

Cutler Bay NEWS

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Despite naysayers, town projects yield positive results

BY ERNIE SOCHIN

Vice Mayor



So who do we listen to?

In the almost 10 years that I have sat on the Cutler Bay Council I have seen many unusual things come to pass. One observation that I make is that there is always a small group of people who seem to have all the answers and demand that we listen.

We do listen, and on occasion they make sense. I say on occasion. Having moved to Cutler Bay 43 years ago I have witnessed a lot of changes, virtually every one of which was opposed by at least one group.

The town has now grown from the 9,000 that lived here back in 1971 to the over 43,000 that live here now and which will increase to over 50,000 by the year 2020. When a town grows that fast drastic steps must be made to provide for the newbies and at the same time try not to take too much away from the longtime residents.

This is no easy job. There may be 30 or 40 people that are terribly against whatever it is that we want to do. There are also well over 40,000 people that might benefit from it but unfortunately they become the silent majority. They don't go to meetings or come to our meetings to protest what we are doing and seem content with what we have done so far.

I will give you just a few examples of what we in government have had to deal with. By now everyone has seen the tremendous improvements made to our long-neglected Caribbean Boulevard. Not only has the road itself been upgraded but I noticed the people living there seem to be taking much better care of their property giving it an overall beautiful appearance.

Frankly, I used to be embarrassed bringing people to Cutler Bay and driving them down Caribbean Boulevard. While this was still in the planning stage there were people holding meetings telling everyone that we were going to four-lane Caribbean Boulevard, make it into a "raceway" and cause all kinds of problems. Obviously not true, but a number of people bought into this based on the alleged knowledge of a speaker.

The marvelous traffic circles that people finally are getting used to have really made driving through our town a lot less of a strain. Same thing here — a group got together with one person showing actual diagrams indicating that trucks and cars with boat

trailers would not be able to navigate around these circles. I'm sure by now you have all seen that this is no problem. We had to provide curbs on Caribbean Boulevard, firstly because they are required by the county, and secondly they are necessary for proper water control of the runoff after rainstorms. Not only do they provide this purpose but they have made the swales look much more presentable.

We were told by some that putting curb stones on Caribbean Boulevard would result in the deaths of many people and not allow mail delivery or UPS trucks. I have driven on that road many, many times and have yet to see it become a problem. Our town has received awards for the beautiful job that we did on Caribbean Boulevard as well as Old Cutler Road.

Frankly I think the Cutler Bay section of Old Cutler Road is by far the most beautiful and utilitarian. Again, while the construction was going on people were blaming us for putting people out of business, ruining traffic, and you name it.

It would be easy for me to become part of the vocal minority but many times their views are totally self-serving and don't take into account the changes that are taking place in our beautiful town. Many people would prefer that they be the last ones to move to Cutler Bay and not allow anyone else to move to our beautiful town.

We in government have made a lot of efforts to make this the beautiful town that it is and as a result lots of people want to live here. Our schools are some of the best in the county; our roads are award-winning paths through the city and there are more to come.

One of the difficult jobs for those of us making decisions is to look ahead to what the future might be in our town. I receive many emails saying that "when I first moved here it was a quiet little town with no traffic," etc., etc. Well things change and people move.

My answer is that if you really prefer living in a



Caribbean Boulevard



Old Cutler Road

sleepy little town with no growth in the future, Cutler Bay is not the place for you. Perhaps someplace in South Dakota or Utah might be more to your liking but we have in our town a beautiful performing arts center which unfortunately will require decent restaurants for the theatergoers and decent lodging for the performers who come to the theater. These are things that we must take into consideration before making any final decisions on any new development.

One of the things that we need the most would be some large employers that would hire people in the area thereby eliminating the need for everyone to travel north and south on US 1 or Old Cutler Road. Getting businesses to move here should be one of our priorities and hopefully at least a partial solution to the problems that exist.

Right now I feel totally confident in our staff and what they present to us. Join with us to make this a dream town.

Visit my website at <www.sochin.com>.