

From: *Miami New Times*, Tuesday, June 2, 2010  
 Subject: **Leaders turn desires to port dredging as needing tie-in with tunnels' impact**  
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### TODAY'S NEWS

WEEK OF THURSDAY, JUNE 10, 2010

## THE INSIDER

**DRIVER GOOD TO GREAT:** Businesses of all sizes were honored at the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce goals conference Friday at the Good to Great Awards luncheon. The theme stemmed from a book by **Jim Collins**. **John Kanas**, keynote speaker and president and CEO of BankUnited, made several references to the metaphor used in the book: "it's all about reaching the road signs and knowing when you get to your destination. Also, knowing when to get off the bus and switch industries can be difficult, especially in this economy," he said. Businesses awarded for excelling in their industries included **Publix**, **Public Relations**, search consultants **Steven Douglas**, **Medicare health plan Preferred Care Partners** and car dealer **AutoNation**. "I am a relative new comer to the South Florida market," Mr. Kanas said, "but I know it hasn't been the easiest year to survive and prosper in business, and this city has had unbelievable fortune given the circumstances."

**LOSES KEY PASSENGER:** BankUnited has turned over 250 of its 1,200 employees since its takeover under new ownership as he works to get "the wrong people off the bus and the right people on the bus," President and CEO **John Kanas** told Friday lunch guests at the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce's goals conference. But one of the right people, he said, also got off last year's chamber chairman **Carlos Fernandez-Guzman** recently left to become CEO of locally based Pacific National Bank and was in the audience. Mr. Kanas thanked Mr. Fernandez-Guzman for showing him the ropes at BankUnited.

**NEW NAME, NEW LOGO:** A new logo for the Florida Marlins is now being reviewed for approval by Major League Baseball. **Brendan Cunningham**, team vice president for corporate sales, told the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce's Sports Committee Friday. The logo, he said, is fairly elaborate, reflecting the team's new name. But "we will not be the Miami Marlins until we close our season in 2011. The minute we close our season we will be the Miami Marlins."

**HOOP DREAMS:** As the Sports Committee was setting goals for the year, chamber President **Barry Johnson** had a suggestion to help the Miami Heat basketball team retain a star. "I'm surprised you don't have a goal to keep **Dwyane Wade** in town."

**SILENT TREATMENT:** As she stepped forward to receive the M. Adahie Range, Miami Pioneer for Progress Award at the Greater Miami Chamber's Goals Conference on Saturday, **Gepi Metellus**, executive director of the Sant La Estacion Neighborhood Center, started by saying "I am speechless." She then delivered a flawless acceptance speech, ending in "I'm simply speechless." She was followed by former County Manager **Merrett Sterheim**, who accepted the Henry M. Flagler Award for Visionary Leadership and noted to Mr. Metellus "I know that you spoke with passion because for someone that was speechless — without a name!"

**LOOKING FOR ANSWERS:** As oil poured into the Gulf of Mexico, officials at the Miami Beach Chamber of Commerce penned a letter to President **Barack Obama** inviting him to Miami Beach to discuss the spill and the government's reaction should the slick approach Greater Miami's beaches. "We believe it's imperative to explain to the business community what's being planned," Chairman **Aaron Perry** and chamber President and city Vice Mayor **Jerry Libin** wrote, "as well as the established criteria required to trigger each safety measure deployed." Added Mr. Perry in an interview Tuesday, "These are tough questions we want answers to. This is not a knock on anyone in particular, we just want detailed information as to how this is going to work."

**GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS:** Mr. Perry said he received a call from Capt. **James Fliton**, the Coast Guard's sector commander for Miami, but wants to inform the community at large as to what will happen should the oil make its way around the Keys. "We don't want to just restrict [the information] to our chamber board," Mr. Perry said. "We're going to set up a town hall meeting... to really give our community the opportunity to hear from this guy, and we're going to talk to him to see what the government's plan is. The meeting is to be at 5 p.m. June 15 at the Gansvoort South hotel, he said.

**WARTZOK STAYS:** Florida International University's interim Provost **Douglas Wartzok** has been named permanent provost and executive vice president, university President **Mark B. Rosenberg** announced in a letter last week. "He has shown an aptitude for the rigors and responsibility that this key position requires," Dr. Rosenberg wrote. Dr. Wartzok said in an interview that he wasn't originally sure if he wanted to remain in the position permanently, but that he found he had a "good working relationship" with Dr. Rosenberg and enjoyed the job. "The more I've worked [as provost] the more enthusiastic I've gotten," he said. Dr. Wartzok, previously vice president of academic affairs, replaced former provost **Ronald Berkman** in 2009.

**NO MORE LAYOFFS:** No Miami-Dade teachers will be fired for economic reasons in the coming year, Miami-Dade County Public Schools Superintendent **Alberto Carvalho** said Friday at the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce's Goals Conference. He also said he would not advocate tax increases and that the school system would have a balanced budget.

**IMPROVED IMAGE:** In addition, Dr. Carvalho told Goals Conference attendees that he has worked to build up the school system's financial standing since becoming superintendent, building reserves from \$4 million to ending this year with \$100 million. He also said he met recently with leaders in New York, working to improve their view of the school system's economic state. "Our ability to borrow money at a cheaper price... is going to be significantly improved."

**MOVIN' ON UP:** In the most recent National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) results, which covers fourth and eighth grades nationwide, Miami-Dade was the "highest performing urban system in America," Dr. Carvalho said at the Goals Conference. It also beat out whole states. Dr. Carvalho said he spoke with a reporter from Oregon who was looking to understand why Miami-Dade outperformed the state of Oregon by 17%. "We've arrived," Dr. Carvalho said.

## Commission gives nod to vital bonds to start awaited UM life sciences park

BY ZACHARY S. FAGENSON

After months of waiting, Miami-Dade commissioners Tuesday night gave an initial nod to direct a \$60 million bond, made available through President Obama's stimulus package, to construction of the first building in the University of Miami's 2-million-square-foot life sciences park.

But before Wexford Miami LLC, project developer, can market the bond and collect proceeds, it must first be approved by the full commission when it meets in July.

The commission's Budget, Planning and Sustainability Committee approved the bond after deferring it at its last two meetings. Joseph Reagan, who's heading the project here for Wexford, said some work has already begun at "Building One" at 191 NW Seventh Ave. in Miami and was hopeful it would receive full commission support.

"We [started] construction with site work and the frame back in February," Mr. Reagan said late Tuesday. "Permits are in place for [the building's] skin, the roof the floors, the main HVAC system."

"And we will soon submit permits for tenants," he added.

But he wouldn't share names of those tenants, though an anchor tenant reportedly has been secured.

Construction of the 246,000 square feet of research and laboratory space as well as 6,000 square feet of retail is expected to last about 18 months.

The total cost comes in at about \$100 million

with Wexford, which is wholly responsible for paying off the bond, providing \$40 million equity and banks providing "credit enhancements."

And Mr. Reagan said he expects the bond, if approved by the full commission, to be marketed and sold by summer's end.

The project is to create about 1,200 construction and 539 permanent jobs, according to documents submitted to the county.

Commissioners last month felt pressure to move the bond due to expiration of its availability at the end of December.

Wexford and the university weren't the only ones vying for the funds.

Michael Swerdlow, founder of developer Swerdlow Group, along with the Public Health Trust sought the bond to build an administration tower for the cash-strapped Jackson Health System at the Civica Towers site.

At a meeting of the Industrial Development Authority, the first agency responsible for approving potential recipients, late last year, Mr. Swerdlow said the tower could help drive down Jackson's costs.

"This is a way in which Jackson Memorial Hospital can consolidate its far-flung administrative staff," he said. The project "is designed first and foremost to reduce [the hospital's] costs."

Despite Jackson's challenges, the vote is a boon to Miami's economic development community.

Members of the business community and those in the economic development world have pinned hopes for a burgeoning biotech industry in Miami on the forthcoming park.



Aaron Perry

BY RISA POLANSKY

With construction on half-dredged tunnels to the Port of Miami under way, local leaders have turned their attention to dredging, another project considered crucial to Miami's future as a cargo hub — and one they say could require just as big a collective push as the clock ticks toward a fiscal 2012 deadline for federal funding.

Deepening the channel to the seaport to make way for larger ships and potentially double cargo volume has been on the books since 2007, when Congress gave the go-ahead, but not the money, to make it happen.

Since, port leaders and others have consistently but relatively quietly lobbied for the needed \$75 million in federal dollars, the pledged match for the total \$150 million project.

The port is to finance the rest through bonds.

Meanwhile, it was the on-again, off-again \$1 billion-plus tunnels project that took top priority and center stage in recent years as its fate was threatened over and over.

Local leaders joined forces last year in what became the final fight for the project designed to relieve downtown truck traffic and improve access to the port.

Now the tunnels are a go, with roadwork under way — but the timeline for the dredging is getting tight.

To make room for the massive ships expected to head this way when an expanded Panama Canal opens in four years, the

channel must be dredged to 50 feet by 2014, the same year the underwater tunnels are expected to be finished.

But to let bids and begin digging, half the federal money must be in the bank. That's \$37.5 million needed by fiscal 2012.

The preliminary engineering and design is expected to be completed about a year from now.

From there, the Army Corps of Engineers could begin the process of drawing up a contract — but to do it, a "symbolic amount" somewhere in the \$100,000 range must be in hand first.

That's got to happen this year, Deputy Port Director Juan Kuryla said at the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce's Goals Conference last week, where what is shaping up to be a big public push for the project began.

Both private and public-sector leaders plugged the project every chance they could during the two-day summit.

Lobbying for the funding made the list of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee's goals for the year, and several participants named the project as a main concern during the Government Affairs session.

"When they open up the Panama Canal, our port has to be ready," said Stephen Sails, Florida International University's vice president of governmental relations during the government session.

Miami-Dade International Trade Consortium Assistant Director Jimmy Nares said the same at the transportation pow-wow, warning that "we stand to lose competitiveness" if the port can't accommodate larger ships.

County Manager George Burgess highlighted the dredging project in an address to the full conference body, imploring business leaders to put their game faces on to press for the funding.

With the tunnels, "we kept our eye on the prize and we got it done," he said.

But "the work at the port is simply not done. The effort we put into the tunnel a year ago must be repeated" — and "redoubled," the manager told a packed ballroom of chamber goal-setters. "We need to be ready to handle a post-Panamax ships."

The congressional approval that's for years been a feather in Miami-Dade's cap "won't matter if we can't secure \$75 million in federal funding," he said.

And if it doesn't happen, Mr. Burgess said, "then frankly we should look in the mirror and say, 'What did we do wrong?'"

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