

Second 2020 Budget Workshop Opening Statement
August 5, 2019

Hello Friends and Neighbors,
Thank you for joining us tonight in person and on Facebook Live. This is a big change from last year's budget workshops when Janet made up the whole audience.

This is the second of 3 planned 2020 Budget Workshops. At the first one on July 15, the staff reviewed a draft budget with the Commission. Tonight, your Commissioners will continue to work with the staff to refine that draft budget - making hard choices because there is never enough money to do everything that needs to be done.

Much of the 2020 budget discussion has been driven by the work of the Long Range Planning Committee. This committee consisted of Commissioners and resident volunteers. They met four times this year between January and March, during high season. Residents were invited and participated in all of the meetings.

The Committee's work was an exhaustive investigation and analysis of the projected Town revenues and expenses over the next five years. The Committee prepared a report that was presented to many Town Residents on April 8, here in the Community Center. The presentation is available on the Town's website for your review.

The report concluded that our beloved small Town is in a period of flat revenues and rising expenses. As a matter of fact, you should know that in 2020, we will see No appreciable increase in property tax dollars which is the main source of Town revenues. That doesn't mean that your taxes will stay the same. It means that some commercial properties are losing value which offsets any gains from new homes or appreciation.

We are built out - there will be no more Marriotts throwing money at us. The report concluded that the situation was untenable and major changes would have to be analyzed and implemented over the coming years. Revenue changes such as raising property taxes or raising height limits along the water and expense reduction changes such as reducing services and staffing were presented as ideas for more investigation. All of those ideas are underway as we speak and will be discussed as the analysis progresses.

One of these considered changes was to turn policing for the Town over to the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office or PBSO.

But why, do you ask, if the PBSO was considered a long-term option, why are they here presenting a proposal tonight?

Because this has moved beyond just a budget concern, this has become a public safety concern. This presentation would not be happening tonight if our Police Chief did not believe that the PBSO would have the capability to keep you safe beyond what our current little Town department can do.

Don't misunderstand me. I love our Town Police. I fight for them to have what they need to do their jobs well. Our Officers and Dispatchers go above and beyond every day to keep you safe and, just as importantly, make you feel safe. You will never hear me say a bad word or get cheap when it comes to our Town Police.

As Mayor, I asked Steve Langevin to be our Police Chief. Never regretted that decision. He has done a fantastic job improving the professionalism of the department across the Board. However, he often expresses how frustrated he is with the serious limitations that he juggles every day to cover shifts, fill open positions, address crime hotspots in Town, keep the department up to date and trained on the ever expanding requirements coming out of Tallahassee, and having to take Officers off road patrol to investigate issues that comes over the border such as home and car burglaries.

And that is what the Commissioners and I have been struggling with. It is our job to keep you safe, protect your quality of life and use your tax dollars wisely. This question is where those three priorities intersect.

Frankly, I am feeling rushed just like you are. This is a momentous decision for our Town. Our whole self-image and precious self-determination is tied up in having our own public safety teams. So I'm not sure that this is the right time for this discussion but our Police Chief feels that it is important for us to listen to the PBSO so I'm willing to listen and I hope that you are too.

There is no vote tonight.

We have been hearing from you and appreciate the outpouring of support for our Police Department. Tonight, we ask that you listen to the speakers and consider the complexity of the issue along with the Commission.

There will be no public comment tonight. If you have a question, write it down, hold it up and a staff member will bring it to the front. We'll get to as many as we have time for.

And now I'm going to turn this over to Chief Langevin to introduce our first speaker. Please give them a courteous Palm Beach Shores welcome.