



.50 ¢

Your Source for Local News in South Dade and the Upper Keys

Vol. 108 No. 16

www.SouthDadeNewsLeader.com

JULY 23, 2021

## Large Crowd Turns Out in Opposition to Turnpike Bypass of Florida City

**“Who’s preferred alternative?”**  
- Florida City Mayor Otis Wallace

By Larry Diehl

Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) project engineers held a final public hearing on a proposed design to widen the turnpike from Campbell Drive to south of Palm Drive on U.S. 1 on Tuesday July 20.

Over a hundred people gathered in the Champion’s Club of the Miami-Dade Speedway to hear and comment on FDOT’s virtual presentation and to have employees of Stanley Consultants answer their questions.

The study is on widening the turnpike to three lanes, north and south-bound, from Campbell Drive to the turnpike’s end at Florida City to relieve congestion. FDOT traffic volume estimates expect his this fix to be needed by 2025.

Additionally, a partial interchange at Lucy Street/328th Street would be constructed from donated land. There would be a southbound turnpike off-ramp and a northbound on-ramp at this location to channel local traffic away from the southern US1 corridor.

Finally, a tolled turnpike fly-over constructed across the U.S.1/Palm Drive intersection would

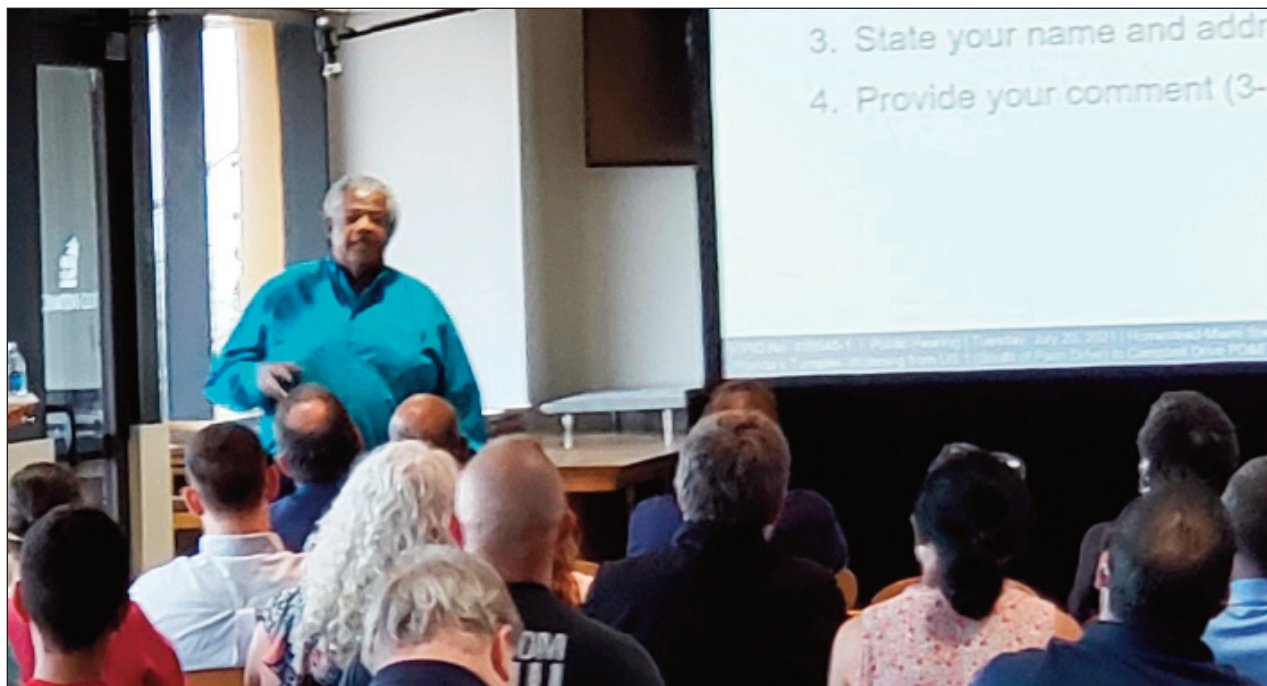
return to ground level 1800 feet south of Palm Drive near the current Racetrac gas station. The twenty-foot elevated roadway would have one lane in each direction. This project adds turnpike capacity for future traffic volumes through 2045. Termed the ‘Florida City By-pass’ in comments, this \$224 million alternative to be built by 2028 brought unanimous public opposition at the hearing.

Florida City Mayor Otis Wallace and Homestead Mayor Steve Losner both spoke in opposition to the bypass portion of the turnpike widening. Mayor Wallace called the FDOT plan a “paper solution.”

“But I’m not Mayor on paper,” Mayor Wallace said. “This destructive plan is already killing Florida City economically today. How can this be the preferred plan when nobody prefers it?”

“I’ve been in continuous contact with all government representatives and I’ve never seen as many public officials from across the spectrum as united as they are on this issue,” said Mayor Losner. “There are better and cheaper ways to accomplish what they’re trying to do. This bypass needs to stop.”

A spokesperson for Congressman Carlos Jimenez said Jimenez is



not in favor of this proposal, and asked who was in favor of these road improvements? As to the economics of the project, the representative spoke for the Congressman and said he hasn’t met one person who likes the preferred alternative.

A first public hearing was held January 21, 2020 prior to the pandemic attended by 121 people and generating 27 written comments. The by-pass would need 15 additional acres for right of way, relocate one commercial site, and require the purchase of 17 property parcels. No wetlands would be taken and the project has minimal impact on wildlife.

See **BYPASS 2A**

Above: Florida City Mayor Otis Wallace testified in opposition to the ‘fly-by’ of the turnpike in Florida City. Below: A large crowd turned out for the FDOT hearing at Homestead-Miami Speedway’s Champions Club on Tuesday, June 20th. SDNL



## Florida Keys’ two-day lobster mini season is next week, July 28 & 29



Cole Neff spent his high school and college years diving for lobster during mini season.

MCSO - The Sheriff’s Office would like to remind everyone the two day lobster mini season is coming up next week.

“We enjoy all the visitors here in the Keys during lobster mini season,” said Sheriff Ramsay. “But we want to make sure everyone is aware of the law, and is behaving in a responsible, and safe, manner.”

Marine thefts commonly happen in the Florida Keys and thieves may see mini season as an opportunity to target people who aren’t being careful with their valuables. Make sure you remove electronics, fishing and diving gear from your boat when you aren’t on it and store this valuable equipment some-

where secure.

The Sheriff’s Office will have extra patrols at boat ramps, bridges and on the water. Anyone caught with illegal lobster will be charged accordingly. All Sheriff’s Office boats will be on patrol, and deputies will also be operating a number of personal watercraft donated to the Sheriff’s Office by Riva Motorsports & Marine of the Keys. They donate WaveRunners® each year to be used for law enforcement purposes such as this, as well as for regular patrols of hard to reach shoreline areas and residential canals.

Before, during and just after the two day season there will be

more boats and trailers on the roadways, and more traffic in general. Pay attention to those around you, be patient and don’t pass in no passing zones. Drinking and driving is, of course, illegal; drunk boating is also illegal and officers will be watching for this dangerous behavior on the water as well as on the roadways of the county.

And remember: You must have a recreational saltwater fishing license and a spiny lobster permit to recreationally harvest spiny lobsters unless you are exempt from recreational license requirements. Information about these licenses and permits is available

See **LOBSTER 2A**

## Where is Maribel?

A cold and strange case in Homestead



By Kevin Lewis

On a Monday afternoon in December, almost 3 months from celebrating her 9th birthday in 1981, Maribel Oquendo-Carrero disappeared.

And yet the only thing more mysterious than her disappearance, is the circumstances surrounding the search and investigation of her case -- a case that is over 38 years old, and until just recently, was just as forgotten as Maribel seems to be.

Homestead Police Detective Jennifer Roa has been trying to figure this out since April of last year, but this particularly odd case has her and others baffled.

Next week we’ll dive into more of the particulars of this incident, but here are the facts surrounding the final moments before she went missing.

Maribel was last seen leaving Food Spot #21, at 1611 NE 8th Street (Sky Vista Shopping Center), where the clerk confirmed a child fitting Maribel’s description was there and purchased five dollars worth of candy, before leaving.

Maybe you were one of the children who grew up with Maribel, or went to her 9th birthday party?

Maybe you went to school with her or worked at the school she went to?

Maybe you saw or heard something that day that might help the investigation?

Either way, Detective Roa and the Homestead Police Department

See **MISSING 2A**

## New Business, Old Location, Shared Values

By Charlie Hudson

Longtime area residents easily remember the value of having family-owned Mitchell Hardware in the times before big box stores were an option. When word of their closing went around, there were no doubt at least a few nostalgic thoughts.

The span between “then and now” was not long however, as Consolidated Electrical Distributors, Inc., (CED) prepares for a grand opening of their newest store. According to their website, “Founded 1957 Consolidated Electrical Distributors, Inc. is one of the nation’s largest electrical supply distribution networks, with over 700 locations across the U.S.

We distribute just about every piece of equipment that keeps your lights on, your energy flowing, and your lifestyle comfortable. WE are here to help you with all your electrical supply needs.” They

were part of the team that helped bring the huge City Hall construction project to fulfillment and while their primary customers are contractors, they also do retail and express the same commitment to community as did the Mitchell family.

“The CED Homestead team is here to help you with all your electrical supply needs. Our CED team cares about doing a great job for you and your business. We offer great service, price, and knowledge to all our customers, and we hope we can do the same for you.”

Although they have been open several weeks, the festive day will be Thursday, August 5, 2021, from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., when there will be food, a dunk tank, raffles, competition for prizes, and other fun activities before and after the official ribbon cutting.

Consolidated Electrical Distributors is at 130 Washington Ave, Homestead; Tel: (786) 410-4133; sales@cedhomestead.com and https://www.cedhomestead.com

