

**City Manager's Self-Assessment**  
**November 2020 to November 2021**

**I. Organization Management**

Transformation of the City of Port St. Lucie into a high performing organization serves as an overarching strategic and administrative goal. During the past twelve months, significant progress has been made aligning the organization's structure to create a responsive, customer-focused organization. Our success is due in large part to the effectiveness of the various systems now in place that enable employee development from both a personal and Team perspective.

In FY 2021, the Human Resources Department developed and administered continuous learning programs which helped employees connect the dots between their individual jobs and the goals of the City Council. Employees are praising the results: according to the National Employee Survey, 80% of respondents rated Training Services positively, higher than the national benchmark and a 15% increase in just two years. For several years, City Council and our employees identified the need to effectively recognize outstanding performance. In 2021, under the leadership of Human Resources, the first annual Employee Recognition Program, the S.T.A.R. (Special Thanks and Recognition) Awards, was launched. The program uses the organization's values and City Council's goals as organizing principles for acknowledging those employees and teams which move the organization forward. Employees are reporting higher satisfaction with recognition for good work, with 70% rating the organization positively, higher than other benchmark cities nationwide. The survey results overall demonstrate that we are moving the organizational vision forward in that "Port St. Lucie is recognized nationally as a leader providing superior services through a diverse, empowered and visionary City Team:"

- Superior Service: Employee ratings for IT, Maintenance and Repair, Fleet, Human Resources services, overall City internal services and more exceeded national benchmarks,
- Diverse: Employee ratings for promoting workplace diversity, recruiting diverse people into positions of organizational leadership, and fostering a respectful atmosphere were higher than national benchmarks,
- Empowered: Employees rated the organization's work to encourage employees to develop innovative solutions to problems and welcoming employee involvement in decision making ranks higher than the national benchmark,
- Visionary: Employees rate the mission and vision of the City making them feel their job is important at rates higher than the national benchmark and rate the organization providing a clear vision for the organization at higher than the national benchmark.

Strategic Planning is a pervasive theme throughout the Port St. Lucie organization. Just as the City Council adopted a two-year Strategic Plan, most City departments conduct a Strategic Planning Session that involves key staff members who assist the departments as they transition the Council's goals, initiatives, and projects into departmental goals. One of the new strategic initiatives this year is "Improve Performance Through Innovation." With the assistance of the PSL Forward Innovation Academy and Strategic Initiatives & Innovation Team, several service processes were reviewed and improved to optimize performance. By way of example, tackling the #1 most received request from our citizens and reducing, by half, the number of services calls for residential stormwater swale maintenance; just one of many innovations throughout City departments. Employees are reacting positively by rating us higher than the national benchmark at providing a clear vision for our organization, openness to new ideas, collaboration between departments and more facets that better empower our employees to make a difference for our community.

The list of projects and objectives initiated and/or accomplished by the organization throughout the year is extensive. A few of the more significant accomplishments include:

- Celebrated the City of Port St. Lucie's Diamond Anniversary with public outreach during all major community events and capping off the year with a concert,
- Completed round-a-bouts at two Torino Parkway locations: California and Cashmere Boulevards,
- Began Phase I of the Floresta Drive Roadway Improvement Project, construction of the first phase will be complete in winter of 2022,
- Negotiated the sale of 25 acres in the Legacy Commerce Park to Federal Express. The construction of the 245,000 sq. ft. last mile distribution center was fast tracked and opened for activities in November 2021,
- Successfully negotiated the sale of 40 acres in Legacy Commerce Park to Project Senior. Construction has started on the 240,000 sq. ft. warehouse /distribution facility. The occupant will be formally announced in winter of 2022,
- Approved a Purchase and Sale Agreement with Cheney Brothers Inc. for the construction of a 427,000 sq. ft. warehouse distribution facility projected to employ over 380 individuals. Located in Legacy Commerce Park, construction is expected to begin in the winter of 2022,
- Assisted Sansone Company to gain all approvals to construct 200,000 sq. ft. and 600,000 sq. ft. in speculative warehouse/office spaces in Legacy Commerce Park,
- Our Venture Partner, Tambone Company, negotiated and closed the sale of 25 acres in the Southern Grove Jobs Corridor to WareHomes Properties,
- Fast tracked the review of plans and construction specifications to expedite start of construction of a 1,100,000 sq. ft. first mile Amazon large product warehouse distribution Center on Midway Road and I-95,
- Prepared and adopted a 20-year Stormwater Management Plan which envisions \$200,000,000 in stormwater/water quality investments in our community,

- Celebrated the grand opening of the 28-acre Winter Lakes Park. Park amenities include tennis courts, a children’s playground, fitness stations, pavilions, multipurpose fields, and a dog park, and secured grant funds to support Phase 2,
- Completed the refresh of Sportsman’s Park which includes a new unique ability playground and fitness stations, supported by a \$250,000 grant,
- Negotiated with the SEC Receiver for the City to purchase the 21 City Center parcels (20 acres). Identifying a favorable purchase price was the easiest part of the acquisition, closing on the property required negotiating a resolution to each of the taxing authorities outstanding taxes and reaching an agreement with the tax certificate holders to resolve how the certificate holders would relinquish their claims to tax payments at closing. The SEC Receiver has submitted a formal recommendation to the Federal Court for approval of the City’s acquisition. The Federal Court approved the acquisition on January 5, 2022,
- Constructed Cell #3 of the C-23 Water Quality Project. Cell #4 started construction and will be complete in 2022, over \$8 million in grants have been secured for this project since its inception, a powerful example of how the City has partnered with the state of Florida to advance water quality and supply,
- Secured over \$35 million in grants through collaboratively working throughout the City via the Grants and Advocacy Team,
- Design plans were completed on a substantial upgrade to the Westport Wastewater Treatment Plant,
- Completed construction and held a grand opening for the middle section of The Port District Riverwalk,
- Florida Governor Ron DeSantis visited Port St. Lucie to announce a \$3,500,000 grant from the Governor’s Job Growth Incentive program to assist in construction of the southern section of the Anthony Sansone Senior Boulevard.
- Awarded the National Recreation and Park Association, Commission for Accreditation of Parks and Recreation Agencies. This prestigious recognition for PSL’s Parks and Recreation program has only been awarded to a handful of departments nationwide,
- Florida sports fans can enjoy the Florida Sports Hall of Fame, which opened this year at the MIDFLORIDA Credit Union Event Center. The Event Center continues to grow in offerings and as a venue,
- Awarded the bid for Phase III of Port St. Lucie Boulevard South, with construction expected to begin in early 2022,
- Adopted a Mobility Plan and Mobility Fees as a tool to mitigate the impact of new growth on existing infrastructure and advance mobility, the top issue consistently identified by residents in the National Community Survey,
- Reviewed plans and issued 4,721 building permits for new single-family homes, and continued high customer service ratings, with customers rating the Building Department on average 9.8 out of 10 points,

- Obtained the City's first ever Certificate of Excellence in Performance Management from the International City/County Management Association, the Association's highest level of recognition, following the City's first application,
- Developed cross-departmental teams to continually function as a high performing organization - there are now many cross-departmental City teams tackling a variety of issues that affect our residents, including stormwater maintenance, high performance public spaces, litter prevention, safety, development review, and implementing the half-cent sales tax approved by voters in 2018 for better roads and sidewalks,
- The City ranked, once again, as the Safest Large City in the State of Florida.

It is easy to focus on the City's accomplishments during the past year as individual events; the reality is that the most noteworthy accomplishments were developing plans for the future of Port St. Lucie. Under the Council's leadership, the staff is implementing a 10-year Parks and Recreation Master Plan, adopted long term master plans for Stormwater/Water Quality, Southern Grove Job Corridor, Public Art, and the Port District. These newly adopted long-term master plans are added to the 10-year Sidewalk and Road Resurfacing plans and provide a compelling roadmap that will continue to strengthen our growing City.

## **II. Relationship with the City Council**

It is my goal to treat all Council members equally well. I share information with the City Council about the status of program implementation through several vehicles. On a weekly basis, I meet with each Council member to provide information on the Council's upcoming agenda items. *The City Managers Bi-weekly Report* and financial status reports are all tools used to communicate with the Council.

One of my objectives is to assist the Mayor and Council to demonstrate to the citizens of Port St. Lucie the impact of the City Council's programs and initiatives. The resignation of former Mayor Oravec in the Spring of 2021 initiated a major transition in the City Council. Council member Shannon Martin ran for the unexpired term and won; her resignation from the City Council opened the District 3 Council seat which was decided in a run-off election in December of 2021.

The District 3 Council seat was won by Anthony Bonna. Although the orientation took place after the performance review period, a thorough orientation was provided to Council member Bonna. During this period of transition, I and the staff were focused on providing consistent information to Council on the status of programs and projects and our commitment to the Council's direction and Strategic Plan.

The City Council and staff are united in achieving the objectives identified in the strategic plan. Under my direction, staff has aggressively implemented the objectives approved by the Council. A quarterly report describing progress in achieving the objectives has been

provided to the Council, and the FY 20/21 budget process was constructed around the priorities established in the adopted Strategic Plan.

To further emphasize the importance of the Council adopted Strategic Plan, departments demonstrate progress by using a system of performance measures, indicators and reporting on each of the strategic goals and objectives.

On rare occasions, an incident may occur that warrants a telephone notification and discussion with individual members of the Council. I call each member and impart the same information thoroughly.

### **III. Relations with the Community**

As your City Manager, I strive to be accessible to the community. During the past year, I have attended and participated in community meetings, spoke before service organizations and neighborhood associations, and have personally met with key businesses representatives within our community. Although challenged by the Covid 19 Pandemic, staff demonstrated creativity and safety in continuing to communicate through virtual and socially distant in-person events. For the fourth year in a row, I delivered the “Year in Review” to the Chamber of Commerce. Through these and other visits and presentations, I am an advocate of the Council’s adopted policy.

To gain a better understanding of citizen’s priorities and perception of City services a comprehensive citizen survey was conducted in 2021. The responses to our survey were compared to 2009 and 2017-2020 citizen surveys and to the same questions answered by citizens in cities across the nation. Seventy-nine percent (79%) of respondents rated services provided by Port St. Lucie as good to excellent as compared to fifty-five percent (55%) in 2009. I am proud that we also engage our residents through the annual Citizen Summit, which reinvented its successful format to include our first-ever virtual summit, an in-person strategic plan trail, and two other pop-up events located throughout the City, educating, and gathering feedback from hundreds of residents. Our work in this area has been recognized twice by the National Research Center and the International City County Management Association with the Voice of the People Awards for Transformation in Foundations and Community Engagement. The Voice of the People Awards are the only awards given to local governments based on the opinion of residents.

In 2019, City staff began a major initiative to transform how citizens make requests for services and report concerns. This initiative which was branded as “1PSL” started with extensive conversations to understand requests and best practices for meeting community needs. Departmental call takers shared successful strategies and ideas for streamlining the customer service request process. The 1PSL Team has continuously improved the citizen request intake system. Analytical data on the number of calls by service are tracked and used as a starting point for process improvements to services. As an example, in FY 21 the service generating the highest number of customer calls was drainage/swale liners. To improve this service, a team was formed to review the process

addressing concerns, mobilizing to respond to a request for service and cleaning swales and proactively communicating to residents before and during rain events. The analytical review demonstrated process improvements which were needed and the need for additional funding to improve drainage service.

The City Council focus on delivering those services the Council had promised and communicating with our citizens yielded dividends in 2021. City Council directed staff to ask our citizens, through a referendum, to renew the authorization for the City Council to provide limited tax abatement to help attract businesses making substantial capital investments in our community and increasing higher paying jobs. Staff undertook a comprehensive campaign which engaged stakeholders such as the Realtors Association, Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development Council and Treasure Coast Builders Association to educate residents about the referendum.

Through an education program which highlighted the impact of the tax abatement program, the City provided sufficient information and almost 60% of voters voted yes to continue efforts to create higher paying jobs.

To be successful at public outreach and engagement, the City must employ multiple tools. *The City Managers Bi-weekly Report*, letters to the editor, the *Annual Year in Review*, Citizen Summit, and the Citizens' University are all vehicles that are used by the Council and staff to engage citizens in their City government. I am particularly pleased with the continued success of the most recent Citizens Academy which provided 80 citizens with a virtual behind the scenes look at City government. We also further educated hundreds of youth this year during the City's Virtual City Government Week along with Mayor Martin and a panel of City staff.

#### **IV. Fiscal Management**

In 2021 The City's bond rating was increased from an A- to an AA, the third highest Standard and Poor credit rating, and indicators such as millage, debt per capita, and employees per capita are stable or improving.

Several years ago, the City acquired Munis Financial Management software to provide a comprehensive financial management system. The City is aggressively implementing available modules of the Munis system to track contracts, verify that positions are funded and track our investments.

In 2015 the City had a total bonded indebtedness of \$1,200,000,000. The City Council adopted a strategic objective of substantially reducing bonded debt and has been successful. The FY 21 budget projects that total debt will decline by \$34,900,000 to total debt of \$764,000,000, a reduction of approximately 30% from FY15.

FY 21 maintained existing services, funded year three of a Police Department five-year plan to implement District V, provided additional fee-based staffing additions to keep up

with growth and reduced the financial impact of Southern Grove Jobs Corridor expenditures while reducing the millage rate by 3/10<sup>th</sup> of a mill.

The City's financial indicators confirm that the City of Port St. Lucie is financially sound. Once again, the City was awarded the Distinguished Budget Presentation Award and the Comprehensive Annual Financial Reporting award of Excellence for financial reporting. In addition, the City was the recipient of GFOA Special Performance Measures Recognition for the second year in a row, among the elite 2% of Distinguished Budget Award winners who received this recognition.

**V. Human Resource Management**

My vision for the workforce is of an organization which is professional, results-oriented, and focuses on providing a high return on investment to our taxpayers. As one of the 2021 Best Places to Work in St. Lucie County our organization's structure, training and communication with employees are critical to success.

I was proud, yet humbled, at the announcement that my peer managers in the Florida City/County Managers Association FCCMA awarded me the 2021 "Michael J. Roberto Award." This award recognizes "a member who has made a significant contribution to the development of new talent in professional local government management." Through the City's Mentorship Program and the previously mentioned S.T.A.R. Awards Recognition Program, I remain committed to the tenet that employee development is fundamental to our success in providing the best services deserved by our public.

Further, in 2021, Human Resources completed a comprehensive update of human resource policies. The policies and procedures reflect current thinking on issues important to the City and employees.

In a period where other organizations are experiencing turnover rates exceeding 20%, over 95% of employees answered on our 2021 employee survey that they see themselves working for the City in the next 12 months. The City of Port St. Lucie was the first in the nation to offer the PSL Forward Virtual Innovation Academy. Three groups of 15 employees have participated in the Innovation Academy creating twenty-eight different individual innovations across multiple departments that will be measured over time for their impact. In addition, through attending the Innovation Academy and working with the Strategic Initiatives & Innovation Team, departments further completed more innovation and process improvements on targeted group projects; the first of many to come. The City Council approved staff's recommendation to increase the reimbursement for applicable classes through the tuition assistance program. As your manager I am committed to offering training opportunities to improve skills and change management aptitude.

Achieving the City Council's goals and objectives requires highly motivated employees. I emphasize the importance of getting the right person in the right position, two-way

communication, ethics, accountability, and teamwork. The Port St. Lucie organization continues to place a high priority on recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce and selecting the most qualified individuals to be part of our organization.

I am pleased with four significant additions to the City Manager's team: Heath Stocton, Public Works Director; Sally Walsh, City Clerk; Natalie Cabrera, Human Resource Director, and Caroline Sturgis, Director of the Office of Management and Budget. Heath, Sally, and Natalie were selected from within the organization and demonstrate a commitment to our values, professionalism, and the hard work necessary to take our organization to the next level. The St. Lucie County Society of Human Resource Managers Association affirmed the wisdom of selecting Natalie when she was recognized as one of two Human Resource professionals of the Year by the Association. Caroline Sturgis, Director of the Office of Management and Budget, comes to PSL following distinguished service as Assistant Budget Director of the City of Baltimore and as Assistant County Administrator in Montgomery County, Maryland.

To be accessible to our City Team, each month I meet with employees within one of our major departments. These departmental meetings provide an opportunity for me to share information regarding City Council priorities. In each department visit I emphasize of the organization's values and engage employees to share their concerns.

**VI. Personal Qualities**

A dominant characteristic of my approach to local government is a commitment to providing excellent service to the City Council and the citizens of Port St. Lucie. I believe to be successful the organization must have a vision, set goals, live our values, involve stakeholders, act with integrity, and follow through.

**VII. Relations to other Governments**

To foster improved relationships with St. Lucie County, Fort Pierce and the other Cities and Counties in the region, I meet monthly with the managers of the jurisdictions. I am disappointed that the relationship between St. Lucie County and the City of Port St. Lucie has deteriorated. The City decision to end the agreement to collect County road and parks impact fees and adopt a Mobility Plan has strained the County's commitment to communicate and collaborate. As we embark on a formal mediation process and potential litigation, I will make every effort to compartmentalize our disagreement and seek areas of agreement.

**VIII. Community Redevelopment Agency Executive Director**

As Executive Director of the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA), I am pleased with the progress made on revitalizing the redevelopment areas. The Southern Grove CRA continues to grow in value and serves a primary function of reducing the impact of the special assessment on properties in the CRA. Through our partnership with the private sector the Governmental Finance Corporation has closed over 228 acres of land sales in Southern Grove. It is hard not to be excited about Port St. Lucie's future: the renewal of



research at the Florida Research Institute Cleveland Clinic and graduate programs at the Florida International University as pillars of our economy, and recognition that PSL has reached a critical mass of importance to the South Florida regional economy positions the City for significant economic growth.

Port St. Lucie's east side redevelopment area will see a renewal with the City's acquisition of the City Center properties. The completion of the Crosstown Parkway, execution of the Village Green Master Plan and preparation of a new Master Plan for City Center will help to establish a clear direction for the East Side CRA.

The CRA's adoption of the Port District Master Plan provides a template for creating exciting destinations along the North Fork of the St. Lucie River. In 2021 the City completed the middle and south section boardwalk. In Summer of 2022, the missing piece of the Boardwalk will be installed linking the north and south to create a one-half mile boardwalk. The design plans for renovation of the first Peacock historic home is complete, bids were let and awarded in FY21. It is easy to envision how these historic structures will fit into the fabric of The Port District, preserving history, and adding to the critical mass of our iconic park. The pandemic delayed the selection of a waterfront restaurant lessee or purchaser. As the food service market recovers from the pandemic, the CRA staff is receiving encouraging feedback from potential restaurants for the Port location.

#### **IX. City Powers and Duties**

The City of Port St. Lucie follows, and exceeds, the requirements of City ordinances. Systems are maintained for finance, procurement, human resources, information technology, budgeting, property inventory control, and risk management.

The City budget process integrates capital, information technology, and operating expenditures and revenues in an award-winning document. A copy of the most recent Strategic Plan annual update is included in the Council packet for this assessment.

As your City Manager, I attest that the City of Port St. Lucie government is well run and in compliance with state statutes. My commitment to the City Council is to continuously improve my performance and the performance of the organization.