

MIAMI TODAY

WEEK OF THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2016

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Spotlight on culture helps to plan your season, pg. 14, 15

ARTS & CULTURE

Expanded, brighter Calendar gears you for week, pg. 18-22



COCONUTS ARE ALLOWED: In a city peppered with all sorts of palm trees, city leaders have given the official OK to planting Coconut Palms. City commissioners approved a resolution directing the city manager to allow the planting of Coconut Palm Trees (*Cocos Nucifera*) and Royal Palm Trees (*Roystonea Regia*) in the public right-of-way on the same or similar basis as other tree species found in the Miami-Dade County Landscape Manual. The legislation notes that the city administration had been discouraging the planting of Coconut Palms and Royal Palms due to a perceived safety hazard to both people and property. Miami-Dade County does not prohibit the planting of Coconut Palms or Royal Palms, it says. The city commission deems the trees not to be "detrimental to native plants, native wildlife, ecosystems, and human health, safety or welfare."

CONSUMER PRICES FLAT: As consumer prices nationally rose 0.2% from July, the Miami area's prices remained flat for the two-month period of July and August, according to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics. Energy prices in the area fell 3.4% in the two months and the price of food remained unchanged, the bureau reports. The largest South Florida increases in the two months were rent of primary residence, up 1.3%, and medical care, up 1.1%. Nationally, the cost of medical care rose 1% in just August, the largest one-month jump in medical care since February 1984.

STATE OF DOWNTOWN: Roughly 90,000 residents call downtown Miami home and another 20,000 are expected to move to downtown in the next five years, according to the Miami Downtown Development Authority. Additionally the median downtown income is \$66,498, roughly 162,000 daytime workers are employed downtown and a 1.4-million-square-foot increase in leasable space is expected over the next three years.

VOICES FOR WOMEN: The Miami-Dade County Commission for Women will meet with a public forum from 6 to 7:45 p.m. Sept. 28 in the Community Room of the North Miami Public Library, 835 NE 132nd St. The Commission for Women, under the purview of Miami-Dade's Office of Community Advocacy, was created in 1971 as an advisory board to the county commission, administration and the public about issues pertaining to the status of women. The commission also advocates for women in the community to improve their quality of life. All meetings are public. Attendees can comment at the start of the meeting. Details: (305) 375-4967, CFW@miamidade.gov, or www.miamidade.gov/advocacy/women-board-home.asp

THE ACHIEVER



Photo by Marlene Ozaon

Frank Steslow

Restoring credibility as Frost Museum of Science rises

The profile is on Page 4

400 job OK quizzed on local hiring

BY SUSAN DANSEYER

County commissioners Tuesday unanimously OK'd \$610,000 in job incentives over six years for an aviation supplier already operating in North-west Miami-Dade that seeks to expand into a new 472,849-square-foot site and add 400 jobs.

While companies awarded Targeted Jobs Incentive Funds (TJIF) aren't required to hire locally, Commission Vice Chair Esteban Bovo Jr. asked if there is a policy that such projects select workers from the county. He said the application on behalf of the company by the Beacon Council, Miami-Dade's economic development organization, "speaks of efforts to hire residents in local areas but there doesn't seem to be a plan."

A summary lists "unknown" for efforts to hire local residents. Mr. Bovo said he didn't oppose the incentives but raised the topic given how much money the county seems to be contributing to TJIF projects.

Jose "Pepe" Diaz, the award's prime sponsor, said he agrees with Mr. Bovo 100% and will work on an amendment with Leland Salomon, Department of Regulatory and Economic Resources director of real estate development, to suggest the company consider local hiring.

Daniella Levine Cava, liaison to the Beacon Council, agreed that it's an important topic she'll raise at a future meeting. "We're obviously attracting businesses," she said, "but local hiring should be a consideration."

The company, code named "Project 007," is an aviation supplier in transportation equipment and sales, with 581 full-time equivalent jobs that it will retain, the application said. Project 007 wants to expand its aerospace division and its corporate headquarters in Miami-Dade but is also considering Memphis and Phoenix instead.

Project 007 agrees that the 400 jobs added over five years will pay an average of \$59,548 plus benefits.

Restaurant complex proposal meets river's grit

BY JOHN CHARLES ROBBINS

Site plans facing special use process, pg. 23

Champions of the Miami River appreciate that the city has a working river, with vibrant marine-industrial uses up and down both banks. A working river means imports and exports, jobs, tax base and more — including noise and smells.

As the building boom continues and the river becomes more attractive to developers, a balance has to be reached, say the men and women guiding the river's future.

The Miami River Commission is considering a plan from developer Shahab Karmely to transform a trio of old warehouses into a dining and event space called River Arts Complex.

The property is less than half an acre at 125, 129 and 131 NW South River Drive. It's a key location as it faces a redeveloped Lummus Park on the river's north side, just northwest of the West Flagler Street Bridge.

While the property is zoned for marine-industrial uses, a restaurant would be allowed with special permission.

But next door at Biscayne Towing & Salvage, owner Cory Offutt has serious concerns about a restaurant operating beside his busi-

ness. The River Arts Complex proposal was reviewed Sept. 14 by the river commission's Urban Infill and Greenways Subcommittee.

Mr. Offutt said his business is loud, smelly and operates around the clock. He said a restaurant next door is incompatible with his shipyard and he's worried he will be regulated out of business.

His emergency marine towing business deals in heavy towing and launch work. It services ships in distress and tows them into the shipyard for work. Mr. Offutt also has a contract with the county to collect and dispose of derelict vessels on the river and Biscayne Bay.

"My belief is that a restaurant is incompatible with my business... we'd be unable to exit in harmony," he said.

"I want to stay in business," he said. "I don't want to move."

"We have to acknowledge it's a working river," said Iris Escarra, an attorney representing Mr. Karmely.

The developer sees the river as the "jewel of the city," she said, noting that he's also the developer of a major mixed-use project

downriver.

Mr. Karmely, CEO of KAR Properties, is the man behind One River Point, planned dual 60-story condo towers connected at the top with a private club and at the bottom with a giant waterfall.

"He likes the edginess of a working river," Ms. Escarra told the committee.

"We always consider the neighbors," said Committee Co-Chair Jim Murley, "but our job is to find a balance."

Phil Everingham, a commission member, asked why Mr. Offutt was worried about being displaced or forced to move.

"I'm a small fish in a big pond," said Mr. Offutt, and he's afraid so many complaints would be lodged against his business for noise and disruption that he'd be "regulated" out of business.

"We want to co-exist with the working river," said Ms. Escarra.

The committee gave Mr. Karmely's team a month to meet with neighboring property owners, tweak the plan to create a wider public riverwalk and better access from the street, and design a sound buffer abutting the shipyard. The plan is expected to reach the full river commission in November.