

36 Years MIAMI TODAY

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UM'S STUDIES OF THE OCEANS CRUISE INTO PACIFIC ON CELEBRITY LINER TO GALAPAGOS, PG. 3



HELICOPTER REPLACEMENTS: Miami-Dade County plans to spend more than \$96 million in a complex transaction that would replace its fleet of four Fire Rescue helicopters. It would buy four new helicopters, sell off the present four, then lease them back until the new ones arrive. The present four are 16 to 19 years old and have reached the end of their useful life, yet they went on 983 air rescue calls in 2018, a memo from Deputy Mayor

Maurice Kemp says. The "administration acknowledges that the replacement of our Air Rescue fleet is long overdue," his memo said. The county commission's Health Care and County Operations Committee was to make a recommendation this week to the full county commission on the transaction, which was delayed for more than a year in an investigations of the original selection committee by the Commission on Ethics and the State Attorney's Office for violations of the county's lobbying and Cone of Silence ordinances. Those involved paid fines in a settlement, Mr. Kemp noted.

FIU TO TRAIN COUNTY LEADERS: Florida International University will provide leadership training for Miami-Dade's government executives and mid-level managers for \$350,000 the next year and \$300,000 if the contract is renewed for the following year under an agreement that was to go before the county commission's Health Care and County Operations Committee this week. The program would be part of the Chapmanville Leadership Development Program, whose executive director is Modesto Maidique, immediate past president of FIU. Aims are to "instill a culture of risk-taking, collaboration and innovation; provide practical tools for self-management, teamwork and communication; enhance dynamics among departments, commissioners and constituents; promote physically and mentally beneficial habits to encourage sustained effectiveness and maximize performance; strengthen an organizational vision; and identify improvements to the county's Leadership Program."

CITY OF BISCAYNE GARDENS?: Incorporation as a municipality of the Biscayne Gardens area is getting a push from county Commissioner Jean Monestime, who is asking a county committee to move the matter forward. He's asking the Health Care and County Operations Committee to recommend that the county commission direct Mayor Carlos Giménez to schedule the area's incorporation for consideration by the Planning Advisory Board. Then, the matter would come back to the county commission to schedule a vote of area residents asking them if they want to be a separate municipality. The issue dates to the early 2000s but was held up for eight years as county commissioners put a moratorium new incorporations.

THE ACHIEVER

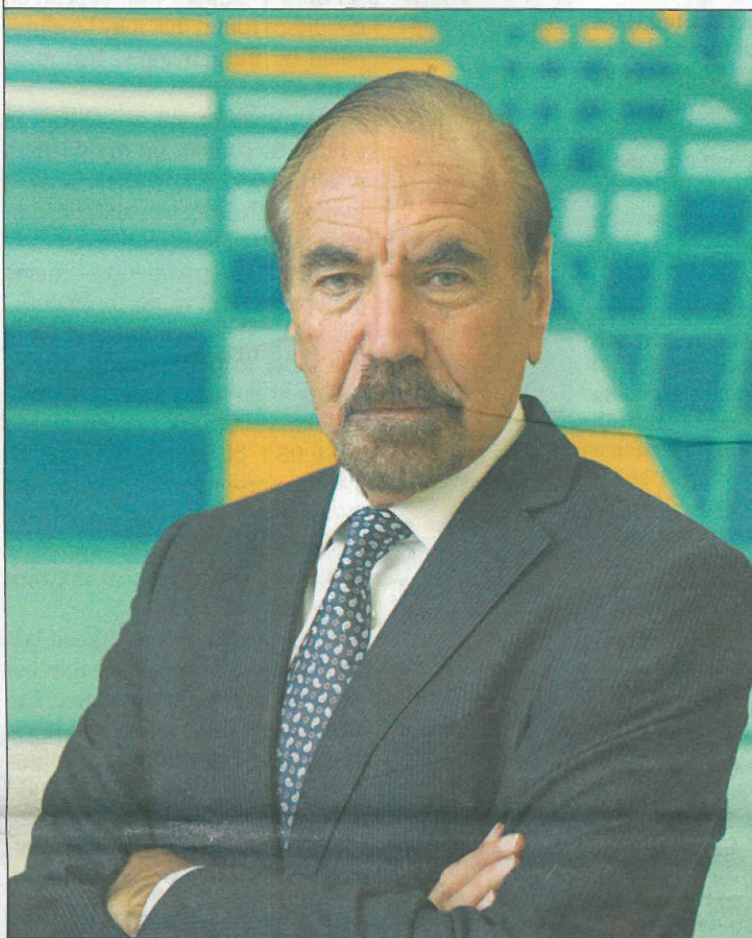


Photo by Cristina Sullivan

Jorge Pérez
Condo king transferring control of his Related Group
The profile is on Page 4

Headwinds from soccer worry MIA

BY JESSE SCHECKNER

As Miami nears a deal for a soccer stadium and commercial complex beside Miami International Airport, county lawmakers want to know how that will affect the area's biggest economic engine.

A county commission committee Tuesday advanced a directive to administrators sponsored by Rebeca Sosa to detail in 90 days potential impacts of the project sought at what is now Melreese Golf Course.

"Our airport is too important," said Ms. Sosa, who asked Aviation Director Lester Sola to expedite the report. "It's a humongous thing, what they want to do over there."

Voters in November authorized Miami to negotiate with David Beckham's Miami Freedom Park LLC, whose principals include brothers Jorge and Jose Mas, for a 99-year lease of roughly 73 city-owned acres near the airport.

On June 5, the company filed a draft lease agreement with the city that included a 25,000-seat Major League Soccer stadium, 58-acre park, hotel, tech hub, office park, commercial campus and restaurants, retail and entertainment space. City Manager Emilio González is to have a lease ready for a city vote by Sept. 12.

"To date, no study has been made of the potential impacts to the airport from the development of Melreese," Ms. Sosa's item said. "The county should oppose any development... which is harmful to [the airport]."

The item said significant development adjacent to the airport could further congest the Dolphin Expressway and Central Boulevard, impact airport stormwater runoff and reduce airport commercial opportunities.

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) may also downgrade some runways, Mr. Sola said, which would limit their ability to handle some flights.

"Your runway may be able to handle X-type of airplane," he said. "But if there's an obstruction in front of [it] beyond that runway, the FAA will tell you that particular airstrip is no longer certified for that airplane."

New financiers downtown may get concierge aid

BY CATHERINE LACKNER

Miami's Downtown Development Authority might institute a concierge service for incoming financial services' professionals.

Its Enterprise Committee last week heard two new arrivals discuss the satisfactions and complexities associated with moving to Miami.

Andreas Moon, managing director for I Squared Capital, is a native New Yorker who thought he "would live and die in New York. Our move to Miami was contemplated for quite some time," he said. "We saw Miami as one of the places that was quite attractive. I'm glad we were right; we have been embraced by the business community."

I Squared Capital (which deals in telecom companies, utilities and renewables such as wind, solar and hydro power) opened its Miami office with 12 employees and hired 25 more, some local, some transplants, he said. "It's been a great move to this vibrant city. When investors hear about the move, they ask 'When can I come and visit?' We're having our annual investor meeting in November, and they're already asking for the dates so they can book their tickets."

"What have been the challenges in moving here, and what might the DDA do to smooth

Next downtown aim: foreign business, pg. 9

the transition?" asked Philippe Houdard, committee chair and founding partner of Pipeline Workspaces & Skybank Financial.

"Finding the right housing partners" was a consideration, Mr. Moon replied. The authority might arrange with real estate firms "just for information," he suggested.

"Happy to serve," quipped Alicia Cervera, committee member and managing partner of Cervera Real Estate, handing him her business card.

"Some of us wanted to ease into Miami" by living downtown or close to I Squared Capital's Brickell headquarters, Mr. Moon said. "Others wanted a suburban lifestyle. Education is extremely important; some of my colleagues have young children and needed to know about the reputations of public and private schools." Knowing what weekend events are coming up, especially for families, would be helpful, he said.

"If somebody's on the fence, what do we do or say to move them over?" asked Alyce Robertson, authority executive director.

"New York is a lot more expensive and Miami offers something different," Mr. Moon said. "It's a growing, vibrant community. Folks view Miami as a tourist capital, so you should

tell them it's been transformed to a community that supports new industries. Look at Wynwood; that's a big draw. Tell them the identity of Miami has changed; it's an easy sell."

"What's our competition?" asked Gary Ressler, authority board member and a principal of the Tilia family of companies.

"Some of my private investment peers have set up shop in Austin, because the tax benefits are there," Mr. Moon said.

"Let's assume the tax situation changes," Ms. Cervera suggested.

"Miami's still a great city, very active, and it has its own appeal," he answered.

"You took a leap of faith," Mr. Houdard said. "We'll work with you any way we can."

"After 20 years on Wall Street, this is my first week in Miami," said Antonio Goncalves, director of global alliances for Miami International Holdings Inc. "I'm still feeling the shock, but I have great hopes that this will be the financial capital of the continent. We're going to try to steal the crown."

His firm operates a fully automated exchange in Brickell; investors include the Bush family, the Bank of Kuwait and "big Chicago buys," he said. "We want to have a point of presence in the US. We have great things to do."

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THE INSIDER

CONSUMER PRICES DIP: Consumer prices for South Florida fell 0.5% from April to June, driven principally by a 7.2% gasoline price drop during the period, the US Bureau of Labor Statistics reported last week. For the past 12 months, consumer prices in the region rose 1.2%. In the past two months the prices of food in the region fell 0.4%, reflecting a 0.7% decrease in the prices of food at home while the costs of food away from home rose 0.1%. Among notable items, the costs of new and used cars fell 3.3% in South Florida in the two-month period and the cost of recreation fell 2.3%, while medical care costs rose 1.1% and housing costs rose 0.3%.

HARD TO ROUND UP BIDDERS: A Miami-Dade resolution passed in June prohibiting the county from using products containing glyphosate, an herbicide commonly used in weed killer and the active ingredient in products such as RoundUp, is coming into play as the county seeks to contract for more than \$34.7 million in fertilizers, pesticides and weed killers and other landscaping and gardening materials for the next five years. A memo for action by the county's Health Care and County Operations Committee this week seeks to establish a prequalification pool for vendors of such products. The memo from Deputy Mayor **Alina Hudak** notes that the county notified 8,717 vendors of the bidding and got only six vendors responding, including one that didn't bid. It then notified 31 current vendors and kept the bidding open and got only four more responses. Last week, the City of Coral Gables also began considering banning RoundUp and similar products.

AGRICULTURAL HEMP AIMS: Miami-Dade could move into growing industrial hemp as both a summer rotational crop and a mainline business with opportunities to develop value-added products and add jobs if a resolution that a committee is to consider this week passes and the full county commission agrees. The resolution by **Daniella Levine Cava** co-sponsored by **Sally Heyman** would call on Mayor **Carlos Giménez** to organize informational sessions on how to apply for the new Florida hemp industrial program before the state opens licensing applications. The measure would direct the mayor to report on opportunities both in agriculture for cultivating industrial hemp and to partner with academic researchers on products, cultivation and use of industrial hemp, and report back to the county commission within 90 days.

ON THE MOVE: Real estate development and management firm Meyers



Alex Rodriguez

Group has moved from Coral Gables to Aventura. Separately, Arod Corp. has acquired office space at Grove at Grand Bay to consolidate its Monument Capital Management, Newport Property Construction, and its sports and wellness, media and entertainment, real estate and venture capital interests. Meyers Group, founded and led by **Stuart I. Meyers**, will move into the

Aventura View building at 2999 NE 191st. St. The company is developing multi-family, mixed-use projects branded as the Avery Collection of rental communities in South Florida and West Texas. Mr. Meyers has completed more than 20,000 apartment units in 70 communities in a 50-year career. Arod Corp. will occupy 12,700 square feet at 2675 S Bayshore Drive and use ground-floor function space for events and conferences. "The thought of having the entire Arod Corp. Miami-based family under one roof has long been a desire of mine," said **Alex Rodriguez**, better known for his long professional baseball career.

NEW INVESTMENT FUND: Four well-known Miamians have launched a boutique investment fund to leverage tax incentives through the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. The Opportunity Zone Fund of America is led by managing directors **Stephen L. Owens**, former president of Swire Properties; **William D. Pruitt**, former managing partner of Arthur Andersen; **Bowman Brown**, chairman of the executive committee of Shutts & Bowen; and **Kristy A. King**.

MORE TRASH CENTERS?: A county effort to curb illegal dumping could lead to adding more trash and recycling centers, modifying the operating hours of existing centers or adding operating hours under a resolution that a county committee is to consider this week. The centers might also be opened for a fee to county residents in areas that the centers now do not serve – but only if adding other areas of the county doesn't violate contracts with third-party haulers that serve those areas. The legislation going to the Health Care and County Operations Committee would, if passed by the full county commission, also require a report from the mayor's office on all of these aspects within 45 days.

COURT TO RULE ON FPL IRMA PLAN: A fierce debate about Florida Power & Light's plan to use federal tax savings to cover costs of restoring electricity after Hurricane Irma is headed to the state Supreme Court. The state Office of Public Counsel, which represents consumers in utility issues, filed a notice that it is appealing to the Supreme Court after the Florida Public Service Commission signed off last week on FPL's plan. The office has contended, in part, that hundreds of millions of dollars in savings from a 2017 federal tax overhaul should flow through to FPL customers through lower base electric rates rather than being used to cover storm costs.

FEWER NEEDY FAMILIES: The number of people served by the state's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program continues to be lower than expected. Lawmakers planned to spend \$144.1 million on the program for the fiscal year that ended June 30, expecting a caseload of about 44,970 enrollees. Instead, the state's caseload was about 40,500, costing an estimated \$130 million. The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families block grant provides federal funding to states. It is best known as the major source of funding for cash assistance for needy families with children, with federal requirements about work requirements and limits on the length of time families can receive the aid.



Alina Hudak



D. Levine Cava



Stuart I. Meyers



Bowman Brown

If revamp cuts bus routes, plan may offer seniors on-demand transit use

By Jesse Scheckner

As nonprofit Transit Alliance Miami works to redesign Miami-Dade's Metrobus route system, steps must be taken to ensure that the county doesn't overlook the needs of its senior citizens, Miami-Dade Commissioner Eileen Higgins said.

To that end, Ms. Higgins said Monday that she hopes by December to deliver a plan for a pilot program that will provide on-demand transit services to seniors who depend on circuitous routes that may be eliminated by the remapped bus route network.

"The goal for me is – at least in a little microcosm [in my district], where I know we have a ton of seniors living – [to] ask them what their transit needs are in a very different way and then come up with an on-demand pilot project that works for [them]," she said. "They're not asking for [a bus route to be restored]; they're asking to get to the grocery store."

Transit Alliance's estimated \$630,000 project is still in an information-gathering phase, but Director Azhar Chougale said this week that the county will ultimately have to choose between two network concepts.

One, he said, would spread bus services as widely as possible but result in less frequent routes. The other would limit services to high-frequency, high-ridership routes that, "like a business," would build ridership but be "extremely controversial" because the total area covered would be significantly reduced.

During a short presentation Monday at the county commission's Transportation and Finance Committee, Mr. Chougale said his group is evaluating the two options based on how many jobs a person can access by way of a 45-minute bus ride.

By that metric, he said, the clear winner of the two choices is the



'You can only fix this by ripping off the Band-Aid at one time for the entire county. The degree to which this is transformative is exactly correlated to the degree it will be controversial.'

Azhar Chougale

controversial one.

"You can only fix this by ripping off the Band-Aid at one time for the entire county," he said. "The degree to which this is transformative is exactly correlated to the degree it will be controversial."

The public, county officials and county personnel will mull over the two route redesigns between September and November, he said. By January, the county is expected to make its final decision.

"If we choose for our transit system to cover as many people as possible, even though maybe it's less dense of an area [and] won't attract high ridership, we can choose to do that," he said. "However... if we choose that, we should never bash our transit department for not growing ridership because we are not asking them to; we are asking them to provide a service to those that are most in need."



'They on a Sunday need to go to mass... and... our bus system [is] two hours to get to mass to save your eternal soul [and] two hours on the way home. So they are definitely doing a lot of penance.'

Eileen Higgins

Ms. Higgins said the on-demand pilot would involve "real training" to familiarize seniors with on-demand services – a step she said would help the county in choosing the best of the two proposed options.

She said she'd met with a small portion of her District 5 constituency to examine transit solutions available to older residents in and around senior citizen centers.

Those efforts will expand next month, she continued, when the centers will host focus groups to determine where and when seniors travel most.

"[But] I kind of know the answers," she said. "They're not trying to get jobs or FIU. They on a Sunday need to go to mass... and right now, our bus system [is] two hours to get to mass to save your eternal soul [and] two hours on the way home. So they are definitely doing a lot of penance."

City waits for Miami Dade College on Olympia, due September update

By Catherine Lackner

Miami Commissioners rejected an unsolicited proposal by New Urban International to renovate the long-neglected Olympia Theater but left the door open for collaboration between that company and whatever entity eventually takes over the structure.

City Manager Emilio Gonzalez has been in negotiations with Miami Dade College, which would operate the city-owned theater and convert its residential tower into student housing, for 15 months. But no firm offer is on the table.

"This building is neglected and falling behind," Ken Russell, in whose district the circa-1926 landmark is located, told fellow commissioners last week. "We owe that Miami Dade College proposal its day. I'd like to see, by the second meeting in September, something that gives us a solid ability to decide."

"We are continuing our conversation with the college, but we have not received responses yet," Mr. Gonzalez replied. Nevertheless, he promised to have an update, pos-

sibly with a proposal, by the first commission meeting in September, usually held the second Thursday of the month.

New Urban International's proposal was to renovate the aging theater and create 80 boutique hotel rooms in what is now an affordable housing tower. Mario Abati, manager and registered agent for the non-profit company, said it would bring the city \$3 million in taxes and \$1.4 million in lease payments per year.

Mr. Russell said the proposal was "not necessarily bad, but we need to see what Miami Dade will do. We're open to all possibilities, but we want to do it with the proper process."

"My proposal adapts to the Miami Dade College plan," Mr. Abati said. "Could I work with Miami Dade College?"

"From what I've heard, it could be bifurcated," Mr. Russell said. "That's between you and Miami Dade."

Commissioner Keon Hardemon said he doesn't like the idea of student housing, because "students are not the best stewards of housing," and suggested the city request proposals.

"Send it out for an RFP," agreed Mr. Abati. "At least it moves the ball forward."

"This doesn't smell good to me," said Commissioner Joe Carollo. "I'm not thrilled to give anybody the run of the Olympia Theater."

"We need to open the discussion," Mr. Hardemon said. "Housing is a crisis."

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