

January 2022 NEWS

Islamorada Community Alliance

P.O. Box 1507

Tavernier, FL 33070

info@Islamorada.org

Islamorada.org



Village Manager Resigns

On Monday Jan 10, Village Manager Greg Oravec turned in his resignation. Click [here](#) to see the Free Press story, linked on our website, www.islamorada.org.

Greg was familiar with Islamorada from working as a planner here in 1999 when we first incorporated. A future in our community became his dream back then. His goal was to one day return to make this his forever home. He did return last July and we were thrilled to have found such an exceptional manager and quality human being.

What has happened? Is Islamorada so much worse now compared to the community Greg fell in love with over 20 years ago? What has happened to shatter his dream?

We need to fix Islamorada. It feels very broken right now.

I had just finished writing the first page for this newsletter when I learned that Oravec resigned. Below is the story I had just completed before I heard:

It's a New Year with new promise in Islamorada!



In 2022, we are looking forward to implementation of a Fills master plan; a design for a distinctive new Village center where Island Silver and Spice once stood; increased transparency and new energy in Village Hall. All of this and more thanks to the methodical efforts of our remarkable Village Manager, Greg Oravec, with much help from the council and

the staff. With Greg in charge, we expect the progress of the last six months to continue with carefully established and innovative policies and strategies for Islamorada.

Oravec stepped into one tough situation on July 1, his first day as manager. He faced numerous massive problems: the approaching 2023 buildout, continual traffic congestion, a workforce housing crisis, vacation rental struggles, and an often frustrated population.

Oravec has met with many organizations and residents to better understand Islamorada's needs. He is organized, energetic and thoughtful. He is just what Islamorada needs.



We look forward to this New Year with confidence, knowing we are in very good hands. Thank you to Greg Oravec and the Council that selected him!

Sue Miller

CONTENTS

Pg

Environment	2
New Mayor	3
Buildout 2023	3
Walgreens purchase	4
Legislative Session	4
Tree Key Cactus Preserve	5
Land Acquisition	6
Real Estate	7

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.

Why did We Come Here? Why Do We Stay?

Water? Beauty? Fishing? Diving?



It's the Environment!

Let's Protect it!

New Mayor for 2022: Pete Bacheler

On Dec 16 the Village Council selected a new Mayor and Vice Mayor. While the mayor position is largely ceremonial, there is much prestige and perhaps standing with the community and other agencies when you are the “ISLAMORADA MAYOR.” The Village code dictates that any of the five members of council can be selected by a majority vote of the council.



Mayor Buddy Pinder started the process at the December meeting and nominated Henry Rosenthal to be our next mayor. During public comment that followed, approximately a dozen prominent members of the public spoke eloquently about the contributions and the tireless efforts of Mr. Rosenthal over decades and now as a member of council. They enthusiastically endorsed him to be the mayor.



When it was time to vote, Councilman David Webb explained that he believed that it is traditional for the Vice Mayor to be selected as the next mayor and therefore opposed Rosenthal. Mark Gregg agreed that it was important to follow the suggested tradition and he opposed Henry. Vice Mayor Bacheler was the third vote opposing Rosenthal. Thus Rosenthal lost 2-3.

Vice Mayor Bacheler was then nominated to be the mayor and was elected 5-0. David Webb nominated Henry Rosenthal to be Vice Mayor and he was elected 5-0.

And now we wonder if Bacheler, Gregg and Webb will insist on this same tradition and make Rosenthal our mayor next year.

Extend 2023 Buildout or Not?

For months Vice Mayor Rosenthal suggested without success that we should follow Monroe County’s lead and extend the date when we are considered “Built Out” and no longer have new residential permits that can be issued via the Building Permit Allocation System (BPAS).



Monroe County has been issuing fewer annual allocations in order to extend the supply until 2026. A primary goal is to have a few extra years of grant funding available for land acquisition, time to review and change regulations, all to reduce the buildout impact. The concern: expensive “takings” lawsuits if property owners are deemed to have the right to build and there are no permits available.

At the Dec 16 meeting, the Council had to approve the number of allocations for 2022. Rosenthal wanted to reduce the number, to extend the buildout date. Village Attorney, Roget Bryan, said the Council would have to make changes to the Comp Plan and LDRs first. All five members of council now were in agreement with Rosenthal and directed Bryan to begin that process so it could be accomplished in the first quarter of 2022.

We will be watching!



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

The Village Closes on Purchase from Walgreens



The for sale sign is still there but on December 17, 2021, the Village of Islamorada became the proud new owner of the property once home to Island Silver and Spice, and before that, Irene and George's. The Village paid Walgreens \$2,750,000 for the property and will demolish the old store. No decision has been made as to how the Village will utilize this property, considered by many to have the potential to be the centerpiece of the downtown area.

2022 Legislative Session Underway: Watch Bill 512

The 2022 session began on January 11 and already nearly 1,000 bills have been filed. The Village has contracts with two lobbying firms that are to help us assure our concerns are addressed. Where are they? What have they been directed to do? We pay them \$125,000 per year and another \$30,000 to Village Attorney Roget Bryan to coordinate the legislative priorities. There has been no public discussion. What have the lobbyists been instructed to do? We know the League of Cities is lobbying diligently for us. What about our own lobbyists?

Vacation rentals again! Bill 512, regarding vacation rentals, creates additional regulation mandated by the state, preempting the rights of the local governments to establish their own regulations. Bill 512 establishes a limit of \$50 as what local governments can charge for a vacation rental license. From 2003 through 2021 the Village license fee was \$1,000.

Policy 1-2.4.8 of the Village Comprehensive Plan states the vacation rental license fee is to cover the cost of enforcement of vacation rentals and any excess is to be used for affordable housing projects.

The Islamorada Finance Department reviewed seven years of expenses and determined the cost of enforcement of these rentals exceeded the total license fees collected by more than \$232,000 over a 7 year period, an average of \$33,000/yr. Affordable housing has never received any funds provided from the fees, as intended.

For 2022 the council agreed to increase the fee to \$1,325 to bring the fee to a break even level, still not likely to contribute to affordable housing. ***If the Village had to reduce the fee from \$1325/year to just \$50/year the taxpayers of Islamorada would have to subsidize vacation rental enforcement at a cost of about \$380,000/yr.***

Our vacation rental ordinance was passed before 2011 so many original regulations are grandfathered ***for now***.

Islamorada Nature Walks and Talks: Key Tree Cactus Preserve MM 80.5



On January 11th from 8:30am-10:00am residents had the opportunity to enjoy a walk in one of Islamorada's Nature Parks with Susan Kolterman! What a great joy to listen as Susan discussed the flora & fauna of the Florida Keys, as well as how we can landscape our yards with native trees to attract butterflies and birds! Participants were able to see a rare juvenile Key tree cactus and learn to identify a huge variety of native trees at the Preserve.

They also got a glimpse of the many Village improvements: lovely mulched trails, benches and a boardwalk, a dock where kayakers can stop as they paddle through a forest of mangroves.

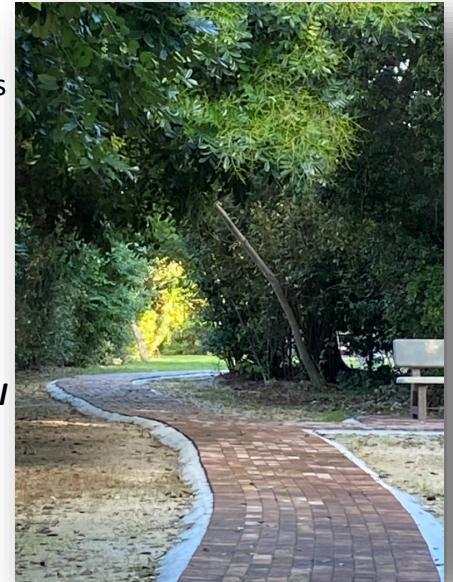


Residents are fortunate to have a local government focused on preserving so many incredibly special tracts of land.

You owe it to yourself to take a walk in the woods, with a guide or on your own. It is a great experience to be in the solitude of a majestic Islamorada hammock of native trees preserved for all of us to enjoy.

Next nature walk: January 27th Windley Key Fossil Reef Geological State Park MM 84.9

Call the Village at 305-853-1685 to reserve space.



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

Land Acquisition By The Village

In 1999, a Land Acquisition Advisory Committee was established to make recommendations to the Village Council regarding the identification of land for acquisition. In 2008, the council felt the committee was no longer needed.

Land acquisition is more critical now. The Village has approximately 33 residential market rate building allocations and 10 affordable allocations left in the Building Permit Allocation System (BPAS) before “buildout” when no more allocations will be available to build new homes. It is estimated that the Village has somewhere around 700 vacant buildable residential lots remaining.

At the suggestion of Councilman Mark Gregg, the Village Council passed a resolution to reestablish the committee at the November 18, 2021 Village Council Meeting.

Staff Liaison: Peter Frezza; Committee Members:

Cheryl Culberson

Kelly Cox

Van Cadenhead

Gregory Dully

Lindsay Fast

Tammie Gurgiolo

Sue Miller

Carolyn Ambler

John Kocol

VACANT

Keeping Islamorada Green: The Overseas Highway through Islamorada makes the Village stand out compared to other municipalities in the Keys because there is so much green complimented by spectacular ocean views at Sea Oats Beach, the bridges and the Fills.



However, there is often pressure to up-zone properties or clear hammocks for monetary gain, conflicting with the goals of our Comprehensive Plan.

Preserving green space is important. Acquiring land for preservation helps do

that.

The Village currently owns 124 properties, 23 outside the Village which were used to increase allocation points before BPAS was approved and County ROGO regulations were still in effect.

The remaining 101 parcels are in the Village: 9 on Lower Matecumbe, 21 on Upper Matecumbe, 17 on Windley Key and 54 on Plantation Key. Some are lots acquired for preservation. Others were acquired for affordable housing, infrastructure, or parks/recreation.

The map to the right, at about MM88.5, is just one example of properties the Village owns—the lots outlined in yellow are owned by Islamorada.



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

The market is HOT!

Real Estate is Selling Like Hotcakes in Islamorada

Some Statistics from the Property Appraiser

Six Months from July 12, 2021—January 12, 2022

166 properties sold in Islamorada (qualified sales) in six months

Ranging from \$180,000 for a boat slip to \$12,975,000 for a single family home on Lower Matecumbe

17 of 166 properties were vacant lots (10%)

Note that some of these were sold in combination with improved properties

25 sales were condominiums (15%)

Ranging from \$300,000 to \$1,200,000

6 of the 25 condo sales were for suites at Cheeca

Ranging from \$385,000—\$615,000

97 sales were single family homes (71%)

Ranging in price from \$435,000 to \$12,975,000, with 71% over \$1 million

Of particular interest:

Caloosa Cove Marina, restaurant, and Safari Lounge sold for \$7,700,000 with hundreds of timeshare weeks transferring for an additional \$800,000. Habanos restaurant, has 12 years remaining on their lease.

Four parcels at **Creekside Motel** sold for \$12,500,000, including the parcel where Made to Order restaurant is located.

The Gimpy Gulch property, with three homes, adjoining Founders Park, sold for \$8,000,000