MAY 2025

CASA COASTER

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Roberta Mann
Exclusive Listings
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Getting rewired



J.T. HARRINGTON

HOT OR NOT: Property manager Ryan Booker and Board Treasurer Ron Hirsch toured the Hotwire Communications head office in Fort Lauderdale last month as the community's long-term agreement for internet and television services expires next year. Meanwhile, Hotwire is urging Casa Costa residents to swap out their routers for a newer version to avoid an interruption in service. Contact Hotwire at (800) 355-5668.

BOYNTON BEAT

State guts local controls

City officials have already lost the power to stop workforce housing projects. Is a CRA ban next?

Florida lawmakers are taking local politics seriously and local politicians are crying foul. The first shakeup was the Live Local Act, a law that accelerates new affordable housing by forcing city halls to fast-track permit reviews and ignore their own zoning restrictions. Two more bills put Community Redevelopment Agencies under the microscope, potentially outlawing them completely. The impact of these shifts has dominated recent meetings of the Boynton city commissioners.

The CRA killer bills – House Bill 991 and Senate Bill 1242 – would gut the way cities like Boynton Beach fight blight. Some CRAs were created over 50 years ago. Boynton formed its version in 1982 and today it is led by the same five elected officials that comprise the

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Committee brings fresh start to orientations

The Social Committee is taking the reins of the welcome wagon. A partnership with management staff and the board looks to take hospitality to the next level with the launch of a formal orientation program for new residents – both owners and renters.

Going forward, no one will move into Casa Costa without first attending an orientation. Assistant Manager Marsha Perez developed an informative email that outlines the mandatory process. A subsection of the Social Committee reviewed and refined a 15-slide presentation that covers everything from building rules and move-in procedures to navigating the property. The half-hour orientation includes time for questions and is conducted in person or virtually.

The orientation idea came from committee member John Battista, who recalls how disorienting it was when he and his wife moved here in the summer of 2021. "We had no idea you needed to reserve the elevator – even for a painter bringing in supplies," Mr. Battista said.

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INSIDE

MR. B'S NEIGHBORHOOD
Gopher tortoises slowly roam sandy trails just three miles south of us. **A5**

Top foodie guide recognizes local steakhouse

For the first time in its 125 year history, the Michelin Guide considered restaurants in Palm Beach County for its influential list of top eateries. Last month, inspectors "recommended" five restaurants here, including Nicholson Muir, the steakhouse on East Ocean Avenue.

While short of awarding it a star, the review calls out the joint's "beachy cottage setting" and menu that "spans a variety of cuts and sides with salads and starters like wagyu nigiri and empanadas to carpaccio."

Chef James Muir decided late one night in Buenos Aires to drop out of the University of Argentina and pursue a culinary career. He studied under fine dining chefs, started a catering business in Long Island, N.Y. before decamping to Florida with his family during the pandemic. In 2022, he leased a landmarked 1920s home just across the railroad tracks and opened a butcher shop in the small space. He named it after his Scottish-born great-grandfather and used a Japanese grill "adjusted for Argentine grilling." He served sandwiches in addition to selling meat.

"Very quickly, we had to change the concept," Mr. Muir said. He shut down for six weeks to add fine dining touches to the decor and menu. After reopening, the *Palm Beach Post* declared Nicholson Muir the county's best new restaurant.

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MICHAEL SHRAMKO

A STAR IS BORN: Chef James Muir ditched the University of Argentina and later opened a butcher shop at 480 E. Ocean Ave., perhaps inspired by the butcher shop across the street. His relaunch drew critical acclaim, but it still opens for lunch on Fridays and Saturdays.

CORRECTION

Due to an editing error, a page A6 article inaccurately reported that Rebecca Shelton is the first female mayor in Boynton Beach history ("Rebecca Shelton elected mayor in decisive victory," March 2025). Instead, Ms. Shelton is the first female mayor in the last 32 years.

The *Casa Coaster* regrets the error and presents a history of the female mayors that preceded her.



Emily McCloud Jackson (1973, 1978)

Deeply committed to public service, she played a key role in securing the city's first permanent library building. During her time in office, she confronted a burglar who shot at her five times and missed.

Betty Riscoe (1980)



She resigned after several months due to "personal reasons." Nine years ago, city hall historians were still seeking details on her whereabouts.

Arline Weiner (1991)



A retired legal secretary with a "friendly manner and quick hugs," she frustrated city staffers by allowing public comments to drag on during 5-hour meetings.

EMAIL CORRECTIONS OR CLARIFICATIONS TO CASA.COASTER.NEWS@GMAIL.COM

EST. 2022

CASA COASTER
Volume IV, Issue Four

SOUTH FLORIDA'S #1 POOLSIDE AMUSEMENT

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Orientations arrive at last

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"I ended up getting a call from management reprimanding me. It was embarrassing."

Rather than staying frustrated, he joined the Social Committee to rally for improvements to the process.

Committee member Marna Atkin helped to shape the orientation program. She researched how other condo associations conduct welcome sessions. "There were common themes that everyone seemed to do really well," she said. Her input catapulted the committee's efforts, resulting in a more thoughtful, well-rounded orientation program.

Orientations at Casa Costa have been inconsistent over the property's history. Some owners recall attending a meeting about building rules with the condo's first property manager. Others were simply handed a binder of disorganized information on hurricanes and recycling. Four years ago, the board recognized the importance of properly acclimating newcomers and mandated that the office conduct an orientation, according to board minutes. The scope was never defined and it never happened.

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CANDACE AYERS

NO WAKE ZONE: A city contractor recently made for an unusual site at Mangrove Pond. Boynton manages invasive plants to keep its ponds healthy and visually appealing.





J.T. HARRINGTON

WORTH THE WAIT: Casa Coasters queued up outside city hall on April 26 for the second-annual Taste of Boynton, a sold-out festival of food, wine, live music, trivia and arcade games. The next city event is free: Rock the Plaza on Sat., May 3, less than a mile north.

Michelin Guide expands to stars of Palm Beach

Continued from page A2

Michelin, the French tire manufacturer, began publishing the guide in 1900 to encourage people to buy cars and explore the country. Its first guide included maps, tire repair instructions, car mechanic listings, hotels and gas stations throughout France.

They first published an American guide in 2005. Michelin goes to great lengths to maintain the anonymity of its inspectors, who are discouraged from telling even their parents what they do. In 1936, publishers created the star rating system, awarding select restaurants with one, two or three stars. The three-star designation is for "exceptional cuisine, worth a special journey."

Only 14 eateries in the U.S. have three stars. The nearest one is over 1,000 miles north in Northern Virginia.

The nearest restaurant to earn a Michelin star is Konro in West Palm Beach. At the Japanese restaurant, a meal comes neither cheap nor easy.

Konro only offers service to 10 guests per night. Rules include: no perfumes, no phones, no substitutions, cash tips only. If you arrive late, the meal starts anyway. The tasting menu is $440 per person, prepaid. If you want a beverage, Konro requires a $295 wine pairing or $195 non-alcoholic pairing. Even the Michelin Guide admits "the bill is bracing." CC

"We really want people to feel welcome from the moment they arrive"

Continued from page A3

Now, property manager Ryan Booker and Ms. Perez are integral to the program, as their office oversees incoming purchase and rental applications. The checklist of requirements now includes a Thursday orientation with a committee member to present slides and answer questions.

A recently oriented arrival at Casa Costa said: "This was very helpful – and now I know someone in the building if I need something." That's exactly the goal, Mr. Battista says, noting that with a resident leading the presentation, newcomers get a neighbor's perspective and tips that make the transition smoother.

Roberta Mann chairs the Social Committee and supports these efforts. "We really want people to feel welcome from the moment they arrive," she said. "If someone is new to the Boynton Beach area, it helps to provide information about the neighborhood too. People are always asking about the restaurants nearby, so we make sure to tell them about all the great places within walking distance of Casa Costa."

Of course, no orientation would be complete without a warm invitation to our many social events. "Several people have already told us that they came to an event because they met one of us during orientation," said Gayle Brousseau, longtime Social Committee Member and now orientation presenter. "It's all part of creating a more connected, comfortable community from day one." *CC*

DUNCE OF THE MONTH



DANILO CAJINA

A resident in the 5 stack of the north tower insists on pouring grease down the drain, causing plumbing backups and forcing maintenance techs to flush the pipes into the garage. *CC*

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CASACOSTA SOCIAL



Poolside mingle

The last Thursday of each month @ 5 p.m.

Tom Turner talks

Thanks for joining the killer from the north tower last month. Since then, he released his 31st thriller called *The Battle of Palm Beach*.



Happy hour

Bring the noise across the street on Thursday, May 8 @ 5 p.m.

THE BUNGALOW BAR & GRILL

Bingo night

Monday, June 9 @ 6:30 p.m.



casacostabb.com

MR. B'S NEIGHBORHOOD



Boynton Beach and its surrounding areas feature a variety of parks and walking trails that showcase Florida's natural beauty and rich diversity. Each park offers a chance to connect with nature and each path tells its own story, from the rich ecosystems of the wetlands to the quiet beauty of native scrub.

As the community continues to grow, these trails remain timeless havens for those seeking tranquility and natural wonder.

Seacrest Natural Scrub Area



This taste of Old Florida's rustic charm offers a wonderful escape. Sandy trails wind through native scrubland, where wild flora and local fauna thrive. You will see Gopher tortoises moving throughout the area, walking among patches of native vegetation. This understated trail is a reminder that some of the best moments in nature come from quiet simplicity.

Open seven days per week from sunrise to sunset, the 54-acre trail is a well-preserved peek into native Florida – just 3 miles south. CC

BOYNTON BEAT

“Let’s get to work”

After her election victory, Rebecca Shelton was sworn into office and presided over her first city commission meeting as mayor on March 18. Eight days later, she hosted a party to thank her supporters at Benvenuto Restaurant & Banquet Facility, where she confirmed to the *Casa Coaster* that her team had largely fulfilled a campaign promise to remove all campaign signs from city sidewalks. One sign is still standing, now surrounded by a fence – perhaps a signal that long-stalled development work is underway. CC

> Our city craves leadership that listens and fights for what’s right. I will do everything I can to make Boynton the best it can be: safe streets, smart growth and a home we’re proud of.
>
> I sadly lost much of my family in recent years and I’m sure they’re watching me from above with pride. But you’ve become my family, Boynton Beach. I carry your trust with me every day.
>
> Together, let’s make history. Not just today, but for years to come.” – *Rebecca Shelton*







BOYNTON BEAT

Clock may be ticking for state CRAs

Continued from page A1

city commission. It is funded by property taxes in its designated district: primarily along Federal Highway.

Critics claim CRAs are unfocused and out of control while city officials call the agencies vital to building affordable housing and public infrastructure.

The Boynton CRA's most visible achievement is the marina harbor, which it purchased in 2006. The agency has also agreed to refund $25 million in property taxes to three rental apartment projects within a few blocks of Casa Costa. The developments would add over 1,000 units to the city, including 150 "workforce housing" apartments at The Pierce, which is planned to stretch from East Ocean Avenue along Federal Highway.

The Pierce's builder, Affiliated Development, is angering would-be neighbors just over two miles south. Affiliated is invoking its rights under Live Local to build 336 apartments, 60% of which would be workforce housing, in a project called The Dune. The land sits just west of Federal Highway, adjacent to a townhouse community called Los Mangos Patio Villas.

At the April 15 commission meeting, Dave Patterson, president of the Los Mangos owners' association, spoke to "vehemently protest" The Dune project, calling it "reckless and dangerous and not a harmonious fit in this location" since it would tower 85 feet over the smaller homes. Another speaker suggested that the shade caused by the new building would kill the mango trees.

After nearly an hour's worth of public comments complaining about The Dune, the city attorney explained that the builders hadn't presented their plans to the commission because they didn't need to. Live Local "requires the city to administratively approve projects" that meet the workforce housing threshold, bypassing city restrictions on density and height. In fact, builders can utilize "the highest density permitted anywhere in the city," the city attorney noted. Live Local was first passed in the summer of 2023 and amendments have largely strengthened it to prevent cities from getting in the way.

Workforce housing is designed to be accessible for renters who earn too much to qualify for subsidies, but can't quite afford luxury rents. However, market forces ultimately set prices. The maximum permitted rent for a two-bedroom workforce housing unit is $2,630, which is more expensive than the average in Palm Beach County.



TIME EQUITIES

DOWNTOWN DREAMS: Boynton's master plan for a downtown corridor includes eight-story buildings and a funding gap that may be impossible to fill if city officials don't act soon.

* * *

The fate of the CRA wasn't on the agenda April 1, but the question lingered throughout the 3-hour meeting. HB 991 and SB 1242 center on whether the agencies are efficient with taxpayer dollars. The legislation would effectively ban CRAs from pursuing new projects after the summer. This possibility adds pressure to the CRA board to take swift action on Town Square – the unfinished collection of a hotel, parking garage, apartment building and retail shops.

The developer, Time Equities, says they've calculated a $35 million financial gap to make the project viable, a figure that tracks with analysis by city accountants. The real estate firm requested rebates on its property taxes to make up the difference, the same mechanism used to incentivize other projects. They would also pay at least $15 million in permitting fees to the city.

"It's a bad deal," said board member Thomas Turkin, who also serves as commissioner for the downtown district that begins to the south of Boynton Beach Blvd., steps away from us.

Robert Singer, director of development from Time Equities, admitted that their plans three years ago didn't include a tax refund, but since then "the market has turned dramatically worse." He said the amount is large, but said that it's proportional to other deals the city has made. He also argued against opponents who call the program a giveaway of taxpayer dollars. "We have to deliver," he said. "We have to pay the taxes. And then a portion of those taxes get rebated. It's a rebate of the taxes we pay, which then allows the project to be economically feasible. It's a zero-cost program."

An overwhelming majority of citizens who spoke at the meeting endorsed the Town Square project, saying it will bring jobs and excitement to vacant lots. Board chair Rebecca Shelton read aloud emails she'd received from neighbors in support of the new downtown corridor that's been planned since the early 1990s.

Despite the looming laws that could kneecap their ability to operate at all, the CRA board voted to postpone the decision on Town Square once again. CC

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