

# COMMUNITY FOCUS

## A MESSAGE FROM PEMBROKE PINES COMMISSIONER ANGELO CASTILLO

Dear Friends:

Last month, the Pembroke Pines City Commission reviewed the city manager's preliminary revenue forecast to prepare for tackling next year's budget. The manager predicts we will collect about \$11



million less in property and sales taxes, franchise fees, and miscellaneous revenues than we did last year. His report on expenses may show that the cost of providing city government may rise by an additional \$15 million. Overcoming a budget deficit of some \$25 million, when we only collect \$46 million in city property taxes against a total budget of about \$160 million, means that we will need to make some very difficult choices. Eighty percent of our city's budgeted funds pay for personnel, and while nobody wants to raise taxes, the prospect of laying employees off is never easy. The fact is that cities throughout South Florida are confronting this same challenge, and frankly many of them face worse situations than Pembroke Pines. Expenses taken for granted in the past are luxuries now, and the times require that we prioritize and closely scrutinize each and every dollar received and spent to ensure greatest value.

An idea that has been floating around in my head seems to be worth exploring. If we were to merge with a neighbor city, let's say Miramar, Cooper City or Southwest Ranches, the resulting economies of scale would likely provide lower cost and enhanced ability to deliver

service to both sets of residents. Think of it – Instead of two city managers, we'd have one, instead of two budget directors, two fire chiefs, two police chiefs, two parks directors, we'd have one of each dealing with a larger city. Our prospects for providing clean water at a reduced cost would improve, our management of traffic and crime could improve, our parks programs would continue to thrive, and taxes would likely decrease as well. A larger city would have more political clout in Tallahassee and Washington, DC. We should be expected to draw down more grant funds, which would reduce taxes even more.

Some say this can never happen. But I ask, why not? In the private sector, when two companies are having trouble, they join through merger to produce one great and profitable entity. Perhaps the time has come for government to learn from the private sector, to stop saying "we can't," and to explore all ways possible to provide our residents with the very best service at the lowest cost. For me, that is job #1, and so I will continue to advocate for a full examination of the value that municipal merger offers our residents.

What's your opinion on this? I'd like to know. Write me at [acastillo@ppines.com](mailto:acastillo@ppines.com)

Sincerely,

Angelo Castillo, Commissioner  
City of Pembroke Pines

## CULTURE VULTURES PRESENTS SUNDAY, MAY 17TH, 2-4PM THE FRESH MARKET

Enjoy art, culture, and thought-provoking programs at the SW Regional Library (16835 Sheridan Street/Pembroke Pines) – All programs are FREE & open to the public.

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Last month's program featured: Denise Wolpert, born Johannesburg, South Africa and arrived in the US with her family in June, 1979; Debora Levi, born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, worked as a free lance writer for the UN's 50th Anniversary, moved to New York in 1999; Damira Feldman, born in Kazan in the Republic of Tatarstan, Russia, is a classical pianist who immigrated to the US in 2001 following several years in Israel.

## LOCAL NEWS HEADLINES

*PublishAmerica* is proud to present *Three Divine Works* by Sharon Maloney of Hollywood, Florida. *Sharon's Verses* and *Philosophies About God* were Malo-

ney's first two poetry books. Her themes are about love, nature, philosophical ideas, God, and much more.



*Ranjana Warier of Davie with her students at their final performance, a thrilling culmination of their classes on the history of India through its traditional folk dances. The costumes displayed a lavish sampling of the orange, green, and white of the Indian flag.*