



From the desk of Commissioner Steven Abrams

2017 Year-End Review

2017 was a busy year for me as your county commissioner. The county experienced sustained economic growth. Job creation increased ahead of the statewide pace. Unemployment was under 4%, the lowest in ten years. Construction jobs finally rebounded. Wages were up nearly 4% in South Florida, the highest of any metro region in the state. Even retail saw its highest level of leasing since 2006 and nearly double 2015. Office and industrial sectors grew, with the industrial vacancy rate dropping to a nine-year low of 4.2%. Boca Raton's fell to 1.2%. To aid the county's economic growth, I worked to secure county incentives for Modernizing Medicine to expand operations in Boca Raton, providing more than 800 new jobs in the field of health care technology. According to the *Palm Beach Post*, this is "Palm Beach County's biggest economic development announcement in years."

At the same time, I continued to fight the good fight to save taxpayers' money, albeit sometimes with mixed results. I led an effort to try to save \$15 million and give greater protections to farmland by selling the McMurrain tract to local farmers, with zero development rights and essential layers of restrictions. I also opposed a proposal to change the county's trash pickup contract, which would increase residential rates. Additionally, for the county to continue to receive federal funds, the Board authorized the Sheriff to sign a certificate of cooperation with the Justice Department to avoid designation as a sanctuary county. We also secured federal funding to defray the costs of the President's trips to Mar-a-Lago.

As you know, I spend a lot of time on Tri-Rail, literally and figuratively, and this year I reassumed the chairmanship of the South Florida Regional Transportation Authority. We fended off efforts to cut all of our state funding! I removed the authority from any responsibility for the "Wave," a Broward County streetcar project, which that county unfortunately may still go forward with despite high cost overruns and obsolete technology.

No recap would be complete without mentioning Hurricane Irma. It was "all hands on deck" for your public officials during those chaotic weeks. One of my most memorable efforts was arranging with the Emergency Operations Center to open a temporary shelter

for the kids who were forced to leave the Aid to Victims of Domestic Assault facility after it was damaged. I am also proud of the county's in-kind assistance to Palm Beach Cares, a citizens' group that formed to raise funds and fly supplies to Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands to assist our fellow Americans.

It was a year of firsts, seconds, and thirds. I had the honor of making the **first** Wawa hoagie in Palm Beach County. A road project in my district was the **second** to be chosen with funding from the voter-approved sales tax. I was proud to lead the fight to allow the hard-working, farmworker-serving **Three** Amigos storeowners in the Ag Reserve to get the same approvals other property owners had been entitled to, despite opposition from some gated communities.

2018 will be the final year of my tenure as your county commissioner due to term limits. I look forward to the best year yet, and also wish you a Happy New Year!

SCORE: A nonprofit helping local businesses

If you, or anyone you know, is a small business owner or budding entrepreneur in need of assistance in areas such as business plans, websites, search engine optimization or cyber security, the Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE) South Palm Beach and Palm Beach Score are local chapters of a national organization that can help!

SCORE provides pro-bono, hands-on expert business advice to existing or new businesses. The SCORE professionals are experts in their fields and offer confidential and free services. They also offer hundreds of free or low-cost workshops, training and events.

SCORE's mission is to foster small businesses through mentoring and education. In addition, they rely on volunteers in the business community. Consequently, they are always in need of individuals such as retired business owners, executives or managers. For more information, visit South [Palm Beach SCORE](#) (in Boca Raton) or [Palm Beach SCORE](#) (in West Palm Beach serving central, western and north county).

BCC Briefs

At the December 5, 2017, Board of County Commissioners meeting, the board took the following action:

Conversion Therapy – approved on first reading and to advertise for public hearing on December 19 an ordinance prohibiting the practice of conversion therapy on minors in

unincorporated areas of the county and in municipalities that have not adopted an ordinance in conflict.

Opioids – directed the County Attorney's Office to prepare a request for proposals (RFP) to secure legal services for the pursuit of litigation against opioid manufacturers, distributors, pharmacies and/or doctors in both state and federal court. To date, over 80 governmental entities nationwide have filed opioid lawsuits, including one in Florida: Osceola County.

Georgian Gardens – approved an award of \$235,290 in Impact Fee Affordable Housing Assistance Program (IFAHAP) funding as a credit for impact fees associated with the Georgian Garden Apartments project. The complex on Community Drive in West Palm Beach will have 87 rental units for the elderly with a multipurpose community room and fitness center. These funds are from interest earned by the impact fee fund.

Banyan Court – approved an award of approximately \$14,496 in Impact Fee Affordable Housing Assistance Program (IFAHAP) funding as a credit for impact fees associated with the Banyan Court project. The complex located at 1716 3rd Avenue in Lake Worth will have 85 rental units with a clubhouse and meeting room. The assisted units will be deed-restricted to remain affordable for no less than 15 years. These funds are from interest earned by the impact fee fund.

Tuscan Gardens – approved the issuance of up to \$9.5 million in industrial development revenue bonds for Tuscan Gardens of Delray Beach Properties, LLC for development of a 7.5-acre site at the southwest corner of Frost Lane and Sims Road in unincorporated Delray Beach. No county funds, nor its taxing power, faith or credit is involved.

Roads – approved on first reading and to advertise for public hearing on December 19 the annual update to the county's five-year road program.

Car storage lot – approved termination of a lease agreement with Palm Beach Imports d/b/a Braman Motorcars for the use of a 1.54-acre vacant field on Cherry Road to store vehicles during construction of a new parking garage. Code requirements for this type of use turned out to be much more extensive and expensive than anticipated. As a result, the company never occupied the property; \$16,548 in monthly rental payments will be refunded.

Building codes – approved on first reading and to advertise for public hearing on December 19 an ordinance adopting county amendments to the Florida Building Code for turf and landscape irrigation systems and repealing and re-adopting an updated FBC 6th Edition (2017) Appendix F of the FBC-Plumbing volume regulating new irrigation systems, which will help to conserve water and protect the public water supply.

Fire prevention code – approved on first reading and to advertise for public hearing on December 19 updated Palm Beach County local amendments to the statewide minimum fire safety code, known as the Florida Fire Prevention Code. Some of the recommended changes to the local amendments include increasing fees for plan review and inspections.

Fire Rescue uniforms – approved and ratified a side agreement amending Article 27-Uniforms to the collective bargaining agreement with the Professional Firefighters/Paramedics of Palm Beach County, Local 2928, IAFF. T-shirts rather than polo

shirts will now be worn as part of the daily uniform by operational personnel at the rank of company officer and below, with the exception of public/educational events where short-sleeve dress shirts shall be worn. Along with battalion chiefs, EMS captains will now be allowed to wear polo shirts.

Airports – approved an interlocal agreement with the town of Palm Beach allowing for the adoption of consistent airport zoning ordinances regulating certain land development activity in the vicinity of Palm Beach International Airport, pursuant to Chapter 333 of the Florida Statutes.

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