

# MINUTES of BELLE ISLE RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION (BIRA)

January 21, 2009, Meeting Room at 20 Island Avenue

Scott Diffenderfer called the meeting to order at 7:13 p.m. and introduced Lynne Bernstein, (Community Outreach Coordinator for Belle Isle), Commissioners Jerry Libbin, Saul Gross, Jonah Wolfson and John Oldenburg of the City's Greenspace Management Division. He then introduced the Belle Isle Board Members at the head table – Rosemary Ravinal, Irene Sperber, Josh Fisher, Vice President and webmaster, Herb Frank, Barbara Frank, Keith Hark, Treasurer, Sandy Money, Secretary, and David Ballard.

## MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 6, 2008 MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Sandy made a motion that the Minutes be approved; Irene seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Scott reviewed the issues the Association is addressing including: outstanding issues in the Park; speeding on Island Avenue North; the pump station odor; and additional landscaping needs. He then asked the Commissioners and invited Guests if they had anything to report to the members.

Jerry Libbin described the Meeting on Foreclosures he held on the Beach and comparable meetings state-wide, as Florida is second only to California in Foreclosures. The objective is to get the state law changed so that banks are responsible for all condo fees and assessments for everything over 6 months. Currently, the banks are only responsible for UP TO six months of payments and so they delay for months or years the sale of distressed properties. This is taking its toll on condo associations with multiple foreclosures and the financial burden is placed on the remaining property owners in good standing. Dan Gelber in the Senate and Julio Binder in the House are supportive of this effort.

Saul Gross noted that South Pointe Park should be open in February or March; there have been improvements to the Botanical Gardens and the park next to the New World Symphony building. In addition there is a 40% increase in recycling, reducing trash removal costs significantly. There are now 200 locations for public recycling.

Lynn Bernstein provided attendees with a list of Condo-related Courses in 2009 with the State of Florida Condominium Ombudsman's Office.

Barbara Bisno, President of the Venetian Causeway Neighborhood Alliance (VCNA) reported that her group and two other Venetian Island groups are having a crisis of leadership. There is too much to be done by them separately and significant overlap. They are planning on combining all 3 groups and are currently seeking a part-time Executive Director for the new organization.

Issues of concern to BIRA members include:

**Streetscape.** This over \$8 million undertaking for the Venetian Causeway, funded by different governmental groups, is scheduled to have final plans completed by mid-March and construction underway in September. It includes landscaping and bridge repair in the spring, with the Belle Island bridge closed for approximately 30 days. The Streetscape for Miami Beach streets has been approved, but is not yet funded.

**Toll Plaza.** VCNA is opposed to the plan to make the toll part of the other toll system, with their transponders instead of the unique, and less expense, annual issue of the Venetian Island transponder. There has also been a proposal to place county-level cameras to trap speeders, but without additional county-supported police for enforcement. There is also a law suit against the County by a resident who believes that those owning property on the Venetian Islands should not have to pay to access their property. VCNA opposes that as well.

Finally, Rivo Alto is complaining about the problem of staff and guests of The Standard parking on their streets. (Scott noted that The Standard is under a new management team and, although a representative was to attend this meeting, she is not present.)

John Oldenburg said that he is responsible for Greenspace Management for the City. He noted

that 69 new trees were planted in the Park and that he conducts a daily review of the plants in the park and creates a list of problems. Currently they are cleaning areas in need, but planting will begin in March. There is money for plants to cover each of the buildings. He left his business card for all interested members.

Scott reported that the responsible Engineer was to attend this meeting to describe the attempts to stop the street flooding, which currently require replacement of an inadequate valve. Other items of concern to BIRA are:

Speeding on North Island Avenue is being addressed by city staff. Procedures to install speed monitors have been initiated which will help state the case for traffic-calming devices including a stop sign and/or speed cushions;

Pump station stench has been noted. Commissioner Gross report that this same problem has been resolved by the Contractor at other sites. Commissioner Wolfson agreed to put this issue on the Commission Agenda.

Proposed changes to 31 Venetian Way are scheduled for review by the Design Board at 8:30 a.m. on February 3, 2009. The BIRA Board will review the proposed changes at their next Board Meeting.

Members of the audience questioned the West Avenue Overpass Bridge status and were told that, although the Housing Authority owns the land, there has not been a move to have it happen, so that may take 3 to 5 years. Another questioned the Mooring Proposal made by Jerry Libbin at this meeting last year. Again, there seems to be no general support for the organization he was seeking.

#### TREASURER'S REPORT

Keith reported that BIRA was incorporated as a Not-For-Profit organization at this time last year. We currently have \$286 in the bank account, donated by Board Members. It was suggested that the Boards of Directors of buildings on the Island be asked to share the benefits of money-saving approaches provided by BIRA.

#### NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT

Committee Chair Irene Sperber noted that the Board is always interested in additional members and anyone interested in joining the Board should obtain the application from the web site and submit it. She noted that the Board meets monthly in person or by e-mail. She thanked her Committee members, Barbara Frank and Josh Fisher, and explained that the following Board Members have one year left in their two year terms: David Ballard, Barbara Cowan, Keith Hark, Rosemary Ravinal and herself. Those proposed by the Nominating Committee for two year terms starting this evening are: Scott Diffendorfer, Josh Fisher, Herb Frank, Barbara Frank, Nancy Liebman and Sandra Money. David made a motion to elect those individuals to a 2 year term; Rosemary seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

There being no further business, Sandy made a motion to adjourn the meeting. David seconded. Motion approved unanimously. Scott adjourned the meeting at 8:17 p.m.

Prepared by:

Sandra K. Money