



# Peacock Express

A quarterly Newsletter for the Residents of El Portal, since the Spring of 2015!

Volume 2 Issue 9

Last Issue Summer 2020

## MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR

Dear El Portal Residents:

Just a little less than a year and a half ago I addressed the attendees at my installation gala as the President of the Miami-Dade County League of Cities with this:

*“The term League is defined as: a collection of people, countries, or groups that combine for a particular purpose, typically mutual protection or cooperation...And, with that said, now more than ever, it’s time – time for our cities, towns, and villages within Miami-Dade County to unite - to have ONE VOICE!”*

*So, this year, as League President, instead of focusing only on one initiative, such as: transportation, or infrastructure, or affordable housing, etc. I will focus on uniting us – our associate members and the 34-municipalities, toward COMMUNICATING more, collaborating more, sharing our resources, and building a community amongst us—just as each of us has built a community within our respective cities. Because we know the value in it; because we know there is strength in numbers!*

*Remember, this is your League—our League, a diverse 34-municipalities strong—and diversity is our strength, and again there is strength in numbers! Together - let’s take this initiative and re-commit to deeper and BETTER COMMUNICATION! Let’s make a difference beyond our municipal boundaries. Let’s do this in order to better represent our constituents’ day-in and day-out. Let’s make them proud and confident. Let’s restore public trust and create a more united tomorrow.”*

Now, let’s fast-forward to today, where our Village is still in the midst of the COVID-19 global pandemic; a pandemic the likes we have not seen for over 100-years since the Spanish Flu—where some people in our Village may be

struggling with the loss of a job, or the loss of a family member, or a friend, and have uncertainty about their future. The unexpected foresight of my words focusing on better communication was an ode to shared resourcefulness and a true joint-effort; made towards attaining greater resiliency. Now more than ever, the responsibility of community leaders is to unite, is to COMMUNICATE, is to collaborate, is to inform, and to share resources, because there are no real municipal boundaries, especially during a crisis.



With that, in an effort to maintain continuity in the Village of El Portal during this long-term crisis, and to provide information to all our residents, especially our new ones as I leave the Mayor’s office this fall, below is a synopsis of actions I took as the Mayor of El Portal and President of the League of Cities the last number of months in response to COVID-19.

Since March 26th, 2020, the County has been under the “Safer at Home” order, which was a collaboration between the MDCLC and County Mayor’s office enacted by Miami-Dade County Emergency Order 12-20.

Then on April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2020, Emergency Order 20-21 “Moving to a New Normal” went into effect, which allowed the opening, with restrictions, of parks, golf courses, marinas, and boat ramps – where we simply asked that when people are outside that they masked (if applicable), and to always practice ‘social/physical distancing!’

*Continued on page 2*

**Mayor** (cont. from page 1)

Also, from mid-March through July 2020, I, along with the MDCLC Executive Board, on every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday attended a Zoom Meeting with Miami-Dade County Mayor Gimenez and his staff. On these calls, the county government shared up-to-date numbers on hospital beds and ventilators available, the number of virus patient discharged/admitted by day, etc. which helped us shape our message and plan.

Then on almost every Tuesday, we virtually meet with our MDCLC Associate Members. These Member-Companies share information on what they are doing to support the community during this pandemic. We also virtually met with the MDCLC Board of Directors (BOD). During this meeting, the BOD is updated on Miami-Dade County and City of Miami Statewide call, statistics and other pertinent information to ensure all municipalities are on the same page.

We also are still virtually meeting with all Miami-Dade County Municipal Mayors on a weekly basis. During these calls we discuss best practices on this fluid situation, we share ideas, and the Mayors are updated on Miami-Dade County and State of Florida facts and figures and other key items from our calls

Lastly, on almost a weekly basis the MDCLC holds a virtual meeting with Miami-Dade County Municipal Attorneys, and as a legal group, they address municipal-legal concerns that have arisen during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As such, the MDCLC has worked with the Miami-Dade County and the 34 Municipalities to deliver a united message of 'safer at home' and following a methodical, medical-based, data-based approach for reopening Miami-Dade County and each city within our County.

Going forward during this pandemic, and as we transition the Village of El Portal leadership, I want you to know there is "strength in numbers" and El Portal's relationship with the League of Cities and our neighboring cities, towns, and villages is paramount in moving past these trying times.

In closing, it is my true and humbling honor to serve as your Village of El Portal Mayor, but we are not done just yet! With that, my El Portal State of the Village Address will be broadcasted on October 20, 2020 - more information on this will be available on our village website in the coming days: [elportalvillage.com](http://elportalvillage.com)

Yours in service,

**Claudia V. Cubillos**, Mayor, Village of El Portal  
2008-2014 Councilperson Seat 2 | 2014-2020 Mayor  
Past-President, Miami-Dade County League of Cities  
Executive Board Member, Florida League of Cities  
<http://elportalvillage.com/officials/mayor/>

## PUBLIC WORKS ACHIEVEMENTS

Craig Smith and Associates (CAS) is pleased to provide a list of public works accomplishments since December of 2014. Note that we have appreciated the Village's business since 2002 and look forward to providing future professional engineering services.

- 2014: NE 87<sup>th</sup> Street/NE 5<sup>th</sup> Ave Minor Drainage Improvements
- 2016: CAS developed a Sanitary Sewer Master Plan which laid out a blueprint to convert the Village from septic to sewer in a phased approach with their associated costs.
- 2017: CAS assisted the Village with a State Appropriations grant request for the El Jardin Stormwater Improvements Project. The legislative appropriation award was for \$550,000.00. This covered the design of the entire system with a phase to be constructed in the near future. Phase 1 of this project is ready for construction once the State contract agreement with the Village is ratified. CAS over the years has assisted the Village with State funding request and will continue to do so as needed.
- 2018: National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Compliance - CAS worked with the current Village Manager to bring the Village into compliance with (NPDES) Permit which helped keep the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) from taking enforcement action against the Village. Past due updated annual reports were submitted to FDEP and CAS saw to it to bring a subconsultant (as a cost savings) to assist the Village with the NPDES permit annual reporting requirements and provide training Village staff. CAS also prepared and submitted to FDEP, the past due Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL) Prioritization Report. As a result, the Village is now in good standing with FDEP.
- 2019: CAS performed a Roadway & Sidewalk Assessment for the Village based on visual observations categorizing roads under 3 categories; 1) Overlay, 2) Milling and Resurfacing, & 3) Roadway Improvements (widening) The total cost for this work was estimated at \$2.18M.
- 2019: CAS also performed a cost estimate to install the necessary septic to sewer system and new liftstation to connect to the Phase 1 sanitary sewer design by others to serve the commercial corridor of Village having an estimated costs \$5.15M. These two 2019 items were presented at El Portal's First Resiliency Town Hall held by Mayor Cubillos on July 20, 2019 with the residents and Village staff.



## COUNCILPERSON VIMARI ROMAN, PUBLIC AFFAIRS CHAIR

“Moments of adversity are our greatest opportunities for growth and teach us to embrace what we have and make the best of it.” Vimari Roman Daruvalla

Hello El Portal,  
Incredible that we are exiting the third quarter of 2020. I wanted to take this time to share a few words.

We all handle our stress and our emotions differently, and 2020 has proven to be a year of uncertainty with significant events affecting us all. First, we had the Coronavirus Pandemic stay at home orders, then the slow reopening led to a spike in our county, and now we have the new normal, which is an adjustment for us all. This pandemic sadly has resulted in the loss of many lives, jobs, and security. As if the pandemic was not enough, we also face the unrest of systemic racism in our country, much divide, lack of tolerance, compassion, and respect.

Stress, worry, and anxiety are common problems that many of us experience from time to time. As humans, our stress, worry, and anxiety accelerate during uncertain times, and this pandemic and unrest have done just that for many. The world, as we knew it has changed drastically in 2020. Given the news coverage, it is hard not to worry about what this means for our loved ones and us. The unknown can be scary. Self-care and compassion are most important now more than ever. It is essential to take this time to take care of yourself while caring for your loved ones and your neighbors.

But as with most moments of adversity, we have seen some good take place too that cannot be ignored. Many of us are having real conversations and relationships with our neighbors—good neighbors whose lives we share in and are involved in the exemplary work of building a community.

As I look back despite the uncertainty and everything that has happened globally, I can also identify the lessons learned. This year has shown me that I am resilient, and that courage is not something we get from others. Courage also cannot be taken away from you. I have learned that tolerance is a gift, and that love allows us to embrace this gift. I can probably go on and on because there have been so many lessons.

Along with lessons, this year has come with many decisions, and as I look forward to my future, I had to make a tough decision that took a lot of discernment. In life, all decisions are paramount. Knowing when to leave is just as important as entering a new journey or chapter. I decided that after two terms as serving you as a Councilperson that it is time for me to focus on family and my business. I am forever grateful to those that voted to elect me in 2016 and for those

that challenged me to ask the tough questions as I held my oath of office. Thank you for this opportunity to serve this beautiful village.

I invite you to look back at the lessons from 2020 and as you move forward to the next 90 days left of this year, think of how you can serve our community in 2021.



My thoughts and prayers are with all that have been affected by this pandemic and our country’s status.

**“There are two foundations or bases from which we build our lives – Faith and Fear.” -- Napoleon Hill.**

I chose faith.  
El Portal,

Be safe and healthy,  
Vimari  
Councilperson Roman  
Seat #2 – Elected 2016  
305-395-2536  
vroman@villageofelportal.org

### DID YOU KNOW?

#### VILLAGE OF EL PORTAL HISTORY:

**“The Threads of History Enrich All Our Lives.”**

In our last newsletter, I wrote about the trailblazers and legendary individuals that had homes in the Village of El Portal. History is important because it allows us to understand our past, which in turn allows us to understand our future. For this issue, I invited our longtime resident Hugh Gladwin to offer us some of his historic knowledge.

**The El Portal Coontie Mill,  
By Hugh Gladwin, July 12, 2020**

Over the centuries water, porous limestone rock, animals, plants, and humans have coexisted and shaped each other’s history in the El Portal area. Southeast Florida is so flat a few feet of elevation creates the difference between dry and

*Continued on page 4*

**Public Affairs** (cont. from page 3)

water-covered land. Water flows above ground and through the porous limestone aquifer below. Before canals drained the Everglades at the beginning of the last century, higher coastal elevations kept freshwater inland about six feet higher than Biscayne Bay. A branch of the Everglades followed along a narrowing basin to what is now NE 2nd Ave and then became the Little River flowing rapidly to the Bay. Gravity drop also pushed water through the limestone to emerge in strong spring outflows, one which powered the Woods coontie mill built in 1843 just above what is now Sherwood Forest Park.

Climate and the Everglades made South Florida a contested and difficult place for humans over the centuries. One problem was a lack of plants that provided starch carbohydrates compatible with the swamps and climate. The root of the coontie plant (also called Florida arrowroot) proved the only source though it required milling in flowing water to wash out toxins. Consumption of coontie caused it to almost disappear. Fortunately, El Portal offers an excellent habitat for coontie and the Atala butterfly that can only survive in symbiosis with it.

Coontie is the only cycad native to Florida. For more information on the Coontie, I found this article posted by the University of Florida, School of Forest Resources and Conservation: <http://sfrc.ufl.edu/extension/4h/plants/Coontie/index.html>

Mayor Claudia Cubillos cordially invites you to virtually attend the

**State of the Village Address**

Tuesday  
October 20<sup>th</sup>, 2020

Address at 7:00 pm  
view on YouTube & Facebook

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**El Portal Resiliency And Sustainability Task Force**

I am very pleased to introduce, for the first time, the Village of El Portal Sustainability & Resiliency Task Force. The Task Force was introduced by Mayor Cubillos and was unanimously passed by the Village Council on May 26, 2020. I am honored to serve as the Chair of the Task Force along with Vice Chair Maribel Fruitstone and Task Force members Kristen McLean, Courtney Kurk, and Village Council liaison Vice Mayor Omarr Nickerson.

Since inception earlier this year, the Task Force has held multiple public meetings and Task Force members have been highly proactive in bringing important issues to the table for discussion, including emergency storm management protocol, flooding, water conservation, water quality, and habitat and shoreline restoration, among others. Along with the invaluable input from village resident Hugh Gladwin, the Task Force has also passed an Immediate Storm & Flood Plan Recommendation for approval by the Village Council.

As our community starts to feel the increased impacts of climate change, the creation of the Task Force represents a momentous step for the Village, which sits at the heart of Little River's drainage basin. The Task Force hopes to be a leading voice in the Miami-Dade County community for resiliency and sustainability efforts. *As William Shakespeare said, "though she be but little, she is fierce."*

The Task Force welcomes participation and input from village residents and looks forward to working with community members on these important initiatives.

Best, Elizabeth, El Portal Resident

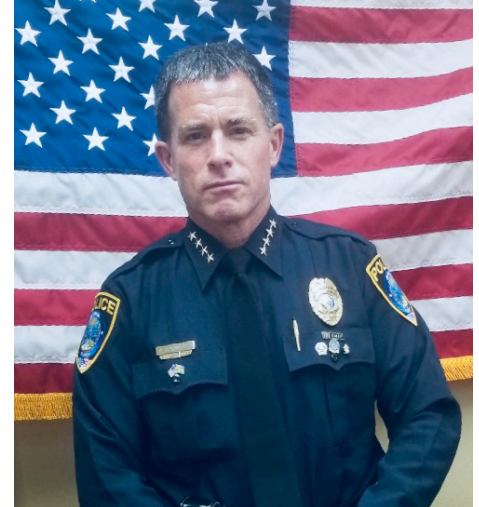


## CHIEF DAVID MAGNUSSON

In recent weeks there has been an uptick in burglaries. Thankfully, not the burglaries associated with breaking into a house; but rather the types where the curtilage has been compromised and the offender(s) have been breaking into backyard sheds, usually in the witching hours of 0230-0500.

According to videos that we have seen, there are a few offenders, unrelated to one another out there. We have put a variety of operations in place and as such, we have arrested two separate offenders. One arrest came five weeks ago. The other arrest came on 19 July 2020.

I bring this up because we all need to be vigilant day in and day out. We have all been captivated by COVID and the rising numbers in the last month. Moving forward from March, 2020 has been COVID all the time, all day. It took a brief reprieve with the onset of nationwide police demonstrations and protests in early June, but the sharp spikes emerging from what was an, almost controlled, COVID shifted the focus once more.



Both issues are incredibly important. Both issues need progress towards a successful resolution. Still, it is important to point out as well, that just because we may have one or two very important issues going on simultaneously, it does not negate the importance of other very important items that we need to tend to.

We are amid an active hurricane season that has not gotten us into the “championship rounds” yet (mid-August through October). I sense that we are into that prepared mindset that we need to be in certainly by July regarding hurricanes. I know it’s very difficult to focus on this with a ravaging disease around us. But we haven’t a choice. No more than we have a choice to combat upticks in crime (which like hurricane season do not take a break because we have other things going on).

We are going to have to juggle all these things to also include a deluge of rain (not hurricane related) much like we experienced around Memorial Day weekend causing flooded streets. Are we ready for any such eventuality moving forward?

What I am getting at is that there is nothing more important, right now, in my humble estimation, than to beat COVID. But there are many other things that are extremely important that cannot be disregarded.

2020 will be looked back upon as a year where we all had to dig down very deep and maintain a status quo in a time frame that was anything but status quo. The watchword for 2020 must be vigilance.

As Thomas Paine stated just before Christmas in 1776, in “The Crisis”, These are the times that try men’s souls. Stay safe. Stay healthy.



### MAYOR’S CITIZEN SPOTLIGHT OF THE QUARTER

*‘El Portal is a different and special place tucked away in Miami-Dade County!  
Tiffany Thorne*

Tiffany Thorne, El Portal resident for 22 years is the new Citizen’s Crime Watch Chair for El Portal! Tiffany, a Financial Advisor - Entrepreneur, simply loves our small intimate Village as well as our peacocks and tree canopies! She recently volunteered to be at the helm of our Citizen’s Crime Watch and although she has big shoes to fill, she is eager and excited to take the reins - thank you Tiffany!

## PLANNING AND ZONING - ACHIEVEMENTS SINCE 2014

### *'Paving the way to a more resilient El Portal'*

The Village of El Portal government has dedicated a lot of time and effort into community planning during the past almost six years. Our efforts of planning involving the Village Council, staff, residents, and our planning consultants at Plusurbia Design. Mayor Cubillos and the Village Council members hired Plusurbia Design in December of 2014 with a goal of respecting the Village's past while addressing the present's needs, and paving the path for a brighter, more livable future.

First and foremost, the community planning regulations and "form-based" code were created to protect the unique homes, trees, lush landscapes, and peaceful tranquility that makes the Village of El Portal a State of Florida Bird Sanctuary and an unrivaled oasis in the heart of one of the biggest counties in America. This planning effort addressed the needs of our residents. The process took a wealth of input gathered during the 2013 Design Charrette, along with guidance from Mayor Cubillos and the Village Council-members, to create a flexible and adaptable code (a "form-based" code) that explains complex concepts in simple terms that residents can understand and implements the Village's vision in a predictable way.

This form-based code, adopted and enacted by Mayor Cubillos and the Village Council on April 2017, serves as a guide for the future development of El Portal within the character of our quaint, yet thriving, community. It addresses a future of healthy and active living with the opportunity to build new places to work, shop, buy healthy food, dine out, enjoy the arts, and call home. We continue to work closely with our planning consultants: Plusurbia Design and are working with the developer of the former Little Farm site to hand-tailor the look, feel and scale of the mixed-use development. This is an opportunity to replace a blighted area with a Village Center that generates new economic sources of tax revenue for the benefit of the Village and its long-term sustainability, and provides a destination for the Village in proximity to a future transit station and that serves the residents of El Portal.

If you did not know, in the summer of 2014, El Portal annexed into the Village new territory on 83<sup>rd</sup> Street and the first developments proposed for the area were approved by Mayor Cubillos and the Village Council after years of conversations with the developers and our community

planning consultants. The first new development, "The Kavista," which is an eight-story multi-family building with live-work units, is making good progress. The commencing of this project resulted in a substantial contribution to the Village's public spaces as established in the form-based code. The second development project, The SkateBird Miami skate park, which was also unanimously approved by Mayor Cubillos and Village Council, celebrated its groundbreaking on October 1st! SkateBird Miami will be a much-needed recreational venue for all Village residents and visitors alike and should be open for skating and recreation in spring 2021.

Also, along the Village's thoroughfare of NE 2nd Avenue, we are working on reactivating the commercial spaces. Interest has sprung up in converting former single-family homes into commercial uses as envisioned in the 2013 Charrette, providing El Portal residents with new opportunities for dining, shopping, and other services.

Furthermore, we continue to initiate conversations with all government agencies for a potential redesign of NE 2nd Avenue to allow more pedestrian connectivity, enhancing safety, and to reduce vehicular traffic speeds. A new street design could feature parallel parking, crosswalks, bike lanes, and other enhancements.

The required review of the Village's Comprehensive Plan has also provided the opportunity to address other local conditions of concern for the Mayor, Council-members, and residents alike, including planning for sustainability and resilience, planning to improve residents' health, and planning to maintain our unique Village character, thereby improving the overall quality of life in El Portal. Several in-person and virtual workshops have taken place to identify the key issues in the Village according to the residents, and how to plan to address and improve them for the next ten years. The Comprehensive Plan is a testament to the vision that Mayor Cubillos, the Council-members, and residents have for El Portal in the long-term. As we near the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan amendments, they will become the footprint for future development in El Portal.

One of our accomplished efforts in terms of sustainability and resilience planning was achieving "Bronze" designation in the national SolSmart program, making it faster, easier, and more affordable for homes and businesses to adopt solar energy. Led by Mayor Cubillos, the

*Continued on page 7*



## Planning and Zoning

*(cont. from page 6)*

Village Council also encouraged the adoption of solar energy by agreeing to waive permitting fees for the installation of solar systems in single-family residences for twelve months from the “Bronze” designation achievement, which was in August 2019.

Mayor Cubillos and the Village Council also listened to residents’ concerns regarding fences regulations and worked with the Village’s planning consultants to amend the code to address them. After a Public Town Hall Meeting and the opportunity to provide input via an online survey, the changes were successfully adopted.

Finally, in July 2019, Mayor Cubillos recommended the initiation of El Portal’s first Architectural Guideline Pattern Book and the Village Council agreed. As such, the Village Council is close to adopting its first Architectural Pattern Guideline Book for El Portal! We are proud of our unique neighborhood, and in a better effort to maintain its character and scale, we have worked with the Village’s planning consultants to study the existing residences and identify the consistent architectural patterns to create guidelines for future development. As always, this process has also included the opportunity to receive input from our residents and that has been taken into consideration as we move toward their completion. Thank you for your support as we continue to move El Portal forward!



## SKATEBOARD PARK COMING SOON TO EL PORTAL

SKATEBOARD SUPERCROSS is bringing its brand new and innovative skate-park SKATEBIRD MIAMI to the booming area of El Portal, in Miami.

SKATEBIRD MIAMI will be the place welcoming all levels skateboarders

- recreational to professional athletes,
- yoga mom/dad stretching on their board
- 5 years old learning the basics
- 40 years old coming back to the sport he/she loved when they were kids
- athletes training to turn pros

SKATEBIRD MIAMI will welcome all wheels

- skateboards
- bikes
- scooters

The spectators will feel at home at SKATEBIRD MIAMI with this topnotch facility offering great and healthy food, art, pop up retails and trendy events. SKATEBIRD MIAMI will be the new destination for the whole family.

In the past few years, skateboarding has maintained its identity as a fringe sub-culture while growing to be a worldwide, an Olympic sport for the first time ever in the 2021 Games in Tokyo.

To most, skateboarding is just a game, to some, it’s a sport, a way of life, to SKATEBOARD SUPERCROSS, it is so much more... It’s mindfulness, it’s passion, it’s opportunity, it’s family, and its fun!

SKATEBOARD SUPERCROSS, which is building the park, expands its concept created in Ningbo, China two years ago at the international Georgia school.

Skateboarding is a timeless sport or activity that definitely influences all ages and all backgrounds positively. SkateBird Miami can’t wait to host you early 2021 with its first ambassador local Zion Effs.

Zion has been well known by the skate community since he started skateboarding at age 2!

Zion has skated all over the world and won numerous competitions around the country and his bag of tricks is full.

Opening early 2021. More info on

- SKATEBIRD MIAMI, skatebirdmiami.com, Instagram: @skatebirdmiami
- SKATEBOARD SUPERCROSS, skateboardsupercross.com, Instagram: @skateboard\_supercross
- ZION EFFS, Instagram @zioneffs

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**Beginning October 1, 2020**

you will see more Coastal trucks on the streets in the Village of El Portal

- Collection days for Garbage and Recycling will **remain the same**.
- You will use the **Same Carts** until the new ones arrive. We anticipate the new carts being delivered on or before October 31st. At which time when the new carts are being delivered the old ones will be removed.
- Bulk schedule **remains the same** until the end of the year.

**Customer Service Hours:** Mon.-Sat. 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.

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## COMING IN LATE OCTOBER OF 2020!

The unveiling of our updated Little Free Library #1257 to celebrate its 5 year anniversary - for the love of learning!



## 2020 AT A GLANCE



Always a shout out to our very own Captain Iggy Carroll and his wife!




**ALEXANDRA MUNOZ**  
Owner & Head Trainer

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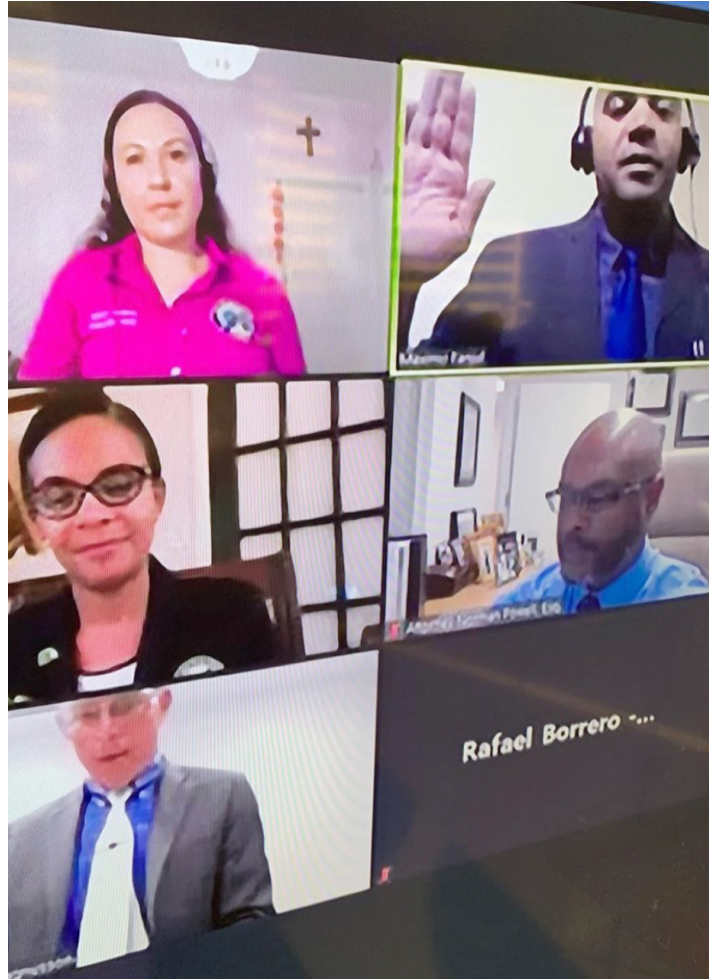
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2020 At a Glance (cont. from page 9)



Working with Miami-Dade County to get our drainages clean.



Swearing-in of Officer Maximo Fanjul at the Virtual Council Meeting on May 26, 2020!

Continued on page 11

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**PLEASE WEAR MASK**



**2020 At a Glance** (cont. from page 10)



Mayor Cubillos, Principal Kevin Lawrence and Vice Principal Ethel Selwood of Horace Mann Middle School.



Mayor Wagar and Mayor Cubillos at Horace Mann Middle School 8th Grade Promotion.



Mayor Cubillos and Chief Magnusson at Horace Mann Middle School 8th Grade Promotion.



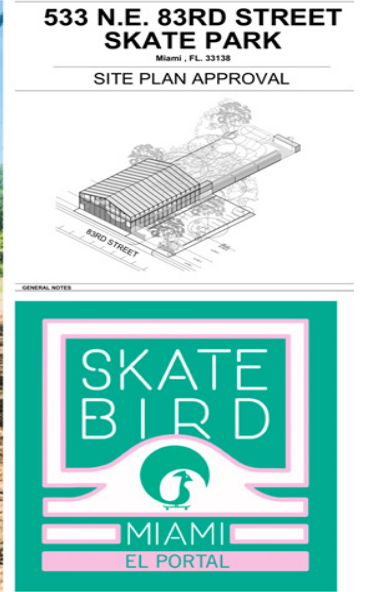
*Continued on page 12*



**2020 At a Glance (cont. from page 11)**



Miami-Dade County Mayor's Press Conference!



Where Miami and El Portal meet - SkateBird Miami in El Portal coming Spring 2021!!

## Barrington Brothers plans mid-rise apartment project in El Portal

Developer plans *The Kavista*, a multifamily project with 282 apartments and ground-floor workspaces

TRD MIAMI

May. 28, 2020 12:30 PM

By [Francisco Alvarado](#)



Swearing-in of Officer Emilie Garcia Poveda at the Virtual Council Meeting on July 28, 2020!



Kavista in El Portal coming to El Portal in 2021!!!