

## CITY MANAGER



**Meeting Date:** December 8, 2020

**To:** Honorable Mayor & Council Members

**From:** George Garrett, City Manager

**Subject:** Establishment of Legislative Priorities for the 2020-2021 Legislative Session and the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress

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As a result of COVID, process and procedure for going to either Tallahassee or Washington D.C. this year is in limbo. As we have been in communication with Carol Bracy (Ballard Partners) and Rick Marks, our ability to have a presence through either the state or federal legislative sessions this year will be impacted. Our team will be an essential resource this year, more than they have been in past years. As we come to understand new protocols for travel to either location, we will keep you posted.

Further, because of our limited potential access to the legislative process we believe that the focus of our legislative initiatives will have to be limited to two or three well defined areas/issues.

On the state side, staff believes that the City needs to continue focus on:

- The State assault on vacation rental legislation.
- Private property rights vis a vie state / local partnership in the cost of takings cases
- The Florida Keys Stewardship Act

On the federal side, our primary focus should continue to be acquisition of funds through the Florida Keys Water Quality Improvement Program (FKWQIP). Rick points out that that we continue to have an excellent lobbying team in D.C. Additionally, funding for these programs has been lucrative in the past couple of years with this team in place. Rick indicates that the new administration may be poised to grant more funds to these programs rather than less. All good, if true.

Finally, the City will need to pay attention to the priorities being set by the County. Notably, the County Commission directed their legislative staff and lobbying team to focus on two principle points:

1. Legislative changes providing authority to assess an additional penny infrastructure sales tax for sea level rise related road elevation (referendum assumed).
2. Securing \$20M in Stewardship funding through inclusion in the State's land Acquisition Trust Fund.

We will discuss with the County their further interest in a "50 / 50" Bill designed to assist in potential future takings cases as we come to 2023 and the theoretical end of BPAS and ROGO.

## **STATE INITIATIVES**

In priority order

- **Vacation Rentals**

As in the past, the City must maintain home rule on this issue and hopes for a “carve out” for new initiatives or a simple status quo on the exemption that we currently hold as an Area of Critical State Concern with adoption of our grandfathered Ordinance in 2011. We will work to permanently restore local jurisdiction and through amendment of F.S. 509.032 allow local jurisdictions in the FKACSC to regulate vacation rentals (Regulation of Trade, Commerce, Investments, and Solicitations).

- **Florida Keys Stewardship Act**

The City should continue to support initiatives through the Stewardship Act to fund water quality improvements (wastewater and stormwater), land acquisition, and nearshore waters improvements, such as canal restoration. We should support the County’s efforts to make Stewardship a recurring revenue source.

- **Sea Level Rise \ Sustainability Initiatives**

State and local initiatives are expected this year to provide funding for issues arising from sea level rise. The City should support these initiatives with an eye towards developing planning and engineering level documents that may be utilized to initiate infrastructure improvement projects aimed at hardening, elevating, and extending our ability to utilize infrastructure subject to sea level rise.

- **Private Property Rights / Compensation**

Should the initiative come up this year, the City should continue to support efforts to garner a partnership legislatively with the state toward funding takings responsibilities as they arise. This initiative failed last year.

- **Additional Objectives**

- Continue to fight for Home Rule opposing initiatives that would propose the contrary
- Continue to support funding efforts to develop work force housing and housing for essential personnel.
- Continue to support efforts for expediting Rebuild Florida and other CDBG-DR and MIT programs
- Support, where appropriate, programs aimed at Comprehensive Everglades Restoration

## **FEDERAL INITIATIVES**

- Support continued funding through FKWQIP
- Identify federal grant funding for coastal initiatives related to sustainability and sea level rise
- Identify other sources of applicable federal grant funding/assistance that may be beneficial for City residents (e.g. COVID assistance for local governments, firefighting/emergency response, infrastructure/roads, broadband, housing, etc.)
- Continue to monitor federal initiatives/regulatory/policy reforms that may impact the City (e.g. NFIP, FEMA, FL Keys National Marine Sanctuary, etc.).