

TOWN OF HIGHLAND BEACH • JUNE/JULY 2025

# MANAGER'S MONTHLY





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# MESSAGE FROM YOUR MANAGER



As the natural beauty of summer unfolds along our coastline and sea turtles return to our shores, the Town Commission resumes its work within the Commission Chambers, focused on the task of crafting a budget that protects and enhances our Three Miles of Paradise. We are pleased to report that the Town's financial position remains strong, providing a solid foundation for a bright and prosperous future.

On June 17, the Town Manager and Finance Director presented a balanced preliminary budget, underscored by a 6.7% growth in property values, continued fiscal prudence, and no increase in the millage (tax) rate. Our local millage rate remains the third lowest in Palm Beach County for the fifth consecutive year.

This budget reflects our steadfast commitment to strategic and financial planning that safeguards the future of our community. It is a zero-based budget consistent with the Town Commission-approved Five-Year Financial Forecast and aligned with our Strategic Priorities Plan, advancing critical projects and initiatives in Organizational Excellence, Public Infrastructure and Resilience, Community Safety, and Community Enrichment and Sustainability.

The approximately \$32 million preliminary budget for all funds—including the General Fund, Water and Sewer Fund, Building Department Fund, and Discretionary Sales Tax Fund—is focused on completing significant capital improvement projects without outside financing (no loans or bonds).

Key projects include:

- Police/Fire Rescue Marine Unit Docking Facility (State Appropriation and FIND Grant)
- Police Department Real-Time Security Center and New Entrance
- Townwide Sanitary Sewer Lining Project
- Lift Station No. 2 Rehabilitation (State Appropriation)
- Reconstruction of the Old Fire Station
- Embedded Crosswalk Lighting
- Water Treatment Plant Upgrades

- Civic Center Repaving and ADA Upgrades
- Mandated Comprehensive Plan Update

In addition, the budget provides for a 12.3% reduction in building permit fees and reaffirms our commitment to delivering popular community events such as Homecoming, Mingle Jingle, and Spring Fling.

We are also proud that the preliminary budget continues the Town Commission's commitment to supporting our dedicated employees and actively pursuing alternative funding sources. Notably, with the assistance of Representative Peggy Gossett-Seidman, the Town secured a third consecutive \$250,000 legislative appropriation for the Marine Docking Facility. Special thanks to Representative Gossett-Seidman for her consistent advocacy and partnership!

The preliminary budget will be reviewed by the Financial Advisory Board on June 24, before returning to the Town Commission on July 15, when the maximum millage rate (3.5875—unchanged and consistent with our commitment to residents) will be set. The Town Commission will review the budget at two statutory public hearings on September 2 and September 18 at 5:01 p.m.

We encourage all residents to visit our website to view the budget presentation, access documents, and watch the Town Commission's budget discussions.

In closing, the Town's financial position remains strong and continues to serve as the foundation for a bright future. The preliminary FY 2025-2026 budget reaffirms the Town Commission's dedication to fiscal responsibility, the preservation of our financial health, enhancement of the quality of life for all residents, and continued investment in public safety and capital improvements. We remain firmly committed to strategic planning and responsible fiscal management to ensure Highland Beach's prosperity for years to come.

With gratitude and commitment,

**Marshall Labadie**, ICMA-CM

Town Manager

# WHAT'S HAPPENING IN HIGHLAND BEACH?

## **Upcoming Agenda Items (Subject to Change and Additional Items may be Added)**

- Palm Beach Property Appraiser - Annual Update
- Setting Tentative Maximum Millage Rate/ Updated Budget Presentation
- FDOT RRR Project Updates
- MyHighlandBeach App Launch

## **Board Vacancies**

Code Enforcement Board – One (1) vacancy for a three-year term

Natural Resources Preservation Advisory Board – One (1) vacancy for a three-year term

For additional information, please contact the Town Clerk's Office at (561) 278-4548 or email [lgaskins@highlandbeach.us](mailto:lgaskins@highlandbeach.us) (Lanelda Gaskins) or [jdehart@highlandbeach.us](mailto:jdehart@highlandbeach.us) (Jaclyn DeHart), Monday through Friday from 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM.

## **Annual Water Quality Report for 2024 (Consumer Confidence Report - CCR)**

The Town of Highland Beach's Annual Water Quality Report for 2024 (Consumer Confidence Report - CCR) provides comprehensive information regarding the drinking water services offered to residents. The water is sourced from the Floridan Aquifer and undergoes treatment using Reverse Osmosis to eliminate contaminants. The report underscores the significance of water conservation and offers practical tips for reducing water usage. It also details potential contaminants in drinking water, including microbial, inorganic, and organic substances, while emphasizing that the presence of these contaminants does not necessarily pose health risks.

Residents are encouraged to contact the Water Plant Superintendent at (561) 637-2036 for any inquiries related to water quality. Additionally, they are invited to attend Town Commission Meetings or view them online at <http://www.highlandbeach.us> for further information. The document includes water and wastewater rates effective from October 2024 to September 2025, along with definitions of terms related to water quality monitoring. The report reassures residents of the Town's commitment to providing safe drinking water in compliance with federal and state regulations. For specific health concerns, particularly regarding lead exposure, residents are advised to flush taps before use and may seek testing if necessary.

The Annual Water Quality Report for 2024 (Consumer Confidence Report - CCR) will be published and made available under Public Notices on the Town's website by June 27, 2025. Residents can access the report at <https://www.pbcfllegalnotices.com/167/Highland-Beach>. Please note that the report will not be mailed to residents.

# FIRE RESCUE DEPARTMENT



## A Friendly Reminder for a Safe and Sparkling Fourth of July

As we prepare to celebrate Independence Day, I want to take a moment to wish you and your families a joyful, relaxing, and safe Fourth of July.

Fireworks are a beloved part of the holiday for many of us, but they also come with important safety considerations. Highland Beach Fire Rescue is here to help you enjoy the festivities while keeping our community safe.

## Know the Rules – State and Local Fireworks Laws

Thanks to a 2020 Florida law, fireworks that fly or explode—like Roman candles and firecrackers—are legal to use on July 4th, New Year’s Eve, and New Year’s Day. On all other days, only non-explosive options like sparklers and smoke devices are allowed.

Our town has its own ordinance to ensure the safe use of fireworks. It’s important to know that fireworks, flame effects (like torches or flares), and pyrotechnics are prohibited inside any building, tent, or enclosed structure. If you’re planning any outdoor display involving such items, a permit from the Town Manager’s office is required in advance—along with proof of insurance and adherence to national safety codes.

Also, please check with your homeowners’ association (HOA) for any neighborhood-specific rules. While HOAs cannot override state laws for the designated holidays, they may have helpful guidance for safe and courteous celebrations.

## Safety Tips for a Fun and Incident-Free Holiday

Here are a few friendly reminders to help everyone stay safe this July 4th:

- Always use fireworks on a flat, stable surface to prevent them from tipping.
- Keep a hose or bucket of water nearby, just in case.
- Never use fireworks while impaired by alcohol or drugs.
- Keep children at a safe distance and never allow them to use unsupervised.
- If fireworks don’t go off, don’t try to relight it—soak it in water and dispose of it properly.



Even though some fireworks are legal, they can still pose serious risks if used improperly. Every year, across the country, injuries and fires occur because safety steps were skipped.



Let's Celebrate Together—Safely

Fireworks are exciting and can add magic to our celebrations, but safety must come first. We want all residents and guests of Highland Beach to enjoy a safe, memorable holiday without emergencies.

On behalf of Highland Beach Fire Rescue, thank you for taking the time to celebrate responsibly. Your cooperation helps us keep our town safe and enjoyable for everyone.

Wishing you a bright and safe Fourth of July!

# BUILDING DEPARTMENT

## *Permits Protect You: Why Verifying With the Building Department Matters*

At the Town of Highland Beach, we understand that remodeling or upgrading your home—whether in a condominium or a single-family residence—can be a significant investment of time and money. Our residents care about quality, safety, and long-term value. That's why the permitting process exists: not to slow things down, but to ensure work meets minimum safety standards and is reviewed by qualified professionals with your protection in mind.

Unfortunately, we continue to see cases where contractors perform work without the required permits. Often, the property owner is unaware until our Code Compliance Officer is forced to issue a violation. When that happens, it is the owner who is held responsible—not the contractor.

Most construction work in a condominium, and much of it in a private home, requires a permit under Florida law and local code. These requirements are not arbitrary. Permits trigger plan review and inspections, which help identify issues before they become expensive problems. Even experienced contractors sometimes make mistakes. The permit process is your safety net.

If your contractor says a permit is not required, or suggests skipping the process to save time or money, please contact the Building Department directly. We are here to serve you, and we're



happy to confirm whether a permit is needed for your project. We are your partner in ensuring the safety of your home, the structural integrity of your building, and the long-term value of your investment.

Our job is not to interfere, but to help. When permits are properly issued and inspections are completed, it protects everyone, residents, guests, neighbors, and future buyers.

Before work begins, check with us. We're here to help, and we take pride in supporting the community we serve.

### **Code Tip of the Month: Bulk Trash**

The Town of Highland Beach maintains a contractual agreement with Waste Management to provide bulk trash collection services to its residents on a weekly basis, specifically every Monday. This service is designed to facilitate the disposal of large household items that exceed the capacity of standard garbage bins. Acceptable bulk waste includes, but is not limited to, appliances, furniture, mattresses, and similarly oversized materials. In accordance with municipal guidelines, the total volume of bulk waste placed at the curb should not exceed approximately 4 cubic yards—roughly equivalent to the size of a compact car. Additionally, individual items should not surpass dimensions of 8 feet in length and 4 feet in width.

Bulk trash pickup is not meant for getting rid of hazardous materials like oil, paint, or anything related to construction work. It also shouldn't be used by hired landscapers to throw away things like tree branches or lawn clippings. According to the town's rules (Section 24-8), landscapers have to clean up and take away all trash, palm fronds, and other yard waste on the same day they do the work. This waste must be taken to a dump or disposal site outside the town limits.

Bulk trash, as well as regular trash bins, may not be placed out before noon on the day preceding the morning pickup per town ordinance Section 24-3b and bins must be brought back in by 8:00 PM on the day of pickup. When bulk trash is placed earlier than prescribed, it increases the likelihood of debris being scattered about the roads and adjacent properties during wind or rain events.

If you have questions regarding what is permitted for bulk trash pick up or need other options for disposing of items that are prohibited, please contact the Code Compliance Department at 561-278-4540 and we can provide you with the help and information you need.



# PLANNING AND ZONING

## Sea Turtle Safety

IT'S SEA TURTLE NESTING SEASON (**March 1 – October 31**), please follow these tips and share them with your community:

- **Boater Awareness.** Sea turtle season is well underway, and several loggerhead and leatherback nests have been spotted across Highland Beach. During nesting season, sea turtles spend greater amounts of time at the surface in the waters close to shore, where they are at an increased risk of being accidentally hit by boats. To decrease unintended harmful interactions between boaters and threatened sea turtles during nesting season in Florida, a voluntary Sea Turtle Protection Zone (STPZ) has been established from March 1 – October 31, encompassing all 45 miles of Palm Beach County extending from shore to one mile offshore. To help protect sea turtles and other marine life, boaters are asked to reduce travel time within one mile offshore and travel at minimum speed for safe navigation when in the STPZ.
- **Keep beaches dark.** From dusk to dawn, turn off any lights not necessary for human safety. [Use long wavelength amber LED lamps for lights that must stay lit and shield lights](#), so they are not visible from the beach. Remember to close shades or curtains at night, and do not take flash photos or use flashlights after dark.
- **Sea turtles are protected by law.** Keep your distance and give sea turtles space if you see one on the beach. Never touch a nesting turtle because it might leave the beach without nesting if disturbed.
- **Clear the way at the end of the day.** Beach furniture, boats, toys and trash left behind on the sand can become obstacles that block crawling sea turtles. Fill in any holes dug in the sand. Holes can trap turtles, and they also pose a safety risk to humans.



Bright lights from buildings can cause sea turtles to become disoriented, leading the hatchlings to stray away from the shoreline where they need to swim and start their life. If they are unable to reach the ocean quickly, they can become dehydrated and exhausted, making them an easy meal for predators. To minimize “interior light” emanating from doors and windows within line-of-sight of the beach, one or more of the following remedial measures are required:

- \*Rearrange lamps, televisions, and other movable fixtures away from windows.
- \*Use opaque shades or room darkening window treatments (e.g. blinds, curtains, screens).
- \*Apply window tint or film that meets the light transmittance standards for tinted glass.
- \*Other remedial measures approved by the Building Official.

Please report sea turtles that are sick, injured, dead, entangled or are in danger to the FWC's Wildlife Alert Hotline at [888-404-3922](tel:888-404-3922) so trained responders can help. For information on the Town's Sea Turtle Lighting Ordinance, please contact: Ingrid Allen, Town Planner, at 561-637-2012 or [iallen@highlandbeach.us](mailto:iallen@highlandbeach.us)

## **LIGHTS OUT**

### **Sea Turtles Dig the Dark**

Sea turtles rely on the darkness of the beach and the relative brightness of the ocean to nest and find their way to the sea. Peak season is March – October.

**You can help!**

- **Keep flashlights off the beach**
- **Close window shades/curtains after dark**
- **Use sea turtle friendly exterior lights**

For more information,  
contact Ingrid Allen,  
Town Planner, at 561-  
637-2012



# PUBLIC WORKS

## Highland Beach Water Treatment Plant Implements Advanced Disinfection Technology

The Florida Department of Health has recently approved the use of four-log treatment technology at our water treatment plant. This new method allows us to disinfect water without relying heavily on chlorine, reducing the presence of harsh chemicals in the treatment process.



What does this mean for residents?

As a result, residents can expect an even higher-quality water supply. Our reverse osmosis system will continue to maintain a minimum free chlorine concentration of 0.65 mg/L each day water is delivered to the public. Additionally, we will ensure that pH levels remain within regulatory standards and that water temperatures stay consistent.

You may have noticed improvements in the taste and smell of your tap water—reflecting the benefits of this advanced treatment approach.

The Highland Beach Water Plant remains committed to continually enhancing water quality and delivering the best possible service to our residents.



# LIBRARY

## Library News – July/August 2025

Summer is heating up at the library! We have something for everyone in our community, from new toys in the children's room to the latest beach reads and blockbuster DVDs for adults. Whether you are a familiar face or new to town, we would love to see you at the library.

### Summer Movies at the Library – at 5:30 pm

- July 8: Alto Knights
- July 22: Breakfast at Tiffany's
- August 5: Juror #2
- August 19: You Hurt My Feelings

### Concerts – at 5:30 pm

- July 10 – David Pedraza (Broadway tunes - viola and piano)

#### Library Hours:

Monday – Thursday	10:00 AM to 8:00 PM
Friday	10:00 AM - 4:30 PM
Saturday	9:00 AM - 1:00 PM

### Last Chance! Art Exhibit

Don't miss our current art exhibit, featuring works by Highland Beach resident and *New Yorker* cartoonist Marisa Acocella and underwater photographer Mark Kosarin. The show closes on July 22.

\*Viewing hours vary; call for times

### Ongoing Activities:

- Learn to download ebooks and stream movies: call for appointment
- Current Events Discussion Group: Saturdays at 10:30 am
- Small Fry Story Time plus Crafts on Wednesdays at 4:30 pm, ages 4 and up
- Toddler Time: Stories and Rhymes on Saturdays at 10:30 am, ages 2 and 3

Call us at 561-278-5455 for more information.

# Another “Task Force Multiplier” for Highland Beach Police

By John Shoemaker

In a continuing effort to recognize those military Veterans who live in Highland Beach or serve our community, we share a short story of each and post it on our town website: [www.highlandbeach.us](http://www.highlandbeach.us) and specifically [Veteran Heroes of Highland Beach | Highland Beach, FL](#)

Please visit this tab to read stories and profiles of our citizens who have served or are serving our country and our town. Prepare to be amazed by the incredible stories of our Veterans. Whether their enlistments were dramatic or routine, their contributions came with sacrifice and hard work to maintain the security of our nation. Without exception, they all served with the utmost honor and dedication, for which we are deeply grateful.



About a year ago, our Chief of Police, Craig Hartmann, and Major Jon Michael Oh, made an important decision to hire a new police officer from Lighthouse Point. David Keyes has a unique background that will greatly benefit our small town.

David has a compelling story to share, with an impressive career.

Originally from Morristown, N.J., David attended Morris Hills High School, Rockaway, NJ, and went on to study civil engineering and business at Widener University in Chester, PA. He then attended the University of North Florida in Jacksonville, FL, to earn a bachelor’s degree in accounting.

He comes from a family of law enforcement officers, including his father, who served in the Morristown Police Department in New Jersey. Breaking somewhat from family tradition, David joined the Army Reserves in 1988, despite several family members having served in the Navy and Marines.

As luck would have it, he was selected to serve in a Military Police Unit: the 449<sup>th</sup> MP Company. He attended MP training at Fort McClellan in Alabama. He was then stationed as an MP officer next to the Willow Grove Naval Air Station at an Army Reserve Center. After the first Gulf War, he was assigned to a transportation company in North Florida that dealt with shipping containers being transferred from rail or trucks to ships, going to the Middle East.

His Army career as an MP spanned six years of active duty and two years on “Individual Ready Reserve,” totaling an eight-year commitment.

He was at the University of North Florida when he met a recruiter for the IRS. It was a pivotal moment in his life. With his technical and accounting background, combined with his family history and Army MP experience, the offer was not to join the IRS to manage tax returns, but more appropriately, he was chosen to join the IRS-CID, or the Criminal Investigation Division of the IRS. This allowed him to combine his accounting and policing skills to focus on national crime concerns, including tax evasion, tax fraud, money laundering, drug enforcement, and other related financial crimes.

Immediately, the IRS-CID sent David to the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (known as "FLETC") for nearly six months of comprehensive training.

And so it went from 1996 to 2022 – a lengthy commitment to the IRS-CID working out of an office close to Fort Lauderdale. Much of his work, success, and experience are confidential. He spent his first six years dealing with tax fraud-type crimes. Then, he was assigned to work with an incredible organization called HIDTA, or the "High-Intensity Drug Trafficking Area" (HIDTA task force, specifically the South Florida HIDTA).



Created by Congress with the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988, HIDTA, with elements of the DEA, ATF, IRS CID, and other agencies, provides assistance to Federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies operating in areas determined to be critical in 33 drug-trafficking regions of the United States. HIDTA plays a very active role and has more than 1,500 authorized special agent positions dedicated to the program. At the local level, the HIDTAs are directed and guided by Executive Boards composed of an equal number of regional Federal and non-Federal (state, local, and tribal) law enforcement leaders.

David worked with HIDTA in the South Florida area for twenty years. Members of HIDTA are comprised of personnel assigned directly by Federal agencies and local law enforcement authorities. During his twenty years in South Florida HIDTA, David worked in the IRS-CID Financial Investigative Strike Force, working cases jointly with the FBI, DEA, HIS, and other Federal, State, and Local law enforcement partners.



Retiring from the IRS in 2022, he spent a year as a private contractor for the Department of State's Diplomatic Security Service, working on asset forfeiture and money laundering investigation support for passport fraud, visa fraud, and human trafficking investigations. After a year, he left to manage family time and priorities.

In 2024, Major Oh of our HBPD, who retired from the Lighthouse Point Police Department after a distinguished career, discussed David's next steps and brought him to Highland Beach for interviews. Chief Hartmann immediately recognized the advantages David would offer our town. David was enthusiastic about the idea and worked to become certified as a police officer, continuing his work representing the Town of Highland Beach on a "Task Force" with HIDTA as a full-time task force officer (TFO) for Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), the investigative agency for ICE, in the HSI El Dorado Task Force South (EDTF-S), a task force focused on money laundering and financial crimes.



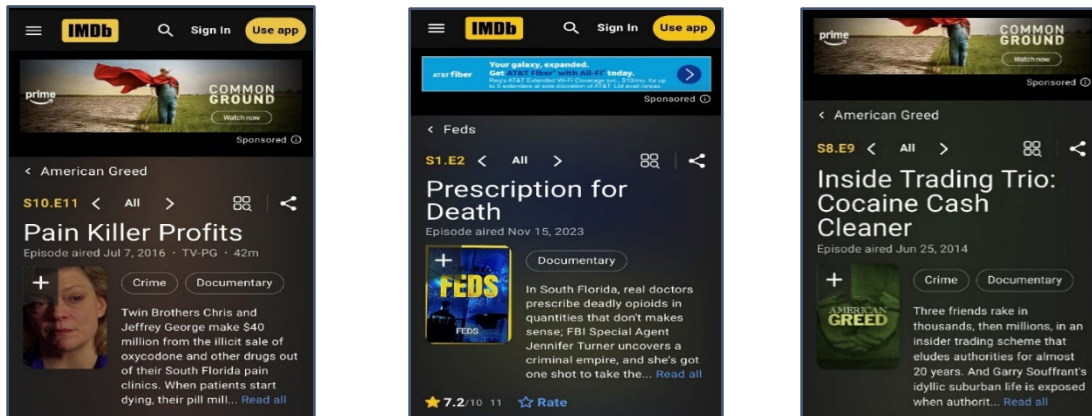
David works on cases involving money laundering and asset forfeiture, immigration and customs-related financial crimes, elder fraud scams, elder victimization, and common criminal activity, including phishing, spoofing, passport and ID fraud, and similar schemes. Hint: If you are asked to make a payment (i.e., for your granddaughter who is in jail or a tax penalty due) by using a Crypto ATM, you must recognize this as a crime in progress, and YOU are going to be the victim. Another lesson: nearly 90% of such elder scams are committed by perpetrators in foreign lands.

Importantly for Highland Beach, by having an officer as part of this Task Force, it will provide our Police Department with direct access to intelligence, resources, training and assistance from the largest federal law enforcement agency in the country. And the payoff for Highland Beach with such an officer assigned to a HIDTA Task Force is that the town, at the end of the year, gets a percentage of all the seizures, forfeitures, and other assets recovered from criminals investigated by the HSI EDTF-S.

The successful exploits of the HIDTA include two of his cases that were featured on the CNBC television show, American Greed, in which he was filmed. One of those cases, the George brothers' "pill mill"



case, was also featured in a CNN Films documentary entitled American Pain. That case was also featured on another episode on the Discovery TV show “F.E.D.S.”



Wow! We wish David every success! When he wins, we all win.

When asked about Highland Beach, he views our town as something quite special. It is a quiet community that is welcoming to our law enforcement officials, as they are to our firefighters and paramedics. Our residents show their gratitude and generosity in many ways, and it makes everyone feel good about their roles and responsibilities. David does not view his assignment as a job, but a trade, and he is highly impressed with the level of professionalism and seriousness of the dedication of the Chief's department to the community.

We have a department with personnel who love their jobs, are highly experienced and skilled, and have extensive contacts within Florida's law enforcement organizations.

David lives today with his wife, Christy, in Lighthouse Point, and she is the Director of the Town of Lighthouse Point's Library.

This writer must admit that, in all the interviews with our Police and Fire personnel to date, it is truly remarkable to see the level of experience, expertise, leadership, and professionalism in such a small town. We all truly benefit from it

Highland Beach is said to be “three miles of paradise”. I would extend it by saying Highland Beach is a safe and secure three miles of paradise.

# **TOWN OF HIGHLAND BEACH – LEADERSHIP TEAM**



## **Town Manager**

Marshall Labadie

Phone: 561-637-2028

## **Executive Assistant to Town Manager**

Madison Noonan



## **Building Official**

Jeff Remas

Phone: 561-278-4540

## **Building Dept. Office Manager**

Carol Holland



## **Town Clerk**

Lanelda Gaskins

Phone: 561-278-4548

## **Deputy Town Clerk**

Jaclyn DeHart



## **Public Works Director**

Pat Roman

Phone: 561-243-2084

## **Asst. Public Works Director**

Sergio Gonzalez Jr.



## **Police Chief**

Craig Hartmann

Phone: 561-266-5800

## **Administrative Assistant**

Deborah Holden



## **Library Director**

Lois Albertson

Phone: 561-278-5455



## **Fire Chief**

Glenn Joseph

Phone: 561-237-5575

## **Asst. Fire Chief/ Fire Marshal**

Matthew Welhaf



## **TOWN COMMISSION**



Mayor Natasha Moore  
Email: [nmoore@highlandbeach.us](mailto:nmoore@highlandbeach.us)  
Phone: (561) 278-4548



Vice Mayor David Stern  
Email: [dstern@highlandbeach.us](mailto:dstern@highlandbeach.us)  
Phone: (561) 664-0426



Commissioner Judith Goldberg  
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Phone: (561) 718-3468



Commissioner Don Peters  
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Commissioner Jason Chudnofsky  
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