

August 29, 2005

Sally Heyman, Commissioner
Miami-Dade County Commissioner
111 N.W. First Street, Suite 220
Miami, FL 33128

SUBJECT: Haulover Beach Park Departmental Budget, Year 2005/2006

REQUEST: Placement of \$240,000 into Park Department Budget to pay for the assignment of two full time Miami-Dade County Police Officers in Haulover Beach Park, a Regional Park of Miami-Dade County, for the Budget Year of 2005/2006

The Honorable Sally Heyman:

The purpose of this letter is to seek your support for the above referenced budget item.

Background: There are presently no M-D Police assigned to Haulover Beach Park. A uniform police officer does drive through the park on each daily shift. On various occasions, police are stationed at the park, but not on a permanent basis.

Haulover Beach Park currently, as a facility, has the highest attendance of any facility in Miami-Dade. Over 1.3 million visitors annually. And it is probably the only profit generating facility in Miami-Dade County government.

Financials: Haulover Beach Park has parking revenues in excess of \$1 million dollars annually. It is the only donor park/facility in Miami-Dade County. This money goes downtown to a General Purpose Account. There is no financially sound reason for Haulover Beach Park to not have budgeted police protection.

Comparatives: The NASDAQ Tennis Tournament/2005, a 12 day event, cost \$213,000 of Park & Recreation Department funds to pay for Miami-Dade Police services. Further, the NASDAQ cost the Park & Recreation Department another \$452,200 of P&R Department Expenses.

NASDAQ: 12 Days. Police Expenses: \$213,000 Park Department Expenses (non-reimbursed) \$452,200.
Total \$662,000 – **Haulover Beach Park:** 365 Days. Police Expenses/Extra Expenses -0-

Detail: We have Haulover Beach Park donating over \$1 million dollars in parking revenues to a general account, which may be used to support the NASDAQ, a private corporately sponsored event's police protection, and other costs while Haulover Beach Park gets, zip, nada, zero, no budgeted police protection. What's wrong with this situation?

We recognize the importance of the NASDAQ to South Florida. However, we object to the lack of budgeted funds to support police at Haulover Beach Park – a facility with a larger economic impact.

Geography: Haulover Beach Park is approximately 5 miles from District 6, Intracoastal Police Station. It is an isolated parcel that has no other county land contiguous to it. Thus, police not presently in the park must travel over 5 miles, through dense traffic to respond to a call for assistance. Haulover Beach Park is a 2 mile long park with SR A1A running through it, creating traffic and parking problems. It contains a boat ramp, marina, restaurants, charter fishing boats, picnic areas, a golf course and tennis center as well as two miles of pristine beach.

Demographics: Haulover Beach Park lies between the communities of Bal Harbour and Sunny Isles Beach. Both communities have under construction or planned over 5000 luxury condominiums in addition to the thousands that presently exist. These communities also have resort hotels that cater to tourists. Haulover Beach Park is their regional park, and as it now exists, without a police presence, not a safe place. Haulover as a regional park, also serves the communities Bay Harbor Islands, North Miami, North Miami Beach, Aventura and Golden Beach as well as all of Miami-Dade County.

Visitors to the 1/4-mile Naturist family beach exceed 1 million annually. Over 60 % of these visitors come from outside of Miami-Dade County. Many tourists come from all over the world. They stay at hotels, eat at restaurants and pay their sales and resort taxes. The economic impact of the Naturist beach may exceed \$500 million dollars annually.

Many of the present visitors from the condos and hotels, plus those new residents are in high-income brackets and will be targets for criminals that seek opportunities where there is no uniformed police presence.

The present situation reeks of misfeasance, malfeasance and nonfeasance and should anyone get hurt in this park, exposes Miami-Dade County to extensive financial damages.

Existing situation: We presently see a non-beach crowd arriving shortly before the lifeguards leave. They appear to have several different agendas, all inappropriate. The isolated location of the park, its easy access to buses and parking, and its foliage, its lack of uniform police all make it an attractive destination for adult sexual predators wanting to meet other adults sexual deviants. Those that expose themselves in public show up too. These agendas are criminal and a public health issue. While we realize that there are sexual perverts visiting all the parks, we can and will not tolerate them at Haulover

Present Code Enforcement Personnel: Don't get the personnel classified as "guards" confused with real uniformed police presence. Guards cannot enforce criminal law. They can't write summons or arrest anyone for criminal behavior. Another level person, that the P&R Dept. classify as ranger, that covers several parks, can write an incident report, which gets filed and no action is taken. They also cannot write a summons or arrest anyone.

Sexual Predators and Public Parks: Public parks are where children play. Child molesters love public parks that have no uniformed police. The counties new sexual predator laws will have no enforcement without the presence of uniform police officers

Commentary: South Florida Free Beaches has for the past 14 years, been responsible for maintaining a Beach Ambassador Program that is located at the northern 1/4 mile of the beach at Haulover Beach Park. We have had Crime Watch training and patrol the Naturist beach. We have also on occasion, conducted Crime Watch patrols in the evening and at night. We know the park and we know the problems.

The only solution is the assignment of uniformed police officers of Miami-Dade County through the process of placing the cost of the police presence in the budget of the Park & Recreation Department.

The present personnel at Haulover Beach Park are professional and do a good job with the limited tools and authority that they are given. But they are undermanned and under budgeted for a park of this size and with these visitor counts. Haulover has approximately 2 miles of open access by land and 2 miles by water.

The M-D police personnel that visit Haulover Beach are also very professional. However, they often cannot stay because of the demands for police on the mainland.

My personal experience has been when you call for a policeman, if they are not in the park you can wait 30 minutes or longer for a response. If the police responding is not familiar with the park, they can get lost in the park and cannot locate you because they are not familiar with the landmarks and location identifiers. Myself and other Beach Ambassadors have been physically pushed and threatened with no police back up to support our crime watch efforts, because they are not in the park.

Recommendation: It is being recommended, for the safety of park visitors, that the Miami-Dade County Commission approve the inclusion in the 2005/06 budget of the Park & Recreation Department, the sum of \$240,000 for the cost of stationing two (2) Miami-Dade Police Officers in Haulover Beach Park, a Regional County Park. We believe that a portion of these funds should come from the Tourist Development Fund.

We respectfully request your support.

Regards,

Richard Mason
President
South Florida Free Beaches, Inc.