

**FORT MYERS BEACH
TOWN COUNCIL WORKSHOP
MAIN STREET PROGRAM
MAY 6, 1999
NationsBank, Council Chambers
2523 Estero Boulevard
FORT MYERS BEACH, FLORIDA**

I. CALL TO ORDER

The Town Council Workshop on the Main Street Program was opened on Thursday, May 6, 1999, at 6:34 P.M. by Mayor Ray Murphy.

Present at the meeting were: Mayor Ray Murphy, Vice-Mayor John Mulholland; Council Members Anita Cereceda, Daniel Hughes and Garr Reynolds; Town Manager Marsha Segal-George and Ron Himmelmann. Also present were Jean Matthew, D. S. Petruccelli and Fran Myers.

Excused absence from the meeting:

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

All present recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS

None.

IV. DISCUSSION OF MAIN STREET PROGRAM

Jean Matthew, Manager of the Main Street Program, described several pieces of literature that she had put into our packets, which she said should give those of us who haven't tracked this program from the beginning an idea of where we were before she started talking about where we are now. She advised that the Main Street Program is both a national and a state program. It is her understanding that rather soon after the Town was incorporated, Anita Cereceda, Marsha Segal-George and Fran Myers put together a huge volume of work that was a proposal for the Main Street Program and then drove up to Winter Haven with all this material and made a presentation to the Florida Main Street people. That day three or four awards were given out and Fort Myers Beach received the number one award.

It took a few weeks to understand that they had this program and what they were supposed to do. But when they did get it together, they hired Shawn Holiday, Ms. Matthew's predecessor, to be the program manager. As it was defined to the Town and to the Town Council at that time, the Main Street district would be in the overlay district. Ms. Matthew stated that she has been told that the overlay district is much too large a district for a normal Main Street program to follow and that the program usually only consists of several downtown blocks of a city. But the Town had other plans for the overlay district anyway.

Ms. Matthew remarked that the Main Street Program has two major things. One is a downtown revitalization program and the other part is to save the historic resources. Some of the older towns in Florida really need to be rescued and Main Street works extremely well in those situations, but our situation needs to be interpreted a little differently from some of the other downtown programs. When she came into the program, Ms. Matthew called the Florida State Main Street boss up in Tallahassee and explained that we have these business pods all along Estero Boulevard and it seemed to her that the impact would be greater if we could do Main Street programs along with these district pods. She asked if it was possible for certain of our activities to extend the length of the island. The man in Tallahassee had been here twice on visits and he knew the island and said it was a great idea. From that came the idea of having concerts in Villa Santini to bring people into that area and acquaint them with the kind of businesses that were there and hopefully, thereby, create even more more business there. We all know how successful that has been.

With the renovation and revitalization of the downtown areas, Florida Main Street has put together a way of thinking about revitalization. It's really kind of a psychological approach. It has

come up with four standing committees. 1) An organization committee will go out into the community and get more volunteers to be on the other committees. 2) A promotion committee, which primarily has activities such as the Villa Santini concerts, crafts shows, etc. 3) A design committee that helps with landscaping and cleaning up. Ms. Matthew said she had a master plan of designs laid out for herself and did not have to work to get that. Their idea is not to be design police, but to work with the Town on whatever areas of design are blighted or offensive or in some way don't fit with the package. They would then try to work on a voluntary basis with the owners or renters, or whoever may be occupying those spaces. 4) An economic restructuring committee.

Ms. Matthew said that what we have here is very very special and we don't need to be like anybody else. We need to cut out our own niche.

Shawn Holiday, Ms. Matthew said, was hired part time in a joint venture between the Town and the Chamber Foundation in a 50-50 arrangement. The Town paid the salary of the part-time manager and also left a cushion of money to be spent for travel and any necessary supplies. The Chamber of Commerce gave in-kind donations. Ms. Matthew said that she was provided with her own office, equipment and supplies. She feels that the information she has gotten from working in the Chamber has been unbelievably wonderful and helps her go much much faster with the things that she's trying to do.

When they were first getting together, one of the things that the Economic Restructuring (ER) Committee was supposed to do, and Shawn went ahead with it, was an arrangement with a place called Market Tech. This is a marketing group in Atlanta, Georgia, which works with the Florida Main Street Program. Some of their people came down to Fort Myers Beach and did a summary survey of who we are and who we'd like to be and then said that they would tell us what we need to do and they would put it all together at the end. Because we get a discount on services, the arrangement cost the Town about \$3,000 for what would ordinarily cost \$10,000 - \$12,000.

There are three kinds of surveys that are designed by the Market Tech firm. One is for the owner of a business, one is for the employees of the business and one is for consumers. They are in the process now of going around and getting these surveys done. When finished, the surveys will be sent to Market Tech, who will do the analysis and print out all the information from them. They would like to be a clearing house for certain kinds of information -- for Realtors, for new owners of businesses, for people who are looking to expand down here.

Ms. Matthew explained that with each new program manager, there will be new methods of doing things. Her methods differed from Shawn Holiday's, but the downtown area is still an area of focus. The program manager is a coordinator or facilitator for the standing committees. For each standing committee, you have three regular committee members. Anyone else who participates would be a subcommittee member. People are matched to committee needs. The first application of the Main Street Program to the Town of Fort Myers Beach brought several people from Tallahassee and also from larger towns to serve as consultants for us. People were called to work on the different committees they would fit into. The turnout was very good. The problem was to keep that momentum going. Committees met once a month, but then you didn't hear from anybody until the next month. The Design Committee on which Ms. Matthew serves was able to get bike racks for the Town. One of the things that the Design Committee is supposed to do is to inform the public about what Main Street is doing. It is an information processing Center. Ms. Matthew said she figured the best way to do that was to write a column for the newspaper to explain the Main Street Program. She has done this for the last year and it has worked out pretty well.

One of the other possible things for a Design Committee to do is to educate and inform the business people who are involved in the overlay district about designs, but this hasn't been done yet because of other commitments. Now that they are ready to start, the question is how do we get the general public to come? How do we interest people in design changes?

The Economic Restructuring Committee went to banks in the area and asked for special loans for persons who wanted to redesign their storefronts. They have nearly finished with that and it will be presented to the CRA in the near future.

Ms. Matthew talked about the benefits of sharing information with others involved in a Main Street Program. This has also been an ongoing project of hers.

Ms. Matthew referred us to a map in our packets which they had used to go down every street in the district and find out what buildings belonged to whom and what activities were going on in those buildings. Their reason for doing this was because of the concept of cluster businesses. They have found on Fort Myers Beach, however, that the cluster concept doesn't work as well as it does in some other places because we are very small. It doesn't take very long for somebody to walk the whole triangle. But they do use the concept as a rule of thumb to find out where there are possibilities.

What they run into in looking at downtown areas is that there are some historic buildings that have been maintained pretty much the same way as they were originally. There is such a building on Crescent Street that looks terrible. Ms. Matthew said she went to the owner and started telling him about the history of the building, which was built as a barracks in 1942 for the Coast Guard. In 1947 it was taken over by the American Legion who moved it to where it is now located on the corner of Second Street and Crescent. It subsequently was continuously in use by several other organizations. The building is intact and sound and an addition was built onto the back. The present owner is very interested in doing something about historic preservation. The ER Committee will go out and talk to some of the business people who are here already who might want to start up a restaurant in that building and have a plaque or something of that nature attached to it. So by identifying areas in the overlay district which are historic, they can go to the persons who own those buildings and ask them if they want to get onto the historic register. One of the downsides to that, though, is that you can't change the building.

Dan Hughes stated that he was under the impression that the building on Crescent Street was now owned by Matanzas Inn who planned to tear it down and build a parking lot where it now stands.

Ms. Matthew stated that only a couple of weeks ago the owner of the Matanzas Inn told her he was not planning to tear down the building. Mrs. Segal-George, however, said that he couldn't do the modifications that he has asked the Council for unless he does. Ms. Matthew felt that perhaps Economic Restructuring could have the building moved to another location. Dan Hughes stated that he wishes the Council had known that it was a historic building.

A part of our packet, Ms. Matthew informed us, talks of historic markers, which have to do with historic buildings that are on the historic register. There are several of those buildings on this island and they are now in the process of inquiring if the owners want to be listed on the historic register and getting those papers together.

There are a list of historic sites in the back of the comprehensive plan, and the function of Main Street is to encourage the preservation of such buildings.

The idea of this workshop, Ms. Matthew stated, was for her to come in and give us some knowledge of what they're doing and why they are doing it, and to get our feedback on what we would like our Main Street Program to do.

Questions and Comments from Council:

Councilman Reynolds told Ms. Matthew that he'd like to thank and compliment her for the information, most of which he had not known. He understands the program a lot better now. Through her concerts at Villa Santini and other locations, she has done something for one little point on the Island that had been overlooked. He thinks that was really a big plus for people who live here on the Island and all the winter visitors that we have. He feels that her tremendous outline should work, because it is certainly a well-planned project that she is doing in steps. He is very impressed.

Vice Mayor Mulholland also complimented Ms. Matthew on her work. He has enjoyed all her concerts that he has attended. He asked if she would be using the information received at the February charette in her Design Committee and she said they absolutely would be using it.

Vice Mayor Mulholland also pointed out that the tenth point in her job description indicated a need for budget development and accounting and reports. He asked if we would be seeing reports from her indicating how money was spent and how effective these concerts are. Also, he doesn't see where she has a staff. Will she get any help in generating some reports back to us? Ms. Matthew replied that she is paid to work 20 hours a week, but she doesn't think she's ever been able to work just 20 hours in one week. The way that it is set up right now is that the program manager is paid \$24,000 a year, \$2,000 a month. And there is \$6,000 left out of that

commitment for things like travel or supplies. She thinks that a certain amount of that has been used for concerts. She sent Marsha Segal-George a memo which told about the concerts, which was the most expense of anything. In that memo is a breakdown of what the concert costs through April 1999, a total of around \$17,000 and change. That constituted the bulk of the expenditures. It is not a breakdown through the summer, and she has an interest in doing some other concerts. As 50-50, the Chamber contributes in kind for her to have an office, to have people who answer the phone for her and everything else, and almost all of her supplies come through the Chamber. She had one travel expense of \$87.96. So most of that \$6,000 was paid out for concerts.

Mr. Mulholland wanted to know if Ms. Matthew would be able to break her expenditures down into any more detail. Is business up for the merchants just during the concerts? Is it up overall? Jean Matthew told him that's like nailing jelly to the wall; it's a little bit tricky. Because they have had concerts every month and they've had an impact from this, she has been trying to get the merchants, especially down at Villa Santini, to have a way of devising whether or not the concerts have impacted. They have met week after week and month after month on this matter. Essentially, the only way that they are measuring impact right now is by the people that come in the store and say "I was at a concert the other day and I realized you were here and I decided I wanted to come back and shop." Ms. Matthew said that she considered that as a pretty good source. Merchants say that for every person who has been in their store before a concert they have approximately five extra customers after a concert. Villa Santini has done all kinds of special things for the shoppers in addition to the concerts, and so they have really built up a clientele as a result. Starting with only two merchants, now twenty-five merchants cooperate there by offering gift certificates and various prizes in drawings. So they are seeing a response from the businesses as well as from the community. Ms. Matthew said she would like to show us in black and white exactly what the impact has been, but it was very tough to measure it quantitatively beyond things like that.

To get concerts started in Key Estero, similar to her efforts in Villa Santini she had to meet with the merchants for three months once a week before she got five merchants who were willing to commit to having a concert down there, and they were still very dubious about the idea. They had a great concert in March, but to a small crowd, and they are interested in doing more concerts. But as a small shopping center, they can't even approximate doing what Villa Santini can do, yet customers increased from one to eight after the drawings.

Mr. Mulholland asked if the Chamber would consider ascertaining if the merchants in Key Estero are also members and advising them that Ms. Matthew was coming. Jean Matthew said that this had been done. The Chamber people have been fantastic. Whenever they have had a chance to help with these things they have jumped right in. The businesses who are members of the Chamber are usually the ones who react first and who are really interested in getting on board. Mr. Mulholland said then he would retract from asking for some analysis of business and just ask her as the recipient of the funds to account in more detail. Ms. Matthew advised that she had received a printout just last week, but she wasn't able to successfully break out the \$6,000 herself. She would need help from the Town staff. But she does think that every dime that goes into this program needs to be accounted for to every taxpayer on the Island. Mr. Mulholland said to let him know if he can help with the reports.

Jean Matthew said she had also included in our packets a report of the Chamber's in-kind contribution. If we have any questions about that, Mr. Petruccelli is here tonight and is willing to answer questions.

Dan Hughes advised that the whole Main Street Program has been very successful and prolific and a very wonderful contribution to the community. He told Ms. Matthew that in her memo of April 8 she shows the cost of concerts at Villa Santini as \$8,500 followed by a double asterisk. He cannot find the reference to the asterisks in the memo. The reference wasn't located, but Ms. Matthew said that the breakdown on the concerts was that on one occasion the Town paid the entire amount of \$2,500 for a concert. She believes that was in October of 1998 and it was to make up for a rained out concert. The remainder of the \$8,500 was paid out in \$1,000 increments by the Town each time there was a concert. Each concert runs around \$3,500, so the Town is paying approximately one-third of the cost of each concert.

Dan Hughes referred to the first year service agreement between the Division of Historical

Resources and the Town that was in our packets. Did it by its term expire December 31, 1997, and was it renewed? Town Manager Segal-George advised that we had made a three-year commitment when we agreed to become a Main Street community and that there is a document with regards to this commitment. Mr. Hughes asked if the agreement had been extended since its expiration in 1997, and Mrs. Segal-George said that she didn't believe so. Jean Matthew said that it hadn't, and that's one reason why she is doing the workshop. The three-year agreement terminates in December of this year and it will be up to the Council to extend the program and do other things with the program. Town Manager Segal-George advised that technically it terminates this fiscal year on September 30.

Council member Anita Cereceda advised that when we applied for the Main Street Program in May 1996, in our application we told them that we were a new town and would not be able to start our program for at least six months and they still agreed to let us do it. She thinks that's why the timing is rather off on this. But the other important thing for us to focus on at this point is that there is a distinct difference between the Main Street Program that we applied for and were granted and what has become of our Main Street Program. Certain aspects are shared, but she thinks there is a very different perception by our community of what the program is and what the State awarded us as a Main Street Program. What the State awarded us could only pertain to the Times Square Overlay District, because that was the Main Street Program. In discussions with the Main Street people from Tallahassee, Anita Cereceda said that it was her original hope that our Main Street Program could be Estero Boulevard and that it would go from one end of the Island to the next. The response was absolutely no. They look at a very small commercial section and that's how they award this designation and the assistance that comes from the State for it. Part of the way that we got the designation was that the Town had to commit to a three-year financial partnership with the Chamber Foundation, not the Chamber of Commerce, for \$30,000 a year for three years. The State of Florida gave us \$10,000. The amount of \$24,000 of the \$30,000 was designated to the part-time employment of the Main Street director. The other \$6,000 is spent on whatever else comes along with that project. Right now we are at the turning point of how we want to define the Main Street Program, because it will be our Main Street Program. Anita Cereceda said she believes the three years will end in our fiscal budget month this year.

Anita Cereceda said that she is regularly in touch with Neil Fritz in Miami. The most difficult part about a Main Street Program as designed by the State of Florida is bringing together the committees that Jean Matthew is talking about to actually push on and create a surge of economic redevelopment, revitalization and historic preservation, which this program is designed to do. The reason why we felt it was a perfect fit with the Town's incorporation was because that is exactly what we were doing anyway. The program would also be a stepping stone. The Main Street Florida Program wants to show something as a Main Street Program. The closest one that you can see other than ours is Naples Fifth Avenue, which is a tremendous success story for Florida Main Street. But it is a success story that isn't just Main Street but something that Main Street can hang its hat on. A lot of dynamics were working all at once and it was a wonderful opportunity for us.

The State, according to Ms. Cereceda, defines this program with definite parameters, and those parameters do not include concerts at the Villa Santini. But the Town of Fort Myers Beach has the opportunity now, as we rethink this project, to decide what our Main Street Project is going to be. How do we define the program from here on out?

Jean Matthew stated that her Main Street Board met with Bob Trescott and that he was extending the program all the way down Estero Boulevard. He had even changed the paperwork. As far as he was concerned, up in Tallahassee it has been extended down Estero Boulevard in the last year.

Dan Hughes said that as he understands it our current relationship with the Chamber Foundation and with the State of Florida's involvement with this will both end at the end of this fiscal year. He was told that this was true.

Referring to the demographic review from the Economic Development Office of Lee County, Councilman Hughes said that the population in 1990 is shown to be 6,794. Another document shows the total population to be 9,284. Town Manager Segal-George stated that our State revenues are calculated on the smaller number.

D. J. Petruccelli, President of the Fort Myers Beach Chamber of Commerce and Secretary of the Chamber Foundation, said that their figures show that the square miles of Fort Myers Beach are 10.34 sq. mis. Our figures show 3.14. The reason for that is that they took all of the 33931 zip code. They are asking that a different zip code be given either to Fort Myers Beach or to the other part so that in the future we'll have exact figures. Ray Murphy said that next year we'll have a better handle on it when the census is taken. Mr. Petruccelli said it was confusing when people say we show a projection for Fort Myers Beach in the 33931 area of 12,146 for the year 2003. And 75+ in the year 2003 would be 1848, or more than 25% of the total population.

Dan Hughes asked if there was any possibility that the Chamber Foundation would be willing to renew their funding at the expiration of this fiscal year. Mr. Petruccelli said that in order for the Chamber Foundation to say yes, it would have to come before the Chamber Foundation Board for final approval. Dan Hughes said he hoped they would see it in their hearts to extend the funding.

Anita Cereceda said that Jean Matthew was focusing on a \$6,000 difference between her salary and the \$30,000. Is it correct that we have spent in addition to that \$17,986.41? Anita was told yes by Town Manager Segal-George, who advised that the \$6,000 has been put in the budget to pay for things like travel and office supplies. That doesn't mean that in any given fiscal year that \$6,000 would be totally spent. The problem we had is that we had to put more dollars in there beyond salary. Anita Cereceda said that \$90,000 has been allocated by the Town budget over the last three years. If you were to subtract out of that \$90,000 everything that has been spent by Main Street and include other requests that have come in, how much has been spent? Mrs. Segal-George advised that with respect to budgeting, they don't carry line items over. They empty everything at the end of the fiscal year into the carryover figure and everything starts fresh on October 1. We can be shown theoretically what was left over every year, but the reality is that nothing was left. The other side, too, is that in the budget you carry three different line items with regards to the events that you've been funding. That's where those dollars have been allocated and that's where they've been expended, not from Main Street. What they can do is compile all that information together and show us that.

John Mulholland said he'd like to see how the taxpayers' money has been spent versus what was allocated and what was budgeted. To him that's basic accounting and he knows that Jean cannot possibly do that function by herself. Mrs. Segal-George stated we can do that.

Councilman Reynolds said he had a question regarding Ms. Matthew as part-time director versus full time. Somewhere in the contract it says that there must be a full-time director and that any time it doesn't happen, they will proceed to get one. How is this program getting by with a part-time director,

Mr. Reynolds wished to know. Jean Matthew's response was that she works a lot of hours that she's not actually paid for, and that's one of the things that she was going to ask this Council about tonight. Because it's a 50-50 program with the Chamber and because it's a three-year commitment for \$30,000, the State Main Street people have asked her why this program hasn't gone to full time. She said she doesn't actually know the reasons behind that, but it hasn't and they've gotten along with putting in extra hours each week. One of her prayerful requests to the Council would be to fund this program again and to pay the program manager, whether herself or someone else, for at least for 30 hours per week. There is an enormous amount of work to do and she can't see how to do it in 20 hours.

Garr Reynolds told Ms. Matthew that he sees she was paid extra for eight hours. He showed her on the memo dated April 8 where it said eight hours of Main Street Manager equals \$133.36. He asked if she got paid extra on occasion, to which she replied no. Ms. Matthew said she didn't know where the \$16.67 per hour came from. It is an incorrect figure totally and it had to do with the Key Estero concert only. She said she had to figure out the hours of Ed Lawler. The hours of using the Town's stage was a number she didn't have at that time. Since then she has found out that it's a flat fee of \$125 for Main Street to use the Town's stage. Then if you figured her time in it, it would be eight hours of her time. But she is not paid additionally for any time. She is paid at \$25 an hour for 20 hours a week, a flat \$2,000 per month. But when someone asks what a concert cost, then she figures some of her costs into it too.

Anita Cereceda explained how the salary came about. They had \$30,000 to work with and

they said how much of this is going to be somebody's salary? And they picked \$24,000, which breaks down to \$25 an hour for 20 hours a week.

Ms. Murphy handed Mayor Murphy her resume which the Main Street Board had said they would like for him to have.

V. PUBLIC COMMENTS

A. GAIL OBER

Ms. Ober, addressing Anita Cereceda, said that when Ms. Cereceda was doing the breakdown of the figures, she had mentioned \$10,000 that came from Tallahassee and she wondered where that money had gone. She was told by Town Manager Segal-George that that money defrayed our initial costs in the first year. It was to be used only one time. Ms. Cereceda stated that it was part of the award for the designation. What is really considered the real gift to whatever group gets the designation is the support that is given from all the state agencies and the other Main Street programs.

B. CEEL SPUHLER

Ms. Spuhler said she was quite impressed with what Main Street is and that she actually didn't know anything about it until tonight's presentation except for the concerts at Santini Plaza. She really feels it's a terrific idea. And she feels that the historic markers are a great idea because there is more history here than people even know, and for such a short time in the 1900s. That gives impetus to families enjoying and taking back a lot from Fort Myers Beach. She hopes to tell more people around where she lives what it's all about.

C. NANCY HENBERGER

Ms. Henberger said she came tonight to support Jean Matthew, but she also feels that she has learned a tremendous amount. She felt Ms. Matthew's presentation was very good and very informative. Most of us have been exposed to the concerts, but it was good to know all the work that goes into the Main Street Program. A new image for Fort Myers Beach has been presented.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:13 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Lorraine Calhoun
Transcribing Secretary