

RESOLUTION NO. 21-11-113

A RESOLUTION OF THE VILLAGE COUNCIL OF ISLAMORADA, VILLAGE OF ISLANDS, FLORIDA, EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR THE FLORIDA FISH AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMISSION AND ITS LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS; FURTHER SUPPORTING MONROE COUNTY'S REQUEST FOR AN INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF FWC OFFICERS WITHIN MONROE COUNTY; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE

WHEREAS, the Florida Keys is home to Everglades National Park, Biscayne National Park, Dry Tortugas National Park and the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, with each being nationally treasured and uniquely important environmental resources; and

WHEREAS, the Florida Keys is also home to the Crocodile Lake National Wildlife Refuge, Great White Heron National Wildlife Refuge, Key Deer National Wildlife Refuge and Key West National Wildlife Refuge; and

WHEREAS, the Federal and state governments have authorized and appropriated significant public investment in the restoration and preservation of the Florida Keys ecosystem; and

WHEREAS, Islamorada, Village of Islands (the "Village"), continues to invest in and to work in partnership with state and federal agencies to protect the health of its unique marine environment; and

WHEREAS, the sustained health and safety of local marine refuges and nearshore waters are vital to the tourist-based Florida Keys economy; and

WHEREAS, the continued environmental and economic viability of Florida Keys depends on the preservation of those environmental resources and on the continued protection of the quality, tranquility, and safety of our surrounding waters; and

WHEREAS, the Florida Keys' unique marine environment is a highly valuable economic engine in the State of Florida, generating over \$200M in sales tax each year, and worthy of increased State investment for its protection; and

WHEREAS, our marine environment provides an unparalleled boating, fishing and diving experience, attracting high numbers of recreational boaters, charter boats, commercial

fishing vessels, liveaboard vessels, transient boaters, dive boats, personal watercraft, and kayaks, all contributing to the need for increasingly robust protective resources; and

WHEREAS, the highly active boating environment leads to a number of hazardous and environmentally damaging impacts including:

1) Vessel groundings: more than 300 vessel groundings are reported in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary every year, with 80% of these impacting the fragile seagrass habitat and damaging corals; and

2) Boating accidents: Monroe has the highest number of boating accidents in the State every year, and in 2020 Monroe once again led the State with 99 accidents and 9 fatalities; and

3) Derelict vessels: Monroe has the highest number of derelict vessels Statewide each year, and is currently on track for the removal of 60 derelict vessels this year; and

WHEREAS, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (“FWC”) has the enormous responsibility for protecting the environmental resources of a 2,900 square mile expanse of the Florida Keys’ nearshore waters, 240 miles of coastline, in one of the most diverse and active boating environments in the State; and

WHEREAS, without exception, existing FWC staff provide excellent and highly professional law enforcement service to the Village and surrounding communities but could be strengthened by a staff increase; and

WHEREAS, the provision and retention of FWC officers is vitally important to the ongoing protection of our marine environment and the safety of the boating public; and

WHEREAS, the Florida Keys has the highest cost of living in the State of Florida, and a well-documented lack of affordable/workforce housing providing a significant affordability challenge for local FWC officers; and

WHEREAS, there are currently 15 vacant FWC officer positions in the Florida Keys; and

WHEREAS, the Village Council of Islamorada, Village of Islands (the “Village Council”), urges FWC to direct increased resources for the protection of our marine environment, and to implement strategies to aid in the recruitment and retention of its officers such as sufficient pay consideration and/or housing allowance to account for the local high cost of living; and

WHEREAS, the Village Council encourages FWC to review the level of compensation for its law enforcement officers in a manner that provides for adequate housing while increasing the level of service needed for public safety and protection of environmental assets within the Florida Keys.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE VILLAGE COUNCIL OF ISLAMORADA, VILLAGE OF ISLANDS, FLORIDA, AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1. Recitals. The above recitals are true and correct and incorporated into this Resolution by this reference.

Section 2. Expressing Support for FWC. The Village Council of Islamorada, Village of Islands, hereby expresses its strong support for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission and its law enforcement officers and urges the State of Florida and FWC to consider directing additional law enforcement resources to the Florida Keys and Monroe County.

Section 3. Authorization of Village Officials. The Village Manager is hereby authorized to take all necessary and expedient action to effectuate the intent of this Resolution.

Section 4. Transmittal. The Village Clerk is hereby authorized and directed to transmit certified copies of this Resolution to Governor DeSantis, Senator Ana Marie Rodriguez, Representative Jim Mooney, FWC Executive Director Eric Sutton, and FWC Commissioners Robert Spottswood, Mike Sole, Rodney Barreto, Steven Hudson, Gary Lester, Gary Nicklaus, and Sonya Rood.

Section 5. Effective Date. This Resolution shall take effect immediately upon adoption.

Motion to adopt by Vice Mayor Pete Bacheler, second by Councilman David Webb.

FINAL VOTE AT ADOPTION

VILLAGE COUNCIL OF ISLAMORADA, VILLAGE OF ISLANDS

| | |
|----------------------------|-----|
| Mayor Joseph B. Pinder III | YES |
| Vice Mayor Pete Bacheler | YES |
| Councilman Mark Gregg | YES |
| Councilman Henry Rosenthal | YES |
| Councilman David Webb | YES |

PASSED AND ADOPTED THIS 18th DAY OF NOVEMBER, 2021.



JOSEPH B. PINDER III, MAYOR

ATTEST:



KELLY TOTH, VILLAGE CLERK

APPROVED AS TO FORM AND LEGALITY
FOR THE USE AND BENEFIT OF
ISLAMORADA, VILLAGE OF ISLANDS:



ROGET V. BRYAN, VILLAGE ATTORNEY