

A Message from Councilman Schaffer:

I commute on Old Cutler Road daily and know firsthand how bad traffic is on the roadway. We know that, unfortunately, most of the traffic is not generated by Palmetto Bay residents but rather by commuters coming from the South. The real bad news is that most of the County growth is expected to be in the southern areas of the County.

At Monday night's Council meeting, the same general concern was repeated during public comments; the issue of traffic. In South Florida we all struggle with traffic. While there are no simple solutions to the regional problem, there may be short term solutions that will alleviate the problem, at least for Palmetto Bay residents. Recently, I started a temporary speed hump application and installation program that allows residents to request speed humps for their neighborhood streets for a specific period of time. This effort has successfully slowed down cars on neighborhood roads. I will soon be proposing legislation to require that all future schools provide for and offset traffic caused by school operations as well as exploring other traffic calming initiatives and ideas to bring forward. I'm also actively engaged in looking into ways to effectively move traffic in, through and out of our Village. Whatever rock has been left unturned in the terms of traffic solutions; I will turn it and will continue to find solutions for this growing issue. What was not discussed Monday night to address some of the concerns that were voiced by the residents is that we are also proposing to augment our IBus connections to provide direct access to the bus way and encourage more use as an alternative to driving.

I am also grateful for the opportunity to hear the property development concerns of the residents Monday night but I am disappointed at the concerted effort to feed inaccurate information to the residents in a cheap political ploy with the objective of dividing. Anyone desiring to run for office should be doing the opposite. The Village should work together toward logical and workable solutions. I believe that this Village has had enough of the scare tactics, the divisiveness, the hypocrisy and the lies for the benefit of a few. We have all seen the ugly side of manipulative politics and how it can cripple a community. The truth is the land owner had vested (legal) rights already granted to him by previous Council and County actions. What we did as a Council during Monday's meeting was simply move the rights further east and take Village ownership of a landscape buffer area. We also minimized future traffic by seriously curtailing the land owner's right to build a hotel and by requiring a traffic study for the project, even when the property is in an area that, by Miami-Dade County law, is exempt from any traffic study requirements. Traffic affects our quality of life but we can't overturn rights that have already been established. That would lead to costly litigation, community polarization and ultimately failure in the court system.

In the end, the likely outcome would have been even more units, a hotel and loss of an environmentally sensitive piece of land; something that wasn't worth gambling on. I am eager to begin a group we will assemble to provide input on how to improve and restore this vital land the Village now owns for our future and for our residents' enjoyment.

Tim Schaffer