85 pages of documents suggesting a rocky relationship with some City Council members and insider conversations about his employment. **Oravec** has blasted Bremer over the past month, saying he lost confidence in Bremer over Bremer's preparation of the 2017 budget. Last week **Oravec** took to Facebook, expressing his dismay that Bremer recommended the city leave its contingency fund

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

untouched. “To me, it is unacceptable to have the city’s CEO (Bremer) thinking that your taxpayer dollars belong to him and his staff,” **Oravec** wrote on Sept. 13. “They belong to you. Therefore, unless you tell me to stand down, I’m going to keep fighting to reduce the debt and to return unneeded dollars back to you via a millage decrease.”

Oravec on Monday publicly addressed Bremer’s abrupt departure, but he stopped short of citing specifics on their toxic relationship and what ultimately ignited their feud. The mayor previously had praised Bremer’s “laid back” personality as an asset to diffuse tense situations in City Hall, yet that characteristic ultimately led **Oravec** to lose faith in Bremer, **Oravec** said Monday. “Being laid back can hold back the organization,” **Oravec** said, “and just in my opinion — as just one of five (City Council members) — I think we can see that happening now, and it’s been happening for some time,” **Oravec** said.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Treasure Coast Palm: Web Edition Articles (FL)
September 9, 2016

PSL honored for exceptional financial reporting

Author: Sarah Prohaska

PORT ST. LUCIE — The City of Port St. Lucie was recently honored with the nation’s highest form of recognition in the area of governmental accounting and financial reporting. This is the 25th year the city has received the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting. On Aug. 19, the Government Finance Officers Association notified Port St. Lucie Mayor **Greg Oravec** that the city has received this certificate honoring Port St. Lucie’s Comprehensive Annual Financial Report for the fiscal year that ended Sept. 30, 2015.

“Transparency and accountability are important virtues of the City of Port St. Lucie, especially when it comes to the expenditure of taxpayer dollars. Receiving the GFOA’s Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for our Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR), the highest honor a CAFR can earn, lets us know that we are living up to those virtues and giving our customers a financial report that clearly communicates the city’s strong financial position,” **Oravec** said. “We are very proud of the Finance Department and all of the employees who contributed to this award-winning work product.”

The Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) is completed by the city’s Finance Department every year. While the city’s annual budget is a spending plan showing where funds will be allocated, the CAFR shows in detail how those funds were spent. It contains the results from a fiscal year compared to previous years, and also contains a section that provides a comparison of the annual budget and actual spending. Additionally, the CAFR gives a detailed showing of investment accounts by category reflecting balances over previous years.

The GFOA’s certificate is the highest form of recognition in the area of governmental accounting and financial reporting, and its attainment represents a significant accomplishment by a government and its management. The CAFR was judged by an impartial panel to meet the high standards of the program, including demonstrating a constructive “spirit of full disclosure” to clearly communicate its financial story and motivate the public to read the report.

The GFOA is a nonprofit professional association serving about 17,500 government finance professionals across the United States. The City of Port St. Lucie publishes its CAFRs on the city’s website. Those interested in reading these award-winning reports can visit:
http://www.cityofpsl.com/finance/comprehensive_annual_financial_reports.html

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Sun-Sentinel
June 18, 2016

Eccentricity, violence at home may have helped shape Orlando shooter Omar Mateen

Author: Mike Clary

PORT ST. LUCIE — From a distance the family of Orlando mass murderer Omar Mateen might appear little different from millions of others in the mosaic of multicultural America. Fleeing turmoil in their native Afghanistan after the Russian invasion in 1979, Seddique and Shahla Mateen first settled in New York, where their four children were born, before moving to Florida's Treasure Coast to find work, raise their kids and build community.

But behind the walls of the homes in Martin and St. Lucie counties in which the Mateens lived was a complex family dynamic that included domestic violence, years of adolescent misbehavior and eccentric cultural role playing that could provide insight into what led Mateen to commit the single deadliest shooting in U.S. history. "Kids learn a lot from modeling," said Caryn Watsky, a counseling psychologist at Florida International University in Miami. "So if there was a history of domestic violence, for example, and that becomes a model for a way to solve problems, that can become a part of the family culture."

Although Mateen, 29, was living in nearby Fort Pierce, he was raised in Port St. Lucie, a city of 179,000 residents stunned to learn the killer had lived among them. "This is a moment like in any other tragedy, something completely unexpected, far reaching," said Port St. Lucie Mayor **Gregory Oravec**. "It will stay with me for the rest of my life. You feel responsible in a way, you feel the weight; you're connected to this heinous act. "He was from our community, but in the aftermath of this national tragedy, it is important to remember that he could have been from Anytown, USA."

In rounds of daily interviews early last week, life insurance salesman Seddique Mateen, 59, described his son as "a very good boy" who showed no signs of being a militant Islamist, in a struggle over his sexual identity or even angry. "I did not see one indication," Seddique Mateen said of his son, a security guard and wanna-be cop who on June 12 killed 49 people and wounded more than 50 others inside the nightclub Pulse before he was slain by police. Yet, as the FBI looked into Omar Mateen's various Facebook accounts and reports that he may have frequented the gay nightclub where he opened fire, public records and his father's apparent appetite for attention may also provide insight into how a young man with a history of failure in school, marriage and the workplace turned into a killer.

Even as he was inside Pulse slaughtering innocent men and women, Mateen was checking Facebook to see if his actions were trending, according to a letter from the U.S. Senate Homeland Security chairman, Ron Johnson, R-Wisc., to Facebook Chief Executive Mark Zuckerberg. That desire for attention Mateen may have seen modeled at home through a strange series of YouTube videos in which his father portrayed himself as both president of his native country and a passionate analyst of political affairs in the troubled region. "Our brothers in

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches***Gregory J. Oravec****(Articles are in reverse chronological order)*

Waziristan, our warrior brothers in [the] Taliban movement and national Afghan Taliban are rising up," he said in one, according to a translation of the Dari by the Washington Post.

In another video, posted on a Facebook page just hours before his son began the bloody carnage inside the nightclub, Seddique Mateen, dressed in military fatigues and apparently pretending to be head of a provisional Afghanistan government, orders the arrest of several Afghan political figures. Seddique Mateen continued posting comments about Afghan political affairs even after his son was identified as the Orlando shooter, according to reports.

Omar Mateen was also exposed to violence at home. In 2002, when he was 16, his mother, who listed her occupation as teacher, was charged with domestic battery after she pinched and pulled the hair of her husband when Seddique Mateen threatened to kill her, records show. Those charges were later dropped. After the terror attacks of Sept 11, 2001, Omar Mateen, then 14 and attending an alternative school for students with behavioral problems, claimed that Osama bin Laden was his uncle, an acquaintance recalled. The school called Mateen's father, and the last thing the classmate remembers is looking out the classroom door and seeing Mateen's father slap his son in the face.

"We know from his former wife that this man was a ragaholic with an explosive temper," said Wilton Manors therapist Anne Selby, who has been following the story. "And sometimes there is a genetic disposition in the family for anger. His family may have molded him inadvertently without realizing what they were doing." Within hours of his son's being named the shooter in the Orlando massacre, Seddique Mateen made himself available to hundreds of reporters and television news crews who converged on his two-story, Mediterranean-style home on a busy boulevard here.

In group interview sessions with six to 12 reporters at a time, Mateen sat on an upholstered settee in the formal living room of the spacious house and, just as he had in his self-produced videos, looked into the camera. He wore a dark suit and a patterned tie, and expressed sorrow and shame for his son's actions. Then Mateen took questions, answering some and deflecting others. Yes, he saw his son hours before the shooting began and noticed nothing out of the ordinary. No, he did not think his son was gay, while saying his son recently became upset when on a visit to Miami he saw two men kissing. Yes, the Afghan Taliban is a terrorist group. No, I don't want to talk politics now.

At times Seddique Mateen looked close to tears, especially as he repeatedly condemned the actions of his second-oldest child, his only son. "As a father it's hard for me to say something against my son, but he's wrong," Mateen said. "What he did was a crime." To some who knew the Mateen family, all seemed normal. Sarah Zaidi, who was best friends with one of Mateen's three sisters, told the Washington Post the Mateens appeared to be "an all-American family." "His mom worked for a while at a day care center. His dad did stuff with stocks and investment," Zaidi told he Post. "They were pretty moderate as Muslims. None of the sisters or mom even wore a headscarf like some Muslims do."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Two of his three daughters, Sabrina, 31, and Mariam, 27, are therapists, Mateen said. They are married and have children. The youngest, Mary, 25, wants to study medicine, he said. Omar Mateen did poorly in school. He lacked self-control, got into fights, struggled with English, was expelled from high school, according to records obtained by the Sun Sentinel. Friends recalled that he was bullied, had few friends and lashed out in anger when provoked. "When there is a family with issues, the son has issues," said former FBI profiler Clint van Zandt. "This was a young boy with significant, ongoing mental health issues. The parents have to be aware of it."

After returning to school and graduating from Stuart Adult Community High School, he went on to earn an associate degree in criminal justice from Indian River State College in 2006, according to records. While attending school he held a series of low-level jobs, clerking in a drugstore and a fast food franchise, at a local gym and at Publix. While still studying, he entered a Florida Department of Corrections training program. He was dismissed after about six months on the job at the Martin Correctional Institution. Documents indicate he was terminated for suggesting to a co-worker that he might bring a gun to a training class.

Although Mateen did land a job as a security guard with G4S Secure Solutions USA Inc., working at the St. Lucie County Courthouse in Fort Pierce, he dreamed of a more prestigious position. He took selfies of himself wearing a New York Police Department T-shirt. He plastered U.S. Marine Corps stickers on his Toyota Camry although he was never in the military. In 2009, Mateen married Sitara Yusufiy, who immigrated to the U.S. from Uzbekistan. In interviews she said Mateen was controlling, angry and beat her severely, and they separated about nine months later. Their divorce became final in 2011. That same year Mateen married Noor Z. Salman, a Rodeo, Calif., woman whose parents are from Palestine. They also met online. They had a son, now 3 1/2 years old.

Salman is currently under FBI investigation after reports that she may have known about the plot ahead of time. Just as in Orlando, the residents of Port St. Lucie have responded to the tragedy with community gatherings. One night there was a candlelight vigil at a gay bar. There have been prayer meetings and expressions of sorrow from the imam of the mosque Mateen attended. "Unfortunately we had someone in our community who was clearly sick and full of hate," **Oravec** said. "But as a society we can't hope to inoculate ourselves, or say the shooting could only have happened in Orlando, or that he only could have grown up here. "This is a problem for the country. It is time for us to wake up."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

TC Palm

May 24, 2016

Port St. Lucie, state each gets \$3 million in Digital Domain settlement; Textor to get \$8.5 million

Church at Digital Domain in PSL coming soon

Author: Nicole Rodriguez

PORT ST. LUCIE — The city, the state and former Digital Domain CEO John Textor all will get multimillion-dollar payouts from a settlement in the two-year-old lawsuit against the defunct Digital Domain Media Group. Port St. Lucie and the state — which both provided economic incentives to bring Digital Domain here in 2009 — each will get about \$3 million, according to the settlement, which was approved Friday by a federal bankruptcy judge. Textor — who presided over both the creation and the bankruptcy of the high-tech digital-animation studio — will receive more than \$8 million.

The state Department of Economic Opportunity filed the suit in July 2014 against 23 defendants, including Textor, claiming the company fraudulently secured millions of dollars from the state. The city joined the suit after it was filed. The state said the company circumvented normal channels to secure \$20 million in state incentive money, which it later used as leverage to secure millions more from Port St. Lucie and West Palm Beach, according to the lawsuit. According to the lawsuit, company officials were able to work around normal economic-development channels by "wooing" former Gov. Charlie Crist.

Port St. Lucie gave Digital Domain \$51.8 million in incentives, including land and a fully equipped, state-of-the-art studio in exchange for jobs and economic development. It will receive \$3.2 million in the settlement, city officials said Tuesday. The state, which gave Digital Domain \$20 million, will get about \$3 million, state officials said.

"There was concern over throwing good money after bad, but we moved forward and fought the good fight," Mayor **Greg Oravec** said in a statement Tuesday. "This prudent decision resulted in ... a big win for our citizens. This recovery does not fully repay the original investment. But, with the building sold to a caring and community-oriented new property owner, and this seven-figure payment soon to be in hand, we have made the most of a difficult situation."

The state, too, considers the settlement a victory, although it blamed Crist for his swift support of the failed venture. "The deal with Digital Domain was approved in 2009 under Gov. Charlie Crist," Cissy Proctor, executive director of the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, said in a statement Tuesday. "In 2011, under the leadership of Gov. Scott, DEO restructured the incentive process to prioritize accountability and transparency for the state's taxpayers, to ensure a deal like this doesn't happen again."

Textor will receive an \$8.5 million reduction on a mortgage on a property in Telluride, Colorado, according to court documents. Textor used the home to secure a \$10 million loan for Digital

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Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Domain, he said. Textor said he considers the ruling vindication. "Had the court not ruled that the management team acted truthfully, the management team would be contributing to the settlement," Textor said Tuesday. Textor said he would not be receiving a payout if there was evidence of wrongdoing on his part. "After two years of evidence, the court ... and mediator further acknowledged there was no untruth told," Textor said. "Obviously, we're pleased by the view of the court and the mediator."

The payouts will be made by Digital Domain's insurance policy. Digital Domain shuttered its doors in late 2012, just nine months after moving into its studio in Tradition, leaving more than 300 employees jobless and the city deep in debt. The city last year sold the 115,000-square-foot building to Christ Fellowship church for \$13 million. It still owes approximately \$35.2 million on the project, which includes interest.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Gregory J. Oravec
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

WPTV.com
February 16, 2016

Port St. Lucie fires city attorney
Author: Jon Shainman

Former Port St. Lucie City Attorney Pam Booker, moments after a 4-0 vote to terminate her Tuesday, said she was disappointed and relieved at the same time. "A comment was made to me that I'm too strict to the letter of the law and I'm not flexible enough for the politics of the politics and to me that's a compliment," said Booker.

Mayor **Greg Oravec** called Tuesday's special meeting. A memo he wrote Monday night, said Booker is "a liability to the city" and should be "separated from service". "I really don't want to criticize her or take away from the work that she's done, but now that we have a strategic plan, we weren't getting what we needed to move forward," said **Oravec**.

Booker became city attorney in June of 2014, but had worked on the city's legal staff since 1997. After she was fired, Booker cited a number of recent legal victories, including those involving troubled projects like VGTI and City Center. "I stand firm in my convictions and legal opinions that have been provided to this council," said Booker.

The special meeting highlighted underlying communication issues throughout City Hall. City manager Jeff Bremer apologized for what he called poor communication between the city administration and council. "First of all I want to apologize to staff and city council for any embarrassment over actions or inactions that have happened over the past several months," Bremer said from the dais.

Booker said she wasn't completely surprised by what happened Tuesday but did add she was a "little perplexed." As council voted to hire a search firm to find Booker's replacement, the next communication from the ousted city attorney will come Monday in a formal response as the two sides work on a separation package.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Gregory J. Oravec
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Stuart News
October 4, 2015

Mayor Oravec admits an ‘avoidable mistake’

Author: Anthony Westbury

What’s that whirring noise coming from the mayor of Port St. Lucie’s office? Must be the sound of urgent spin work after **Greg Oravec**’s stumble Monday night. Four City Council members moved in concert to sink the mayor’s plan to hold the annual State of the City speech at a local Rotary Club instead of a public venue. Worst of all, Councilman Ron Bowen pointed out, was the intention to charge attendees. “I find it odd that a working couple would have to pay \$100 — a day’s wages of one person — to hear the State of the City address, one that historically has been given at no charge,” Bowen said.

However, if you believe **Oravec**, it may have all been a misunderstanding, a still-forming idea prematurely thrust into the limelight before all the kinks had been ironed out. In an interview Thursday, **Oravec** admitted the idea to charge \$50 a head was an “avoidable mistake.” You’re not kidding. “It won’t be the last time one of my ideas goes over like a lead balloon,” the mayor said. Probably true.

Oravec explained that, far from restricting the number of people at the event, he actually wanted to expand his audience. Huh? “Well, how many non-city people have you ever seen at a State of the City?” the mayor asked me. “Probably fewer than 10,” I answered. “Close,” **Oravec** said, “there were 24 people at the last speech (by Mayor JoAnn Faiella at the Civic Center). I was brainstorming with Patricia (Christensen, another former mayor) about making it a must-attend event, a social occasion like the Economic Development Council dinner. I’ve seen it done in other cities.”

But charging to hear it? “There was no way we wanted to shut people out,” **Oravec** countered. “We’d have had a live TV simulcast and also printed out the speech” so people wouldn’t have had to attend in person. He said he wanted it to become a social and fundraising event — perhaps to build more sidewalks. The mayor claims the invitations became public “too soon, before they were vetted. That was a recipe for failure and very disappointing for me. It was an avoidable mistake.” **Oravec** said he should have aired the idea at a council workshop but had been too “preoccupied” by the budget to bring it up sooner. Whatever. His fellow council members clearly felt blindsided and acted accordingly.

Oravec’s tone-deaf blunder is out of character. His voting record on several big-ticket items this year has erred on the side of the Regular Joe citizen, putting him in the minority. In March, for instance, **Oravec** was the sole dissenter in the decision to buy the former Liberty Medical property on U.S. 1 for \$4.4 million as a utility department headquarters — less than two weeks after the council had voted to rein in big-ticket purchases. **Oravec** feels the building is in the wrong place to serve a city where population is shifting westward.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The mayor also championed the reinstatement of the Citizens Budget Committee to put fresh eyes on council financial policy. The 25-person volunteer committee was allowed to present alternatives to raising the property tax rate by 18 percent, but their plan to lower contingency funds fell on deaf ears on the dais. **Oravec** also, of course, was the sole “no” vote on the tax hike itself.

Oravec seems chastened, but not cowed. “When something doesn’t go right, a leader must look inward,” he said, “but it won’t stop me coming up with other ideas. ” Moments after the mayor hung up, the phone rang again. **Oravec** had more to say. Uh-oh, there’s that spinning noise again. “At the end of the day,” he said, “I floated an idea, there was a decent debate and I dropped it. Where was the harm? It was an idea that died, and we move on.”

We should. In future, I recommend the mayor airs the next “good idea” with his peers in a public forum. Port St. Lucie is a hotbed of dissent at the best of times; with all the financial burden the city is carrying these days, unity of purpose and a shared direction is vital. You can’t do that with constant bickering coming from the dais.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Treasure Coast Palm: Web Edition Articles (FL)

July 21, 2015

Port St. Lucie Mayor Greg Oravec creating informal citizens budget group

Author: Nicole Rodriguez

PORT ST. LUCIE — Mayor **Greg Oravec** is trying to make good on a campaign promise to get citizens involved in the budget process. **Oravec**, elected in November, promised voters he'd fight for re-establishment of a citizens budget advisory board, which was created in 2010 and disbanded a year later. City officials said the volunteer committee became combative with the staff and fixated on merging the Police Department with the St. Lucie County Sheriff's Office, against the wishes of the City Council. The mayor's proposal to reconstitute the board was shot down by fellow council members in recent months, but he's found a way to work around their objections.

Beginning next month, **Oravec** will lead an informal group of residents in weekly meetings at City Hall, continuing until the budget is finalized on Sept. 28. The group's goal is to suggest innovative ways to tweak the proposed \$552 million budget and find places to eliminate wasteful spending and avoid a tax increase, **Oravec** said Monday. "This is not a formal city committee," **Oravec** said. "It is an informal group of people who believe we can create a better Port St. Lucie, if we work for it."

The informal group violates no open-government or Sunshine Law, City Attorney Pam Booker said. As long as no other council member attends, the group is legal and proper, she said. Fellow council members who opposed a formal board applauded **Oravec**'s efforts. "The mayor should feel free to do information gathering from any sources he can, and I think as a council, we're always willing to look at new ideas," Vice Mayor Linda Bartz said Monday.

Oravec's informal group is a good way to garner citizen input without using staff time to facilitate it, Councilwoman Michelle Berger said. "They can operate outside of Sunshine (Law) and we don't have to worry about the costs associated with the board and the legalities with committees that fall under Sunshine, and he'll still be able to get the information he's looking for," Berger said. **Oravec** is accepting resumes from residents and is hoping for a diverse crowd with innovative ideas, he said.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Treasure Coast Palm: Web Edition Articles (FL)

June 23, 2015

Port St. Lucie City Council writes blank check to VGTI crisis-management firm

Author: Nicole Rodriguez

PORT ST. LUCIE — The City Council on Monday wrote a blank check to a crisis-management firm to advise the city on how to deal with the financially floundering Vaccine & Gene Therapy Institute of Florida. The original contract, agreed to by city administrators and New York-based Alvarez & Marsal, set a \$25,000 cap on what the city would pay. The council, however, removed the cap, leaving the cost open-ended.

City Attorney Pam Booker said the firm’s services would cost more, but would not tell the council how much. That figure is part of the city’s legal strategy against VGTI and exempt from public disclosure, Booker said Monday. She said she would disclose potential costs privately to the council. Mayor **Greg Oravec**, who publicly said he objected to the open-ended contract, voted to approve it. “My principles will not allow me to support this item because I can’t publicly disclose what our exposure as an organization is to the cost,” **Oravec** said. “There’s no cap that I’m being presented with here.” The City Council approved the contract unanimously.

The firm was hired to reach an out-of-court settlement between VGTI and the city by November, when the biotech’s next mortgage payment is due. VGTI missed a mortgage payment of \$2.6 million due May 1, according to court documents. The cash-strapped nonprofit biotech research center in late April asked the city for a \$21 million bailout or threatened to leave for Palm Beach County, but backed down from its ultimatum days later, inviting the city to sit at the bargaining table. The city shunned the offer and instead, in early May, sued VGTI, asking a judge to bar the institute from moving and to force it to make good on its missed mortgage payment, according to court documents.

If VGTI — which had a spending deficit of approximately \$5.3 million in 2012, \$8.4 million in 2013 and \$10.9 million in 2014 — can’t make its mortgage payments, the city is responsible. Port St. Lucie borrowed \$64 million in 2010 for an incentive package to build and furnish VGTI’s facility. VGTI is required to repay the money over 30 years with interest. With interest, the total owed is \$130 million.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Stuart News
April 17, 2015

Oravec seeking lawyer for free

Author: Nicole Rodriguez

PORT ST. LUCIE — The city is looking for a lawyer to help it recover money from a would-be buyer of the Digital Domain building. And the mayor wants the legal work for free. Mayor **Greg Oravec** issued the call for legal action against Jupiter businessman James Hall at Monday’s City Council meeting, two weeks after Hall failed to pay a \$200,000 deposit due March 30. **Oravec** insists Hall owes the city \$15,000 — the nonrefundable portion of that deposit — and made the plea after city staff said the investment of staff time and resources for litigation could cost the city more than any potential award. “I’m just tired of being taken advantage of as a city by people acting in bad faith,” **Oravec** said. “This should be a slam dunk,” he said. “There was a contract. It was agreed upon and covenants were broken and there should be damages.”

Councilwoman Shannon Martin agreed. “If we could get someone to volunteer for that, that would definitely be an option,” Martin said. At least one law firm almost immediately answered the mayor’s call. Michael B. Katz of Katz & Associates Law Firm in Stuart has offered to take the case pro bono. “As a taxpayer, any moneys that can be recovered for the taxpayers, I would be more than happy to assist and help the city to recover those funds,” Katz said. Katz’s starting rate is \$350 per hour, he said. Until he reviews the specifics of the contract with Hall and speaks with city officials, Katz said, he can’t estimate how many hours would go into pursuing the money.

Katz hasn’t yet talked to city officials about the case, he said. City Attorney Pam Booker, who advised against hiring a free lawyer, said Thursday if City Council is insistent, she would evaluate offers. The failed sale was the second time Hall, who developed Stuart’s River Forest residential community, tried to buy the vacant Digital Domain building from the city. It’s also the second time the city has attempted to sell the 115,000-square-foot building located in the Tradition area. The City Council in 2013 approved a \$14 million sales contract with Vero Beach resident Richard Friedberg, but it fell through that November.

The council Monday decided to hire a team of brokers to list and market the building. The city plans to solicit for brokers soon. Selling the building would save the city approximately \$427,000 a year on maintenance and decrease its annual interest payments of \$1.4 million through 2018 and principal payments of \$2.3 million through 2042. The city borrowed \$39.9 million in 2009 to build the digital-animation studio for Digital Domain, which went bankrupt in late 2012.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Gregory J. Oravec
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Treasure Coast Palm: Web Edition Articles (FL)
April 7, 2015

Port St. Lucie facing credit-rating downgrade

Author: Nicole Rodriguez

PORT ST. LUCIE — A global credit rating agency is reviewing the city for a possible credit-score downgrade because of a potential VGTI bailout amid a mountain of debt. Moody's Investors Service cited the potentially heightened risk that the city — which is \$916 million in debt — might have if it assumes the mortgage payments for floundering biotech nonprofit VGTI. The city in 2010 agreed to borrow \$64 million for an incentive package to build and furnish VGTI's Tradition facility. VGTI is required to repay the money over 30 years with interest, but should the nonprofit default, the city is on the hook for the payments. "Our review will focus on the extent to which these pressures will impact the city's financial position and the city's plans for managing its liabilities," according to a Moody's news release.

The city has issued a number of different bonds totaling more than \$388 million, according to the release. The projects for which the city issued bonds include Digital Domain, VGTI, Torrey Pines and Crosstown Parkway. Moody's currently rates the city's three bond categories independently at Aa3, A1 and A1. The highest rating a city can receive is Aaa1 and the lowest C3. Port St. Lucie, according to the Moody's scale, is at the higher end of the credit-rating spectrum.

A reduction in the credit rating would impact the city's ability to borrow money at a beneficial interest rate, Mayor **Greg Oravec** said Tuesday. "If the city did go out to market, it could experience higher borrowing costs," **Oravec** said. "Hopefully," he added, "we're not going to borrow more money, unless it's replacing more expensive borrowing — unless it's a refinancing because it makes financial sense."

The city in March restricted borrowing through what's known as covenant to budget and appropriate bonds, putting an end to handsome incentive packages that lured entities such as Digital Domain and VGTI to town. They are bonds for a specific purpose, and have specific guidelines for payback, but in the event of a default, the city assumes the debt. Representatives for Moody's Investors Service could not be reached for comment Tuesday.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Gregory J. Oravec
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Stuart News
February 22, 2015

Inside Oravec's first 100 days as mayor

Author: Nicole Rodriguez

PORT ST. LUCIE — In his first 100 days, Mayor **Greg Oravec** has taken steps to repair broken relationships and improve City Hall's tainted reputation of secrecy and scandal. So far, most City Hall critics say, the former city manager has kept campaign promises of government transparency and maintaining civility among a City Council that voted to mutually sever ties with him two years ago. That followed revelations of infighting and a supposed plot to oust him from the city's top position. It ultimately led to civil and criminal indictments for three council members, including former Mayor JoAnn Faiella, for allegedly violating state public-records laws. "The way that the meetings are being run is a vast improvement," critic Victoria Huggins said.

Oravec convened his first meeting in November with a refresher of the charter rules of civility in an effort to show constituents he's working to "restore values in, and the credibility of, the Mayor's Office." That's at the top of a two-page, typed to-do list **Oravec** pinned to the wall of his City Hall office. "It's a work in progress, but I think we're on track," **Oravec** said.

City Hall in shambles

Oravec admits he has his work cut out for him. His two predecessors were no stranger to controversy. Faiella was involved in at least five scandals in her one term, including misreporting campaign donations; the release of embarrassing emails that suggested she was scheming against the city attorney; and two civil infractions, on different charges, that she violated Florida's public records law, or Sunshine Law, in connection with **Oravec's** 2013 release from the city. Faiella paid a fine for the campaign contributions issue, and the public records charges were dismissed on a technicality.

Former Mayor Patricia Christensen resigned in 2010 over allegations of campaign finance irregularities. She pleaded no contest in 2011 to charges of official misconduct and improper disposition of surplus funds by a candidate and was sentenced to five years probation. Repairing broken relationships with fellow council members — particularly Ron Bowen, with whom **Oravec** had a publicly volatile relationship — has been an easy task, he said. "All of that stuff that happened, when other people might carry a grudge, I let it go," **Oravec** said. Moments after taking the oath of office, **Oravec** extended an olive branch to Bowen and the council, saying the past controversy is water under the bridge.

City Officials remaining Mum

City officials and members of the council largely declined to comment on **Oravec's** first 100 days in office. So did Faiella. "I have always and will continue to be respectful of those I serve with," Bowen said in an emailed statement. "If I have any further comments about this subject I will address them from the dais."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The current City Council is operating as a cohesive group, but rarely talks outside of meetings because of Sunshine Law constraints, said Vice Mayor Linda Bartz. **Oravec** initiated public negotiations to bail out Tradition’s anchor nonprofit research institute, Torrey Pines — an item he requested be added to the agenda during his second week in office. That deal is expected to be finalized once Torrey Pines completes its financing. “We had our backs against the (wall) and came out with a workable solution,” **Oravec** said.

Oravec alerted the City Council at a public meeting that attorneys for the state wanted the city to join its lawsuit against former Digital Domain CEO John Textor. He also asked the city manager and city attorney to provide the council with more detailed reports on city business and pending lawsuits. “He asks the hard questions,” Huggins said. “The former mayor never swayed from the agenda. She didn’t ask questions.” **Oravec**’s skepticism of city spending for things such as code enforcement vehicles and work contracts is refreshing, said Mark Gotz, City Hall watchdog and St. Lucie County Fire District board member.

“From a standpoint of understanding the city and its finances and its dealings, obviously being a city manager previously puts him in a position where he’s a little bit more aware and a deal maker, which is good,” Gotz said.

Looking ahead

The city could see a sale of the Digital Domain building in **Oravec**’s next 100 days, but it won’t be a notch on his belt. **Oravec** opposed a \$15 million sale to Jupiter businessman and Treasure Coast developer James Hall, because Hall lacked a deposit and proposed a lengthy inspection and closing. Most of the City Council, though, countered Hall’s offer, which he accepted last week. The purchase agreement will go before the council Monday for final review. **Oravec** hopes to re-establish a budget advisory committee, formulate a more robust marketing plan for the city and try to resolve the huge issue of City Center and its absentee developer, Lily Zhong.

Some observers, however, still aren’t reticent to hold their tongues. City Hall gadfly Steve Carroll rates **Oravec**’s performance as “mediocre” and questions his ability to resolve City Center, which was to have been the city’s downtown on U.S. 1. **Oravec** in 2002 was director of the city Community Redevelopment Agency. During that time, he worked closely with the land’s first developer, George de Guardiola, who eventually went bankrupt. “His handling of it has been atrocious,” Carroll said. **Oravec** said he’s more than qualified to hold Zhong responsible and work with staff on a solution, despite his history with the property.

BY THE NUMBERS: MAYOR ORAVEC'S FIRST 100 DAYS

122: Resident concerns resolved through the Mayor's Office assistance.

23: Open resident concerns/monitored concerns. 213: Meetings attended by Mayor **Greg Oravec**.

More than 8,000: Emails received.

Source: City of Port St. Lucie

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Gregory J. Oravec
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Treasure Coast Palm: Web Edition Articles (FL)
November 17, 2014

Oravec sworn in as Port St. Lucie mayor, promises to unite council

Author: Nicole Rodriguez

PORT ST. LUCIE — During his triumphant return to City Hall, ousted City Manager **Greg Oravec**, who was sworn in as mayor Monday night, said he'll be a uniting force on the City Council despite past differences. **Oravec**, who parted ways with the city last year after revelations of a rocky relationship with the Council, fought his way back to City Hall during the most expensive mayor's race in city history.

He had a commanding win this month over one-term mayor JoAnn Faiella, who ended their political war with a hug Monday just before passing **Oravec** the gavel. Faiella was among four council members who voted to sever ties with him last February during an emotionally charged meeting in the Council's chambers.

Oravec's victory means he'll also sit among the same council members — Shannon Martin, Ron Bowen and Vice Mayor Linda Bartz — who voted with Faiella. Martin was re-elected to a second term and Bartz, a third. **Oravec's** departure last year came just days after he released a package of memos, personal notes and emails chronicling the sour relationship with City Council — Bowen in particular.

But that's all water under the bridge **Oravec** told an overcrowded chambers from the dais minutes after taking office. "I want everyone here to know I'm excited to serve with Mr. Bowen and this whole team," **Oravec** said. "It actually gives me goose bumps to think about." Bowen was charged last November with a second-degree criminal misdemeanor for allegedly violating the state's open records laws in connection with **Oravec's** February 2013 dismissal. He was accused of using former City Attorney Roger Orr as an intermediary to discuss **Oravec's** employment.

Bowen pleaded "no contest" to a lesser civil infraction earlier this year. Martin and Faiella were both charged with civil infractions for allegedly deleting text messages in connection with **Oravec's** release. Martin paid a fine for her infraction. Faiella's two infractions were thrown out on a technicality — a ruling prosecutors have appealed. Asked if **Oravec's** presence on the dais will change the City Council's dynamic, Bowen replied: "I haven't even thought about it, to be honest with you."

In a Nov. 14 memo to the governing body, **Oravec** — who has a collective 12 years of experience working with the city in different capacities — stressed the importance of teamwork on the City Council. "We are about to embark on a journey together, and while differences in styles, opinions and positions will actually help us get to our destination, differences due to competing purposes or values will leave us lost at sea," **Oravec** wrote. "We need to be a genuine team to succeed."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

With any new mayor, Councilwoman Michelle Berger said, the dynamic of council changes. “**Greg** will be the fourth mayor I’m working with and I can tell you that with each mayor, things do change, no matter what,” Berger said. “So, I’m hoping for more collaborative conversations and more concise conversations that are meaningful.” “What I think that we’ll see are conversations that link decisions and behaviors to outcomes.”

Although she’s certain Council’s dynamic will change, Berger said she can’t predict how **Oravec** and Bowen will interact. “I think we all are responsible and accountable for our own behavior, so individually whether you’re a councilman or a mayor, our role is to be professional and open and authentic with each other, and my expectation is that each one will operate in the same manner,” Berger said.

City Manager Jeff Bremer, who was hired by **Oravec** as assistant city manager in November 2012, said working with **Oravec** again will be no problem. “To me, it’s just going to be a different relationship and one that I’m looking forward to,” Bremer said.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Stuart News
December 1, 2013

Sunshine Law fiasco only latest PSL mess

Author: Isadora Rangel

PORT ST. LUCIE — The city's latest political scandal involving alleged open meeting law violations is only the latest blunder that has negatively put elected officials in the public eye. In the past five years, political and financial turmoil have shaken the city many times. Scripps Treasure Coast Newspapers has put together a list of Port St. Lucie's 10 biggest blunders in light of the release of a State Attorney's Office investigation that implicates three elected officials in violation of Florida's open meetings law known as the Sunshine Law.

Councilman Ron Bowen last week was charged with a second-degree misdemeanor for using City Attorney Roger Orr as an intermediary to discuss former City Manager **Greg Oravec's** employment with Mayor JoAnn Faiella, officials said. The State Attorney's Office said that violates state laws that prohibit two or more elected officials from discussing public business outside of a scheduled open meeting. **Oravec** and the city entered a separation agreement in February. Gov. Rick Scott suspended Bowen from the council on Wednesday.

Faiella and Councilwoman Shannon Martin face civil infractions of destruction of a public record by deleting text messages, the state said. Faiella faces an additional infraction for discussing **Oravec's** employment with Bowen, according to the state. She received a lesser charge than Bowen because there was lack of evidence that she communicated with Orr knowing it would be shared with Bowen.

Here are 10 of the city's top blunders in the past five years:

Police chief, city manager ousted over DUI case

Port St. Lucie police stopped then-Assistant City Attorney Gabrielle Taylor in March under the suspicion of drinking and driving, but drove her home instead of giving her a field sobriety test. Taylor was reprimanded, then fired. The incident caused a political earthquake in Port St. Lucie that ended with the firing of then-City Manager Jerry Bentrutt.

Police Chief Brian Reuther also came under fire by the council for not taking action. He last year entered Florida's Deferred Retirement Option Program, or DROP, and later reapplied for his position, but the council did not support him. In April, Taylor sued the city, Orr and elected officials in office at the time for wrongful termination. Taylor is seeking \$250,000 in compensatory damages and reinstatement of her job or back wages and benefits. The lawsuit states council members wrongfully perceived her to be an alcoholic and discriminated against her.

Another city manager ousted

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Assistant City Manager **Oravec** succeeded Bentrott after his termination. However, his tenure as city manager lasted less than a year. In February, **Oravec** released 85 pages of notes and emails that referenced possible insider conversations about his employment and the intention of ousting him. His notes made clear there was conflict between him and some council members, in particular Bowen. **Oravec** said Faiella pulled his contract for the second time in six months because “she said she had to check severance provisions because the council was not happy with me,” Scripps Treasure Coast Newspapers reported. **Oravec** asked Faiella how she knew this without breaking the Sunshine Law, but she didn’t respond. City Council approved a separation agreement for **Oravec** on Feb. 6.

The notes released by **Oravec** prompted the State Attorney’s Office to begin an investigation into Sunshine Law violations by council members, which resulted last week in Faiella, Martin and Bowen facing penalties.

Mayor’s arrest

Former Mayor Patricia Christensen resigned in 2010 after being charged with one count of official misconduct for falsification of an official record or document and one count of disposition of surplus funds by a candidate. The Florida Department of Law Enforcement found that on at least two occasions, Christensen wrote a check to herself from campaign funds. According to FDLE, Christensen admitted to investigators she falsified her campaign treasurer report and investigators believe she used the money to pay personal bills and expenses. She was sentenced to five years probation in 2011 and will be able to hold public office after probation.

Digital Domain

City officials were looking to diversify Port St. Lucie’s economy and create white-collar jobs. They approved the city borrowing \$39.9 million to build Tradition Studio as the home of special effects company Digital Domain Media Group. The building opened in January 2012, and the city entered a \$10 million agreement with the promise that Digital Domain would relocate to Port St. Lucie and create about 500 jobs by 2014. In September 2012, Digital Domain filed for bankruptcy, laid off 346 employees and closed the studio on Southwest Village Parkway.

In July, the city signed a \$14 million sale contract with Vero Beach Richard Friedberg without taking a security deposit. He was to close on the property on Nov. 22, but the sale fell through when he asked for an extension until February. The city rejected the proposal and still is looking for a buyer. Port St. Lucie is on the hook for \$3.4 million annual debt payments due next year. The money used to come from Digital Domain’s lease payments. Without a new tenant or a buyer, the city will use its reserves to avoid defaulting on its debt.

City Center collapse

City officials envisioned creating the city’s first downtown off U.S. 1 and Walton Road. In 2005, the city entered an agreement with Jupiter developer and creator of Abacoa, George De Guardiola. Port St. Lucie’s part of the deal was to build the Civic Center, a parking garage and infrastructure. Guardiola was to create the downtown area with mixed-use buildings that would accommodate housing, retail, office space and entertainment venues, as well as a hotel. His part

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

of the deal never materialized, and the 21 acres he owned at City Center went into foreclosure in 2008. They have not been developed.

The area has remained largely undeveloped. In September, Chinese entrepreneur Lily Zhong purchased the properties that make up most of City Center and plans to attract foreign investors to develop them. However, there are \$8.4 million in back taxes and assessments owed on the properties, and Zhong has not contacted the city to explain whether she will pay those or how.

Councilman’s sons CHARGED WITH DEALING drugs FROM HIS HOUSE

Two sons of Councilman Christopher Cooper in 2010 were charged with drug dealing and possession after neighbors complained they had been selling drugs out of their home. Cooper was running for the mayoral seat at the time and denied knowing his sons were dealing drugs. He lost the election to Faiella. Martin took over his seat on the council.

In 2011, Christopher Brian Cooper, then 21, pleaded no contest to drug charges. His plea deal called for him spend no time behind bars but serve 18 months of strict drug offender probation followed by 18 months of regular probation. Jefferey Cooper, who was 17 at the time of his arrest, was charged as an adult and sentenced to 60 days in jail to be followed by two years of drug-offender probation and another year of regular probation.

Abuse of power allegations

The Florida Department of Law Enforcement launched an investigation after Port St. Lucie police Capt. Joe D’Agostino filed a complaint in December 2010 alleging Faiella, a former police criminal intelligence analyst, used her office to influence personnel issues within the city’s Police Department. According to D’Agostino’s allegations, Faiella pressured then-City Manager Jerry Bentrrott to fire former Police Chief Donald Shinnamon in December 2010, shortly after she was elected mayor. The FDLE determined in 2011 there was no evidence Faiella committed any wrongdoing.

D’Agostinio also filed a defamation lawsuit against Faiella claiming she authored an anonymous handwritten letter that accused him of using a friend as a confidential informant and refers to \$10,000 in missing money from the Police Department narcotics division. Faiella denied she wrote the letter, and the two reached an undisclosed settlement last year.

Mayor’s emails leaked

Emails released in 2012 indicate Faiella attempted to conspire against Orr and was trying to gather “ammo” against D’Agostino because of his allegations against her. Faiella sent the emails about three months after she was sworn into office from her personal account to former mayoral candidate Victoria Huggins in 2011. Faiella asked for help to set up Orr because she believed he was using city time to communicate with Christensen regarding a Florida Elections Commission complaint against Faiella. The council unanimously voted to censure Faiella, which was described as a formal public scolding of an official.

Police chief search goes sour

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Port St. Lucie spent more than \$10,000 in taxpayer money and staff time to help **Oravec**, then-city manager, find a new police chief last year. Reuther, the former chief, left following Taylor's DUI scandal. **Oravec**'s top candidate for the vacant post, Craig Novick, withdrew his bid for the job less than 24 hours after **Oravec** sent him a basic contract for review. Novick, township manager of Franklin, N.J., said Faiella interfered with the chief search when she called his township. He said he didn't want to work in a hostile environment because it seemed Faiella questioned his abilities to work with police unions.

Faiella said she was doing her due diligence and she thought it wasn't clear Novick was **Oravec**'s first choice. Orr said at the time Faiella didn't violate city charter, which states elected officials cannot interfere in the city manager's administrative matters, because **Oravec** opened the chief search process to the council's input. Instead of offering the job to the two other qualified candidates, the city chose to promote then-acting Chief John Bolduc to the permanent post.

Debt

Port St. Lucie's staggering debt has hovered near \$1 billion since at least 2010. Today, it is \$939.3 million and is down from \$981.2 million in September because the city has made debt payments. The debt is expected to grow because the city plans to borrow \$36 million for the construction of the Crosstown Parkway Bridge, which received preliminary approval in November. Final approval from the federal government is expected in December. Most of the debt comes from infrastructure projects.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

<https://www.wpbf.com/article/port-st-lucie-city-manager-greg-oravec-leaves-post-with-92-000-in-hand/1316011>

WPBF News
February 7, 2013

**Port St. Lucie City Manager Greg Oravec leaves post with \$92,000 in hand
Council votes unanimously to part ways**

PORT ST. LUCIE, Fla. —

It's official -- Port St. Lucie needs a new city manager. The council voted Thursday to accept a separation agreement from embattled City Manager **Greg Oravec**. After less than a year on the job and with more than a year to go on his contract, **Oravec's** request for separation came suddenly.

On Monday, **Oravec** unintentionally released part of a personal journal. The 85 pages detailed issues he was experiencing with some city council members. In what he called a tactical error, **Oravec** sent his personal notes to two city council members and the media.

On Thursday, he told citizens who attended Thursday's specially called meeting how proud he was to have served the city. "I regret I won't be a more direct participant in that future," he said. "I believe in Port St. Lucie, I believe in the city council and I believe in Team Port St. Lucie."

The separation agreement calls for five months of severance pay for **Oravec**, plus nearly 250 days of unused leave time. Since his raise had not kicked in, **Oravec** also will get pay dating back to the council's vote to give him a raise. In all, **Oravec** leaves the post with more than \$92,000.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Gregory J. Oravec
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Stuart News
February 5, 2013

Oravec's notes lend clue to sour atmosphere

Author: Anthony Westbury

Well, at least now we have some clues as to why Port St. Lucie City Manager **Greg Oravec** was spending 80 and 90 hours a week at his office. It's clear he was busy covering his butt. **Oravec** released an 85-page bundle of emails as well as typed and handwritten notes Monday morning that chronicle multiple meetings and one-on-one confrontations with council members over the last three months. It could easily form the basis of a daytime soap opera script.

Relations between **Oravec** who hasn't even completed a full year on the job and certain council members haven't always run smoothly. Yet **Oravec's** voluminous notes make it clear the atmosphere between him and the council's newest member, Ron Bowen, were particularly poisonous. Relations had gone south between Bowen and **Oravec** by Nov. 15, a week before the councilman was formally sworn in. In a series of scorching memos and emails, Bowen makes no bones about his disdain for the city manager, calling him arrogant and a liar.

Petty complaints over Bowen's city office or business cards not being ready, and a number of perceived slights in one-on-one meetings between the two quickly escalated into more or less open warfare. Bowen fired off a memo dated Dec. 19 that said: First of all, you seem to have a bad habit of wanting to have the last word with me no matter what the circumstance is. Your self-righteous tone of voice on a voice-mail message has me wondering if you understand that you work for the council and not the other way around.

In recent weeks, despite **Oravec's** apparent attempts to mollify the councilman, the situation got worse. At one point, someone tipped off a candidate for the city's vacant economic development position that relationships between **Oravec** and the council were rocky, even to the point that the city manager was on his way out. The candidate, Rebecca Miller, subsequently declined the city's job offer.

All this backroom nastiness, of course, isn't new for PSL. Mayor JoAnn Faiella has been accused of meddling many times in city business that should have been left to the city manager. That came to a head last summer with her intervention in the selection of the city's new police chief. You'll recall **Oravec's** choice for the job, Craig Novick, decided against coming to PSL because he was wary of probable council intrusion into his duties.

On the surface, the mayor has been laying low ever since being publicly censured in July, yet her fingerprints sure look to be all over this mess. What's truly amazing is how Faiella and fellow council members could give **Oravec** such a glowing performance review and a generous raise on his six-month anniversary in November, yet apparently express a loss of faith in him only weeks later. Several times **Oravec's** notes mention that four out of five members wanted him gone.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

As of Monday, **Oravec** seems to be positioning himself to leave the city, but he insists he's not resigning. I would never resign, **Oravec** stressed on the phone. I would never quit on the team. **Oravec** kept emphasizing how much he loves the community, perhaps even more than his job. He also noted how many good things are happening in the city under his watch. He said he wants to work with council but had reluctantly concluded it's clear it's not working on both sides.

So, **Oravec** hasn't quit and he hasn't been fired yet. He seems to be trying to salvage the most amicable severance deal he can. That might be an insurmountable task given his release of that raft of incriminating memos and notes. Which leaves us with the biggest unanswered question of all in this ugly little saga. The city has now gone through two city managers and a police chief in less than 12 months. How on earth does the council think it can attract high-caliber staff when it continues to play such unprofessional, childish games?

Oravec's notes and the public-record emails and memos paint a very unflattering picture of life at City Hall. Suspicion, open hatred and continual behind-the-scenes maneuverings seem to be run-of-the-mill work hazards. Perhaps **Oravec** and, yes, even Craig Novick, are best out of there. **Oravec** wasn't the perfect city manager. He was new to the position and still had much to learn. Yes, he could sometimes come across as condescending, even arrogant. Yet I can't think of anyone who's worked harder or who cares more about the city. In the past, I've compared PSL City Hall to middle school. This latest episode does nothing to alter that sad conclusion.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Hometown News (Fort Pierce, FL)

December 21, 2012

City council gives employees raises

Author: Dawn Krebs

PORT ST. LUCIE -- The end of the year will seem a little brighter for Port St. Lucie city employees, as a previously budgeted raise of 3 percent went into effect on Dec. 20. The city council unanimously approved the pay raises in a November city council meeting. The city council also voted to bring the city manager's salary in line with cities the size of Port St. Lucie.

Gregory Oravec received an increase from \$121,000 to \$165,000 or 36 percent. The salary Mr. **Oravec** was making -- \$121,000 -- reflected his previous pay as assistant city manager for six months. After former city manager Jerry Bentrrott was fired in March and Mr. **Oravec** was promoted to fill the position, he requested his pay remain the same until after a six-month evaluation had taken place.

Mr. Bentrrott's salary when he was fired was \$165,000. Up until a month ago, he worked without an assistant city manager, taking on all the responsibilities. "Eight months ago, we said that in six months we would come back and do a review of him, and at that time, he didn't want to take an increase in salary," said City Councilman Jack Kelly, who was officially attending his last council meeting. "He said he didn't want to do an increase until we were able to increase everyone else's salary."

The human resources department researched the salaries of city managers who were managing cities the same size as Port St. Lucie, one of the 10 largest cities in the state. And, according to his contract, the increase was less than he could have asked for. His contract contains a clause stating his salary could be no less than the average of city manager's salaries for cities the same size. That salary number is \$179,018. But Mr. **Oravec** explained why he didn't want such a large increase in pay. "I have preached service about self," he said. "Such an adjustment would be too much, and would be more appropriately considered at an annual evaluation in a subsequent budget year."

The council had high praise for the city manager. "Mr. **Oravec** has done everything this council has asked of him and more," said Councilman Kelly. "He has saved this city millions of dollars." Mr. Kelly cited the reconstruction of the police department and the decrease in taxes to residents as some of Mr. **Oravec's** recent accomplishments. "I was ready to come to the table and offer more (to Mr. **Oravec**)," said Councilwoman Michelle Berger. "This is consistent with his altruistic nature and we've seen Mr. **Oravec** put the organization before himself, and this is another example." After the vote, Mr. **Oravec** took a moment to thank the council for allowing him to serve the city. "It's an honor to serve this council and the community," he said. "And thanks to staff, because I couldn't do anything without the staff that we have."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Hometown News (Fort Pierce, FL)

October 26, 2012

City to sue developer of city center project

Author: Dawn Krebs

PORT ST. LUCIE - In 2008, Port St. Lucie city councilors wore hard hats and toured the beginnings of the Port St. Lucie Civic Center, set to open that fall. On Oct. 15, at both the community redevelopment agency meeting and the Port St. Lucie City Council meeting, **Gregory Oravec**, city manager, announced the city's plans to proceed with a lawsuit against the developers of the city center, where the city's civic center is currently located. And at both meetings, the city council voted quickly and unanimously to go ahead with the lawsuit.

The city center was projected to be a complex of business offices, restaurants, shops and a park. To date, only the civic center has been built. According to Azlina Goldstein Siegel, assistant city attorney, the city is suing the developer, De Guardiola Properties, project lender PNC Bank and the PSL City Center, a corporation, for breach of contract and specific performance, among other things.

In 2001, the city created the community redevelopment agency and began working on the developing the city center, located on approximately 40 acres in Port St. Lucie by U.S. 1, in 2005. The lawsuit states De Guardiola was to build the project in four phases, and have them completed by 2009. As of today, that timeline has not been met.

As for the PSL City Center corporation, the lawsuit states it failed to pay its last two payments, totaling \$500,000, that would help fund the construction of the civic center. In addition, the lawsuit states project lender PNC Bank has failed to pay the real estate taxes for the property in 2010 and 2011. With interest, the total amount due is approximately \$3.7 million.

Add in that the city has provided the infrastructure and built parking garages, the city has spent about \$54 million on the civic center. "We've done everything we can do," said Councilman Jack Kelly. Both the developer and the PSL City Center corporation are based in Palm Beach County, and could not be reached for comment. Meanwhile, the civic center has become a hub for entertainment and family events in the city. Last year, it met its goal of 50 percent revenue.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Stuart News
September 29, 2012

Judge dismisses portion of lawsuit

Author: Christin Erazo

FORT PIERCE A federal court judge has dismissed a portion of a lawsuit filed by six former officers and employees of the Port St. Lucie Police Department who allege their constitutional rights were violated after being wrongfully terminated. U.S. District Court Judge Jose E. Martinez issued the order Friday afternoon declaring City Manager **Greg Oravec** did not violate the city's charter by eliminating the employees' positions back in April. The rest of the lawsuit involving claims the officers were denied due process in their terminations and allegations there were violations of Florida's Sunshine Law as part of the layoffs still can be refiled.

Attorneys for the employees argued any altering of a department would have to be done through an ordinance per the city charter. However, the judge ruled an ordinance only would be necessary if the City Council were to take action to alter a city department. The duties of the city manager, which include the power to hire and fire city employees, are listed in the charter. According to the ruling, the officers did not point to any charter or ordinance which limits **Oravec's** authority to reduce the police force and reorganize the Police Department.

On April 10, **Oravec** laid off Maj. Gary L. Robinson, Maj. Scott Bartal, Capt. Don Kryak, Capt. Steven M. Claus Sr. and civilian employees Sheila K. Bronger, a supervisor in the communication division, and Sheila B. O'Sullivan, an administrator in the communication department. The employees filed the termination suit in May, which then moved to federal court in July. This Court finds that the City's interpretation of the Charter that the City Manager is vested with the authority to make reductions in the police force without the issuance of an ordinance to be permissible under the language of the Charter and is certainly not clearly erroneous, stated the ruling. As such, this Court finds that no violation of the Charter occurred and **Oravec's** actions as City Manager were within his powers granted by the Charter.

Oravec, who upon hearing the news of the dismissal shortly before 4 p.m. Friday, smiled and embraced City Attorney Roger Orr as they patted each other on the back. It's a strange feeling because as I set forth all of those actions of the reorganization, they were taken with great care, **Oravec** said Friday evening. I never would have implemented them if I thought in any way I wasn't empowered to take them. I went through that process, of course, I felt it was right, and then of course you have to defend it, **Oravec** said. It's very satisfying and I'm pleased with the judge's ruling.

Oravec and Orr received word of the ruling as they sat in a second hearing before 19th Circuit Court Judge Dwight L. Geiger in a state lawsuit filed by the same six police department employees. That lawsuit claims the employees have been denied access to public records needed to argue their wrongful termination suit. Attorney Lorenzo Williams, who represents the former

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Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

police department employees in both federal and state suits, said they plan to refile an amended complaint in U.S. District Court on the other claims listed in the federal lawsuit.

One claim alleges a violation of the plaintiffs' constitutional right to due process guaranteed by the 14th Amendment, which prohibits state and local government from depriving citizens of life, liberty and property without taking steps to guarantee fairness. The other claim in the federal suit points to alleged violations of the Florida Sunshine Law because elected city officials supposedly met with **Oravec** before the dismissals to give him guidance. The federal ruling states because the attorneys representing the plaintiffs didn't properly allege a due process violation, they can amend and refile the complaint and can include the allegation of the sunshine law violation. Oct. 11 is the deadline to refile, according to the ruling.

Williams said the order to dismiss this charter portion is just a bump in the road and he's confident his clients will win out, they'll just have to tweak their game plan. We'll take the checkered flag, Williams said. Williams also said Friday's ruling will have no impact on their state public records lawsuit where his clients allege the city is in violation of Florida's Public Records Act. Williams and co-counsel Attorney Stuart Address have requested a total of 106 items including city emails, City Council minutes and other documents going as far back as 1992. A \$3.5 million quote, given to them by the city's legal office, covers editing, copying costs and the staff time to go through the millions of records.

The suit seeks for the city to produce the records in a timely fashion without the hefty price tag. All we're simply saying is we're entitled to it, we're citizens of the state ... and you cannot obstruct the law simply by creating an outrageous unfair cost, Williams said Friday after the records hearing. A third hearing on the public records lawsuit is tentatively scheduled for 9:30 a.m. Oct. 5, pending confirmation from Geiger.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Palm Beach Post

April 11, 2012

Oravec: Port St. Lucie Police Department poised to re-create itself with reorganization plan

Author: Eric Pfahler

Standing alongside three council members and Mayor JoAnn Faiella, Port St. Lucie City Manager **Greg Oravec** ushered in a new era for the city's Police Department. With all of council minus Vice Mayor Linda Bartz in attendance, **Oravec** announced painful cuts Tuesday designed to free up money to hire more sworn officers. Overall, **Oravec** said the city eliminated 12 positions, including three captains and two majors. The moves help the city free up about \$2 million and **Oravec** said he plans to use the money to hire two acting assistant police chiefs Wednesday along with 18 new sworn officers and four civilian employees during the next several months.

The Rosser substation also will be closed and the Police Department's Information Technology work will be merged with the city's Management Information Systems department. Port St. Lucie Police Department staff will increase from about 207 to about 220, **Oravec** said. Major Scott Bartal, Major Gary Robinson, Capt. Joe D'Agostino, Capt. Steve Claus and Capt. Don Kryak all had their positions cut, according to **Oravec's** report. Captains and majors will be eligible to apply for the acting assistant police chief positions. "I did not take this action lightly or hastily, and that this reorganization was prepared after careful study and consultation with a wide cross section of current and former employees and rigorous review by respected police professionals," **Oravec** said.

Port St. Lucie's next police chief will be hired from outside the organization after Chief Brian Reuther retires May 31, **Oravec** said. **Oravec** said hiring a new chief will take a couple of months in a best-case scenario. Reuther declined to comment through police department spokesman Office Tom Nichols. Nichols referred comments to the city. As part of Reuther's retirement program, he could have reapplied after 30 days, though council members have indicated they are looking to go in a different direction. **Oravec** credited Reuther and others for building a top-notch organization, but said it is time for new blood. "Now is the time where we ramp back up, we reinvigorate ourselves, we reinvest in ourselves and we go to the next level," **Oravec** said. "In the way that we have organizational dynamics, I didn't feel like anyone was going to take us to the next level. We need that next long-term commitment."

The moves with the Police Department's senior command staff come in the midst of turmoil, but **Oravec** said the decisions were budgetary as opposed to disciplinary. Already this year, Port St. Lucie has changed city managers and fired an assistant city attorney. **Oravec** was promoted from within after starting with the city in 2002. "It's very important to put out there that this was not disciplinary action," **Oravec** said. "This was budgetary and strategic reorganization. Quite frankly, the five positions that were cut and the empty lieutenant position was over \$1 million in costs. Based on my evaluation of the functioning of the department, that money would be better

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Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

spent putting officers on patrol and detectives on the street solving crime versus management.” **Oravec** said it is important to make the changes now as opposed to waiting for a new police chief to make the decisions. “It wasn’t going to be punted down the road,” **Oravec** said. “There’s no great way to do it, and as far as an organization goes, you just deal with it.” Faiella said the changes are difficult, but had to be made. “We’re here to support (**Oravec**).” Council members Jack Kelly and Michelle Berger also said they support the decision, while Councilwoman Shannon Martin also stood with the group. Bartz could not be reached for comment. Different severance packages affected different terminated employees depending on their rank and whether they had union membership. The city is offering a voluntary retirement package to all employees.

The Police Department has come under fire in recent months for its handling of cases involving city employees. In fact, **Oravec** became acting city manager — a title later simplified to city manager — after a police scandal. City Council members called a March 9 meeting to discuss the Police Department’s handling of a now former assistant city attorney suspected of drinking and driving. Assistant City Attorney Gabrielle Taylor was fired March 8 after an incident Feb. 18 in which police stopped Taylor under the suspicion of drinking and driving, but drove Taylor home instead of giving her a field sobriety test.

At the March 9 meeting, City Council voted 4-1 to fire then-City Manager Jerry Bentrutt for a lack of leadership and was scolded by council for not urging City Attorney Roger Orr for immediate disciplinary action for Taylor. Members also cited a breakdown of communication with council. In a separate incident Feb. 18, Officer Gabrielle Conger was allowed to be driven home by a friend despite a police report stating Conger smelled of alcohol and was found to be driving erratically on Airoso Boulevard. Sgt. Todd Schrader, who stopped Conger, believed she was impaired, but did not issue a field sobriety test, according to an internal affairs investigation. Following the Taylor incident, a shooting death took place last month at Sportsman’s Park. About 100 Little League players were as close as 100 feet from the shooting. Police still are investigating the incident. **Oravec** said politics did not play a role in the decision. “There is a difference between wants and needs, and in tough times, you have to focus all of your resources on your needs, and what we need is to continue to be one of the safest cities in the state of Florida,” **Oravec** said.

Port St. Lucie Police Department changes

Here’s a look at the structural changes underway in the Port St. Lucie Police Department:

- Cutting five command staff involving two majors and three captains.
- Consolidating the Police Department’s Information Technology section with the city’s Management Information Systems department.
- Closing the Rosser Road Substation with considerations to sell or lease the substation.
- Hiring 22 more during the next several months.
- Hiring two assistant city police chiefs on Wednesday.
- Seeking an external candidate for police chief upon Police Chief Brian Reuther’s retirement May 31.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Gregory J. Oravec
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Hometown News (Fort Pierce, FL)
March 30, 2012

Council chooses new city manager

Author: Dawn Krebs

PORT ST. LUCIE - At the Port St. Lucie City Council afternoon meeting on March 19, acting manager **Gregory Oravec** was unanimously voted to stay in the position of city manager, which he had been filling as interim since March 9. That's when the council voted 4-1 in a special meeting to terminate the contract of then-city manager Jerry Bentrutt, because of his handling of an incident involving a city employee.

Mayor JoAnn Faiella opened the discussion and Councilwoman Shannon Martin spoke up to make a motion for Mr. **Oravec** to officially take over running the city. "We have a lot of things coming up, and it's important for the fluidity of our organization to make sure we have a city manager in place," Councilwoman Martin said. "Mr. **Oravec** has displayed great leadership ability and has a passion and a vision for the city."

Councilman Jack Kelly seconded the motion, adding that he has worked with Mr. **Oravec** for the last 10 years. "He's impressed me," Councilman Kelly said. "He gets better and better every year." Mayor Faiella liked that Mr. **Oravec** "isn't a 'yes' man." "You may not like what he has to say, but he's going to tell you what has to be done, and that impresses me," she said.

The vote was unanimous, and Mr. **Oravec** assured them negotiating a contract would be a quick thing. "I'm honored and excited," he said. He stated he didn't want the raise the job title would have given him. "I don't want any compensation until we've gone through these tough times and I can recommend a raise for all of our hard-working men and women." He also requested his performance be evaluated every six months. "I want to always stay attuned to the council's perception of my performance," he said. "It's very important to me."

As he verbally accepted the position, he said, "I promise you that no one will work harder than me, no one will care more and no one will be more accountable." The first task the council then charged him with was to hire an assistant city manager.

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Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Hometown News (Fort Pierce, FL)

August 26, 2011

City looks at helping landowners

Author: Dawn Krebs

PORT ST. LUCIE - The Port St. Lucie City Council, meeting as the Port St. Lucie Community Redevelopment Agency, officially heard a proposal to include approximately 3,400 acres west of the city into its community redevelopment plan. The property is referred to as Southern Grove, and encompasses the land next to Interstate-95 from Tradition Parkway south to Becker Road. The proposal suggested including the property as part of a modified community redevelopment plan, because the recent downturn in land values have made it difficult to attract future developers to the area. "This area was and remains strategically important, because it is the heart of the jobs corridor," said assistant city manager **Gregory Oravec**.

Currently located within the area are Torrey Pines Institute for Molecular Studies, a biotechnology institute, the Vaccine and Gene Therapy Institute, Martin Memorial Health Systems and Mann Research Center. Mr. **Oravec** said recent improvements to the area, such as updating the I-95 interchanges at Tradition Parkway and Becker Road, widening and developing roads in that area, construction of Tradition Parkway and Village Parkway, and installing water, sewer and storm water there will help it overcome market barriers. "If development is going to occur anywhere in our region in the current economic environment or even in an improving one, it will happen here first," he said, "as long as we create the opportunity."

The issue that exists with the land is its value has dropped considerably. Previously, the land with all the recent improvements was in excess of \$1 billion. However, in today's real estate market, the same property is now valued at approximately \$100,000. This is less than the cost of \$156 million in bonds that were issued to the landowners to cover the cost of all the improvements to the area. To help cover the costs of the bonds, the city provided a covenant to apply non-ad valorem revenues to help repay the bonds if there were any shortfall from the landowners. "That's what government is for," Mr. **Oravec** said. "We do things that don't have a profit."

By incorporating Southern Grove into the city's community redevelopment plan, the city would be able to develop programs to strengthen economic development there. The move would not increase taxes or take away existing taxes from the city, and any tax dollars created in that area stay there. "Including Southern Grove in the CRA is not a magic bullet, it's not going to make all the problems go away," he said. "But it is a tool to make the property more valuable to encourage the owners to reinstate the marketing efforts to sell it." The board was in unanimous agreement to take the first step and move forward with the suggestion of looking at the proposal in more detail. A public hearing will be held during a city council meeting on Aug. 29 to hear more about the proposal and its possibilities. "It shows the end user the future," Mr. **Oravec** said. "And it shows them the potential, without mortgaging the city's future."

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Gregory J. Oravec
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Stuart News
March 12, 2011

PSL no longer wants community center rehab job

Author: Alexi Howk

PORT ST. LUCIE The city wants to fire itself from the controversial Ravenswood Community Center project and city officials blame interference from a local firm that's suing over the project. On Monday night's City Council agenda, Assistant City Manager **Greg Oravec** is requesting the council cancel a \$5.7 million contract it awarded the city's construction division in January to rebuild the hurricane-damaged Ravenswood Community Center.

The request also asks the council to reject all previous bid proposals and rebid the project through the city's sealed bid process. **Oravec's** request includes canceling previous contract awards to subcontractors selected by the city's construction division. The city will not bid on the project, according to the request. When the city solicited bids from contractors to reconstruct the community center on Ravenswood Lane just south of Prima Vista Boulevard, it received five bids. The city's bid of \$5.7 million was \$202,662 lower than the next-lowest bidder, Fort Pierce-based Paul Jacquin and Sons.

The center has severe mold damage from the 2004 hurricanes. The project includes building a 24,771-square-foot community center with gymnasium and a 10,981-square-foot classroom wing for Indian River State College. Part of the cost will be paid with money from the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The money must be spent by November 2012, **Oravec** said. The city received \$779,712 in grant money from FEMA, and expects to receive an additional \$1.2 million in FEMA money for the project.

Michael Jacquin, president of Paul Jacquin & Sons, as well as several other contractors objected to the city getting the contract, saying the city had an unfair advantage and should not be competing with the private sector. The city argued it bid fairly on the contract and did so to save money. Paul Jacquin & Sons filed suit against the city in Circuit Court Jan. 19, a day after the City Council voted 3-2 to award the contract to the city's construction division.

The suit alleges the city failed to competitively award the Ravenswood contract by not selecting a private firm and didn't comply with its own bid requirements. **Oravec**, who's acting city manager this week while City Manager Jerry Bentrutt is on vacation, said one of the city's subcontractors, Precision Paving & Excavation, backed away from the job. He said he had discussions with Bentrutt on Friday over sending the project back out to bid.

I have reason to believe that (Precision Paving was) contacted by a representative or someone associated with Jacquin & Sons, and as a result, they didn't feel comfortable with proceeding with the project, **Oravec** said. At this point, with all the third-party intervention directly through the lawsuit and perhaps indirectly through our subs, we felt like it would be a good idea to propose hitting the reset button on the bidding to reject all bids. We feel like that would reduce

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Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

the likelihood that we'll experience continuing slowdowns or even a shutdown of the project due to third-party intervention. It clears any clouds hanging over this process, and I believe it makes the current lawsuit a moot point.

Precision Paving was one of three subcontractors the city hired for the Ravenswood project. Others included Bayview Construction Corp. and Certified Building Corp. Pete Ramsdell, co-owner and vice president of Fort Pierce-based Precision Paving & Excavation, said Friday the company's decision to back out of the Ravenswood project had nothing to do with any contact with representatives from Paul Jacquin & Sons.

We're a Christian company, and the project was too controversial, Ramsdell said. We didn't want to get drawn into it or be in the papers every day. It has absolutely nothing to do with anybody contacting us. Jacquin was taken aback by the city's decision to rebid the project and said he hoped the City Council would consider awarding the contract to his firm since it was the next lowest bidder rather than restart the bidding process over. However, according to a city policy spelled out in the city's procurement documents, the city does not accept bids from parties engaging in adversarial relationships with the city, which means Paul Jacquin & Sons is prohibited from rebidding on the project, **Oravec** said.

I think it's very unfortunate for the current subcontractors that have done nothing wrong, and I think it's unfortunate that the potential for cost savings can't be realized because of third-party intervention, **Oravec** said. **Oravec** said the move to cancel the city's contract should not delay the project. He said initially the city included demolition of the current building as part of the overall bid.

However, the city will proceed with demolition immediately, using an existing city contractor. The actual construction would be bid out almost immediately and could take up to 30 days. I did not support the idea of having the city do the contracting when we voted on it and I don't want this project held up any longer. I want to move ahead, hire the private contractor who will give us the best value for the dollar, and assure the many construction industry professionals in this town that the city has no interest in taking work away from any of them, Mayor JoAnn Faiella said.

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Gregory J. Oravec
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Stuart News
February 10, 2011

Asst. City manager takes cut in Salary

Author: Alexi Howk

PORT ST. LUCIE The city renegotiated Assistant City Manager **Greg Oravec's** employment contract, and he took a voluntary \$13,492 pay cut. Under the two-year agreement, signed Jan. 31, **Oravec** now earns an annual salary of \$121,500. His previous salary was \$134,992. The pay cut comes after several residents and City Council members criticized **Oravec**, 36, when City Manager Jerry Bentrott gave him a \$16,536 raise in April amid budget cuts, layoffs and a 17 percent increase in the property tax rate. Critics said the raise was poor timing, and **Oravec** shouldn't have accepted it.

However, **Oravec** said he got the raise for taking on additional duties when a second assistant city manager position was eliminated. He also said the increase brought his pay more in line with the median income of similar professionals throughout the state. **Oravec** said Wednesday he did not take the pay cut because of any criticism over the raise. He said his contract was renegotiated because he put Bentrott on notice that he was looking to resign because the city breached his contract.

I put them on notice that my contract had been breached because of taking (my) car allowance away and changes to insurance and things like that, he said. The city had broken the existing contract so I brought that to their attention. It had not been a pleasant experience the last few months. I was seriously thinking about moving on. I think it's important for the city to treat all employees as equally and fairly as possible.

Oravec said the city unilaterally imposed conditions on employees who had individual contracts but didn't impose those same conditions on unionized employees, which if it had, would have subjected the city to an unfair labor practice charge. But I understood the reasons for it, **Oravec** said. I think for the city to be a good faith operator, it needs to go to each of those people under contracts just as it would a collective bargaining group and then work on those issues that need to be worked.

He said the city had been asking all employees to make concessions in pay and benefits of approximately 10 percent to get the city in a more sustainable position in the long term. He said his pay cut was part of that concession, but he wasn't forced to do it. OK, if you need concessions from employees you negotiate with them and then change the contract. And that's what happened here, **Oravec** said. I feel like I'm very lucky to be in America. You work hard. You care. You sacrifice. You can get ahead, **Oravec** said. And eventually you're rewarded for your hard work and sacrifice. I feel like there's nothing wrong with that. I shouldn't be ashamed of that. So, no, I wouldn't have given up the raise because there was this outcry from some, especially when it wasn't out of line for the position in the industry. That doesn't mean I am not

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Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

in tune with what's going on in the city and what the needs of the city are. I'm more than willing to sacrifice and contribute for the good of the city. I care greatly about the city.

A Jan. 22, 2009, memo from **Oravec** to former City Manager Don Cooper shows **Oravec** turned down a pay raise in budget year 2008-2009 because of economic concerns. As you know, our city, country and citizens face severe economic challenges, **Oravec** wrote in the memo. In the case of our city, I believe that our upcoming budgeting process will reveal that either taxes have to be increased or hundreds of employees have to be laid off. There will be no pixie dust or magic to rescue us. In such a time, I cannot, in good conscience, accept any increase to my pay.

After Mayor JoAnn Faiella fulfilled a campaign promise by taking a 5 percent voluntary pay cut in December, she said **Oravec** should have rescinded his raise. It was the wrong thing to do at the time, Faiella told Scripps Treasure Coast Newspapers in December. People are losing their jobs and their car allowances. Their insurance rates are going up, and here you have an assistant city manager taking a raise. I wish he would give it back. I can't force him to. It's up to him to decide what to do because that's going to be thrown in his face for the rest of his career.

Faiella praised **Oravec's** move to cut his pay. I commend him for that and for displaying leadership in a time when everybody's hurting, she said. **Oravec** said when he received the \$16,536 raise in April, he knew he'd eventually lose the money. When I got promoted I fully expected, OK, I'm taking an increase now, but I'm going to be giving a lot of it back pretty soon,' he said. Because the pace of negotiations has been slower than anticipated, it didn't materialize.

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Gregory J. Oravec
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Stuart News
January 12, 2011

Former PSL worker to withdraw complaint against Oravec

Author: Eric Pfahler

PORT ST. LUCIE Former city employee Anna Marie Burdett said Tuesday she planned to withdraw her hostile work complaint against Assistant City Manager **Greg Oravec**. Burdett said by phone Tuesday that a union representative investigated Burdett's complaint that **Oravec** had ordered her firing, but the investigation concluded that **Oravec** had nothing to do with the removal. Burdett resigned as an animal control officer Dec. 23.

Mr. **Oravec** did not have anything to do with (my resignation), said Burdett, who had worked with the city since 2005. Burdett said she did not plan to file any new complaints. **Oravec** denied any wrongdoing Monday. He said Tuesday he could not comment until something is submitted to the city or to him personally. On Friday, Burdett filed a complaint saying she was offered two choices resign or be fired and claimed **Oravec** was working to push her out. The city planned to fire Burdett following its investigation of an August incident in which Burdett claimed she accidentally ran over a raccoon while working. Burdett, however, resigned.

The State Attorney's Office cleared her of breaking the law, but the city determined she violated city rules. She wrote that **Oravec** held a grudge against her after she was fired in 2009. The city accused her of not being forthcoming after a photo taken from a holiday party was sent to the city. The city determined the photo did not warrant discipline, but investigated the source of the photo. Burdett denied being the source. She was rehired later that year as an animal control officer.

On Tuesday, Burdett said she was surprised to learn **Oravec** had nothing to do with her firing but accepted the conclusion. I feel relieved that it wasn't Mr. **Oravec** and I feel that you can let bygones be bygones, Burdett said. Things that happened in the past were done and over with and holding grudges or thinking people are holding grudges against you is ridiculous. Burdett said she regretted filing the complaint. Maybe I should have done a full investigation myself, Burdett said. Maybe I should have had my union rep go up there prior to filing it.

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Gregory J. Oravec
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Stuart News
January 4, 2007

PSL rehires redevelopment chief

Author: Derek Simmons

PORT ST. LUCIE -- When he resigned as Community Redevelopment Agency director in 2005, city officials told **Greg Oravec** they would "keep the light on" for him. That promise was kept Wednesday as **Oravec** accepted a job that will bring him back to government as the assistant city manager, filling the position left open when Bonnie Dyga retired last year.

As part of his new job, **Oravec** also will be returning to his role as CRA director, splitting time between the two responsibilities. "I feel honored to have been selected," **Oravec** said. "I look forward to returning to the city and helping it at what I feel is a very important time in its evolution." He likely will begin work in early February. Mayor Patricia Christensen said by hiring **Oravec**, the city will save about \$100,000 it would have spent in filling the CRA director position.

She said she expected **Oravec** would make a quick transition into the new position and described him as professional and dedicated. He also will be able to help Assistant City Manager Jerry Bentrutt, who has been overseeing the City Center project, along with other responsibilities, Christensen said. His resignation as the city's first CRA director was somewhat controversial, as he announced his departure on the same day that council members learned an unnamed buyer had purchased the City Center property before the city had a chance to consider a plan to develop it on its own.

Oravec said he was leaving to pursue private development opportunities and later worked for City Center developer George de Guardiola, at times acting as his spokesman. More than 100 people applied for the assistant city manager job and **Oravec** was one of three finalists for the position, which also included former Jupiter administrator Tod Mowery and Assistant Police Chief Brian Reuther.

The job pays \$115,000 a year, plus benefits. Though he will not be earning as much as Dyga, who took home \$136,011 per year, the position pays more than the \$77,667 he made as the CRA director. **Oravec**, who served as head of the Community Redevelopment Agency for about three years, currently works as a senior project manager for Culpepper & Terpening, Inc. based in Fort Pierce.

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Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Stuart News
May 15, 2005

PSL paid 4 city officials \$29,000 after leaving city

Authors: Sarah Myrick and Hillary Copsey

PORT ST. LUCIE -- Top city employees who retire or resign to pursue private business ventures are receiving thousands of dollars in severance pay, thanks to a city policy granting them one month of salary after they quit. Since 2002, four employees have received more than \$29,000 in severance pay awarded by City Manager Don Cooper. The policy, which dates back to 1988, allows department heads and professional employees to receive their normal salary for 30 days after leaving the city, with the approval of the city manager. "It's not a policy I saw before I worked here, but it's a long-standing policy," Cooper said. "It's essentially been enshrined."

Employees granted the severance include:

Former Building Official Brian Hurley, who received \$7,584 upon retirement.

Former Utility Director Gary Basham, who received \$8,886 before he took a job with local engineering firm Culpepper & Terpening;

Former Planning Director Steve Ball, who received \$6,985 before starting his own planning consultation business in the city;

Former Community Redevelopment Agency Director **Greg Oravec**, who received \$5,974 before he was hired by CRA developer George de Guardiola.

Although Cooper approved the employees' severance pay, a review of personnel records found some violated city rules and others did not complete contractual obligations. Basham was criticized publicly in 1999 for extending water and sewer lines to his home two years before city water and sewer was supposed to be available to his neighborhood. Hurley was reprimanded in 1989 for taking his city vehicle on a personal trip to Gainesville. **Oravec** was required by contract to complete a master's degree in public administration, but personnel records do not include proof of his receiving the degree.

"If they're not fired for cause, they're basically entitled to it," Cooper said of the severance. No other major Treasure Coast cities regularly award severance pay to employees who resign. In Stuart, eligible employees receive severance pay only upon termination without cause, said Marie Fertitta, the city's human resources director. Fort Pierce uses a similar policy. Vero Beach has no policy regarding severance pay. The city manager is the only city employee with a severance pay provision in his contract, Vero's human resources manager said.

Cooper called Port St. Lucie's policy "generous," but said changing the long-standing agreement would be a hassle. All employees hired under the existing personnel manual would be entitled to severance pay upon their departure, and to change it for new hires would require public negotiation. "We don't have that many people leave," Cooper said. "And it's never been that big a deal."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Gregory J. Oravec
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Stuart News
April 19, 2005

Oravec rescinds offer to consult

Author: Sarah Myrick

PORT ST. LUCIE - **Greg Oravec**, former Community Redevelopment Agency director, withdrew his proposal to work as city consultant, but the announcement unleashed a larger discussion about a lack of senior level management at City Hall. **Oravec**, who was responsible for the CRA, Animal Control and Code Enforcement departments, proposed as part of a \$24,000, six-month contract to oversee his former projects, including Lennard Road widening, East Lake Village and the Woodstork Trail Greenway project.

After reading comments from City Council members in the newspaper, **Oravec** withdrew his proposal Friday morning, Cooper said. With **Oravec's** resignation, the city is left with several vacancies to oversee major projects and departments, City Manager Don Cooper said. Assistant City Manager Bonnie Dyga plans to retire in September 2006 and Deputy City Manager Victor Granello is on leave.

City Councilman Jack Kelly said he's concerned the city could be left with a major problem if Cooper decides to resign or retire within the next couple years and no employees can take his place. Kelly proposed that Cooper hire an administrator with CRA experience who could also oversee other major projects. "We need to look at a higher price, a bigger job than just CRA manager," Kelly said. "What if something happened to Mr. Cooper? We'd have no one." Cooper said the job would not be easy, especially because he says benefits and job security in senior government positions are not "great."

Daytona Beach and two South Florida cities also have CRA openings, and that will create competition with other governments, Cooper added. "Do you know how hard it's going to be to find an assistant with construction and finance experience?" he asked. "They just aren't out there." Cooper said he'd take responsibility for the CRA until a replacement is hired and will resume the staffing discussion with council members after several "legal issues" are resolved.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Stuart News
September 19, 2004

PSL officials plunder, loot for supplies 'SUPPLIES'

Authors: Sarah Myrick and Will Greenlee

PORT ST. LUCIE -- They are two high-ranking city officials, but around City Hall they're simply known as "Loot" and "Plunder." Their nicknames are well-deserved. During the city's worst disaster, City Councilman Christopher Cooper and Community Redevelopment Agency director **Greg Oravec** were patrolling the city in search of supplies for 500 elderly and sick people at the Port St. Lucie Community Center. It wasn't an easy task.

The pair commandeered ice chests from vacant, damaged gas stations and let themselves into the Publix in Rivergate Plaza for much-needed supplies such as cereal, baby wipes and Depends diapers. Councilman Cooper, aka "Loot," defended their actions, saying they had to get the supplies immediately and that the businesses were paid back and ice chests returned after the city no longer needed them. "Sometimes you've got to revert to extreme measures," Cooper said. "In a state of emergency like that, I think we have the authority to appropriate like that."

Cooper said when he could, he left notes at the businesses explaining that the city needed supplies; if employees were around, he asked permission. **Oravec**, nicknamed "Plunder," said supplies were desperately needed, forcing city employees to take extraordinary measures. "It was a time of crisis," he said. "Nothing was open and there were definite resources that had to be had for public safety."

Cooper and **Oravec** weren't the only people going to extreme measures for basic supplies such as ice, water and food. In Martin County, fire-rescue officials were able to go shopping at BJ's Wholesale Club during the first few hours of the storm after an alarm sounded at the store and the manager allowed fire-rescue employees to take food for residents in shelters and emergency staff. "Because the duration of the storm was going to be longer than anticipated, we needed more supplies," said Jim Loffredo, fire-rescue district chief and spokesman. Loffredo said the store was paid back.

A hand-written note and an encounter with a truck driver Sept. 9 ended up bringing eight trucks of ready-to-eat meals, two trucks of water and a truck of ice to Tradition Field in St. Lucie West from West Palm Beach, according to Port St. Lucie police officials. In speaking with the driver, police learned 17 trucks of supplies were in West Palm Beach and that "the truckers down there were frustrated because they were just sitting down there with no place to go," Capt. Scott Bartal said.

Using a cell phone, the truck driver called his boss, who said a note from someone in authority requesting supplies was needed. Bartal wrote a note, and acting Lt. Ron Caudell and Detective John Holman followed the trucker south to Palm Beach County, where Caudell spoke to National Guard officials. "One of the National Guard lieutenants there showed me the list and he

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

says, 'Look, you guys, St. Lucie County's not even on our list,' " Caudell said. "Of course, that creates a problem." A few conversations later, Caudell ended up with 11 trucks of supplies -- including more than 175,000 MREs -- and enlisted state Department of Transportation and Florida Highway Patrol officials to help escort the convoy back to St. Lucie County. "After that, we continued to work the city distribution center and I don't think we had any problems getting trucks as they became available," Caudell said.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Stuart News (FL)

June 30, 2002

Neighborhood Envisioned in Citrus Grove

Author: Jennifer Sorentroue

PORT ST. LUCIE - Brick-paved streets dotted with town houses, restaurants and fashionable boutiques could soon replace thousands of citrus trees in the heart of the city's future downtown. Last week, in his first extended discussion of the project since the city's June 11 announcement that he plans to buy the property, Abacoa developer George de Guardiola said he plans to turn the 100-acre citrus grove just west of Lennard Road into a bustling neighborhood. Residents will be able to walk to work, he said, and shop owners, residents and visitors will "come together" to "create a strong sense of community."

In this "traditional neighborhood," residents can go months without using their cars by using paths and greenways to walk to destinations such as restaurants, stores and doctors' offices, he said. "When you deliver a sense of community, that is the best thing that you can do," said de Guardiola, who has a contract to buy the grove owned by brothers Harry and James Lentz. The grove, which sits in the unincorporated part of the county and is surrounded by residential and commercial development, is the largest piece of undeveloped property in the city's Community Redevelopment Area.

Residences essential

City officials say residential development within the redevelopment area, which stretches from just north of the Village Green area south to the Martin County line, is vital to the survival of commercial development in the Village Green shopping center. The city plans to transform the Village Green into a town center, similar to CityPlace in West Palm Beach. "Every downtown in the U.S. is clamoring for residential support," said de Guardiola, a West Palm Beach resident. "The Lentz property could produce tremendous support. If we move forward with the Lentz property and develop that kind of visual, it will be a lot easier for the city to develop what they are doing at the corner of Walton and U.S. 1."

Although de Guardiola has a contract to buy the site, he has yet to close on the sale. De Guardiola said he's interested in the grove property because of its proximity to St. Lucie Medical Center and several neighboring medical offices along Tiffany Avenue. He said the community would give thousands of residents employed at the medical center the option of walking or biking to work. Citing a "desire from the whole eastern seaboard to come to Florida," de Guardiola says he sees a market for communities that encourage pedestrians. But his successful development of upscale Abacoa in Jupiter was followed by a failed effort to develop a "mini town" next to Vero Beach's Dodgertown.

De Guardiola's Vero Beach vision - a combination of restaurants, retail shops and homes - was to be a "collateral development," separate but related to the Dodgers' agreement to sell 64 acres, including Holman Stadium and other spring-training facilities, to Indian River County. But faced

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches***Gregory J. Oravec****(Articles are in reverse chronological order)*

with an economic slump, de Guardiola took a loan last year from the Dodgers to pay the \$3.7 million price for his part. When he couldn't repay the team, the Dodgers kept the land. At the time, de Guardiola said he was entangled with former Abacoa business partner Abe Gosman's bankruptcy and legal problems. Then came the national economic slump. Dodgers Vice President Craig Callan said the team couldn't wait for de Guardiola to resolve those issues and decided to press on without him.

De Guardiola said last week he has freed himself from the entanglement with Gosman, and called problems at Dodgertown "freak." De Guardiola said he's learned from his mistakes and will not make the same decisions when developing the Port St. Lucie site. Some Indian River County residents have criticized the Dodgertown deal, saying there were too many entities involved and that the transaction was too complex.

Governments play role

But de Guardiola said it takes more than the developer to "create a community" in the Abacoa style. Local governments and other private partnerships must play a role as well, he said. "I am attracted to this situation because this kind of development takes a lot of support from all different entities," said de Guardiola, who moved to Miami from Cuba in 1959. "It's not just private entities," he said. "It is important to make sure that the city manager, the CRA manager, the City Council members are all on board, and we all know the dynamics we are looking at. To successfully do this, it is really about the implementation of management."

That's support City Manager Don Cooper said the city is ready to give. "We don't have the pedestrian orientation that you have the opportunity to have here," Cooper said. "He's looking at something with a lot more interaction, and a lot of activity." During the next two months, developers will be doing environmental studies and a marketing analysis of the site. De Guardiola said he will make a final decision on the purchase in September.

Much of that decision hinges on St. Lucie County's willingness to transfer control of Lennard and Jennings roads to Port St. Lucie. County officials said last week they support the transfer, but the County Commission still must vote on the deal. De Guardiola called the move a "positive step," but said if the site is developed, it would also be necessary to annex the property into the city. If annexed, a move county officials have said they would support, developers could qualify for a tax incentive available to projects within the redevelopment area.

De Guardiola said if he moves forward with the project, he could begin working with the city on permit issues as soon as February. The upscale community would be a scaled-down version of de Guardiola's Abacoa development in Jupiter, the developer said. Abacoa has been billed by many as the modern-day "Mayberry," complete with front porches, white fences and live oaks. The walkable village sits on 2,300 acres north of Donald Ross Road, and includes more than 6,000 homes, 3.4 million square feet of stores and offices, a Florida Atlantic University campus and a spring training stadium for the Florida Marlins and the St. Louis Cardinals. Abacoa Town Center sits at the core of the community, offering a "place to live, shop and dine. . ." its Web site boasts. Homes, shops and offices can be found on the same block, a design de Guardiola said fosters

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Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

"civic activity." It's that dynamic de Guardiola hopes to develop in Port St. Lucie. "Town Center is an expression of the area; that is why so many civic things happen here," said de Guardiola. "Design is a very small part of it."

Gregory Oravec, the city's community redevelopment manager, said the city really doesn't have "a sense of place," adding that the de Guardiola project could bring a feeling of community to the area. In an attempt to create that feeling, **Oravec** is already planning festivals at the Village Green, and hopes to redirect the city's parade route to the Village Green area. "One of our challenges is all the development that is happening out west," **Oravec** said. The walkable community will offer an alternative to many gated communities in St. Lucie West, developments where, de Guardiola said, "your home is kind of static." "A lot of these projects, they go up like rockets, then all of a sudden they fall off the charts and start declining in value," said de Guardiola. "People live there for 10 years, and move out."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Gregory J. Oravec
(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Stuart News
January 5, 2002

CRA Manager for PSL starts works Feb. 11

Author: Christie Caliendo

PORT ST. LUCIE - The city hired a manager Friday to lead the push to build a downtown and redevelop the eastern corridor. **Gregory J. Oravec**, 27, will begin Feb. 11 as the new manager of the city's Community Redevelopment Area, which lies along U.S. 1 from the city's northern border south to the Martin County line. Preliminary city plans call for the transformation of the area into a mixed-use stretch including entertainment, restaurants, offices, businesses, parks and homes. The northern part, the site of the failing Village Green Shopping Center, is slated to serve as the 40-year-old city's first downtown. "Port St. Lucie can be the diamond of the Treasure Coast," **Oravec** said. "I think the city can achieve much. It is definitely moving in the right direction, and the CRA will provide for that needed and possible change."

Oravec, a 1996 graduate of the University of Miami, will leave his job as CRA director for South Miami, a position he has held since May 2000. Before that, he was assistant to the city manager for that city, which has a population of 10,741. He also has served as a planner there. The Port St. Lucie CRA manager position starts at \$55,000 a year, personnel officials said.

Oravec, who will be part of Port St. Lucie's Planning and Zoning Department, said his biggest initial challenges will be "learning the system in and out" and "knowing the CRA plan and the motivation that created the plan." He also wants to get in touch with the "wants of the citizenry," and plans to have public workshops periodically to include the community in the planning process. That is a key that made South Miami's CRA successful, he said. "Port St. Lucie will be an overwhelming success, and it is something I want to be a part of," **Oravec** said. "I understand everyone's eyes are on the CRA, and I want to make it a success from the get-go."

One of the factors that led **Oravec** to seek the job was the city, a place he thinks is ideal to raise his family, which includes wife Tonia, stepson Aric, 8, son Alexander, 11 months, and a new baby on the way. "To me, this opportunity offers the best of both worlds," he said. "Continued professional development and it provides my family with a better quality of life. We never planned on making our lives in the Greater Miami area, and when I saw this position open up . . . I already knew the area and thought it was great."

Steve Ball, director of the city planning department, said he is glad the months- long search for someone to fill the "important position" is over. A Virginia man was offered the position in late September, but the job offer was rescinded when the candidate failed to return phone calls from city officials inquiring about his start date, officials said. Ball said **Oravec** will be a great addition to the department and the CRA effort, and that **Oravec** wants to "get out there and work with the community and landowners." "He is young and energetic and excited about being here in this position," Ball said. "He will be very valuable to us. I think he'll do a good job, and I am glad he will be here."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Gregory J. Oravec

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The Miami Herald

June 15, 1997

Snapper Creek residents to discuss a master plan

Author: Charles Rabin

Twice successful, perhaps three times a charm. At least that's the hope of some South Miami residents who have set out to create a master plan for their neighborhood. The Snapper Creek Charrette Steering Committee has met five times to set up a forum and will sponsor its first resident workshop July 26 at Chamber South. Charrettes are community workshops formed to create a master plan that will eventually lead to the development of a specific neighborhood. The group is made up of residents who live within the designated charrette region. Snapper Creek covers from Southwest 80th Street to Kendall Drive, Red Road to 62nd Avenue.

It's the third time South Miami has let its homeowners lay out a plan to develop a neighborhood. The first in 1992 led to South Miami's Hometown Plan, which led to the refurbishing of Dorn Avenue and the soon-to-be reconstruction of Sunset Drive. The Charrette Too in 1994 focused on a section of the city west of U.S. 1 and north of Sunset Drive. Out of that project came Madison Square and a multipurpose community center at Murray Park that is set to be built sometime this fall. The difference between this charrette and the other two: The first two focused on improving commercial areas; the Snapper Creek Charrette primarily concerns a residential community.

Because of that, said steering committee member Iliette Oliveros, no outside consulting firm will be hired to help, like in the last two charrettes. "We're having University of Miami architectural students volunteer their time to come help," she said. "What they will do is help build the model that we'll be working with." Group members, led by city planning officials **Gregory Oravec** and Brian Soltz, will help determine signage, landscaping, color schemes, even the design of homes and buildings. "You can get into any kind of street fixtures, brick roads. We want to really go to the residents and find out what they want in their community," Soltz said.

Over the summer the group will mail out a questionnaire to residents asking for input into the process. When the charrette begins in late July, all comers will be taken on a trolley tour of the neighborhood. During the workshop, residents will divide into several groups. Later, each group will give a presentation. After the meeting, Soltz and **Oravec** will gather the information, pick out the best ideas, and focus on creating a master plan that eventually is passed along to the city commission. "We have found that the first two were very successful," Soltz said. "We want to eventually do one for every neighborhood in South Miami."

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