

Mayor Report #7. December 11, 2023: Chip Block

This is my final meeting to chair as mayor. I have served as mayor, vice mayor and commissioner for almost 13 years.

I thank all of you who have voiced and contributed support over the last seven months. This list of people is long – so I am not going to thank you by name now, but I will thank you individually.

My friend, Dick Busto, retired as commissioner today. Tonight, we will select his replacement. Dick is allergic to people saying nice things about him, so I will only say that he and Pam both married well. JIC is blessed to have had him as Commissioner for 13 years.

2023 has been an eventful year for JIC.

At each meeting since becoming mayor, I have stated that I have had three goals for the Town.

- to protect JIC and ensure the safety of its residents
- to secure the town's finances
- to leave the town government in the best possible condition for the next commissioners.

While there is still more to do, I believe we have made considerable progress in all three objectives.

Here are some key accomplishments of this Commission in the last six months:

- We hired Police Chief Dan Kerr. Everyone who meets him agrees he is doing a fantastic job. His monthly reports show a stepped-up focus on our safety and security. Morale in the police department has soared.

- We finalized our FY 2023 budget and have made substantial cuts to bring our finances into line with the final FY2024 Budget.
- We created and passed a proposed Charter to be voted on next March in a town referendum.
- We performed a rigorous operating audit. The recommendations of the auditor are being implemented by Administrator Lucas and Town Clerk Chico-Randazzo.
- A necessary stub audit is near completion. Results will be presented soon.
- Our Building Committee is revising our fee schedule and past due fees have been collected.
- We continue to defend the Town in several legal cases with guidance from our lawyers.

Now we must look to the future.

First, I urge residents to vote in the March 19 election.

And second, along with close attention to Town business, I urge the new Commission to continue play an important role in the greater community.

- It is important to have good relationships with elected officials in North County.
- participation in the Florida League of Cities and Chamber North is also beneficial to JIC.

I will provide specific recommendations to the commissioners when my retirement is official.

At the next Commission meeting, whether it is January 8 or a special meeting the Commissioners may call, a new mayor will be elected to serve as mayor until the March 19 election.

If the new Charter is adopted, the commissioners will then select a mayor and vice mayor for one year. If we retain the current Charter, the mayor selected by the Commission to replace me will serve in office until the March 2025 election. We are going to discuss this later in this meeting.

In closing, I note that JIC will celebrate its 65th anniversary as a Town in 2024. Much has changed in what it means to be a town in those 65 years – which is why residents will decide in March whether to hire a Town Manager.

The 65th anniversary is an important milestone. In each issue of Inlet Outlet this year, you'll read about JIC's history.

In the January issue, you'll find a compelling piece written in 1984, to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Town. It was written by John Wolf, a world-famous historian who lived here.

You'll learn some of the joys and challenges of the Town's first 25 years, including the fact you could buy a lot for less than \$5000!

When I read that history, I am honored to have joined the many residents and elected officials in JIC who have helped make this such a successful community.

I love our community and will continue to serve it as a private citizen.