



Notes and Decisions

from the Key West City Leadership Retreat

Fantasy Fest and Special Taxing Districts

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Retreat Overview

In August, 2021, the Key West City Commission and Leaders agreed to meet three times during the fiscal year to address important topics that require more time and exploration than Commission meetings typically allow. This forum fosters candid discourse and allows for valuable input from Department Heads. For their first meeting in the 2021-22 year, the group agreed to discuss two pressing issues: How to move forward with the new Fantasy Fest contract, and forming a special taxing district.

Fantasy Fest

City Leadership's Position on Moving Forward with Fantasy Fest

City leadership believes it is time to revamp Fantasy Fest. There is widespread agreement amongst Commissioners and senior staff to transform the event into a positive, clean festival enjoyed by both residents and visitors.

The rationale for this decision is based on concerns over the labor and financial costs the City incurs in preparation and execution of the event, a lack of staff to cover the services required, safety concerns, the spillover of sexualized acts and costumes throughout the island, and the understanding that many local businesses do not profit from the events. City leadership values the traditions associated with Fantasy Fest of raising funds for non-profit organizations, and celebrating the indigenous culture of the island, and hopes to maintain those aspects of the festivities. Yet overall, it is time for change and a revival of the event.

The City will move forward with a one-year contract to the TDA, based on the need to change the street fair and parade, eliminate public nudity, and market the event with clear expectations of standards. (See specific stipulations listed below.)

Eliminating Nudity and Supporting Appropriate Behaviors on Public Property

1. Prohibit nudity, (commensurate with normal municipal standards). This includes getting rid of the Fantasy Zone.
2. Prevent the TDA from advertising “shadow events.”
3. Establish “family hours” at set times in events in which inappropriate costumes are prohibited.¹
4. Consider instituting a fine for businesses for inappropriate body painting.

Street Fair and Parade

5. Consider moving the street fair to Truman Waterfront or Mallory Square.
6. Strive for a majority of local vendors (E.g., Taste of Key West).
7. Invite businesses from the entire island to participate (beyond Duval Street/Old Town).
8. Provide deeper discounts for local booths (E.g., non-profits get half price)
9. Increase the focus on culture, history and natural resources of Key West.
10. Establish local advisory committees for the street fair and the parade.
11. Look into the possibility of eliminating or reducing the use of generators.
12. Lower the costs to the City for enforcement by requesting additional contributions from the TDA, and/or asking private businesses to contribute to a fund in which they “adopt a police officer or firefighter” for the event.

Marketing

13. Consider adding signage near street parking signs with reminders on the nudity ban.
14. Support the City’s PIO efforts to educate the community on the costs/impacts to the municipality of supporting Fantasy Fest, (in terms of tangible and non-tangible impacts).
15. Advertise on the Fantasy Fest and other promotional websites “Standards for Fantasy Fest” clarifying rules on nudity and expectations of behaviors.

Other Events

16. Work with a hotel/sponsor to revive the Pretenders event (Casa Marina?)
17. Close the cemetery gates for the Masquerade March.

¹ Further discussion on what constitutes an inappropriate costume and unacceptable body painting is required.

Special Taxing Districts

City Leadership's Position on Special Taxing Districts

City Leadership identified the need for an ongoing revenue stream to support current services and the revitalization of the Duval Street area. The group agreed to pursue a special taxing district in the next fiscal year 2022-2023. Leaders identified North Roosevelt Blvd. as an area for a special taxing district in the future, though it is not advisable to pursue the establishment of two districts simultaneously.

Location, Services and Amenities

Duval Street businesses require a disproportionate level of services compared to other areas of the island. The additional funds procured through a special taxing district could be used for a wide variety of amenities and services including lighting, landscaping, public safety, street cleaning, utilities and bathrooms.

Areas to be explored for the district include the Duval Street commercial corridor, Mallory Square and Truman Waterfront.

Next Steps/Action Plan from the Retreat

Action	Person(s) Responsible	Time Frame
Fantasy Fest		
1. Meet with Nadene Grossman to share input from the retreat.	Patti McLauchlin	12/9/21
2. Meet with the TDA to discuss changes and determine interest in a one-year contract. Negotiate requests as needed and update the Commission regularly.	Patti McLauchlin	TBD
3. Develop an RFP for future contracts.		During 2022
4. Organize meetings/workshops to gather from a wide variety of community stakeholders.		TBD

Special Taxing District

1. Meet with business owners on Duval Street (Focus on influential owners first).	Patti McLauchlin	Beginning January 2022
2. Request a presentation to the Commission on Special Taxing Districts.	Patti McLauchlin and Nathalia Mellies	February 2022
3. Make a plan to proceed with a special taxing district for 2022-2023.	Patti McLauchlin	May/June 2022