



The Abrams Agenda

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Palm Beach County Commissioner Steven Abrams

Coming Soon: 911 Text



In light of the Parkland tragedy, public safety remains a critical issue for me. Consequently, at the March 20th Board of County Commission meeting, I requested staff look into being the first county in Florida to provide residents with 911 text messaging, an initiative that is currently being implemented in

countywide and nationally.

I have been advised that the system is currently “live” for testing and training and expected to be released to the public in the next few months. The new system, “Text to 911,” promises to bring even more functionality and versatility to those in need of emergency assistance.

Palm Beach County’s 911 system receives more than one million calls annually, and the majority of them are made from cell phones. Advanced technology is utilized that identifies the phone number and location of a caller, even when the call is from a mobile phone and is transferred from one cell tower to another. In addition, an advanced Geographical Information Systems (GIS) is used to accurately display the physical location of the caller providing quick and accurate information for emergency responders.

As we keep our Parkland neighbors in our thoughts and prayers, we urge everyone to remain diligent and alert for suspicious behaviors or activities, and

Spanish River I-95 Interchange Opens

Back in 2001, when I was mayor of Boca Raton, I held a press conference proposing plans to construct exit/entrance ramps on I-95 at Spanish River Boulevard. After four years of construction and nearly 20 years of planning, the interchange finally opened in March!



Approximately 200,000 motorists travel this area daily and are already experiencing positive results from the multiple ramps that have recently opened.

- Traffic congestion has been reduced, and motorists are experiencing shorter daily commutes.
- It's the fifth interchange for Boca Raton giving regional travelers easier access to local amenities.
- The project includes multimodal connectivity to the expanded El Rio Trail, a popular pedestrian and bicycle thoroughfare.

Construction crews started working on this interchange in 2014. The \$69 million state-funded project included widening Spanish River Boulevard west of FAU Boulevard and constructing 13 bridges between Spanish River Boulevard and Yamato Road. It also included signalized intersection improvements and the addition of auxiliary lanes on Yamato Road.

Camino Real Bridge Construction

Boca Raton's historic Camino Real Bridge will close for a year to motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians while the 79-year-old structure undergoes long-needed repairs.

The connection between the barrier island and the mainland is set to close on April 12. Detour signs will direct traffic to the Palmetto Park Road Bridge.

The \$8.9-million-dollar project will include minor widening of the fixed and bascule bridge elements and relocating the bridge tender house from the south to the north on the island. Additionally, the fender system will be replaced, new mechanical equipment installed, roadway approaches and sidewalks will be reconstructed, and drainage improvements will be made.

Due to the historic designation in 1997, the new bridge will have similar architectural design, the same clearance height and railing.

The two-lane drawbridge handles about 7,600 vehicles a day. Also known as the Boca Raton Club Bridge, it was deemed structurally deficient by the state. Consequently, the project became a priority for the county.

BCC Briefs

At its March 13, 2018, Board of County Commissioners meeting, the board took the following action:

Opioid litigation – selected the team of the Ferrero Law Firm, P.A., Napoli Skolnik, PLLC. LLC, and Stull, Stull & Brody and approved a contract for professional legal services to pursue litigation on behalf of the county for costs,

damages and other relief associated with the opioid epidemic in Palm Beach County.

Housing liaison – discussed the creation of a new ad valorem-funded position in the Department of Housing and Economic Sustainability to serve as the housing liaison at a minimum starting salary of \$77,151 plus benefits. The proposed position will be brought forward for consideration as part of the overall 2019 budget cycle.

Workforce housing – approved the Workforce Housing Program down payment assistance strategy for low, moderate and middle-income groups. A portion of the \$3 million Workforce Housing Trust Fund, which developers pay into in lieu of constructing required lower-priced units, will be used to provide down payments

Inspector General – amended the contract with Inspector General John Carey extending it to June 22, 2022. The amendment modifies the deferred compensation provision and allows for the conversion of sick leave to vacation leave.

Work I.D. – approved an amendment to the adult entertainment ordinance requiring work I.D. cards to be renewed every two years to protect vulnerable children and young adults, increasing the fee for a new work I.D. from \$75 to \$100, and requiring adult entertainment establishments to retain a complete performer roster.

Budget – approved a series of budget amendments and transfers in various funds reflecting adjustments for balances brought forward, other revenue sources, reserves and operating expenses. These are necessary to adjust FY 2018 budgets to reflect differences between actual and estimated FY 2017 revenues and expenditures.

OCR – approved a series of revisions to the Office of Community Revitalization (OCR) America's Next Top Neighborhood grant program to include: 1) clarifying the guidelines and simplifying the application; 2) forming a new grant review committee; 3) increasing the grant amount from \$5,000 to \$10,000; and 4) limiting funding to projects located in specific target areas which are in need of funding assistance.

Orange Bowl – accepted an Orange Bowl Legacy Gift donation to pay for improvements at Glades Pioneer Park in Belle Glade. The Orange Bowl Committee has offered to design, permit and construct a project that will include a synthetic athletic field, an electronic scoreboard, goals, entry monument and related Orange Bowl amenities at the park. The agreement requires a 50 percent match not to exceed \$1.5 million from the county.

Project Knight – conceptually approved a cash grant of \$70,000 and an ad valorem tax exemption of up to \$650,000 over a six-year period for Project Knight. The company is considering investing \$25 million to renovate and equip its existing facility in Palm Beach County and create 100 new jobs over a three-year period. The annualized average wage is \$92,124 with an annualized median wage of \$64,000; estimated five-year local economic impact is \$248 million.

Opportunity Zones – approved Opportunity Zone census tracts for Palm Beach County to be approved by the governor. Opportunity Zones are a federal tax incentive designed to subsidize private investment in designated distressed areas. The recommended census tracts are based on areas identified for potential economic development and for mixed-income or affordable rental housing developments.

Palm Springs – adopted a resolution denying establishment of the Palm Springs Community Redevelopment Agency.

Reentry – authorized the use of general funds to continue reentry services for ex-offenders under the Public Safety Department in the amount of \$393,550 and the Frequent User’s System Engagement (FUSE) program under the Criminal Justice Commission in the amount of \$100,000. The funds would be available in the event expected federal grant funding under the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant Program is not released by the U.S. Department of Justice.

YMCA – authorized staff to evaluate the potential of forming a cooperative partnership with the YMCA of the Palm Beaches to relocate the existing YMCA branch in Palm Springs to undeveloped land within Lake Lytal Park.

Fire Rescue – discussed a typical development costs associated with the proposed acquisition of a 5.09-acre vacant parcel of land in unincorporated western Delray Beach for the development of a Fire Rescue station. Staff was directed to negotiate further with the property owner and update the BCC on options.

Ratification – ratified the appointment of Michael Mackey as Fire Rescue Administrator. He has been serving as interim administrator since January.

Palm Beach property – adopted a resolution authorizing the conveyance of a .02-acre parcel of property on the east side of North Ocean Boulevard to the Town of Palm Beach. This will allow the town to use the property for its coastal management program and relieves the county of liability and maintenance responsibility.

Criminal history records – approved on preliminary hearing and to advertise for public hearing on April 10 the Palm Beach County Criminal History Records Check (CHRC) Ordinance.



**If you have any questions or require assistance, please contact my office
at 561-355-2204 or email at sabrams@pbcgov.org.**
