



"A City for All Ages"

CITY OF PORT ST. LUCIE

Office of the City Manager

MEMORANDUM

RUSS BLACKBURN
City Manager

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Russ Blackburn, City Manager

Subject: Retirement

Date: November 22, 2022

In 2016, I was honored to be appointed as the Port St. Lucie City Manager. At that time, the city was still slowly recovering from the great recession. The past six years have brought challenges and success which have pointed Port St. Lucie in the direction to become an elite local government in the United States.

The City Council's leadership and commitment to strategic planning have provided the foundation for staff to consistently achieve the Council's strategic initiatives. Port St. Lucie now has over 225,000 residents and is one of the fastest growing cities in Florida. As we have grown, Port St. Lucie has maintained its ranking as the safest large city in Florida. Our park system is evolving to fulfill the quality of life desired by residents. A great example is Pioneer Park, which is destined to become a marque park. Our water, sewer, roads, and drainage infrastructure are funded to meet the needs of our citizens and businesses. A missing piece of our community fabric has been high wage jobs. Development in Legacy Park and other parcels in Southern Grove has resulted in over five million square feet of current and future economic development projects.

Some of the more transformative accomplishments in the past 6 years are:

- Completion of the Final section of the Crosstown Parkway,
- Passage of the one- half cent sales tax referendum,
- Funding and construction of the Port Boardwalk and start of construction of the children's play area,
- Acquisition of the 1200-acre Jobs corridor,
- Development and implementation of a Master Plan for the Jobs Corridor,
- Acquisition of the City Center property,
- Adoption of a Mobility Plan as an alternative to impact fees.
- Voter renewal of the tax abatement program for economic development, and
- The economic development investments of the VGTI and Tory Pines Buildings have been adaptably re-purposed as the Cleveland Clinic Florida Research Institute and a FIU graduate research Institute.

A high priority of City Council throughout this period has been to reduce the City's total indebtedness. Our debt was over \$1,000,000,000 in 2015. Through exercising fiscal discipline, FY 23 debt is projected to be reduced by over 36% from its highest level to \$665,000,000. The city recently paid off the Torrey Pines Building ending a difficult chapter in our history.

Since my first day on the job, I have been positively impressed with the dedication and commitment of City employees to delivering outstanding services. Annual employee surveys confirm that Port St. Lucie employees feel appreciated and are committed to providing services to the community. Without a dedicated team of public servants, achieving stretch objectives becomes less certain. Port St. Lucie has an outstanding Leadership and Executive team guiding the organization. The city departments are driven by continuous improvement and are benchmarked by other local governments as best in class. I am extremely proud that the Parks and Recreation, Police, Public Works, Building, Purchasing and Code Enforcement Departments are accredited by their professional associations. Only a fraction of service providers nationwide is accredited by their peers.

Serving as your City Manager has been extremely gratifying. The Mayor and Council continue to be supportive and are a pleasure to work for. I am also appreciative of the former Mayor and Council members who selected me and allowed me to serve as City Manager. But even under the best circumstances, serving as a City Manager is a challenging position. I have been fortunate to lead local governments for almost 25 years and have served in City and County organizations for 47 years (over ten hurricanes and one pandemic). The time has come to allow someone else to take point. I am confident that the Leadership and Executive Teams will effectively adapt and continue to provide exceptional public services.

I am providing the City Council notice that I will retire from my position effective February 17, 2023.

Thank you for your support of me and for your commitment to the City of Port St. Lucie.

C: Leadership Team