



June 18, 2025

Mayor Henriquez
Commissioner Castillo
Commissioner Carey
Commissioner Haskell
Commissioner Hoover
Commissioner Kaufman
Commissioner Lee

Subject: Response to Grand Jury Report

Dear Mayor Henriquez and Commissioners,

We are writing to share our perspective on the recent Grand Jury Report and the Corradino Group's findings, and to urge meaningful reform in their wake.

Last Stand of the Florida Keys is a non-profit, Section 501(c)(3) organization with more than 500 members who are committed to preserving the Florida Keys and ensuring a sustainable future for all. We advocate for protecting the unique quality of life in the Keys, with particular emphasis on preserving water quality & the natural environment, promoting the development of affordable workforce housing, and opposing overdevelopment.

As you are well aware, the issues outlined in the Grand Jury report extend far beyond the actions of any one individual. They expose a deeper, systemic breakdown within an institution that has, for too long, tolerated the erosion of safeguards intended to protect the public interest. These safeguards exist to responsibly manage development, preserve our fragile coastal environment, and ensure that Key West remains a livable, resilient, and equitable community for all.

Grand Jury testimony also highlighted a work environment that drives away the very professionals our community depends on. As a geographically isolated, environmentally

sensitive island on the front lines of climate change, Key West faces development challenges unlike any other city. To meet these challenges, we must retain and empower bright, innovative, professionals. That starts with a workplace culture where public servants are treated with fairness, empowered to lead, and expected to act with integrity.

These indictments came from a Grand Jury of your own constituents—our neighbors—who recognized these charges as symptoms of systemic failures threatening our community's future. So convinced were they of the stakes that they waived anonymity and boldly signed their names to the report. They listened, deliberated, and made difficult decisions in service of the public good—and we expect no less from our City leaders.

For decades, Last Stand has engaged collaboratively with City leaders to promote sound planning and environmental stewardship. But these goals can only be achieved when land use policies are implemented with integrity. When they're not, the impacts are real: degraded natural resources, overburdened infrastructure, loss of community character – and a rising sense that private interests too often take precedence over the public good.

Last Stand remains committed to a spirit of constructive engagement. At the same time, we are also clear-eyed about the urgency of this moment. To that end, we are calling on each of you to publicly reaffirm a commitment to transparency, fairness, and the rule of law, by developing clear, enforceable policies that prevent future misconduct and safeguard the integrity of our institutions:

1. Accountability:

- Publicly investigate institutional weaknesses that enabled ongoing misconduct & neglect; outline and implement a plan to correct these flaws & prevent future failures.
- Establish clear policies for handling reports of malfeasance, mandating management investigations, formal record-keeping, documented findings, and defined consequences for failing to act on credible complaints.
- Codify whistleblower protections to ensure employees can report unethical or illegal behavior without fear of retaliation.consequences for management's failure to investigate or act on credible complaints.
- Codify whistleblower protections so employees are empowered to report unethical or illegal behavior without fear of retaliation.

2. Transparency:

- Establish meaningful avenues for public oversight, including the creation of a citizen advisory board - free from special interests - to provide independent review of development policies, practices, and approvals.
- Establish clear guidelines governing communication between officials and staff on quasi-judicial matters to prevent undue influence or the appearance of impropriety.

3. Fairness:

- Adopt and enforce clear standards, checks and balances to ensure that special interests are not given undue consideration.
- Strengthen conflict of interest & nepotism policies to prevent undue influence in the development review process, including for elected & appointed officials.

4. Protecting the Future:

- Reaffirm the City's commitment to resilient, sustainable development & the preservation of cultural and environmental resources.
- Provide full and appropriate professional staffing for departments tasked with planning, historic preservation, and resilience/adaptation planning, including a dedicated staff member to review for compliance with environmental regulations.

We urge each of you to commit publicly and transparently to the principles outlined above—not only through words, but through timely and deliberate action. Specifically, we call on the Commission to establish a clear plan and timeline for developing and adopting these reforms. That process should be open, informed by the experiences of affected City staff and community members, and shaped by a candid assessment of the systemic failures that tolerated pervasive misconduct in the first place.

We appreciate your service, and we stand ready to work with you to build a stronger, more resilient future.

Sincerely,

Last Stand Board of Directors