

# McKinlay Memo - District 6 Update

Commissioner Melissa McKinlay <district6+pbcgov.org@ccsend.com>

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To: Updates <updates@gladesinitiative.org>



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## Accomplishments As County Commissioner

Over my final few weeks in office, I am reflecting on my years as the District 6 County Commissioner and what I've been fortunate to accomplish on behalf of my constituents. I'm going to share these in the weeks ahead. Here are a few to start.

**Glades Property Values:** One of the signs of economic growth is increasing property values. We've seen them for years across the eastern side of Palm Beach County, but growth was hard to come by in the far western reaches of the County. When I took office, I promised to make the Glades region a high priority. And I did. And, through incredible collaboration, good things are happening.

Property values in Belle Glade, Pahokee and South Bay increased this past year 9.0%, 6.7% and 14.6%, respectively. Despite reporting to the contrary that property values have declined, the Palm Beach County Property Appraiser has reported increased values in the Glades for the past few years. We have a long

way to go, but we are making promising, positive gains.

**Standing Up for Foster Children:** In 2018, Homesafe, a local nonprofit that provides housing & services for foster children, proposed a project in District 6. It faced fierce opposition from neighbors. Many were worried about “dangerous kids” being in the neighborhood. After years of working with foster care agencies through my volunteer work, I knew this wasn’t the case.

The project ultimately passed. The home for young girls opened. It is absolutely beautiful. HomeSafe created a loving place to call home. I took a tour not too long ago. The young girl who showed me around was so proud of her house! She told me it was the first time in her life she ever had her own room and bathroom. When she recognized the benefactor whose name resides above the front door standing next to me by the name on the name tag, the young girl cried while saying thank you. Serving in public office means you get the chance to make a difference. The kind of difference you make depends on the legacy you want to leave.

**Safer Housing:** I've been passionate about creating strong, safe, and healthy housing in my district. Slumlords know they're on my radar. I've shut some down and working on others. We relocated dozens of families from homes covered with black mold, rodent droppings and insects. My time in office has been about making life better for my constituents. Providing dignified housing is doing that.

**Herbert Hoover Dike:** For years my district worried about a break in the Herbert Hoover Dike surrounding Lake Okeechobee. Images from Hurricane Katrina and the aftermath of that storm in New Orleans caused memory triggers of the deadliest storm in Glades history, the 1928 Storm.

A joint effort led by local, state and federal leaders to demand the dike repairs be prioritized and then expedited means the project will be completed three years ahead of schedule! A ribbon cutting is planned for January 2023.

Between leadership at the County level and the 16 County Lake Okeechobee Coalition, proud of the work our team did on behalf of the 16 counties in the Lake O watershed! It's all about teamwork!

**Human Trafficking:** I'm proud of my efforts to combat human trafficking which have led to increased awareness and reporting. Some accomplishments include:

- Pushed to allow local governments to pass local ordinances requiring national trafficking hotline in adult entertainment establishments.
- Became first county in Florida to pass ordinance in accordance with new law and helped get similar ordinances passed throughout Florida.
- Palm Beach County created a website with resources for survivors and educational information to increase awareness.
- County now requires trafficking awareness training for all employees.
- Updated adult dancer registry ordinances to help prevent underaged dancers.
- Hosted awareness training for all strip clubs in county week before Miami Superbowl.

- Led effort to get issue onto National Association of Counties annual legislative agenda. It is now part of their permanent platform.

**Advocating for Women and Families:** I led the effort to bring back the Palm Beach County Commission on Women, an advisory board charged with making recommendations to the County Commission on issues affecting women and families in our County. And, in early 2023, we will host the 1st Annual Women's Summit. My goal? Create an agenda that helps grow women owned businesses, provides affordable childcare and housing, and reduces violence against women.

**Working with Jared Moskowitz during the COVID-19 Pandemic:** When Jared served as the Director of the Florida Division of Emergency Management, he was incredibly responsive to the needs of the Glades during the height of COVID-19. I appreciate him working with me to expand vaccine distribution locations in the Glades and to organize mobile vaccination clinics to farmworker housing complexes to give these workers an opportunity to receive the shot due to their long work hours, limited mobility, and high risk.

**Road Improvements in the Glades:** Advocating for Glades road improvements has been a constant during my time as commissioner. I'm proud to have worked relentlessly with Belle Glade Mayor Steve Wilson to get street lights on State Road 80 approved.

It's hard to maintain roads built on muck! Through a joint effort between the TriCities, the Legislature (and especially PBC Sens. Abruzzo, Rader, and Polsky), and the County, significant road repair funding has been spent in the Glades. Hatton Highway, Old 880, Browns Farm, Duda Rd, Connors Highway, and US27 are just a few of the larger projects underway along with significant local roads. I continue to push to make it easier for "Farm to Market" roads to receive funding, a priority I was able to have permanently added to the legislative agendas of both the Florida Association and National Association of Counties legislative agenda to ensure the issue continues to be a lobbying priority.



### **Volunteering for Hurricane Ian Recovery**

Recently I volunteered with 25 United to assist with recovery efforts in areas impacted by Hurricane Ian. It was a humbling and inspiring experience being able to help our neighbors in their time of need. I can't thank Stephen Leighton enough for helping organize this effort.

I was also appreciative of the opportunity to break bread with PBSO and Martin County Sheriff William Snyder's team who were also there helping!

Thank you to my Palm Beach County team for sending me with supplies, the Junior League of the Palm Beaches for dozens of hammers, and Michelle Oyola McGovern and Michelle DePotter for providing roofing nails. Also, a huge shoutout to Cheney Brothers - Punta Gorda for the "campground" and for feeding us, Charlotte County Commissioner Bill Truex for helping us connect with those that needed our help, and PBSO & PBC Fire Rescue for being on-site, too!

This was a tremendous team effort that helped many people get another step closer to recovering from this devastating storm!





### Belle Glade Housing Forum

On October 19th, the Belle Glade Branch Library hosted a Housing Forum about the need for affordable and workforce housing in Palm Beach County. Community leaders and county staff discussed strategies for improving this housing stock and listened to input from residents about their needs.





### **The Arc Breaking Barriers Breakfast**

On October 19th, I attended The Arc's Breaking Barriers Breakfast at the Kravis Center. This inaugural event recognized October as National Disability Employment Awareness Month and raised awareness about the vital role people with disabilities have in the nation's workforce.



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### **FLITE Center Ribbon Cutting**

I attended the ribbon cutting for FLITE Center on October 19th. It was wonderful welcoming this organization to Palm Beach County. Its mission is to guide young adults aging out of foster care and other vulnerable youth for a successful transition to independence through education, employment, housing, and system of care coordination.



## University of Florida Transformative Gift

On October 12th, I joined fellow County Commissioners and business and community leaders at the University of Florida Scripps Campus in Jupiter for a wonderful announcement by UF that the Dr. Herbert and Nicole Wertheim Family Foundation has provided a \$100 million gift to the campus! This marks the single largest gift from an individual donor in UF history. It will bolster UF Scripps as one of the leading biomedical research campuses in the entire world and allow its continued expansion which will fuel further scientific and clinical discoveries. This is an exciting development for Palm Beach County!



## Walk and Roll to School Day

October 12th was National Walk & Roll to School Day. My Chief of Staff, Kelley Burke, joined Palm Beach County School District and Transportation Planning Agency staff at Everglades Elementary School to celebrate.

There were 51 PBC elementary schools participating in the walk. This was the most schools registered in Florida and the second most in the country! This is a wonderful testament to the collaboration and commitment our County has for child



safety!

*l - r: TPA Executive Director Valerie Nielson, PBC Superintendent Mike Burke, Chief of Staff Kelley Burke, PBC School Administrator for Physical Education Eric Stern*



## **Cayuga Centers Ribbon Cutting**

On October 11th, I attended the ribbon cutting for Cayuga Centers in Boynton Beach. This nonprofit organization is dedicated to ensuring children have a safe, loving home. I joined Mayor Robert Weinroth and Vice Mayor Gregg Weiss to present a proclamation declaring the week of October 10th as Cayuga Centers Week.

I appreciate this organization's wonderful mission to support foster families and serve the needs of children in Palm Beach County.

*l-r: Mayor Weinroth, Commissioner McKinlay, Cayuga Centers Director Megan Wiston, Cayuga Centers South Florida CEO Edward Myers Hayes, State Senator Lori Berman, Vice Mayor Weiss*



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## **Palm Beach County Approves 2 New Affordable Housing Projects!**

In its continuing commitment to provide more affordable housing opportunities throughout Palm Beach County, the Board of County Commissioners at its Tuesday, October 18<sup>th</sup> meeting approved \$8.2M in American Rescue Plan Act Response Projects funding for the construction of new affordable housing multi-family projects. The funding was made available through a Request for Proposal through the Department of Housing & Economic Development.

The projects include Autumn Ridge Apartments Ltd., located in West Palm Beach and Legacy at 45<sup>th</sup> Street also located in West Palm Beach. The 106 unit Autumn Ridge Project will target elderly persons 62 and older and boasts a number of community amenities and programs including easy access to public transportation, close proximity to employment & commercial centers, on-site retail space, exercise facilities, computer training and an outdoor pavilion with grills and shuffleboard court.

Legacy Place at 45<sup>th</sup> Street is within walking distance to numerous commercial businesses including grocery stores, eating establishments and other conveniences such as pharmacies and retail. The project will consist of 48 units built from repurposed shipping containers. These two funding awards will assist in the development of affordable housing leveraging \$47M in other funding and resulting in 154 affordable units.

All County assisted housing units will remain affordable to tenants with incomes no greater than 80% of the County's area median income for no less that 30-years.

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