

VILLAGE HALL
500 NE 87TH ST
EL PORTAL, FL
CHRISTIA E. ALOU, ESQ.
VILLAGE MANAGER



MAYOR OMARR C. NICKERSON
VICE MAYOR LUIS M. PIRELA
COUNCILPERSON ANDERS URBOM
COUNCILPERSON ANNA LIGHTFOOT-WARD
COUNCILPERSON DARIAN MARTIN

MEMORANDUM

TO: Village of El Portal Council
FR: Christia E. Alou, Village Manager
DATE: October 24, 2023
RE: October 2023 Village Manager's Report

Please accept this memorandum as my October 2023 Village of El Portal Administrative Report to Council and the Community.

I was inducted into the Miami Dade City and County Management Associations 2023-24 Executive Board on October 7, 2023 in Coral Gables. I am honored to represent my fellow managers and serve them and El Portal on a larger scale within the County.

SPECIAL PROJECTS

Administrative Adjustment Requested for 9001 NE 1 Avenue - DRIVEWAY

The Corradino Group has been unraveling a long-standing issue with the property owners at 9001 NE 1st Avenue. One of a few other issues is the need for a driveway allowance after-the-fact. The applicant and owner, Alberto Fernandez, is seeking an administrative adjustment approval to allow for a driveway approach wider than allowed by the Village of El Portal Code of Ordinance (the Code) and separated by less space than is required. The property is in a single-family residential neighborhood within the Village of El Portal. The subject property is approximately 13,635 square feet, which exceeds the average lot within the subdivision. This home is located on a corner lot at NE 90th Street and NE 1st Avenue. The home is situated such that the front door faces NE 1st Avenue. The result is a smaller front yard depth, with a larger rear yard and side yard facing NE 90th Street.

The applicant is requesting an approval of an administrative adjustment, that began tolling on October 6, 2023 with the memo to proceed with required steps and advertising for the administrative adjustment, to provide for a driveway wider than allowed by the Code. The current zoning code requires a maximum width for two driveways to not exceed 10 feet each and to be separated by 50% of the width of the lot frontage. The applicant has requested two driveways that are located less than the separation required and are 20 feet in width. Administrative Adjustment Standards: The Village may grant an administrative adjustment from the strict application of the provisions of the Code in accordance with Sec. 17-58(c).

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Village of El Portal Parks Renovation

The Village was also offered a lovely donation from an El Portal private property owner of four cultural statues, Stupas, that could be added to the Village of El Portal Nature Trail. These statues are quite large and impressive, and our space is limited in our small parks. I met with Miami Dade County Department of Transportation and Public Works, the true owner of the El Portal Nature Trail, and permission was granted to install the statues so long as their installation follows the Miami Dade County permitting and that the Village execute an Interlocal Agreement that VOEP will maintain the Stupa(s). Our Parks Renovation and Preservation Project Manager, Sr. Engineer Orlando Rubio and I reviewed the requirements of the space and found that one statue would be the maximum we can fit in the space without changing the landscaping design and keeping exercise equipment area that was identified for the park's renovation. We also made sure that the existing sewer pump station easement located on the public school property just north of the El Portal Nature Trail would not be obstructed in any way if the statue is installed.

A family-sized, ADA compliant restroom is being installed in the El Portal Tot Lot, and its completion is expected, according to the contractor, November 28, 2023.

Village of El Portal Transportation Circulator Pilot Project Shuttle to Downtown Transit

Due to low ridership, the Village of El Portal discontinued its Transit/Electric Shuttle Service to Downtown Miami Pilot Project. This transit project lasted two years in the Village of El Portal using Citizens Transportation Trust Transit funding.

NE 2nd Avenue Business Corridor

The Village Plaza project presented its site plan to the Village Council at the September 26th meeting. The project is planning a private sewer line for the property with Miami Dade County and Miami Shores Village, that is planned to run from NE 88th Street to NE 1 Avenue to the closest Miami Shores Village lift station at NE 96 Street. The Village Administration and El Portal Police will work with the community and the Village Plaza Property team to communicate and accommodate local impacts for this project. According to the property managers, they are planning to develop two small restaurants, retail, and offices at the location.

Speed Limit Reduction/Roadway and Traffic Improvements – The Village submitted our completed traffic study report and mobility study to Miami Dade County Transportation and Public Works to support the Village's request for reduced speed limit to 25mph on Village streets, for painted intersections at NE 2nd Avenue and N. Miami Avenue, and for a "road diet" to reduce NE 2nd Avenue from four lanes to two lanes to match the City of Miami and Miami Shores Village. The Village's Public Works Director, Mohan Thampi submitted a permit application for the speed limit reduction to Miami Dade County which has been approved, and the Interlocal Agreement for the reduction of the speed limit is being prepared. The County is requiring that the Village provide an engineering plan to remove and replace and place street and speed limit signage. An information campaign for residents and visitors is forthcoming to educate about the new lower speed limit. This project is ongoing.

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Public Works Director Thampi and I, with David A. Plummer and Associates to present the Village's Mobility Study to the TPO, who provided the Village with the matching grant funds to conduct the assessment. David A. Plummer and Associates' Senior Traffic Engineer, Juan Espinosa presented the mobility study findings to the Village Council in Spring 2023. It was presented to the TPO in October to garner support and direction for next steps. It is our hope that a road diet (reduction from four lanes to two lanes), parking, painted intersections and medians for NE 2nd Avenue will be approved and permitted by the County.

Public Work Coordinator Solomon is collecting addresses/locations of potholes for a pothole inventory to be repaired in 2024. To report a **pothole**, please contact publicworks@villageofelportal.org with a physical address and photo.

FPL Street Lighting Conversion to lower wattage LED Lights

I am working with FPL's Office on LED Lighting Solutions for LED street light conversion. This pilot project started approximately three years ago but stalled for a very long time despite several attempts by Vice Mayor Pirela. As of September 27, 2023, the project is reactivated, the conversion project details are as follows: the Village has approximately 151 FPL owned/operated streetlights. Miami Dade County owns and operates the streetlights on N. Miami Avenue and N.E. 2nd Avenue, and not FPL. We were given two options for the lighting: we chose the lower wattage of 3000 Kelvin (warm yellow light). The conversion will be at NO cost to the Village, and the conversion will start approximately five to six months from now.

State Appropriation Funded School Safety Roundabout at Horace Mann Middle School

Biscayne Boulevard/Annexed Area Development

The Kavista Rental Development at El Portal Annex

The Kavista Project continues developing according to plan, with occupancy expected by the end of the year. City of Miami residents have complained about the Skatebird for music noise and Kavista construction project noise. Under the Code and according to the Z5 zoning, music and noise are permitted within 100 feet of the property in its usual course of business. Skatebird Miami is preparing a noise mitigation plan that may include a sound curtain for the property, that they will submit to the Village in response to the request.

The Launch Rental Development at El Portal Annex

The owners of the Kavista Project development are planning a second development along the canal coast of the El Portal Annex entitled The Launch. Finalized plans are being prepared for submission in the coming months.

Skate Bird Miami (Skate Park)

Skate Bird Miami is open for business and preparing a Sound/Noise Mitigation plan in response to several noise complaints about Skatebird Miami from surrounding City of Miami and El Portal residents. The proprietor insists that he is making every effort to keep the performance noise confined to the property, not beyond 100 feet of the property as required by VOEP Code of

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Ordinances. EPPD and El Portal Code Enforcement continue to monitor and address issues related to the violation of the law and code.

Former Trailer Park "Little Farm"

This property is still in receivership. Mayor Nickerson and I met with the representative of an interested firm regarding potential development and environmental challenges of the property.

VOEP DEPARTMENTS HIGHLIGHTS

Police and Public Safety/El Portal Police Department (EPPD)

The Village of El Portal Police Department is to receive three new exterior impact doors, three impact windows, a generator, and a new air conditioning unit from a HUD/CDBG critical facilities grant (\$50,000) the Village received from the efforts of Ecostratas, the Village's grant consultant. This project is currently under an active Request for Proposals for construction services. We look forward to the improvements. approval by HUD. The RFP will close on October 24, 2023, at 3pm. A contractor recommendation will be provided at the November 2023 Council Meeting.

From Police Chief Alex Mendez/Major Thomas Harrison for October 2023

- Hired two full time police officers: Ofc. Ricardo Chavez and Ofc. Ana Machado **WELCOME Officer Chavez and Officer Machado!!**
- CPR/AED/Anti-Choking training for the department and office staff
- Using the Patrick Leahy Bullet Proof Vest Grant, we were able to obtain 10 vests for our officers and command staff.
- EPPD Police Officer Manny Berthet and his wife gave birth to Baby Jacob this month.

Code Enforcement

Special Master hearing scheduled for October 24, 2023 – Seven cases to be heard.

I am speaking with firms in consideration of a community noise survey services for the various zones of the Village of El Portal. This is in response to the noise complaints from some Sherwood Forest residents against the Skatebird Miami in Zone 5.

From Code Enforcement Officer Fitzgerald Simmons for October 2023

- Active Cases (CCIN's, NOCI's, Verbal Warnings) - 255
- Overhead (Supplies/Fuel/Equipment/Software)- Fuel \$104.32, Field Laptop \$422.99
- Work Orders (VOEP Abatement) - 1 (\$150)
- Notices To Appear (SM Hearing 10/24/2023) - 7
- Final Order/Imposition of Fine/Mitigation Request (SM Hearing 10/24/2023)- \$19,900
- Stickered Vehicles (Abandoned/Inoperable/Invalid) - 1

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Building Department

From CAP/Building Department Building Official Pedro Martinez for October 2023

Total Fees Collected - \$17,302

Total Permits Issued – 43

Total Construction Value - \$210,484.00

Planning and Zoning

Plus Urbia Design will now conduct Urban Planning services only for the Village of El Portal. The Corradino Group is now the Village's Zoning Department contractor. They conduct site plan reviews, variance and special use requests and zoning inspections for the Village.

Plusurbia prepared a presentation and recommendations to the Village's Planning and Zoning Committee through the chair in anticipation of an October 2023 Planning and Zoning Committee meeting. Planning and Zoning Committee Chairperson Martin requested that the discussion be in the form of a Community Town Hall. Plusurbia is planning the town hall with me and Chairperson Martin. The discussion will be regarding swale material, flooding and code of ordinance issues related to that matter are being contemplated due to overwhelming property owner concerns and non-compliance due to environmental challenges including tree canopy, tree roots, flooding and the need for parking that affect the swales presently.

Plusurbia's Megan McLaughlin is working with Miami Dade County on a grant that was provided by the State of Florida Division of Historical Resources to address the Village of El Portal Historical Resources Survey. This was not an El Portal project or initiative, but a County Office of Historic Preservation project to study the Village, its subdivisions: Sherwood Forest, El Jardin, El Portal, River Estates, Tuttle's Subdivision, Glendale Manor, as well as local businesses and institutions. Ms. McLaughlin will request an opportunity to present the project to the Village Council to inform the Village Council and residents about the historical resources survey project and its specifics and to request matching funds.

The Corradino Group provided a summary of other municipal zoning inspection fees, and recommendations to the Administration to establish a fee for the new service being provided by the Corradino Group. The fee is \$95 per inspection.

The Corradino Group has been unraveling a long-standing issue with the property owners at 9001 NE 1st Avenue. One of a few other issues is the need for a driveway allowance after-the-fact. The Corradino Group requested that the Village Manager provide an Administrative Adjustment to the property owners to remedy the issue. The homeowner submitted the required request in writing and is advertising for the adjustment in local paper. If there is any appeal made by anyone regarding the granting of the administrative adjustment, then the adjustment fails, and the owner will then have to seek a variance from the Village Council. The adjustment appeal period began tolling on October 6, 2023, or at the time of the publication of the advertisement. I have not been provided with a copy of the advertisement at this time.

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The Corradino Group continues to work with the Village Plaza property development team, as well as with residents for their zoning needs and zoning inspections.

Public Works and Maintenance

Village of El Portal Parks Renovation

The Village of El Portal met several times to try to close the gap between the quoted price of the parks renovation and preservation selected a general contractor and has put the project on hold until more funding can be added through grants or other means. In the meantime, I requested a landscaping and plantings quote from the Village's Landscaping and Tree Services Contractor, Green Dreams Paradise, and presented it to the Public Works Committee Chair for consideration at Fall/Winter 2023 Public Works Committee Meeting.

From Public Works Department Director Mohan Thampi for October 2023

- o Coordinate construction of the Tot Lots Bathroom with contractor Mr. Victor Marzo where completion is scheduled before November 28, 2023.
- o Reviewed 3 quotes for installing US flags and banner at three intersections.
- o Miami-Dade DTPW approved Villages engineering report to reduce speed limit and Miami-Dade TPO requires VOEP hire an engineering consultant to design replacement of traffic speed sign from 30 MPH to 25 MPH. Go ahead given to David Plummer & Associates to prepare construction plans.
- o VOEP Village Manager, PW Director, and Davis Plummer & Associates (DPA) staff made presentation to Miami- Dade TPO on NE 2nd Avenue Mobility Study. VOEP was one of the first two to successfully complete this new grant program study by TPO. Have asked DPA to make design proposal for construction plans.
- o Bus Shelter FY22-23 Audit conducted Miami-Dade County Department of Transportation and Public Works. Provided maintenance logs and fixed assets list and filed inspection. Received audit report and approval from N'agbe Kabe, MD-DTPW QA Engineer.
- o Review stupa donation proposal for installation in VOEP parks.
- o Coordinated with Shenandoah to provide repairs to drainage grate in Sherwood area.
- o Coordinate with FEC on their cleaning up around railroad tracks next to VOEP.
- o Coordinate distribution of sand and sandbags at Village Hall for residents to fill and take for their use.
- o Drive and Inspect daily various areas of Village to check for litter, problems, or issues.
- o Coordinate landscaping activities with Village contractor, Green Dreams Paradise.
- o Coordinate residents request to trim tree branches obscuring stop sign at NE 89th St and N Miami Avenue.
- o Continue checking stormwater drainage inlets, clear and clean them of surface debris blockages as needed.
- o Continue to review various Village right-of-way permit applications and those submitted to Miami Dade Department of Transportation and Public Works (DTPW) for construction in Village road right-of-ways.
- o Returned abandoned shopping carts to nearby stores.

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- o Submit additional information for SS4 grant application who have indicated should reapply next year.
 - o Respond to queries on right-of-way requirements and permits by contractors.
 - o Work with code enforcement to report illegal dumping and overgrown grasses in abandoned lots.
 - o Report to FPL North Miami 86-91 blocks road lights not working at night. FPL stated that it may take them 40 days to solve the problem.
 - o Drive around on a daily basis around the Village to review contractor work.
 - o Drive around to checked potholes and stormwater drains.
 - o Checked trees in right-of-way for any damage or disease that could be a threat to the public.
- * Checked bus stops, streets lights and reported any damage to our contractors or Miami Dade County.
- o Checked daily on parks to see they are maintained clean.

Trees in VOEP

Ecostratas, the Village's grants consultant secured the Village's 2023 Neat Street Tree Planting Matching Grant. The grant will be utilized to plant 75 native trees in the Village. The planting was to take place in September 2023, however the selected contractor to conduct the work had an emergency operations problem that has delayed the planting. We hope to have the contractor attend the planting before year-end. Postcard mailers will be going to those homes that will be receiving a tree. In the meantime, the Village's Tree City USA Certification is being renewed through application. A VOEP Tree Board will hold a board meeting in the coming months under chairman Councilperson Anders Urbom. Grants Consultant Robert Ruano, of Ecostratas, and I continue to process necessary reports and documentation of the Village's Tree City USA status and activity and work with the Public Works Department on day-to-day maintenance.

Village of El Portal Sustainability and Resiliency

Grants Contractor, Ecostratas, with Public Works Director and Engineering Contractor prepared an Army Corp of Engineers resiliency grant application with the chairperson of the S&R Taskforce, Mayor Nickerson, and the Administration this month. The Administration met with Chairperson Carpenter and Mayor Nickerson several times over the last two months to coordinate grant funding opportunities for which we have applied for water quality funding and will apply for and request state legislative funding for a sustainable police department building and more water quality and parks renovation, projects.

The Village of El Portal was included in the Miami Dade County Reasonable Assurance Plan (RAP), led by Miami Dade the RAP coordinates County water quality policies and initiatives, and prioritizes the County's most vital areas, with El Portal and our neighboring municipalities being identified as most needy due to the C7 Little River Canal's effect on Miami Biscayne Bay's water quality. Mayor Omarr Nickerson is leading a collaborative effort with all Miami Dade County Coastal Mayors of Biscayne Bay. The Village Administration is called upon quite often to participate in initiatives and efforts such as a new program being instituted by Miami Dade County entitled iSee Flood Tracking

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for residents. This application is being rolled out very soon to allow residents to report flooding directly to Miami Dade County's Resiliency Office. More information and an educational campaign are forthcoming.

Other Outstanding Infrastructure Projects:

Stormwater Improvements in VOEP

El Jardin Stormwater Improvement. Phase 1 of the El Jardin storm water improvement project was completed in January 2022. Just recently, the Village of El Portal was granted the Resilient Florida Grant for 2021 by Governor DeSantis. This grant is a matching grant that would provide the Village with over \$900,000 from the State (FDEP) to do the next phase of the El Jardin project. Receiving the Resilient Florida grant is a tremendous win for the Village of El Portal, and a meeting between me and FDEP garnered the approval of the use of the El Jardin Stormwater Improvement Phase 1 project to serve as a portion of the match requirements of Phase 2. Phase 2 will require the outfall easement that we desperately need in El Jardin.

The Village of El Portal was granted approximately \$900,000 for the Resilient305 2021-22 grant to be utilized for stormwater improvements on Phase Two of the El Jardin community as was detailed in the Village's Local Mitigation Strategy. This is a matching grant, for which I met with FDEP leadership to determine if the El Jardin Stormwater Improvement Phase One work that was just completed earlier this year may be considered for the Village's match. The answer is yes, but we must add approximately \$250,000 to make up the residual amount of the match. This is good news for the Village and for our efforts in bringing water quality improvements to the residents. This project is ongoing.

Septic to Sewer Project on West Side of Village

99+ Homes of the Village's West Side – the Village met with and finalized all portions of the easement payment for the small parcel required for the lift station at Horace Mann Middle School. The first installment payment for \$18,000 was issued to Miami Dade County Public Schools, and the executed land conveyance from MDCPS was received last month. Additionally, Miami Dade County WASD received a grant that they will use to convene the project. There is a Little River Sewer System expansion that will tie into the Village's project, which could increase the number of homes being converted by the County's project. Miami Dade County's WASD will utilize its federal resiliency funding for the construction of the S2S project but is now seeking further grant funds for the design of the project. This project is ongoing with a two-year minimum before construction is to commence.

State Appropriation Funded School Safety Roundabout at Horace Mann Middle School

The Village received \$300,000 from the State of Florida in the 2021 Legislative Appropriations to fund the development of a traffic calming project at NW91 Street and NW 2nd Avenue. The project was designed, and the construction management will be with the Village engineering firm, Craig A.

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Smith, and Associates. Miami Shores Village Manager, with an executed Interlocal Agreement with MSV for the shared location, but this is an EL Portal project. The Village has applied for the proper Miami Dade County DTPW permits, for grant funds to install lighting and signage at the location, and the proper extension of execution to January 2025 to address additional engineering services as required by Miami Dade County. Once these matters are addressed, an RFP will be issued for general contractors to construct the project, and mobility plans and information about the project will be shared with residents of both municipalities and Horace Mann Middle School. This project will take three weeks to construct once construction commences after general contract selection is made through the appropriate procurement process. This project is ongoing.

Miami Dade County's Renovation of C7 CANAL BRIDGE at N. Miami Avenue

No update since September 2023. Miami Dade County alerted the municipality and residents that the traffic shift on North Miami Avenue bridge just south of the Village of El Portal was implemented. This new traffic pattern is scheduled to be in place through Spring 2024, according to Miami Dade County Department of Transportation and Public Works Bridge Director, Alex Barrios.

Public Affairs

My and the Administration's participation in public affairs is to supplement and aid the Public Affairs Committee/El Portal's Women's Club where possible. The Administration will continue to support all public affairs efforts. At present the Village's website and social media, the digital marquee sign, Mayor Omarr Nickerson's door-to-door flyer distribution with vital information about what is happening in the Village, are being utilized as outreach. Mayor Nickerson and Members of the Village Council conduct outreach to residents regularly.

The El Portal Women's Club will host a Halloween Costume and Movie Night Party at the El Portal Tot Lot Park on Tuesday, October 31, 2023 at 6PM. Concessions will be available for purchase.

The El Portal Information Expo is Saturday, November 4th!!!!

I met with local high school students, Shira Evans and Emilia Gogrichiani, to establish a routine collection of books to supply to the Little Library located at the West side of the Village Hall campus, next to the El Portal Tot Lot. Flyers were distributed to residents about the collection of books, to be stored at the Village Hall in a box provided by the students, and to encourage literacy and the love of reading for all residents and visitors. They will also fix up the current Little Library by touching up the paint, while keeping the integrity of its original artist's work.

Councilperson Darian Martin's new initiative, El Portal Junior Birders Program began July 2023. Please visit the Village website for more information.

Councilperson Darian Martin's new initiative, Miami Diaper Bank, will commence in November 2023. I coordinated the application for the Village to receive the community donation collection

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box for diapers and baby essentials at the Village Hall. More information will be provided on the Village website.

Administration and Finance

From Chief Financial Officer Harry Taubenfeld for October 2023

Establishing and preparing Budget FY2023-24 hearing dates, and materials for Council approval.
Working with Synovus Bank on the newly negotiated line-of-credit repayment schedule
Working on the 2022 Audit
Working with Village Manager to address administration and finance improvements and reporting.

Hurricane Irma Financial Recovery

The Village of El Portal received \$537,477.88 in reimbursement. These funds are being transferred to Synovus Bank as a partial payment on the line of credit/loan for \$695,551.21 that was extended in May 2023 by the bank. We are in the process of working on the new balance and its repayment with Synovus Bank. We continue to work with FDEM, by meeting with, following up with requests for information, to capture the remaining balance of the reimbursement. The CFO filed the quarterly report with FEMA/FDEM this month.

From Office Administrator David Perez for October 2023

- Finalized the implementation for ADP Company Code Y9Q.
- Assisted in correcting and monitoring the RFP for the Police Station and posted it on DemandStar.
- Finalized Clerk Jacobi audit and began to process payment.
- Updated all forms and Business Tax Receipt license on BS&A.
- Proceed payment and mailed out Business Tax Receipt.
- Obtain quote for our IT room organization.
- Removed all files previous fiscal year files from office.
- Assisted Mayor Nickerson with invoices for the event sponsorship.
- Regular day to day duties and other tasks assigned.

There continue to be varied requests, directives, and projects I provide at the request of the Village Council and members of the El Portal community. I also participated in several forums on behalf of the Village over the course of the month:

10/2/2023 – Skatebird Miami Noise Mitigation Plan Meeting with proprietor Jonathn Strauss

10/3/2023 – Horace Mann Middle School meeting regarding new school year plans, collaborative efforts, and resident concerns with litter and parking with Principal Thompson, Mayor Nickerson and resident

10/5/2023 – CITT municipal partnership meeting in person

10/5/2023 – FIU Workshop with Miami Dade County Mayors

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10/6/2023 – MDCity, County Management Association Coordinator luncheon

10/6/2023 – Grants coordination meeting for VOEP with contractors

10/6/2023 – FMIT Audit - Ongoing

10/11/2023 – Miami Dade County Best Practices Conference – participated on a panel that was moderated by Mayor Nickerson on Good Government

10/12/2023 – iSee Flood Tracking preview meeting with Miami Dade County Office of Resiliency

10/16/2023 – Transportation Planning Organization Board meeting presentation of the Village's NE 2nd Avenue Mobility Study

10/17/2023- ADA Compliance Workshop, Miami Dade County

10/20/2023 – Senator Shevrin Jones' Lunch and Learn

For more information, please contact me directly. Thank you.

Village Manager Christia E. Alou, Esq.

