



# MIAMI BEACH

OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

NO. LTC # **110-2012**

## LETTER TO COMMISSION

TO: Mayor Matti Herrera Bower and Members of the City Commission

FROM: Jorge M. Gonzalez, City Manager

DATE: April 27, 2012

SUBJECT: Opinion Editorial Submitted to the Miami Herald

The purpose of this Letter to Commission (LTC) is to inform you that I have submitted an opinion editorial piece to the Miami Herald, for their consideration to publish this coming weekend.

I am attaching a copy of my letter for your information. At this time when there is so much focus on the very negative actions of some former City employees, I felt it was important to share information on the City Commission's and Administration's positive efforts these past few years to improve the quality of life and services of our residents and businesses. I have also included the proposals that I have previously advised you I will be bringing to the City Commission for your consideration on May 9<sup>th</sup>.

As always, please feel free to call me should you have any questions or require additional information.

ATTACHMENT

JMG/pw

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CITY CLERK'S OFFICE

As public servants, we are all expected to maintain the highest level of honesty, integrity and dedication. Recent arrests and alleged misconduct by a few city employees represent a huge betrayal not only of the public's trust – but of our entire organization. Their irresponsible actions have now cast a negative light on the vast majority of our employees, who are hard working, dedicated men and women committed to our mission of public service. They also paint an unfair picture of the hard work and efforts by the Mayor and City Commission to provide honest guidance and vision for this community.

We will face this most recent incident head on. As in the past, whenever any information about possible misconduct has surfaced, I have initiated investigations and demanded accountability. I have sought out assistance from the State Attorney's Office, and allocated investigative resources to ensure that criminal behavior is rooted out and removed from our organization. And I have insisted on prosecution when the facts point to criminal conduct.

I have done so knowing that I am inviting scrutiny and criticism by shedding light on bad behavior. However, doing nothing just to avoid negative press has never been an option.

Clearly more needs to be done, and we must take aggressive steps to restore the public's trust. On May 9<sup>th</sup> I will present a five-point plan to the Mayor and City Commission for their consideration and approval. I know they share my strong desire to eliminate any opportunity for wrongdoing in our city. The plan is as follows:

- Assign a city police officer to the FBI's Public Corruption Taskforce.
- Appoint the Miami-Dade County Office of the Inspector General, as the City's Inspector General to attack corruption.
- Require enhanced ethics training tailored for regulatory department employees by the Miami-Dade Commission on Ethics.
- Independently audit the internal controls and processes of the Code Compliance Division, Fire inspection program, Parking Enforcement and other regulatory agencies.
- Assign a senior level police commander to provide day-to-day oversight of the code compliance department and implement reforms to protect the public trust.

While these initiatives are important, and the criminal activity is inexcusable, we should not let recent events overshadow all of the positives in our community. Our community satisfaction survey conducted earlier this year, shows that 89% of residents surveyed rated Miami Beach as an excellent or good place to live, and nearly 80% would recommend Miami Beach as a place to live.

While we have more work to do, it is important to remember that today, Miami Beach is in a much better position than most cities, and certainly better than it was a decade ago.

Despite the global recession, the business community has grown by 30 percent, and local jobs have increased by 9 percent in the past four years. The City's unemployment rate (7.2%) is lower than the national, state and regional rates. Tourism remains stronger than ever with hotel room occupancy growing consistently since the first quarter of 2007, and average daily room rates are at their highest point in the city's history.

At a time when other communities are being downgraded and given negative outlooks, the City's bond rating has been upgraded to the highest levels we have ever held – a testament to our financial health and sound fiscal management these past 12 years. We have also reduced

taxes to the lowest rate in recent history, minimized budget growth for city services by doing more with less, and initiated pension reform.

At the same time, we have remained focused on our residents' quality of life. Few communities offer as many amenities to their residents, including free citywide WiFi, an International Baccalaureate program from Kindergarten to 12<sup>th</sup> grades in public schools, free recreation, arts and cultural programming.

As investigations move forward, new allegations may emerge that are painful for us to hear, but imperative to air and fix. During such moments, it is important to remember that Miami Beach is recognized as one of the most attractive and livable communities in America. That's in no small measure a result of the efforts of our elected leaders and our employees. I am confident that we – as a community – will address the issues before us with resolve and come out stronger as a result.