

KEY COLONY BEACH COMMISSION APPOINTS DOUGLAS COLONELL

By **Alex Rickert** - March 28, 2024



KCB City Clerk Silvia Gransee, right, swears in newly-appointed commissioner Doug Colonell on March 21. ALEX RICKERT/Keys Weekly

The Key Colony Beach City Commission is once again a five-member board, following the unanimous appointment of Douglas Colonell to the open commission seat on March 21.

Colonell's appointment marks the second in four months for KCB, which since October has contended with significant commission and staff turnover following the resignation of former Mayor Patti Trefry in October and former commissioner Beth Ramsay-Vickrey in early February.

While current commissioner Thomas DiFransico earned a unanimous appointment in November from a field of seven candidates, Colonell stood as the lone applicant in the morning's session, with additional candidates Lin Walsh and Janet Bischoff withdrawing their applications weeks before the meeting. Though several candidates from November's selection process have now adopted other roles within the city, none applied to fill the most recent vacancy.

Listing a 42-year commercial building career on his application, Colonell told the seated commission his knowledge of construction law and basic engineering would lend a helpful perspective to a city moving through infrastructure projects and repairs to its city hall.

"I will work hard and earn your trust, and I will be proud to serve the city and see this community thrive as the gem of the Florida Keys," he said.



The new-look Key Colony Beach City Commission. From left: Tom DiFransico, Doug Colonell, Mayor Joey Raspe, Vice Mayor Freddie Foster, Secretary/Treasurer Tom Harding. ALEX RICKERT/Keys Weekly

Borysiewicz to oversee building, code, fire inspection

Originally hired on an interim basis with Mayor and acting City Administrator Joey Raspe's discretionary spending funds, former KCB Building Official Ed Borysiewicz will return to the post and assume oversight of the city's code enforcement and fire inspection efforts. With unanimous approval, Borysiewicz's annual salary was set at \$160,000, an amount Borysiewicz said was equal to the value of the salary and benefits paid to former Building Official Lenny Leggett.

Borysiewicz will oversee the reshaping of city departments that have seen a complete turnover in the last two months, beginning with the resignation of Leggett and former Code

Enforcement Officer Barry Goldman in February and ending with former building assistant Karl Bursa's departure on March 19.

Borysiewicz said he looked forward to hiring "friendly faces that will do their job, but do it in a nice manner" and spoke of "many different interpretations" to the city's fire codes and building codes for existing and new buildings.

"My interpretations are going to be the ones to help the people that keep us safe, not just pick a line and say 'you have to have this,'" he said.

Ironing out city administrator details

Following revisions to KCB's city administrator job description with commissioner input, Raspe asked the board to relay their recommendations for salary, working hours and any additional items to him via City Clerk Silvia Gransee.

Raspe has stated over the past few commission meetings that he doesn't necessarily believe the position requires a full-time work week, but on Thursday acknowledged the difficulty in filling a high-level position on a part-time basis.

"The department heads we have are outstanding," Raspe said. "My recommendation is I'd like to see something in between, maybe a 30-hour-a-week job for less money and still have the department heads be able to run their departments."

Vice Mayor Freddie Foster echoed Raspe's sentiments, while Secretary-Treasurer Tom Harding recommended allocating funds to pay a grant writer separately from the administrator position.

Next steps for city hall

Thursday's meeting marked the first regular session for the commission in the recently-reopened Marble Hall section of KCB's City Hall. While the building's administrative offices remain closed due to a partially collapsed floor slab, Raspe said the city is "in a phase

where we need to get going on drawings to have that part of the building either repaired or replaced.” Raspe said he had already received input from the city’s department heads on spaces required for staff to work “comfortably and efficiently,” but was eager to translate informal drawings into formal engineered plans to put the project out for bid and pursue possible grant funding.

“This could go two ways: We could do a repair, or we may have people, even the same companies, who may be interested in doing a replacement,” Raspe said. “But the first thing we need to do is sit down with an engineering firm and get these drawings solidified.”

Borysiewicz said he believed settlement of the floor slab could be addressed through the use of structural foam or pin piling inside the building. He added that concerns with asbestos in the administrative area of the hall have already been treated and tested, further confirmed by the Weekly through documents obtained in a public records request. In the meantime, he said he hoped to move the city’s building department into the second floor of the hall in the coming weeks.

In other news:

- After an extensive proposal and discussion of a solar installation by Burke Energy Solutions to power the city’s wastewater plant, the commission agreed to seek further resident input and explore grant funding for the project before making a final decision. Addressing the commission, Burke COO Gregory Galmin said the installation could provide annual cost savings of roughly \$110,000.
- Resolution 2024-05, unanimously approved, authorizes Raspe to renegotiate and execute a lease with the United States Postal Service, required as the post office moves from its temporary location back into City Hall.



Subscribe To Our Newsletter

Subscribe To Our Newsletter

Get Keys Weekly delivered right to your inbox along with a daily dose of Keys News.



Email

SUBSCRIBE!

ALEX RICKERT

Alex Rickert made the perfectly natural career progression from dolphin trainer to newspaper editor in 2021 after freelancing for Keys Weekly while working full time at Dolphin Research Center. A resident of Marathon since 2015, he fell in love with the Florida Keys community by helping multiple organizations and friends rebuild in the wake of Hurricane Irma. An avid runner, actor, and spearfisherman, he spends as much of his time outside of work on or under the sea having civil disagreements with sharks.