



From The Desk Of DEAN TRANTALIS

Fort Lauderdale City Commission • District II

SEPTEMBER 2014

Observations from trip to Africa, Europe

Lessons about about race relations, mass transit, economic development, quality of life

When the City Commission adjourned for the summer and my city calendar opened up, I took the opportunity to travel abroad and once again experience the world outside our borders. But for the nod from my law office staff, I was able to take a giant step into the world to places I had yet to experience.

My first stop was Johannesburg, South Africa. Affectionately known as Jo-burg, the hyphenated expression slips off the tongue like some well-timed limerick, but do not be mistaken, this is a land still coping with the cruelty wrought by apartheid.

As pride of place dominates the monologues of each of our guides, their talks are finished with a peppery aftertaste of what life was like when there were white-only restaurants, train cars, and drinking fountains. Dark-skinned residents were not allowed to vote, own property, or even venture into areas inhabited by whites.

We visited Soweto, the section where blacks were required to live, but now it's simply an attraction for tourists who would take selfie's in front of the house of Nelson Mandela.

Our own country, too, is not without fault for engaging in similar practices. By my reckoning, we may have been only a generation ahead in diluting discrimination, so we are no one to point fingers. South Africa, a



shadowy reflection of who we were as Americans, is a reminder of our constant struggle not to return to a culture that accepts discrimination as a way of life.

The beauty of Cape Town, with its rugged mountains and miles of vineyards, is breathtaking. Victoria Falls, where the tales of Dr. Livingstone are daily recounted and the zebras are as much at ease roaming the savannah as they are parking themselves at your front step, is an experience that cannot be fully described or duplicated. The scent of the wild beckons you.

Heading from Johannesburg to Rome, I was greeted by a good client who so generously took three days out of his busy life to show me Rome as a Roman. There, food is not just a necessity, but it is an obsession.

The search for the best meats, the best cheeses and the most wholesome legumes repeatedly reminded me of how we are being poisoned by the processed foods we eat here in the U.S. Things seem to digest better when dining in an open-air cafe nestled between 15th-century churches atop cobblestones that you know were once walked upon by Julius Caesar himself.

I noticed that in Rome, there is an entire system of light-rail street cars that crisscross the center city. I thought about how we are embarking on a similar endeavor and how Fort Lauderdale is going to be so European!! When I inquired with my client about the system, he remarked dismissively that the city was getting rid of the light-rail system in favor of buses because the other was too expensive to run and inefficient. We seem to be going down the right track, but it is not the Appian Way.

Before my return, I was able to stop in Spain to visit one of our sister



cities, a reciprocal gesture since the mayor of Mataro visited us earlier this year.

I was treated to a full day tour of their historical sites which was then topped off with a great lunch by the sea (lunch didn't start until 3 p.m.). I found myself taken by the wonderful art and architecture, both new and old, as a building by Gaudi himself is to be found there.

But Mataro, like the rest of Spain, is still struggling to escape the ravages of the financial meltdown of the last decade. While I might ogle at the fine craftsmanship of the baroque artisans, they were more interested in how our relationship could bring greater economic development to their shores. I guess you can't eat gold leaf.

But a visit to Spain is not complete without a stay in Barcelona, which completed my trip.

Upon my return, almost everyone whom I spoke to about the city remarked how beautiful it is and how it is one of the great, livable cities of the world. When I heard such remarks from an important developer here in our city, I agreed but then pointed out that the Barcelona city center has a height restriction of only eight stories. He grimaced.

Sincerely,

Dean

Summer news updates

Work continued on key city projects over the summer.

We witnessed two significant developments on All Aboard Florida's plans for high-speed rail service.

Project managers selected the location of their Fort Lauderdale station. The \$30 million station will sit along the railway tracks on Northwest Second Avenue between Broward Boulevard and Northeast Fourth Street within walking distance of downtown amenities. In addition, All Aboard secured funding to improve local rail crossings so trains no longer must sound their horns.



The city is moving ahead with parking and drainage improvements around Pine Crest Village in Victoria Park, has ordered a study regarding traffic safety in Lake Ridge and hired consultants to finalize design standards for North Beach Village. The standards will be based on public input received over the past year.

The City Commission adopted a multi-year strategic plan that details needed bicycle, pedestrian and road projects called "Connecting the Blocks." We're also working with Florida Atlantic University to decide how best to brand the Sistrunk Boulevard corridor and encourage business development there.

The city continues to address flooding issues around District 2.

In the Central Beach area, the city completed a stormwater improvement project this summer on Belmar Street and is scheduled to undertake storm/tidal control project along Bayshore Drive in 2015. Meanwhile in the Victoria Park-Sunrise Key area, the city expects to begin construction in October to add flood control valves around Northeast 20th Ave and at the Sunrise Key entrance.

Finally, please be aware that the Federal Emergency Management Agency has completed new flood zone maps for Broward County. Several thousand residents in Fort Lauderdale are impacted because the new elevations may mean their homes are no longer in a flood zone or now are considered to be in one. This potentially affects your need to have flood insurance or the rate of your premium.

The new maps took effect Aug. 18. To learn more, visit fortlauderdale.gov/floodzones/index.htm or call your insurance agent.



Commissioner Trantalis joins volunteers to help paint the intersection of Las Olas Boulevard and Southeast 2nd Avenue as part of the city's Painted Intersection program to promote walkability downtown.



Commissioner Trantalis joins Broward cultural affairs director Earl Bosworth and ArtServe president Jaye Abbate for the annual Red Eye art festival.



Commissioner Trantalis joins British consul general David Prodder and Broward Mayor Barbara Sharief at a welcoming reception for the frigate HMS Argyll.