



MAY 2015

Body cameras for police. Is it time?

The news across the nation has brought startling images into our homes.

Almost everyone I know was shocked last month by the video showing a South Carolina police officer shooting to death an unarmed man. If a citizen had not been nearby with a cellphone, who knows whether we'd ever have learned the truth about what happened.

Such horrific events have caused many to ask whether shoulder-worn police cameras should be standard issue in police departments across the country. Is this the next step in law enforcement?

I believe the time has come to at least experiment with the use of cameras in the Police Department. I hope to persuade the rest of the City Commission to include a pilot project in next year's budget.

Police body cameras create transparency in law enforcement by documenting the interactions between officers and civilians. They can assist in the collection of evidence and witness statements as well as address any concerns about misconduct, use of force or bias.

This simple device not only protects citizens from that type of renegade police conduct, but it also offers protection to the police officers from disingenuous accusations intended to demean the men and women who proudly wear our uniform.

The Wall Street Journal recently reported that out of the 18,000 police departments in this country, about a third already employ camera devices on their uniformed police. Broward Sheriff Scott Israel wants to equip his deputies with cameras, and the cities of Hallandale Beach, Pembroke Pines, Coral Springs and Lauderhill are all moving this direction.

A camera system does come at a cost, and there are those who may say there may be rights to privacy or inconsistent results from their use that might undermine their effectiveness. However, President Obama has announced his administration will provide



\$20 million to help police departments cover the cost. The rest will take time and training.

I truly believe this is the right thing to do and the right time to do it. It should be added to the goals that the commission recently set.

The City Commission held a two-day retreat at the end of April to lay out the top priorities for city government in the coming year. The city manager will use them to draw up his 2016 budget.

Beach improvement projects and the continued redevelopment of the Northwest-Progresso-Flagler Village area topped the list. Rounding out the top five priorities are developing a plan to better manage beach traffic, moving forward with plans to prevent stormwater and tidal flooding and increasing the availability of soccer and lacrosse fields in the city through partnerships with schools.

Six other items were identified as high priorities.

They were the revisiting of our homeless strategy, improvement in the Central City redevelopment area, a policy to address the density of future development, a traffic plan for Southeast 17th Street and State Road A1A, the renourishment of sand along eroded sections of our beach and solutions to the street lighting concerns along A1A.

In regard to the beach improvements, city staff is moving forward with design work for an upgraded A1A streetscape, a public plaza in the Oceanside parking lot at A1A and Las Olas Boulevard, a promenade along the Intracoastal Waterway and more parking.

The City Commission has hired a

construction management firm to team up with the designers. We chose Skanska USA Building, which has worked on major waterfront park projects such as the Brooklyn Bridge Park.

Skanska will identify ways to value-engineer the projects and will provide input on scheduling, cost estimates and constructability. One exciting thing about Skanska is the firm offered a very detailed public involvement plan, including

community outreach meetings as well as constant information updates through social media platforms and web-based applications.

The goal of crafting a policy on development density will be critical. Almost every day, I'm asked why the city keeps approving housing developments when our roads are already so congested.

The commission has held two strategy sessions on growth so far this year. We need to come up with a clear vision so we are not overwhelmed and we can enjoy the quality of life we expect. No one wants the gridlock and chaos we witness on the streets of Miami Beach.

I'm also pleased that the goals for next year include pedestrian lighting along A1A. County, state and federal rules require the city to turn off or dim street lights during sea turtle nesting season so as not to disorient hatchlings as they make their way to the water. The dark conditions, though, are dangerous for drivers and pedestrians.

Our goal will be to find solutions in the next year that improve lighting while protecting turtles.

One step we've already agreed to take is the installation of embedded lighting in crosswalks along A1A. The Florida Department of Transportation will add the lighting when it repaves the road in 2016.

Sincerely,



THE CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE PRESENTS THE

Great American BEACH PARTY

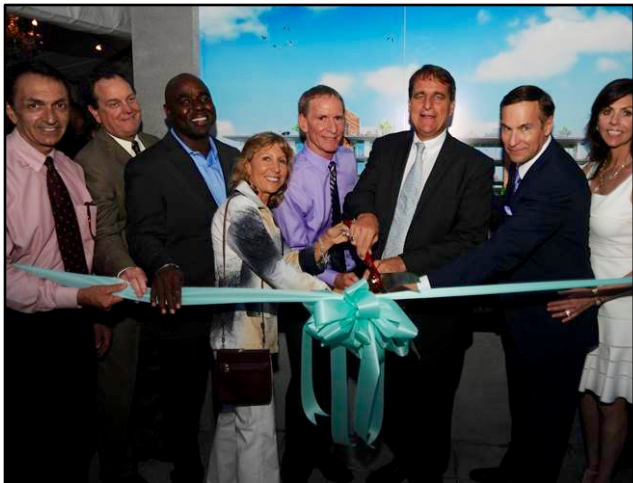
FREE!

SATURDAY • MAY 23 • 10 AM - 8:30 PM
 FORT LAUDERDALE BEACH • A1A AND LAS OLAS BOULEVARD

Featuring

- Live Bands - Kids Zone - DJ
- Sand Castle Contest
- Art Show - Classic Car Show
- Life-size beach games
- U.S. Military Parachute Team
- Tribute to U.S. Armed Forces
- Walk of Fame Induction

For parking, shuttle and event details:
www.fortlauderdale.gov/gabp : 954-828-5363



Commissioner Trantalis helps cut the ribbon at the groundbreaking for the AquaLuna and Aquamar condo projects off Las Olas Boulevard.



Commissioner Trantalis presents a Community Appearance WOW Award to Edward and Cristina Strobel of Sailboat Bend for beautifying their property.



Commissioner Trantalis helps break ground on the city project to pave Northwest 15th Street in the South Middle River neighborhood.



Commissioner Trantalis, Mayor Jack Seiler and former Commissioner Tim Smith honor representatives of FlashLube for their recent support of the Funky Fun Run.

