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Subject: RE: At-Large Election of District City Commissioners

Good Morning Mary,

I asked Nancy to forward your email to me so that I could respond directly.

I am adamantly opposed to at-large election of City Commissioners because it will disenfranchise minority voters, and in particular, the black population in District 6 where I live. I haven't confirmed, but as I recall, this issue was originally raised by the Department of Justice in the mid-1980's as a civil rights issue. If it wasn't, it should have been. If I can find the time, I will research it.

On the surface, the idea that this is a small island and our issues are city wide seems reasonable, but that isn't the case. I have not witnessed city wide support for the people or the issues that affect Bahama Village. TIF and BVRAC were implemented as a way for funding to be raised for projects in the Key West Bight and Bahama Village. Perhaps I am skeptical and jaded, but I believe that if the law could have been implemented without Bahama Village as a vehicle, it would have been. I attended the MLK Scholarship fundraiser on Saturday night. Had that been a Studios of Key West event, there would have been 10 times the number of people and 20 times the amount of money raised. Where the MLK Scholarship committee hopes to raise \$5,000 from this event for scholarships, TSKW would anticipate \$100,000. Where the American Legion at 803 Emma sits vacant because we can't raise enough for ADA access, TSKW can raise over \$2,000,000 to renovate their building. I simply have not witnessed the "One Human Family" that Key West loves to market, when it comes to support for District 6.

I believe that if Clayton Lopez, a black man who lives in Bahama Village, was not our representative, there would be far less accomplished there.

I believe that if we go back to at large elections, that equal representation will be set back 40 years.

For those reasons, and many more that I don't have time to go into, I am opposed to at large elections.

Thanks,

Bert

Bert L. Bender, Architect