

As the holiday season unfolds, I am filled with gratitude and pride for the vibrant community we share here in Fort Lauderdale. This time of year is an opportunity to reflect on the many blessings that surround us and to celebrate the spirit of togetherness, kindness and hope that defines our city.

It was amazing to see the hundreds of people turn out for Light up the Beach, and I know large crowds will gather just same for our other holiday festivities.

Whether you're enjoying our beautiful beaches, the festive lights of Las Olas or gathering with loved ones, I encourage you to embrace the joy and generosity that make this season so special. We've faced challenges together, and yet, our resilience and unity continue to shine through.

I'd like to thank all of those who turned out to vote in the Nov. 3 election.

I am truly honored to have received your confidence to continue to serve our city as mayor for a third term. Please join me in congratulating Vice Mayor Steve Glassman and commissioners Pamela Beasley-Pittman and John Herbst on their re-elections and welcoming Ben Sorensen back to the dais.

I also wish Warren Sturman the best as he departs from the commission.

The incoming commission will be sworn into office at 10 a.m. on Dec. 3 in the Mary Porter Ballroom at the Broward Center for the Performing Arts. Everyone is welcome to attend the ceremony.

The new commission will have many challenges and opportunities over the coming four years.

## **Infrastructure**

We must continue to improve the city's infrastructure – a major priority given the age of parts of the system and the growing impact of climate change.

The king tides of the past couple months have been some of the highest tides ever recorded. And, while we were fortunate not to be impacted by any tropical systems this year, weather data shows that hurricanes are of much greater intensity than they were a mere decade ago.

We've committed an investment of more than \$1.6 billion directly to infrastructure upgrades. This rapid modernization will bring the best level of service possible to our neighborhoods and businesses.

Our existing flood-control system could accommodate a mere three inches of rainfall over a 24-hour period. When our upgrades are completed, we will be able to handle 10 inches of rain in the same time-period – tripling our capacity to prevent flooded streets.

## **Water plant and police station**

The new commission must oversee the completion of several major construction projects.

We are a third of the way through building a new water treatment plant. This plant will be able to withstand major hurricanes, provide clean, colorless water and remove contaminants that scientists are increasingly concerned about like PFAs.

Construction of the new police station should be completed next year, providing space for our growing force and offering them the latest in technological support as well as better access to training. Three new fire stations on the barrier island and in the downtown-Rio Vista area are in various stages of the design-construction process.

### **Homelessness**

Speaking of public safety, the new commission will oversee the implementation of our new homeless strategies. We will be ready when a new state law takes full effect in January mandating that cities be more assertive.

We will continue to help those who want help, but we will not tolerate behavior that harms our community and threatens neighbors and businesses. Along these lines, we have passed new ordinances prohibiting aggressive panhandling and camping on public property.

Our Police Department and homeless assistance teams have stepped up their engagement with those living on the streets – finding assistance or shelter for many and issuing warnings and court notices to others. We also continue our discussions with the county and other government and non-profit entities about increasing shelter space.

### **Amenities**

We have several new amenities that must be seen to completion as well – adding to our ever-growing mix that already includes our partnership with the InterMiami professional soccer team, the construction of the Baptist Health IcePlex, the renovation of the aquatic center and the reopening of a completely overhauled War Memorial Auditorium.

The construction of a new International Swimming Hall of Fame is moving forward as is the re-imagination of Huizenga Park. Soon, we will open a major new pickleball center in an unused corner of Snyder Park – responding to the sport's growing popularity. Also, we have entered an agreement with the Orange Bowl Committee to upgrade the Jimmy Evert Tennis Center in Holiday Park.

### **Commuter rail**

The new commission also takes over the responsibility of addressing the dispute with Broward County over the future of commuter rail service through our community.

The county is continuing to push for the construction of a bridge over the New River despite our long-stated concerns about the impact to the downtown's renaissance and

the city's historic district, the potential harm to the marine industry and the creation of a permanent divide between parts of our community.

The city must stand resolute that the only viable option is the construction of a tunnel. We have repeatedly shown that it is technically feasible and does not carry the extreme cost that the county claims.

As I said at my State of the City address in October, we can get it done. Federal funding is available. Members of Congress will help. And there are potential private partners out there who know how to do it.

### **City Hall**

The new commission also must decide on how to replace the old City Hall, which was destroyed in the April 2023 flood.

An outreach process to gather community input has concluded. Now, we must choose a location and how to proceed with design and construction so we can quickly have a new permanent home for our operations.

### **City administration**

We also are tasked with finding a new city manager and new city attorney. We are well underway in a national search for a city manager following Greg Chavarria's resignation this summer. Sadly, our attorney, Tom Ansbro, recently passed away and now we need to find a replacement for him as well.

There are many other issues before us – addressing the high cost of housing, maintaining the city's financial health, ensuring that our streets and neighborhoods remains as safe as possible and preserving our quality of life amid continued growth. I believe that together, this new commission can address these matters and ensure our city continues to be a great place to live, work and visit.

Yours,

Dean