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LETTER TO COMMISSION
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TO: Mayor Matti H. Bower and Members of the City Commission

FROM: Jorge M. Gonzalez, City Manager

DATE: September 28, 2011

SUBJECT: Tree City USA – 5-year Anniversary

This letter to Commission is to notify you that certification as a Tree City USA for 2010 marked the fifth year that the City of Miami Beach has been awarded this designation. The Tree City USA program is sponsored by the National Arbor Day Foundation in cooperation with the National Association of State Foresters and the USDA Forest Service. The Tree City USA designation recognizes communities that have proven their commitment to a healthy urban forest and an effective urban forestry program. It honors the efforts of the elected officials, city staff and citizens who work to maintain and enhance the urban forest.

To qualify for Tree City USA a city must meet four standards:

- 1) A Tree Board or Department responsible for the care and management of the city's trees. In Miami Beach, this responsibility resides in the Department of Parks & Recreation, Greenspace Management Division, Urban Forestry Program. The program is headed by Chris Latt Ph.D., an International Society of Arboriculture certified arborist and a graduate of the Society of Municipal Arborists' Municipal Forester Institute. Four other certified arborists in the Greenspace Management Division assist with monitoring and managing the City's trees, among other duties. Few other cities can claim such a wealth of tree management expertise.
- 2) A Tree Care Ordinance. In Miami Beach, Ordinance Number 2000-3279 addresses tree care, maintenance and protection.
- 3) A Community Forestry Program With An Annual Budget of at Least \$2 Per Capita. Miami Beach easily exceeded this standard with tree planting under the Reforestation Program, which the City Commission authorized in 2007, tree planting as part of CIP projects, and funds expended for tree maintenance, including salaries and equipment for a tree maintenance crew.
- 4) An Arbor Day Observance and Proclamation. Each year the mayor proclaims a date in April as Arbor Day in Miami Beach. The Arbor Day celebrations, which always include tree planting, have usually been linked to larger events in order to bring our tree-friendly message to bigger crowds. In recent years the Arbor Day celebration has been associated with the Spring Eggstravaganza at North Shore Park, the Captain Planet Carnival at Flamingo Park, and an ECOMB event at Marjory Stoneman Douglas Park, where volunteers planted 23 trees provided by the City.

Trees are a vital part of the city infrastructure, providing numerous environmental, economic, and social benefits. Among the identified benefits of trees are cleaner air, reduced energy usage, less storm water runoff, amelioration of high urban temperatures, higher property values, improved aesthetics, a greater sense of well-being, reduced anxiety levels, and lower crime rates. Being designated as a Tree City USA projects a positive image of Miami

Beach, and tells visitors, convention organizers and prospective businesses that ours is a community that cares about a healthy environment and the quality of life. The designation rewards the various people who have worked so hard to ensure a vital urban forest, and encourages residents to plant trees and properly care for those they have. The Tree City USA designation also assists the city in obtaining grant money that is allocated for trees or urban forestry programs. Despite declining funds for urban forestry grants, the Urban Forestry program has been awarded three Urban & Community Forestry grants since 2006. The grants assisted with tree planting, the removal and replacement of six hazardous Australian pines, the purchase of a water tanker truck to promote better water use efficiency and survival of newly planted trees, and the trimming of mature mahogany trees on Alton Road.

We are pleased to report to you that the City's Urban Forestry Program will plant over 300 trees and palms this fiscal year and a total of 4,115 trees and palms since the inception of the program in F.Y. 2006-07, utilizing designated funds earmarked towards the Urban Reforestation Program.

This past year has been an especially challenging one for our tree canopy. As you may recall, you were previously informed of damage to the large *Calophyllum* trees lining Meridian Avenue between 2nd Street and 16th Street. Numerous dead branches were removed for public safety and tree health as the result of cold weather in January 2010. The City's Urban Forester supervised the trimming program that began earlier this summer at 16th and Meridian moving south to 2nd Street. Prior to initiating this work there was extensive coordination with the residents of the Flamingo Park neighborhood and the Flamingo Park HOA to ensure minimal impact on everyone. The feedback we are receiving indicates these efforts were successful and the residents appreciate the healthy appearance of the trees after trimming.

Please advise if you have additional questions or comments.

JMG/HMF/KS/CL