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## North Bay Village completes survey of residents

By Philippe Buteau  
The Miami Herald

It may have taken longer to happen than Mayor Connie Leon-Kreps would have liked, but North Bay Village has finally completed a survey of its residents.

At a special Village Commission meeting last Thursday, Barry University professors Jack Kleban and Selima Ben Mrad presented the results of a survey their students conducted at the request of the village.

"I'm happy it came to fruition," Leon-Kreps said, adding that she tried for two years to get a survey passed through the commission.

The survey asked residents what issues were most important to them, and the ones that rose to the top were the village's cleanliness, traffic and speeding, flooding, parking and safety. In doing research for the survey, 37 students of Barry University's Andreas School of Business, along with the university's Institute for Community and Economic Development, determined the village's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats and what its plan of action should be going forward.

Ben Mrad, associate professor of marketing, and Kleban, assistant director of the institute, presented the survey results a week before the village prepares to discuss its financial plans for the next fiscal year.

"It will help us identify and address the needs of residents, particularly now in budget session," Leon-Kreps said.

A budget workshop is scheduled for 7:30 p.m. Thursday at Village Hall, 1666 79th Street Causeway.

Kleban said the students researched the village's history and the "trouble areas" of its past, reviewed its budget and attended an "active" commission meeting. Then they wrote a report that Kleban submitted to village commissioners and interim Village Manager Frank Rollason.

In their report, the students identified four issues they believed required action from village administration and what the first response should be.

The report suggested that to "build a sense of community awareness, pride, and trust" to foster better communication, the village "develop a community vision and strategy for achievement," add speed control to the 79th Street Causeway, conduct a parking space study and develop a parking strategy.

“Now we’ve got some marching orders,” Commissioner Jorge Gonzalez said after the meeting. “We know what the community wants to see.”

Gonzalez will be up for reelection in November.

He said that although addressing the problems brought up in the survey are important, getting them done will take time.

“We can’t right past wrongs in the blink of an eye,” Gonzalez said.

The survey was a seven-month project that started in October and provided the students outside-the-classroom experience, Kleban said.

Wollason said surveys were sent out with the village’s water bills, copies were available at Village Hall and 30 copies were hand-delivered to each of 12 condos on the three islands. The students also interviewed about 20 people in person, according to Ben Mrad. Students from Assistant Professor of Marketing Shirley Ye Sheng’s class were also a part of the survey project.

All total of 300 surveys were completed. Kleban said that amounted to 5 percent of the village’s population, and is considered a “high percentage for this kind of survey.”

Village resident Mario Garcia said he agreed with the survey’s results.

“You really took a picture of this community,” Garcia said after the presentation.

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