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FEATURED

Two more resign from Key Colony Beach ranks

By RICHARD TAMBORRINO Special to The Citizen

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The exodus within the city of Key Colony Beach continues as two recent resignations now bring the tally to five city officials gone since October. But the city, which at this time a mere six months ago was in a state of complete upheaval, may now be entering a more positive transformational phase, according to officials.

Code Officer Barry Goldman, who abruptly resigned Feb. 15, was followed by Building Official Gerald L. Leggett last week. The resignations follow those of former mayor Patti Trefry in October, Commissioner Beth Ramsay-Vickrey in early February and City Administrator Dave Turner, whose contract was not renewed in December.

The commission is expected to fill Ramsay-Vickrey's seat in March, while Mayor Joey Raspe has assumed city administrator functions during the past two months. His efforts to proactively assess the current condition of City Hall and take steps to repair several items aimed at shoring up the building for occupancy began in earnest in January.

But while this dramatic government transformation continues, a distinct ray of optimism has emerged.

Vice Mayor Freddie Foster shared by phone that the city has lured former longtime KCB building official Ed Borysiewicz out of retirement to lead both the code and building departments.

“We will take our time finding the right people long-term,” said Foster, indicating Borysiewicz has agreed to remain in that capacity as long as is necessary. “Bringing him in is as easy as giving him a set of keys,” he continued. “It could’ve been painful, but the city is rallying around us, the atmosphere has changed dramatically, and we couldn’t be happier.”

“Ed (Borysiewicz) will oversee both departments under his experienced guidance,” continued Foster. “He came back to help us while we look for a permanent building official. He bought the city a lot of time.”

Borysiewicz has been a vocal opponent of a complete City Hall rebuild. He will oversee the engineers who are diligently examining City Hall’s condition and determining the building is safe and secure is one of his first tasks, said Foster.

Foster also enthusiastically said City Hall may be reoccupied very, very soon. “All good plans fall in place,” he said. “After seven years of being idle (since Hurricane Irma), it could be reopened in seven weeks since Mayor Raspe and I were elected (as mayor and vice mayor).”

At the December KCB commission meeting, Raspe reiterated that there were conflicting assessments from several different engineering reports on City Hall, and he intended to understand the building’s true condition. At that same meeting, Raspe said he would engage Leggett to assess the building’s condition. Leggett’s contract was extended for 2024 in that same commission session.

Leggett replaced Gerard Roussin, who is now the Marathon Building Official, in late 2022. KCB, which for years was considered the “gold standard” for building permit turnaround time, has been marred by contractor and resident complaints about permitting delays ever since. One local contractor said that Marathon’s turnaround time, widely criticized by contractors for years, has now surpassed KCB in terms of efficiency.

Goldman had been widely criticized by residents who viewed his code enforcement efforts as targeted and punitive, even suggesting the department was operating as a profit center, at the direction of Turner. Fine revenue collected since he started in August 2022 had increased to almost \$150,000 – a daily average of about \$310 – effectively tripling previous code enforcement fines.

By contrast, in the 1,365 days under former City Manager Chris Moonis, who stepped down in September 2020, code enforcement produced fine revenue of \$139,362 or about \$103 per day.

During the first 500 days of Turner’s reign, code enforcement produced fine revenue of only \$43,810 but took an abrupt about-face at about the same time resident displeasure with the proposed City Hall rebuild was emerging late in 2022.

At the city’s January commission meeting, Goldman reported that his department had liens on multiple homeowners in KCB on which he intended to foreclose. At that same meeting, City Attorney Dirk Smits made a reference that Goldman raised more in fines than he costs the city.

While the city was experiencing this uptick in fines, KCB was also incurring mounting legal expenses. Since 2021, KCB has spent more than a half-million dollars on legal work, an appreciable expenditure for a city the size of Key Colony Beach.

Even though the legal expenses initiated by the city's building and code enforcement departments were largely unavoidable, more than 91% of the city's Code Enforcement legal expenses occurred since Goldman came on board in August 2022.

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