

STATE OF THE VILLAGE

OCTOBER 27, 2010

Good evening. Thank you all for coming to this, my Eighth Annual State of the Village Address.

Words cannot adequately express how proud I am of the residents of Palmetto Bay, how honored I have been to serve as your first mayor, and how excited I am about the future we created together. We have created a community that exceeded all original expectations. Eight years has flown by so quickly, so many projects, so many challenges, so many successes.

I have two purposes for giving this speech tonight: One, is to report on the recent activities in the Village. My second purpose is the most important: to challenge the next Mayor and Council – I am leaving this house in good order, I join my fellow residents in expecting it to stay this way...

We have ended mitigation, we have established significant reserves – over \$7 million. We have provided all the services that you asked for: we created a vibrant park system, improved all infrastructure – roads, sidewalks, drainage – and most importantly, we were extremely fiscally conservative, which is the reason for our excellent bond rating. We never forgot that each of us on the Council is a taxpayer.

Ladies and gentlemen, I achieved my goals – frankly, I exceeded my goals – and it is my pleasure to report to you that in the face of a severe economic recession, and despite the significant challenges the County originally placed

upon us, THE STATE OF THIS VILLAGE IS STRONG, both financially and, even more importantly, as a community – thank YOU for your help.

As I mentioned, “Building Community” is this year’s theme. Actually, it has always been the Village’s theme, since 2002 when we started this adventure with two average regional parks and one run-down US-1 frontage park.

Can you believe what we have accomplished?

- **Coral Reef Park** is undoubtedly one of the most beautiful parks in the County; I hope all of you have visited the Parkview Café – the first LEED-Certified Municipal Building in Miami-Dade County.
- **Palmetto Bay Park** is renowned for its outstanding softball fields, skate park, and boundless playground – soon we will be installing exercise stations and a pavilion in the playground area.
- **Perrine Wayside Park** is home to one of the prettiest dog parks in the state.
- And, we have added **Thalatta Park** and **Ludovici Park** to that remarkable list.

We have been recognized not only as the Village of Parks, but now as a Playful City USA. There is definitely something for everyone – programs for seniors, educational activities at the library, beach volleyball, and summer camp fun.

I find it hard to believe – eight years flew by, but we have completed a multitude of capital projects. As wonderful as our parks are, the bricks and mortar of Palmetto Bay are second-to-none.

Let me remind everyone that the **Public Works Department** consists of just five employees. And although we maintain such lean staffing on this front, our commitment to improving the stormwater utilities and drainage throughout this city has accomplished exactly what we wanted: Standing water on our streets does not exist. Sure, you can send me a picture of standing water in Palmetto Bay, but I challenge you to re-shoot that same spot a half hour later and still show me the same pooling – it won't happen.

We consistently set goals and followed through. Another example, roads and sidewalks – we will be investing \$250 million this fiscal year to fix and pave 51,000 linear feet of two-lane roadways – that's nearly 10 miles of road.

We continue our work to encourage a pedestrian- and bike-friendly community. The Village's "Safe Route to School Study" will be part of the Village's *Five-Year Capital Improvement Element* of the Comprehensive Plan. Encouraging walking and/or biking is important to the health of this community and future residents.

Public transportation is important to us, too. In the very near future, the IBUS route will be revised to provide service to our new Municipal Center and other key areas along US-1.

While on the subject of pedestrians and mass transit, let me spend some time addressing the **Greening of Palmetto Bay:**

- From passing legislation to allowing golf carts; to
- Joining with neighboring communities to begin a green corridor (thanks, Cutler Bay Mayor Paul Vrooman, for his coordination on this effort); to

- Constructing the concession stand (Parkview Café) and a new Municipal Center to meet Green Building standards; to
- Producing the new Village map that promotes businesses close to where we live, which encourages us to shop locally, whereby reducing our carbon footprint.

Palmetto Bay has never strayed from its vision to leave our world better than how we found it.

Personally, I think it is an easy choice: Do I continue to use toxic chemicals, do I continue with wasteful practices, do I continue to contribute to the growing global environmental crisis... or do I make simple sacrifices, live more consciously, and be responsible for helping the world be a greener, more beautiful place to live? I choose the latter.

Going green is not just a passing fad, it is a way of life – for me, for my family, and for our entire community. It's also about quality of construction and reducing the cost of operations.

So, besides the construction of a new Municipal Center and Concession Stand at Coral Reef Park, **traffic calming** has also been a priority – not only for safety, but for improving the environment. Traffic calming devices are important – travel east on 164 Street just past the American Legion Post and you'll see traffic calming at its finest.

Also, the traffic circle on 160 Street and 82 Avenue is terrific. I live within walking distance of that intersection so I have first-hand knowledge of the significant improvement to traffic flow in that area.

When completed, our newest traffic circle at 87 Avenue and 168 Street will likewise help the environment. You may wonder how? Every time you stop your vehicle and wait 30 seconds for the light to change there, your car is unnecessarily burning fuel and emitting harmful gases.

“Roundabouts” not only help our quality of life by ensuring there is more clean air to breathe – they increase safety. There have been countless studies pointing to reductions in emissions, and reduced fuel consumption. And on the safety side, cars can’t speed through traffic circles, thus, we will see reductions in the severity of any collisions that may take place there.

I would like to publicly thank those who have been patient with the short-term nuisance, for the long-term goal. It is an inconvenience, I know. But these projects can’t all be completed when schools are out for summer. I recognize that it is difficult, I lived with the inconvenience when the circle was constructed near my home, I applaud you all – your patience is commendable. Thank you.

Now on to **Public Safety**. Helping us with this effort since the beginning has been our Village Policing Unit, under the Command of Lt. Greg Truitt. This Unit has been great: We continue to have quick response times for service calls and a truly dedicated team. My commitment to the Village’s Policing Unit has been unwavering throughout the years.

I am especially proud of the Units' community outreach programs, and our DARE Officer Patience Glasko, "Officer Friendly" Peter Judge, and RADKids Officer Oscar Roque. Thank you, so much. The work that you all do to help educate our youth is awesome.

Another division I am so very proud of is our **Finance Department**. I have absolutely no doubt we have the best Finance team in the entire state. This is the fifth straight year that Finance has received the "*Distinguished Budget Award*" from the Government Finance Officers Association. Also, this is the fourth consecutive year that we've received the "*Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting*" for the Village's Comprehensive Annual Financial Report.

In addition, we continue our unbroken streak of receiving "*unqualified audits*" – perfection. We consistently keep a careful eye on our operations. We account for each and every dollar we receive, and each and every dollar we spend. As soon-to-be-former Mayor, and most importantly, as a resident taxpayer, I intend to maintain this streak by carefully guarding and challenging the next Council to maintain this unblemished standard.

And, despite the recent economic downturn that affected market values and ad valorem revenue, the Village was able to keep its same **millage rate**. Translation: We continue to provide an excellent service level and without raising taxes. We also don't dip into village reserves – on the contrary, we consistently add to them.

Even though I've spoken in great length about this in the past – I am most proud of the Village for being able to have the **mitigation payments** eliminated. The \$1.7 million we paid between 2002 and 2009 was, in essence, quite beneficial to us: the strong legacy of the mitigation-period remains. It taught the Village how to serve the public on a reduced budget. We learned how to do more with less. I would like to thank Mayor J.C. Bermudez of Doral and Mayor Michael Pizzi of Miami Lakes for their persistence and for joining with me to fight for our money back.

Another example of doing more with less – our **Planning & Zoning** and **Code Compliance** Department.

Let me start with **Code Compliance**. Two Code Officers serve our entire Village, by providing courtesy notices and by educating the public, particularly with regard to the importance of water conservation and water restrictions.

Another important function of this department is the monitoring and management of properties affected by the foreclosure crisis. The Village's *"Lot Maintenance and Abandoned Property Program"* has gone to great lengths to ensure that neighbors are not negatively impacted by foreclosed, abandoned properties. We passed an ordinance to make certain that the *"Mow & Go"* program cleans up any foreclosed properties that are unsightly and unsafe. Lower property values and increased crime are two consequences of a neglected home in your neighborhood – and I will not allow those consequences.

Homes in disrepair are quickly and appropriately maintained and we file liens on the property. We have collected more than \$300,000 in liens from financial institutions with foreclosed properties in the Village. Meaning, this expense does not fall upon the backs of my fellow taxpayers.

Planning and Zoning – can you believe the volume of work this Department produces is achieved by only three employees: the Director, a Zoning Administrator, and an Administrative Aide.

So much is accomplished by this Department, such as:

- Comprehensive Plan development and review – including the initiation of the *“Evaluation and Appraisal Report”* due this year;
- Administration of the Land Development Code;
- Maintenance of the GIS system that tracks development and infrastructure throughout the Village;
- Zoning evaluation, review, and coordination of public workshops; and
- Working with developers to implement the Franjo Triangle & Island Design Guidelines; and lastly,

I’m going to repeat myself – we do so much with so little. I am very proud of staff. This village clearly embodies the phrase *“government lite,”* or better yet, *“government efficient.”*

Our **Building & Capital Improvements Office** – Again, a small department: the Director, Chief Building Inspector, Office Manager, and five employees who are dedicated to providing prompt, professional, courteous service.

Talk about work, here's a brief run-down:

- Oversight of capital improvement projects such as Thalatta Park, Coral Reef Concession, and the future Municipal Center;
- Processing over 2,200 permits and conducting over 11,000 inspections;
- Working to meet the qualifications allowing the Village to become a designated Green-City member; and
- Drafting public education brochures to help make the Building process less confusing to the owner-builder.

Remember these words: We are working diligently to ensure Palmetto Bay becomes the next designated “**LEED-Certified Green City**.” This is one of the most important certification any municipality can achieve – I’m certain it will come to fruition in Palmetto Bay in the very near future.

Speaking of **informing the public**, my thanks to the Village Manager for his significant efforts to engage the public. I staunchly believe that public participation is key. After all, the best government is one that consistently listens to its public. I believe that Palmetto Bay far exceeds the challenge of providing and ensuring access to all. Our Communications Manager Bill Kress has been tasked with this directive and Palmetto Bay remains dedicated to engaging our citizens.

This past year, we made our presence known through Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook, which alone, today, boasts more than 425 subscribers – and is adding “friends” daily. Additionally, the monthly resident e-newsletter “*e-Currents*” is now in its second year with more than 1,100 active subscribers.

We also started a newsletter geared toward our active senior audience (200 subscribers), entitled “Seniors-on-the-Go.” In fact, we have excellent “open rates” and “click through” rates for both publications, indicating we are meeting the demands of an engaged base of readers. It is very satisfying to have such valuable feedback showing that we are providing a desired function – and doing it well.

And we want your feedback. We are always listening. Speaking of comments, we have heard loud and clear that we need a search engine on our website – be patient, it is coming. Bill is currently working to provide a new and improved website with search-engine capability, an enhanced calendar function, and other features that will make your cyber visit to our Village more efficient and more enjoyable via the internet.

And finally, regarding quality communications, the opening of the Municipal Center will allow for the webcast of all future Council meetings – I expect the next Council to follow-through by implementing this.

Currently, our **ratio of employee** to resident is 1 to 314. This bears repeating: 1 to 314. This ratio also includes all of the contracted police officers. So, you may ask, “How in the world do they do it ... How do they take care of the Village so well with so few?” Well, the answer is easy: we carefully select experienced and highly-professional personnel, and provide a working environment that encourages retention and high morale.

Recently, we received two **local grants** for Coral Reef Park and Thalatta Park from the County’s Safe Neighborhood Parks (SNP) program in the

aggregate amount of approximately \$320,000. As a result, the Village successfully completed the construction of the Thalatta Park carriage house and the Coral Reef Park concession building – home to Parkview Café.

Now, on to the cap-stone capital project of this Village’s capital improvement plan – and the most important project – our **Municipal Center**. This state-of-the-art, well-timed facility is nearing completion and will be remarkable.

Two years after incorporating, we knew that the practice of renting administrative office space was neither cost-effective nor appropriate for the long-term. We convened a citizen advisory committee and began looking at options. Ideas came and went; however, in 2009, an opportunity arose that we could not refuse. Our new municipal center will be located in the Franjo Triangle area – an example of promises kept.

There are so many reasons to build in this location, first and foremost: location, location, location. This is the perfect location. We made a commitment to improve this Village – all of this Village. For years, the Franjo Triangle/Island area was suffering from neglect. We stepped up by expanding and constructing the beautiful Palmetto Bay Park. Shortly after, signs of economic development appeared, such as the Indigo Street commercial complex, Palmetto Bay Pointe Building, and the new Teacher’s Credit Union.

This was the right time to purchase and construct a new “home” right in the heart of this commercial district. With the downturn in the economy, we were able to capitalize on low construction costs and create jobs. We were

spending over \$180,000 annually to rent in, honestly, a building that is not sufficient for a productive work environment.

This year's theme is "Building Community" and that is exactly what we are doing with the construction of this municipal center. It will be a landmark building that will be constructed soundly. This building will stand the test of time – no doubt about it.

This building is being constructed for the future of our natural environment – something I insisted upon. This building will be constructed to the highest Green Buildings standards possible – **LEED Certification Platinum**.

Some people don't understand LEED certification levels, so let me explain: Platinum certification doesn't mean it's built out of platinum, rather, by building carefully with the environmental impacts at the forefront, we will experience an estimated \$50,000 in recurring savings each year due to the outstanding energy efficiencies. This is what "*sustainable building design & construction*" is all about.

The features have nothing to do with luxury – but everything to do with preservation and conservation. The building will be powered by the largest array of photovoltaic solar power in Miami-Dade County. We will be a shining example – literally. Additionally, there will be a cistern irrigation and sewer system. Also, we will have very low-consumption restroom fixtures. The air-conditioning system will include zones that will regulate the air conditioning based upon our usage and occupancy – for example, if no one is using a

conference room, that air conditioning for that room will be minimized. We'll also have car-charging stations and a covered bike rack.

This building will have plethora of uses: the police department, all municipal functions, a facility that the community can use for meetings – a building that the community will be proud of, an anchor to the emerging downtown.

Every responsible entity, whether it is a government, business, or community group, must establish and rely on a **strategic plan**. We did just that – we started with over a dozen advisory groups, conducted surveys, and town hall meetings, and stuck to the plan. We listened to our residents, we encouraged their participation, and we responded.

CONCLUSION

So many events, so many milestones – parks, library, road improvements – time flew by so quickly. Words can not completely express how grateful I am to all of you for supporting me over the years, and I will never forget that I will always be one of you – a proud resident of Palmetto Bay.

I'm not exactly sure what my future holds – but, there is one thing that I am sure of: Together, we built this community. Together, we will keep it great.

Palmetto Bay is outstanding and I will always treasure the opportunity that I have had, to serve you all, these past eight years.

Thank you.