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# AVENTURA update

VOLUME 11 | NUMBER 3 | FALL 2008

*A Newsletter Designed to Inform the Residents of Aventura*

## A COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The City of Aventura's newsletter represents the City Commission's continued commitment to keep the community updated on important issues, including city government and services. This newsletter is published on a quarterly basis and your comments and suggestions are welcome.

## MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to join with our community to make Aventura a city of the highest quality and a City of Excellence. We do this by providing RESPONSIVE, COST EFFECTIVE and INNOVATIVE local government services.



## The City Adopts Lowest Tax Rate While Maintaining City Services

Recently the City Commission adopted the budget for the fiscal year beginning October 1, 2008. The budget adopted the same tax rate as the prior year of 1.726, which is the lowest rate in Miami – Dade County. The City's portion of the property tax bill represents only 10% of the total. The other large portions represent the County and City's School Board. By adopting last year's tax rate, most residents with a homestead exemption will see a reduction in their City's taxes. Just as important as keeping taxes low, was accomplishing this while maintaining the service levels and programs our residents and businesses currently enjoy.

Over the past year, the country as well as the South Florida area, has experienced an economic downturn that has resulted in lower home values, rising fuel costs, a national credit crunch, an increase in the jobless rate and revenue shortfalls at all levels of government. In addition to a \$247 million reduction in the City's taxable value caused by Amendment One, the sagging housing market resulted in another \$477 million reduction in taxable value. Taxable value increases from new construction in the amount of \$555 million assisted in offsetting the loss in property values. However, the overall reduction of \$170 mil-

lion or \$279,000 in tax revenue resulted in the City experiencing its first loss of taxable value in our 12 years of incorporation.

Due to privatizing and outsourcing many City services over the years, completing \$110 million in capital projects since 1996 and maintaining prudent reserve funds, the City has stabilized costs and is in a better position than most to weather the revenue reductions caused by Amendment One and the economic slowdown. Last year's comprehensive reevaluation of service levels and budget line items which resulted in operating cost reductions also played in a key role in creating the foundation and financial sustainability for the City to respond to lower revenues as we prepared this year's budget.

In response to these uncertain economic times, a goal was established to limit the overall budget increase to 2% and General Fund operating costs to 5% while maintaining the current service levels and programs. The budget would not include any expansion or additional areas of service except for the start-up costs associated with the Arts & Cultural Center. The budget process produced a total budget .8% less than the previous year and operating costs were limited to a

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## A New Hotel for 2009



Aventura is getting a new hotel which is under construction on NE 185 Street behind the Walgreens and Pier 1 stores. ALoft is an 8 story hotel, 215 room hotel with attached parking garage, 3,500 square feet of first floor retail stores on the NE 187 Street frontage, 5,000 square feet of meeting space, lobby lounge and snack area, fitness center and outdoor swimming pool and patio. Completion is expected in November of 2009.

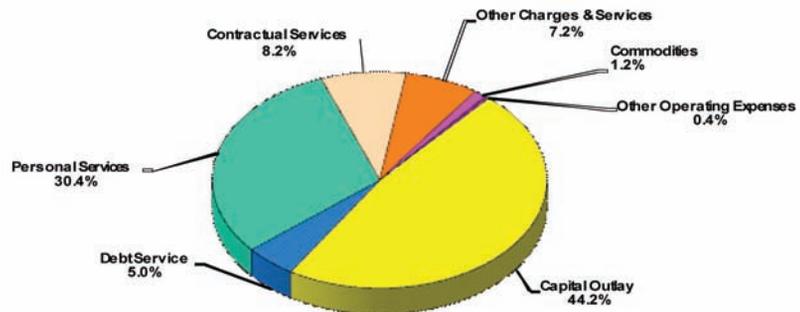
## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT NEWS

As of August 25, 2008, the City has a new Building Official, Raul Rodriquez. You can reach Mr. Rodriquez by phone at (305) 466-8937 or by email at [rrodriquez@cityofaventura.com](mailto:rrodriquez@cityofaventura.com)

*Continued from cover*

4.5% increase as compared to the previous year. Capital Outlay costs decreased by 11.7% due to the completion of major capital projects in prior years.

The total number of employees contained in the budget decreased for the first time in the City's history. The total number of full-time employees decreased from 176 to 174. Each year the administration evaluates the organizational structure, service levels and workforce requirements. This year the process resulted in the elimination of three positions



which were directly related to the economic downturn, (ie., building permits and special events). The budget contains one new position associated with start-up costs of the Arts & Cultural Center

The total budget for 2008/09 is \$54,802,354. This is \$426,468 or .8% less as compared to the prior year. The decrease is attributed to completing major capital projects and reducing operating expenses.

Some of the major points emphasized, in the proposed budget, are as follows:

- For the thirteenth year, no property tax increase. By adopting last year's millage rate, which is less than the roll back rate, most residents with a homestead exemption will see a reduction in their City's taxes.
- Funds construction of Aventura Arts & Cultural Center which will be utilized to host a variety of performing arts and cultural programming for all age groups.
- Includes funds to construct traffic flow

intersection improvements along Biscayne Boulevard, NE 199th Street and resurface Williams Island Road and NE 190th Street at a cost of \$1,174,000.

- Create a new Crime Suppression Unit from within the ranks of the Police Department to proactively concentrate on crimes of violence and/or felonies within the City.
- Provides for \$9,276,800 worth of capital improvements. The City's infrastructure needs are addressed through a broad mix of

capital Improvement projects, which will enhance the City's quality of life, and its attractiveness.

- Continues to implement technology enhancements that develop our "Electronic Government" allowing the public to interact more easily and conveniently with the City and to automate City operations.
- Continues contracting most maintenance functions, engineering, plan review and inspection services to the private sector.
- Funds police equipment needs from laptop computers to new police vehicles in the amount of \$1,204,300.
- Includes \$200,000 to upgrade the drainage system along NE 191st Street and NE 29th Avenue.
- Continue to adopt "Go Green" initiatives in order to save energy, conserve precious natural resources and reduce our impact on climate change.

# Proposed Arts & Cultural Center Moves Forward



The design and permitting process for the new Arts & Cultural Center is moving forward and a ground breaking ceremony for the first phase is scheduled for November 2008. The Center will be located at the end of NE 188th Street adjacent to the water and the City's Community Recreation Center and Charter School. The tentative completion date is scheduled for February 2010. The proposed 14,000 square foot state of the art facility will hold about 322 seats and is being designed in accordance with "green building" environmentally friendly criteria. The majority of the funding for the construction of the new Arts &

Cultural Center is being provided by the County through their GOB program passed by voters. When complete the facility will host a variety of performing arts and cultural programming for all age groups. It will provide performing arts entertainment locally for our residents to enjoy without having to travel outside the City.



## CRIME SUPPRESSION UNIT (CSU)

On Tuesday September 16th, 2008, the newly formed Aventura Police Crime Suppression Unit began full time operations. The unit's main objective and focus is the detection, investigation and apprehension of subjects who are committing and/or about to commit crimes of violence and/or felonies.

The CSU is an undercover tactical unit. Utilizing various surveillance and investigative techniques, this unit will work with neighboring jurisdiction's police agencies to effectively combat crime problems that affect the City of Aventura. The unit has been outfitted with some of the most modern equipment available to law enforcement today and the return on investment is already showing.

Under the direction of Sgt. Michael Mauer, the unit's members: Ofc. Sean Bergert, Ofc. Lou Chaidez, Ofc. Ken Sealy and Ofc. James McEvoy, have already made several noteworthy arrests. Recent arrests included several large shoplifting theft groups, a robbery group responsible for over \$200,000 in jewelry theft, and a robbery subject wanted by North Miami Beach PD.

We have very high expectations for this unit to make a positive impact on specific crime problems that can affect our City. The formation of this unit is just one more example of the dedication that your city government has towards keeping our residents, visitors and merchants safe while they live, shop and play in the City of Excellence.

## ACES Achieves "A" For Excellence

Aventura City of Excellence School, (ACES) students achieved an A Grade, ranking among the top high performing combination schools in the State of Florida, for the 4th year in a row.

The school slogan states, "At ACES, Excellence is the Expectation, not the Exception," so it's not surprising that ACES students, teachers and administrators have taken academics very seriously.

ACES Principal, Julie Alm said, "Academic rigor combined with our commitment to Character Education has helped ACES achieve excellence. Our "whole child" focus ensures that our students are safe, engaged, supported, and challenged so that they become productive, caring and engaged citizens of our community and our world." ACES has won a State School of Character Award, ranked as a National Finalist for the presti-

gious National Schools of Character Award and has won five National Character Education Promising Practices Awards.

ACES' progressive and rigorous program targets students' individual needs by tracking and promoting their progress toward both academic and personal goals. Teachers focus on helping students to think critically, problem solve and to learn to make responsible choices. In addition, our staff receives extensive professional development that empowers our teachers with current best practices.

City Manager, Eric Soroka said, "We are very proud of ACES accomplishments. Students receive a well balanced education that connects the school and families to our broader community and prepares them for a successful future in a rapidly changing global society."

# Peace Represents Action at ACES

Aventura City of Excellence School, ACES students and the City of Aventura celebrated their fourth annual International Peace Day event on Friday, September 19th to honor the United Nations Day of Peace. ACES itself is a United Nation of sorts with over 23 different countries represented in the student body.

ACES students experience Peace Day as a special event involving weeks of preparation, filled with activities and projects that express Peace Day in writing, art, music, history, theater, language, video presentations and student directed service learning projects. The Good Samaritan Gift Project had all 900 K-8 students collecting items for needy children in war torn countries. Students filled colorful gift wrapped shoe boxes with essential items that less fortunate children would appreciate and need. A large Peace Day quilt



made by the Kindergarten classes hung proudly on an entry way hall. Art students created a banner to greet students and guests for the Peace Day Ceremony. The 5th grade classes collected new and gently used shoes for less fortunate children in the Dominican Republic and then wrote personal letters to the children in Spanish that were placed in the shoes. Classes displayed beautiful Peace Day bulletin boards for all to enjoy.

ACES students, parents, Aventura city officials and teachers entered the Middle School Media Center, where the Peace Day Ceremony was held. Guests enjoyed the extraordinary display of Middle School Peace Day art and the enchanting musical medley performed by Phillip Lakofsky on guitar and his wife Elissa on flute, professor at FAU, FIU and performer for the Miami City Ballet. The student run morning TV Cast began the show with their daily reports and Living Values messages on peace. ACES students presented the University Of Miami School Of Medicine with a check for \$1,500 for school fundraising efforts on behalf of the Strides for Safety Walk at the Aventura Mall.

Principal Julie Alm began the official Peace Day Ceremony welcoming students and guests by sharing a meaningful, heartfelt discussion of the importance of Peace and ACES

role in being socially responsible, caring and contributing citizens at school, in the community and in the world. Mayor Susan Gottlieb read an insightful student essay on Peace and proclaimed it a day of peace in the City of Aventura. The young ACES chorus, led by Choral Director Philip Lakofsky delighted the audience with their selection of "Peace Day" songs. The Keynote speaker, Brigitte Benchmool, children's author of the best selling Jady and the Magic Bubbles series, discussed her book, "I Met Gandhi" and the significant role that Gandhi played in influencing world leaders to change the world through nonviolence. Ms. Benchmool said, "Peace doesn't get much press and war gets all the attention. It all starts with our children. Each one of us must be a messenger for peace and continue to enlarge our circle of peace." Vice Principal Daniel Sandberg invited mid-



## AVENTURA UPDATE



MAYOR Susan Gottlieb

### COMMISSIONERS

Zev Auerbach ■ Bob Diamond

Teri Holzberg ■ Billy Joel

Michael Stern ■ Luz Urbáez-Weinberg

CITY MANAGER Eric M. Soroka, ICMA-CM

CITY CLERK Teresa M. Soroka, MMC

### CITY ATTORNEY

Weiss Serota Helfman

Pastoriza Cole & Boniske

EDITOR Rosie Marquez

dle school students to present their outstanding essays and poems on peace. The ceremony ended with a Peace Day video presentation that featured students demonstrating what "Peace Means to ACES students."

After the ceremony, guests were invited to the middle school cafeteria to enjoy Peace

Day Cake and the author's book signing, where hundreds of colorfully wrapped gift boxes were displayed for the school wide service learning project.

Later, assemblies featuring Ms. Benchmoly were held for ACES students to discuss the topic of peace and her books. Students cre-

ated art and completed Peace Day projects to reinforce the lessons.

The entire ACES caring community is a role model for all of us to be socially conscious, caring and contributing members of society, where we learn by example that each one of us can make a big difference. ☺

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## Youth Athletics

### FLAG FOOTBALL

Are you ready for some football? Over 130 children had a great season playing in the City of Aventura's Flag Football League. Players and their families experienced the excitement of the game and community spirit. All players gained confidence as athletes, learned new skills regarding flag football, and worked together as a team.

### BASKETBALL

Dribble it, pass it, let's make a basket! Youth basketball registration is currently underway and this year's league promises to be the best ever. Players will have the opportunity to learn new skills as they play weekly games against other age

appropriate teams. All team practices and games will be held at the Community Recreation Center located at 3375 NE 188th Street. Youth Basketball season is scheduled to begin November 11, 2008 through January 17, 2009. You must be a Community Recreation Center member to participate. For more information on Youth Basketball league and Community Recreation Center membership please call 305-466-3883.

### GIRLS SOCCER

Get ready girls, soccer registration is kicking off on November 3, 2008 for residents at \$157.50 and November 10, 2008 for non residents at \$189. The girl's soccer season is

scheduled to begin on December 13, 2008 and run through March, 2009. For more information regarding girls soccer games, practices and volunteer coaching please call Waterways Park at 305-466-8008.

### BOYS SOCCER

Boys Soccer registration for residents will begin on December 1, 2008 and non residents on December 8, 2008. Boys Soccer Season is scheduled to begin on January 31, 2009 – March 28, 2009. We are now taking applications for all volunteer coaches and assistant coaches. For more information on Boys Youth Soccer please call Waterways Park at 305-466-8008. Residents: \$100.00, and Non Residents: \$120.00 ☺

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## Red-Light Cameras Keep Aventura Streets Safer

Red-light running is a dangerous and costly problem on Aventura streets and across the country. Aventura's camera enforcement program is designed to reduce the number of violations, crashes and injuries caused by red-light runners. The objective is to change drivers' behavior, making the community safe as more and more drivers obey the traffic signals and stop on red.

Aventura presently has red-light cameras located at five intersections.

- Northbound Biscayne Blvd at NE 199th St
  - Northbound W. Country Club Dr at NE 199th St
  - Southbound W. Country Club Dr at NE 199th St
  - Northbound W. Country Club Dr at William Lehman Causeway
  - Southbound W. Country Club Dr at William Lehman Causeway
- Future locations will be considered.

### WHAT IS A RED-LIGHT VIOLATION?

A red-light violation occurs when a motorist enters an intersection after the traffic signal has turned red. Motorists already in the intersection when the signal changes to red are not considered red-light violators. For example, a driver who enters an intersection on a green light will not receive a citation—even if that motorist must wait until the light turns red to complete a left-hand turn after oncoming traffic clears.

### HOW DOES THE RED-LIGHT CAMERA PROGRAM WORK?

The camera is activated when motion is detected, indicating a vehicle is entering the intersection AFTER the traffic signal has turned red. The camera captures two images of the offending vehicle—one showing the vehicle before entering the intersection on a red light, and one showing the vehicle proceeding through the inter-

section on red. A video is also made of the violation. The images are reviewed and the violation confirmed by an officer with the Aventura Police Department before a violation notice is issued.

Owners of vehicles photographed running red lights receive a Notice of Violation and are subject to a minimum fine of \$125. Those who receive a Notice of Violation can obtain additional information or view their violations and video online at [www.ViolationInfo.com](http://www.ViolationInfo.com). Citizens also can call toll free 1-866-790-4111 if they have questions. ☺



## A QUANTUM LEAP FOR K-9



Officer Helen Morrison's new K-9 partner, Quantum, joined the Aventura team and is currently undergoing specialized training for police work. Quantum will learn the specialty of narcotics detection and patrol work.

The Aventura Police Department utilizes its K-9 Unit as an extension of our Road Patrol and Special Services. Often times the 3-person unit is called to assist neighboring cities or support other major events throughout Miami-Dade and Broward Counties as needed. K-9 partners bring a level of safety for an officer as they can sense danger prior to an officer's knowledge in addition to their ability to detect narcotics and search for persons.

Quantum is already trained for obedience with classic 'Schutzhund' training which refers to special protection training. This special training teaches dogs to protect their owners by biting and holding, or simply hold as is necessary while responding immediately to verbal commands.

Officer Morrison has been a K-9 officer for 23 years and said of being a K-9 officer, "It's the best partner you could ever have." Her previous K-9 partner, Scout, was a loyal member of the Aventura Police Department for seven years and received numerous commendations for his assistance in many felony apprehensions. 🐾

## Special Events



### FOUNDERS DAY

Save the Date and Go Green! The 13th Annual Founders Day will be held on Sunday, November 9, 2008 from 12:00 – 5:00 PM at Founders Park Bayside, 3105 NE 190th Street. Enjoy a variety of activities including recyclable arts and crafts, air brush tattoos, interactive Go Green demonstrations from Mad Science, rock climbing walls and giant inflatable bounce houses, Toddler Town play area, puppet shows, face painters, a mobile video arcade and an opportunity to meet the team mascots from the Florida Panthers, Florida Marlins and the Miami Heat.



Don't miss the 6th Annual Aventura Star Talent Competition finals, What's the Deal game show, The High Voltage Dancers, and an outdoor concert featuring Aventura's own Elsten Torres! Elsten is an Aventura resident whose music is a combination of Latin

and pop! There is sure to be something for everyone including great food and a festival atmosphere. Parking and Shuttles will be available at the Harbour Centre beginning at 11:30 AM. The Aventura Express will operate from 11:30 AM to 5:30 PM.

Please bring a new unwrapped toy for the Holiday Toy Drive at Founders Day or drop off donation items at the following locations:

- The Government Center, 19200 West Country Club Drive
- Aventura Community Recreation Center, 3375 NE 188 Street
- Founders Park, 3105 NE 190 Street
- Waterways Park, 3301 NE 213 Street

### VETERANS DAY CEREMONY

The City of Aventura will honor America's veterans and recognize all the brave men and women who have served in the armed forces on Tuesday, November 11, 2008, 10 AM at the Aventura Government Center, 19200 West Country Club Drive. Please plan to join our city officials, community leaders, veterans, heroes and neighbors at this annual ceremony. Local veteran's groups will present wreathes and the keynote speaker will be dispatched from the United States Military.

**CULTURAL ARTS THEATRE  
AND LEISURE PROGRAM**

The Cultural Arts, Theater and Leisure programming offers trips and tours to the theater, museums, historical places, art shows, and area restaurants

This season the Cultural Arts Theater and Leisure program was filled with events from theater excursions to a day cruise on the Lady Atlantic. These excursions offer a more intimate experience with the arts and give people a chance to see their neighbors in a social setting. Don't miss the 2009 season of excursions available November 24, 2008 in the Aventura Activities.

**TEACHER PLANNING DAYS**

When school is out the adventures begins! The City of Aventura offers fun filled days of activities for children ages 5-12 at the Community Recreation Center, located at 3375 NE 188th Street. Spend the day playing games, making crafts, special events, field trips, and more! Teacher Planning Days begins at 7:30 am and end at 6:00 pm. Fee include all activities, supplies, an afternoon snack, and lunch. Resident fee is \$39 and non resident fee is \$47. Bring a canned good for the At Home program, Aventura Together Helping Others Meet Excellence.

*Tuesday, November 4, 2008*

Can you find the buried treasure in Aventura? Campers will enter a world of make believe and search for buried treasures. All princesses, pirates, dragons, and princes are invited.

*Friday, January 16, 2009*

Campers will discover what it is like to be a paleontologist as they explore dinosaurs and their prehistoric environment. The day will be complete with a fossil dig where campers can keep the artifacts they find.

*Friday, February 6, 2009*

Explore the word of bubbles. Campers will make bubble solutions and experiment with each one to see which ones work the best. They will also test a variety of objects used as wands in our Bubble Wand Competition. The day would not be complete without the bubble that brings

the most fun in our bubble gum blowing contest.

*Friday, March 27, 2009*

Campers will explore some of the cultures found in Aventura, as well as cultures from around the world. We will discover and try foods from around the world at the "Around the World Buffet." Throughout the day, campers will play games from all over the world, so they can see how children around the world have fun.

*Friday, June 5, 2009*

Explore the sweet world of Candyland. Adventures will include candy relays, a sweet scavenger hunt, a trip to the Sweet Shop and more!

**WINTER CAMP**

Spend your winter break with the City of Aventura! Winter Camp will be available for children ages 5-12 at the Community Recreation Center, 3375 NE 188 St, from 7:30 AM to 6 PM. The cost for residents is \$204 for the two week session. Non-resident cost is \$245.

*Monday, December 22, 2008 –*

*Friday, December 26, 2008*

Get ready to enter Wacky Wonderland! Campers will participate in backwards day, where everything will be the wrong way, decorate cupcakes to share with family and friends, and travel offsite to Color Me Mine where masterpieces will be created.

*Monday, December 29, 2008 –*

*Friday, January 2, 2009*

Continue the journey through Wacky Wonderland as campers participate in wacky and wonderful games. End the week by celebrating everyone's birthday at the Merry Unbirthday Party.

Camp will close at Noon on Wednesday, December 24 and December 31, 2008. Camp will be closed Thursday, December 25, 2008 and January 1, 2009.

Help us help others by participating in the AT HOME Program, Aventura Together, Helping Others Meet Excellence. We will be collecting children's books throughout Winter Camp to donate to Kids in Distress. Together we can make a difference. 🐾



**GOVERNMENT  
CENTER DIRECTORY**

- MAIN NUMBER .....(305) 466-8900
- MAIN FAX NUMBER .....(305) 466-8939
- MAYOR AND COMMISSION .....(305) 466-8901
- CITY MANAGER .....(305) 466-8910  
Eric M. Soroka, ICMA-CM
- CITY CLERK .....(305) 466-8901  
Teresa M. Soroka, MMC
- COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT  
Joanne Carr, Director .....(305) 466-8940
- COMMUNITY SERVICES .....(305) 466-8930  
Robert M. Sherman, Director
- FINANCE .....(305) 466-8920  
Brian K. Raducci, Director
- POLICE .....(305) 466-8989  
Steven Steinberg, Police Chief
- INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY ....(305)466-8928  
Karen J. Lanke, Director
- CHARTER SCHOOL .....(305) 466-1499  
Julie Alm, Principal
- COMMUNITY  
RECREATION CENTER .....(305) 466-3883
- JOB HOTLINE .....(305) 466-8955

# CITY COMMISSION MEETINGS

Commission Meetings are held  
at 6:00 pm:

Aventura Government Center  
Commission Chambers  
19200 West Country Club Drive

Check our web site,  
[www.cityofaventura.com](http://www.cityofaventura.com),  
for our next meeting date

For information on upcoming  
Commission meetings and work-  
shops and to confirm all meeting  
dates, times and locations,  
please contact the City Clerk's  
Office at (305) 466-8901.

## Watch for These Upcoming Events!



- November 9 .....13th Annual Founders Day
- November 9 .....6th Annual Aventura Star Talent Competition Finals
- November 11 .....Veterans Day Ceremony
- December 22 – Jan 2, 2009 .....Winter Camp

**For event details, visit [www.cityofaventura.com](http://www.cityofaventura.com)**



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