


KEYSWEEKLY

KEY COLONY BEACH LOSES BUILDING OFFICIAL & CODE OFFICER AS CITY HALL PREPARES TO REOPEN

By **Alex Rickert** - February 29, 2024



Though some areas of Key Colony Beach's existing city hall, including an administrative area with a cracked floor, will remain closed, contractors and city staff have begun preparations to open the remainder of the hall for immediate use. ALEX RICKERT/Keys Weekly

Key Colony Beach is continuing its five-month period of heavy turnover among city leadership and staff, adding former Code Enforcement Officer Barry Goldman and Building Official Lenny Leggett to its list of resignations over the past two weeks. 

Borysiewicz replaces Leggett as Building Official

Leggett's resignation, sent via email to KCB Mayor Joey Raspe on Feb. 22 to take effect March 1, comes less than one week after the city commission's vote to accept contractor quotes to repair, and eventually re-enter, portions of KCB's existing city hall building. At the Feb. 15 commission meeting, Raspe outlined the results of a recent inspection by structural engineers that he said showed the existing building's Marble Hall area, post office and building department areas are "structurally safe and sound."

In previous email and verbal exchanges with commissioners throughout January and February, Leggett had addressed re-entry to the building with caution, arguing that a 2018 letter from then-Building Official Ed Borysiewicz had effectively revoked the building's Certificate of Occupancy and that one portion of the structure was ineligible to reopen while another retained its unsafe designation.

Email exchanges obtained by the Weekly via a records request state that Borysiewicz, who in January challenged the results of his 2018 letter and said that he "believe(d) the city hall building was not substantially damaged due to Hurricane Irma, period," will serve as the city's interim Building Official. The hire is made possible via use of Raspe's discretionary spending account until the city's next commission meeting, at which time Borysiewicz may either be hired as the permanent Building Official or extended as a temporary employee, with salary to be determined.

Speaking with the Weekly by phone on Feb. 27, Vice Mayor Freddie Foster confirmed that although Leggett's resignation listed a final day of March 1, Borysiewicz had already begun work as the city's Building Official.

The final timeline and status of Leggett's resignation is unclear; in an email exchange with City Clerk Silvia Gransee on Feb. 26, Raspe stated that Leggett "did not leave in good

standing,” while Gransee confirmed Leggett’s last day working as Feb. 23 in a reply to Raspe. However, an email sent to Leggett the following day by Gransee stated that Leggett would be compensated through March 1 as an employee “in good standing.”

A phone call and text message to Raspe by the Weekly had not been returned at press time.

Permitting timelines

Since the publication of the Marathon Weekly’s Feb. 22 issue, which contained an image of ongoing repair work in the existing city hall building taken on Feb. 21, multiple KCB residents contacted the Weekly by phone to express concerns regarding the timelines of permits submitted for repair work.

As of Feb. 28, Key Colony Beach’s online permitting system shows five permits issued for the property in 2024: an asbestos abatement permit, issued Feb. 15; a permit to inspect the building’s electrical system for water damage and safety violations, issued Feb. 22; a permit for plumbing work, issued Feb. 27; and two HVAC equipment replacement permits, both issued Feb. 27.

Asked about the seemingly conflicting timelines, Foster attributed the permits’ approval dates to “a lag” as the city undergoes changes in its building department.

Code enforcement officer Goldman resigns

Goldman’s resignation, tendered verbally to Raspe on Feb. 14, confirmed in a Feb. 21 email to Raspe and Gransee, and effective Feb. 28, comes on the heels of extensive resident debate regarding the city’s code enforcement efforts. Dissent came to a head in the city commission’s workshop meeting two days before Goldman’s resignation, when multiple KCB citizens spoke both for and against Goldman’s enforcement efforts in a workshop segment prompted by Foster.

"I'm in for compliance. I'm not in for punishment, I'm not in for fines, and I don't think we should budget for (them)," said Foster, stressing the importance of prompt notification of violations to prevent accrual of fines. "I think we should be facilitative and work with the citizens, not work as an enforcement agency."

Public commenters in the Monday workshop and prior commission meetings who were critical of Goldman's efforts zeroed in on what some called a crackdown in enforcement of specific ordinances over the past year, including a 2023 focus on egress window requirements. Some went as far as to suggest the city should return oversight of code enforcement efforts to KCB's police and building official, forgoing the code enforcement officer position entirely.

But others were quick to state that significant violations stemming from construction without permits and vacation rental infractions made up a large portion of KCB's fines, saying that "a violation is a violation," and praising Goldman's work as necessary to maintain compliance throughout the city.

Secretary/Treasurer Tom Harding, who served on KCB's commission when the code enforcement post was created, said the city's shift in approach came following resident concerns that code enforcement efforts had grown "too casual," with those responsible for enforcement "looking the other way." Police Chief Kris DiGiovanni called increasing code enforcement efforts by officers "a road we don't want to go down."





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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.