

LOCAL + BUSINESS

OIG: Councilman's aide's firm violated policy

Inspector General reports Riviera aide to county after she formed company without city's permission

By Tony Doris
The Palm Beach Post

RIVIERA BEACH — City Councilman Terence Davis' legislative aide formed a political consulting company that took payments, sometimes allegedly at Davis' direction, from companies doing business with the city, according to the Palm Beach County Office of Inspector General. In a report released Tuesday, Inspector General John Carey said he reported

legislative aide Regina Williams to the county and Florida ethics commissions for investigation, for failing to file an outside employment disclosure form with the city. City policy requires the forms, to determine whether outside work conflicts with city responsibilities, or in this case, with votes taken by Williams' supervisor, the councilman.

Carey referred Davis to the ethics commissions, and to the Florida Election Commission for possible campaign reporting discrepancies during his 2016 election filings.

The report noted that Williams' firm, Innovative Consulting LLC, took in more than \$15,000, between

October 2015 through January 2017, when its bank account was closed, including payments from Davis, former Councilwoman Dawn Pardo and Port of Palm Beach Commissioner Wayne Richards, among others. Richards is an attorney who represents clients before the city council.

Williams' firm also took payments from Stonerock Shipping Corp. and Viking Associates, among other companies or individuals who did business with the city, the inspector general reported.

Williams, assigned to Davis' office since March 2013, said no one told her of the city's

See DAVIS, B4



The Office of Inspector General has reported Riviera Beach City Councilman Terence Davis' aide Regina Williams to the county and ethics commission for investigation of possible violations. [TONY DORIS/PALMBEACHPOST.COM]

Surfers hit waves despite chill



Surfers enjoy the 4- to 6-foot waves Tuesday near the Juno Beach pier despite early morning temperatures near 50 degrees. [RICHARD GRAULICH/PALMBEACHPOST.COM]

County mulls tearing down, building new animal shelter

By Jeff Ostrowski
The Palm Beach Post

Faced with a hefty price tag to renovate Palm Beach County's Animal Care and Control kennels, county commissioners on Tuesday directed county staff to research the cost to tear down the 27-year-old facility and build a new shelter.

"Let's start from scratch," Commissioner Melissa McKinlay said. "The facility right now is so outdated. I don't think it's efficient to keep putting Band-Aids on it."

The county already plans to spend \$21 million generated by the penny sales tax to refurbish the Animal Care and Control facilities on Belvedere Road. However, that price tag doesn't include air conditioning, and temperatures in the kennels can top 90 degrees during the summer. After animal lovers

complained about the lack of air conditioning in the proposed renovation, commissioners told county officials to estimate the cost of including air conditioning. Animal Care and Control officials on Tuesday presented two plans that include air conditioning, one that would cost \$26 million and another priced at \$32 million.

It's unclear whether commissioners would be willing to spend significantly more for air conditioning. Commissioner Robert Weinroth called even the cheapest estimate "way, way too high" given the county's many priorities.

"The issue of the heat needs to be addressed," Weinroth said. "But I think we need to step away from this and figure out some way to privatize this."

Lauree Simmons, president of Big Dog Ranch Rescue in Loxahatchee

Groves, also said the \$21 million estimate sounded high. She told commissioners her shelter recently built an air-conditioned facility for \$12 million.

"It can be done," Simmons said. "It's just a matter of proper design and planning."

McKinlay suggested taking the matter to county voters via a referendum. While that's uncertain, commissioners told Animal Care and Control to hire a consultant to estimate the cost of tearing down and rebuilding the county's kennels.

When they were built in the early 1990s, the county's kennels weren't designed to provide air conditioning. The facility, home to about 200 dogs, has three kennels in stand-alone buildings, each about 8,000 square feet. The

See SHELTER, B5

Sheriff's office: 'Zero tolerance' for teen trouble

Deputies to step up patrols near Wellington park, plazas to control after-school violence

By Kristina Webb
The Palm Beach Post

WELLINGTON — A new effort by the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office will target teens who businesses and residents say terrorize two shopping plazas and the surrounding area.

The action follows a Jan. 7 incident where a 14-year-old

was stabbed at Wellington's Goldenrod Park in what officials have described as a "school-related altercation."

Deputies will step up patrols between 3 and 6 p.m. in the Goldenrod Park area, including the Wellington Marketplace and Courtyard Shops at Wellington shopping plazas at the intersection of Greenview Shores Boulevard and Wellington Trace, where the sheriff's office has seen "an increase of incidents

See SHERIFF, B4



So new it doesn't have a name: proposed 24-story condo tower at 1309 S. Flagler Drive won initial approval from the West Palm Beach City Commission. [PHOTO PROVIDED]

24-story condo on narrow waterfront lot gets initial OK

By Tony Doris
The Palm Beach Post

WEST PALM BEACH — The City Commission Monday gave initial approval to a 24-story condo at 1309 S. Flagler Drive, paving the way for more millionaire aeries

on the waterfront just south of downtown and dismissing complaints the 300-foot-tall structure would be far bigger than city regulations allow on only a lot that is less than 1.4 acres.

See CONDO, B5

Science teaching would evolve in schools under proposal



Frank Cerabino

The Florida Legislature is considering a bill that would give public school students alternative facts to so-called "controversial theories" of science such as evolution and climate change.

The bill is being pushed by the Florida Citizens Alliance, which thinks that Florida's kids are being "indoctrinated in a public school system that undermines their individual rights and destroys our founding principles and family values."

After all, every child should have the right to be as proudly misinformed as the most uneducated parent in his or her school district.

The bill's sponsor, Sen. Dennis Baxley, R-Ocala,

worries that school textbooks can lead children toward a harmful uniformity of thought.

"Nothing is ever settled if it's science, because people are always questioning science," Baxley told the Tampa Bay Times. "If you look at the history of human learning, for a long time the official worldview was that the world was flat. Anything you now accept as fact comes from a perspective and you learn from examining different

schools of thought."

So, it's best to mix beliefs with science and call it even. Who knows what's right? Both sides. Both sides. That's just being fair.

Gravity: It doesn't have to get you down.

You might think the hypotenuse is always the long side of a right triangle, but let's just agree to disagree.

So, it's time that children be taught that it's perfectly within their individual rights, not to mention the

country's founding principles and our family values, to believe in a more tolerant science, one that holds that our planet might be just thousands of years old, and that global warming must be a hoax because, well, it's been really cold this week.

Did dinosaurs and man live on Earth during the same time? If you believe they did, they did!

See how easy it is? See CERABINO, B4

Shooting parents call for furniture company boycott

Terry Spencer
The Associated Press

TAMARAC — The parents of some victims of the Florida high school massacre protested Monday outside a furniture company whose CEO's support, they say, has helped prevent the firing of the local school superintendent.

Three victims' parents from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High and about 50 supporters held up signs calling for a boycott of the company City Furniture because CEO Keith Koenig supports Broward Superintendent Robert Runcie, whom they have been unsuccessfully pushing the school board to fire.

Parents Andrew Pollack, Ryan Petty and Max Schachter said Runcie's discipline policies contributed to a former student killing 17 people at the school on Feb. 14. They say suspect Nikolas

Cruz avoided significant discipline during his years in Broward schools despite a history of fighting, threats, vandalism and classroom outbursts.

Koenig is the chairman of the Broward Workshop, a business group that has strongly supported Runcie, saying he has improved graduation rates and has gotten public support for better school security since being hired in 2011. "Our superintendent has failed to provide a safe school environment, but unfortunately has a lot of apologists in the business community," said Petty, whose 14-year-old daughter, Alaina, died in the attack.

"City Furniture does not want the kids to be safe if they support Robert Runcie," Pollack said. His 18-year-old daughter, Meadow, also died.

Koenig issued a statement saying he chaired a committee that raised \$10 million

for Stoneman Douglas victims and their families and supports the district's efforts to make schools safer. City Furniture has 18 stores in Florida.

"Not everyone sees the solutions the same way," he said. "We are all keeping Broward Schools and law enforcement accountable for the rapid progress needed to keep children safe."

Pollack and others have pushed new Gov. Ron DeSantis to suspend Runcie, but state law may not permit that as he is an appointed official. DeSantis recently suspended Broward's elected sheriff, Scott Israel, for his alleged actions before and after the shooting. Israel has said he will challenge the suspension either in court or before the state Senate.

Runcie has a strong majority support among Broward's nine-member school board. He has declined to address calls for his ouster, saying he is focused on his job.



County commissioners want to renovate Palm Beach County Animal Care and Control kennels, but the hefty price tag does not include air-conditioning work. [MELANIE BELL/PALMBEACHPOST.COM]

SHELTER

From Page B1

kennels each have 48 holding pens.

Miami-Dade and Broward counties have built new air-conditioned shelters in recent years. County officials say they use a combination of fans, ice cubes, kiddie pools and sprinklers to

keep the animals cool. The county also stations portable chillers in kennels during the hottest times of day.

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CONDO

From Page B1

The commissioners voted unanimously to OK a staff recommendation that the project benefits justified a zoning waiver for a building that would require a lot of at least 10 acres and setbacks dozens of feet wider to distance it from surrounding properties.

A final vote will be scheduled in four weeks. But it was clear from the tenor of commissioner comments that approval is in the offing.

"We need this kind of project," Commissioner Paula Ryan said, adding that it was "my pleasure" to make the motion in favor. "They have done an excellent job."

Commissioner Keith James, who, like Ryan, is running for mayor in the March 12 municipal election, urged the developers to have a representative meet with him to discuss their plans for including local residents in hiring for the construction project.

The building, with 42 units — only two per floor — would be among the city's tallest, perhaps the tallest if one counts its pedestal atop two below-surface garage levels that set its ground floor well above flood levels near the Lake Worth Lagoon it overlooks.

The project is proposed by Two Roads Development and Alpha Blue Ventures. They haven't named the building.

Benefits cited by staff and pointed out by the mayor include a rebuilt Acacia Road bordering the



Source: maps4news.com/©HERE GATEHOUSE MEDIA

tower to the north, valued at \$832,000, a pocket park on Flagler valued at \$250,000, a \$341,000 contribution to a city fund for transit improvements, and a lushly landscaped "art walk" the length of Acacia leading from Currie Crescent to the Flagler waterfront.

Plans call for private elevators, the option to combine units to buy an entire floor, a sculpture garden, wine storage, two dedicated house cars for resident use, and "deep, wraparound balconies" that offer "sweeping, unobstructed city and ocean views from every residence," according to an info sheet provided by the developers.

The project comes for approvals just as The Bristol nears completion nearby, a 25-story tower that has brought the highest condo prices in Palm Beach County, thanks in part to its proximity to downtown and the wealthy town of Palm Beach across the water. That tower, on the east side of Flagler at the former site of the Chapel-by-the-Lake,

also drew opposition for its height and heft, but city officials praised it for the millions of dollars it will add annually to city property tax revenues.

Another luxury condo tower, La Clara, is within a few months of starting construction at 1515 S. Flagler.

Opponents urged commissioners to deny the waivers required at 1309 S. Flagler, saying the city would be violating promises not to let The Bristol serve as a precedent for an area whose building heights should be stepping down toward the single-family homes that surround it.

Citizens were told The Bristol wouldn't pave the way for more large towers, that the city would weigh every proposal on its merits, Nancy Pullum, founder of Citizens for Thoughtful Growth, told the board. "We saw how that went."

Another woman bemoaned the commission's approval of large projects in the neighborhood, saying The Bristol looked like "a meg-cruise ship" missing only the black whale's tail smokestack. The new buildings will hurt values of existing ones, she said, adding that the city's motto seemed to be, "No developer left behind."

But supporters outnumbered opponents at the meeting.

"It actually blended in beautifully," one resident of the nearby Trianon condo said. "It's the right thing at the right time for this city."

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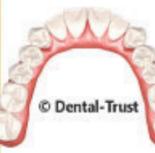
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