

## APRIL 2022 NEWS

Islamorada Community Alliance

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**A huge thank you to those who have sent donations to the**

**Islamorada**

**Community Alliance**

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### ***Our Mission:***

***To provide Islamorada residents with information about events occurring in our community that will impact our quality of life, preservation of our native ecosystems, land development, lawful and transparent governance.***



## **Village Manager Selection Again in 2022**



Islamorada is in the midst of selecting another Village Manager. Is it the 10th since 1998 or is it 11, plus all the acting managers between the actual managers?

Ever since Manager Greg Oravec resigned, it seemed clear, there was a difference of opinion on the council and in the community about what steps to take to find Oravec's replacement.

While not all members of council agreed, it was decided to let Baenziger and Associates provide a new short list of potential candidates as Baenziger brought us the previous short list just a little more than six months earlier. Islamorada could fast track the process this way and Baenziger's prior contract provided free service if the manager selected did not stay a full year.

Baenziger believed that with Islamorada's history of short term managers, he needed to concentrate on finding a candidate with a military background.

Baenziger quickly had 62 new applicants and cut that list to eight of those he considered the most qualified. Two had military backgrounds. One of those two dropped out after being placed on the list of eight.

At their March 31 meeting, the Council was tasked with deciding who to invite to Islamorada for face to face interviews. The councilmen each listed the candidates they preferred.

The top four being invited to visit Islamorada with their wives:

- ◆ Ted Blackburn: former Islamorada resident and member of Village Council
- ◆ Joseph Kirby: County Administrator from Benton, Oregon, and prior management experience in Colorado Springs
- ◆ Thomas Yates: attorney, mayor and public safety director in Twinsburg, Ohio for last 7 years, following 6 years on city council there
- ◆ Lee Staab: West Point graduate, military background, county/city management 5 years, independent contractor specializing in business operations in the Middle East and other high risk areas.

Tentatively, the candidates will be here April 25—26 with the expectation that a new manager will be selected the evening of April 26.



## Go to [Islamorada.org](http://Islamorada.org)

### End of BPAS —Buildout: When the Environment and Infrastructure can take No More

Buildout is anticipated in July of 2023. There are 33 allocations left for new market rate homes. After extensive research, Monroe County has reduced allocation awards to extend the buildout date in unincorporated Monroe to 2026. Councilman Henry Rosenthal has been promoting the idea here. But have we already reached “buildout,” with the environment struggling and traffic horrendous?

**December 16, 2021 Council meeting:** Rosenthal finally convinced the council there is merit in extending the buildout date, by issuing less allocations each quarter. The Village Attorney suggested they approve the old numbers to give staff time to prepare changes to the Comprehensive Plan and Land Development regulations in the first quarter of 2022. Council voted 5-0 to approve the 2022 allocations with the plan to decrease the numbers after any regulations needed are submitted by staff and approved by council.

**March 10, 2022 Council meeting:** The first quarter of 2022 is nearly over and no changes to extend BPAS have been presented. The BPAS list to be considered at the meeting agenda showed Councilman Mark Gregg was to receive an allocation. The Director of Planning, Dan Gulizio, indicated there is a discrepancy in the dates for awarding BPAS allocations. The council voted to delay the decision until dates were clarified.

**March 31, 2022 Council meeting:** A resolution was in agenda to extend BPAS through 2025 by reducing the number of allocations per quarter. The proposal called for no market rate allocations until quarter 3 of 2022 to correct the date discrepancy. Quarter 3 and 4 would get 9 total allocations. Years 2023 through 2025 would award two allocations per quarter.

While all five councilmen voiced agreement to extend BPAS in December of 2021, Councilman Gregg is now emphatically opposed, three months later. In December, it appeared that he would get an award in quarter 1, 2022. With the resolution as proposed, he would not. He now believes that the 33 awards remaining should go to the top 33 applicants in the current list because they followed all the rules provided. His preference is to issue them all immediately.

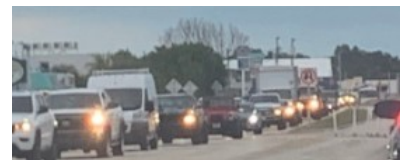
Dan Gulizio suggested waiting until the planning department can provide a map showing the vacant residential lots available so the Council is better able to make an informed decision, particularly regarding the impact of potential takings. And so the resolution was delayed. The maps should be available in 4 to 6 weeks.

### Buildout—Are we already there?



Most often “buildout” is thought to occur when it would be impossible to evacuate all residents within 24 hours based on population statistics. There’s more. The limited infrastructure and fragile environment may not be able to withstand more people.

In Sec 30-306 of the Village regulations: *The village shall not approve applications for development in areas of the village that are served by inadequate facilities.*



**Traffic:** How much of a study is needed to realize U.S. One is inadequate with frequent backups, not just during evacuations! Every single decision made by our council should consider the potential it has for making traffic congestion even worse.

**Water:** All of the Keys get their water piped from the mainland where the water is taken from the “Floridan” aquifer below the surface. Over-extraction and an increasing risk of saltwater intrusion are straining the aquifer’s resources. There are simply too many people taking too much water from the aquifer, dangerously depleting its water levels.

With household water use one of the fastest growing drains on the Floridan aquifer, residents are being encouraged to conserve water. But are we? We keep building more and using more. It is not only BPAS. When we redevelop and use the building right of a small mobile home, condo or cottage to create a large 4 or 5 bedroom vacation rental, how does that conserve our limited water supply? Too many flushes, too many swimming pools, too much irrigation.

### Schools, employee housing, stormwater facilities—all seem stretched to the limit.

We think we may already have reached buildout. What do you think?

## Voices



Voices for  
Florida Keys  
Children



“Voices” is a local all volunteer group with an awe-inspiring mission:

To assist the 16th judicial circuit and Guardian ad Litem by providing financial assistance through raising and distributing funds for the medical, social, educational, and normal personal needs of abused, abandoned and neglected children in Monroe County.

On Saturday, April 2, Voices had their annual luncheon and fashion show with 300 in attendance at Hawks Cay. The generosity and caring of the people of the Florida Keys was so very evident throughout the event. Voices President, Susan Raffanello was hostess with help from her 13 year old daughter, Gabriella.

The guest speaker was Cassidy Camp, now a Human Resources and Communication professional, passionate about her work as she is determined to make a positive impact. Cas-

sidy graduated from Coral Shores High School, received a dual degree from FSU and is now in graduate school at the University of Colorado all because of financial help and mentoring she received through Voices. She inspired the audience as she credited Voices with much of her success, demonstrating the dramatic difference the organization can make to a troubled young student. She certainly made a positive impact at the luncheon.



All in attendance loved the unique Fashion Show that featured local models!

The fundraising included a silent auction and “Stand for Scholarships.” The day was highlighted by the auctioning of a painting created live during the event by famed local artist Pasta Panteleo. For this year’s event, Pasta painted sunflowers, a symbol of peace in Ukraine.





## The Fills: Any Progress Yet?

### The Tale of the Orange Cones

On March 31, Councilman Henry Rosenthal added a Fills update to the Council meeting agenda, for the third meeting in a row. Rosenthal wants to get rid of the orange traffic cones, now.



Councilman Mark Gregg questioned how many times Rosenthal planned to bring this up. Gregg thought it may be contrary to Robert's Rules of Order, but was reminded, the Village does not use Robert's Rules.

Many residents of Islamorada are tired of listening to the Fills discussion—but are grateful to Rosenthal for continuing to remind everyone: "Let's do **SOMETHING!**"

After years of debate, this council hired CPH for \$55,000 to create a plan for the Fills based on input from locals and stakeholders. CPH plans did not reflect the results of the public involvement, a strong preference for minimal improvements. Many in the public reminded the Council: the Fills is a roadway, not a park.

At the February 17, 2022 council meeting, Rosenthal suggested that the existing no parking signs with \$200 fines would minimize use of the Fills with a small number of paved, time limited parking spaces. Rosenthal made a motion but got no second, as there was concern that the no parking signs would be ignored, creating excessive work for deputies to provide enforcement. Council did pass a motion to install guard rails as a barrier to prevent illegal parking, landscaping and limited parking with meters. Mayor Bacheler volunteered to be the Council liaison to work with staff and CPH to help develop the plan for Florida Department of Transportation approval.

It was unclear as to the length of guardrails needed on both the north and southbound side of the highway, the cost, who will pay, and how much longer it will take.

Rosenthal later spoke to Sheriff Rick Ramsay and reported that while public safety always comes first, the deputies can be used to patrol the area and issue parking tickets. It may require some overtime especially on holiday weekends.

At the March 31 meeting, Captain Derek Paul of the Sheriff's department, provided statistics. Over the last year, there have been 231 parking complaints at the Fills and 76 citations written (an average of 1 every 5 days). Paul believes that if the cones are removed before guardrails are installed that the number of calls will increase.

A careful look at the Fills shows there are long stretches with no cones, yet so few citations. Perhaps in reality, the "No Parking" signs with \$200 fines indicated are warning enough. Why not try it?

It is tragic that what should be the loveliest stretch of highway in the Village has created a huge divide.



## Freebee Contract Extension

Opinion, Sue Miller



Most people would agree that a local electric transportation system is a great service for our community. But there are significant questions about this \$343,000 per year service. The Council delayed the decision on the contract presented on March 31 until their April meeting.

The contract in the agenda package had errors:

- ◆ Term of contract – 17 months from May 2022 through Sep 2024? That’s not 17 months, that’s 29 months.
- ◆ The Freebee Schedule was contradicted several places.

When asked at the council meeting if the contract did in fact have errors, the Village Attorney said it did not. What?

The most recent contract with Freebee was approved in May 2019 at \$317,000 per year. Other towns using Freebee got 50% of the cost covered via a three year FDOT grant according to Freebee representative, Jason Spiegel. To quote then Councilman Jim Mooney at that meeting, regarding the FDOT grant – “It’s a slam dunk.”

**The FDOT grant would have saved taxpayers \$490,000.** Did Islamorada apply for the FDOT “slam dunk” grant?

**Who benefits and who pays for this “free” \$343,000 service?** Taxpayers pay. Who benefits?

Can the contract terms better serve our taxpayers? The new contract calls for two Tesla X vehicles and an XL van. Why do riders need the Tesla X? Surely there is a more economical way to provide free transportation?



For January and February, 2022, Freebee averaged less than two passengers per trip. And less than two trips per vehicle per hour. Does Islamorada need three vehicles?

### **Suggestions:**

The proposed schedule is for 6 days a week, no service Mondays. And depending on the day of the week, has three different start times during the day and four different end times. Councilman Henry Rosenthal had a good idea. Why not provide a consistent service: seven days a week, 7 am to 10 pm, by staggering the schedules of the vehicles? More locals could use the service to get to and from work, church, meetings.

Islamorada should research and utilize all possible grant opportunities and funding sources including help from local businesses that benefit; put services like this out for competitive bid; and assure all contracts are carefully reviewed.

**Thank you Joan Scholz for your grant research.** Hopefully the Village will use the research done following the March 31 meeting to apply for a grant to significantly reduce costs to taxpayers!

Free transportation is only a good service if we get it right.



## Who can afford Islamorada Home Prices?

Is it too heartbreaking to leave Islamorada, but too expensive to stay?

Check Increases in Home Sales in One Year

3/1/2020—2/28/2021	3/1/2021—2/28/2022	Increase
Single Family homes sold: 241	Single Family homes sold: 275	14%
Total price of homes sold: \$326,691,200	Total price of homes sold: \$453,988,500	39%
Average sales price: \$1,355,565	Average sales price: \$1,650,867	22%
Number of homes sold over \$2 million: 39	Number of homes sold over \$2 million: 64	64%
Number of homes sold under \$500,000: 20	Number of homes sold under \$500,000: 12	-40%
Lowest Price: \$210,000	Lowest Price: \$290,000	38%
Highest Price: \$7,100,000	Highest Price: \$12,975,000	83%

## What's Coming Up

**April 21, 2022**—Public Hearings at Council meeting

1. Alcoholic Beverage Use Permit for new brewery at MM90.2 —near several churches and three schools
2. Road abandonment by the Moorings
3. New ordinance to regulate farmers markets, second reading to add private club use to our regulations.

**Items forwarded from March 31 agenda:** Freebee contract, Accessory Dwelling Units for affordable housing in single family zoning; moratorium on in lieu fees for affordable housing. There will also be a discussion about Council disclosures of business interests that resident John Kocol has been proposing for months. ([Click here](#) for John's ideas)

**May 12 meeting:** Extending BPAS to 2025 or 2026 by reducing quarterly allocations, new mapping with vacant lots better identified.

**April 30: Indian Key Celebration**—10:00 to 4:00. Celebrate the storied history of Indian Key with the Friends Islamorada State Parks and the Florida Keys History and Discovery Center on the grounds of the Islander Resort. There will be informative exhibits, demonstrations and speakers. And food trucks.

**Fall of 2022: Move power lines** - Florida Keys Electric Coop expects to begin moving the main transmission line from the ocean side of U.S. One to the right of way on the bay side from just north of Sea Oats Beach to Anne's Beach. They do not expect significant lane closures or electric outages.

## Village Citizen Committees: Get Involved

There are numerous opportunities for Village residents to get involved in issues impacting our community. One great way to have a voice is to volunteer to serve on one of Islamorada's citizen committees.

Did you know the Village has nine citizen committees with 82 positions. Currently there are three vacancies. A majority of the committees are scheduled to meet quarterly, but may meet more often if needed.

If you are a resident of Islamorada and would like to apply for an appointment to any citizen committee, you may do so by downloading the [Committee Application Form](#).

There are many committee members who have served for many years and their experience and knowledge of the issues are of tremendous value. However, new members of a committee are appreciated as they often bring fresh ideas and enthusiasm as well as a different perspective.

Of the 82 committee positions there are

- ◆ 8 residents who serve on multiple committees
- ◆ 14 who have served 5—9 years
- ◆ 11 who have served 10—14 years
- ◆ 1 who has served 15 years
- ◆ 1 who has served over 20 years

If you want to know more about any of the committees, you can go to the Village website to see who is currently serving and who is the staff liaison ([Click here](#)). Each May, the Council reviews the committees and reappoints or replaces members. The committee members select their chairman who runs the meetings and presents reports to Council.

To attend a meeting, live or by zoom, go to the Village Calendar on the Village website ([click here](#)) to find the committee meetings. Click on the meeting you want to attend. Then click on the **Public Notice** to get instructions and links.

**Historic Preservation Commission**, 5 members, meets quarterly, 2 pm meetings

**Local Planning Agency**, 7 members, meets monthly, 5:30 pm meetings

**Achievable Housing Citizens' Advisory Committee**, 10 members, meets quarterly, 5 pm

**Landscape Advisory Committee**, 10 members, meets quarterly, 2 pm

**Near Shore Water Regulation Citizens' Advisory Committee**, 10 members, 5:15 pm, **2 vacancies**

**Parks and Recreation Citizens' Advisory Committee**, 10 members, meets quarterly, 4 pm

**Water Quality Improvement Citizens' Advisory Committee**, 10 members, meets quarterly, 5:30 pm

**Youth Council**, 10 members, meets monthly during school year on 4th Tues, 4 pm

**Land Acquisition Advisory Committee**, 10 members, meets quarterly, 10 am, **1 vacancy currently**