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**Sent:** Monday, April 04, 2016 10:35 AM

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**Subject:** Agenda Item #28 Extension of TDA Contract - Please add to the record

Dear Commissioners, Mr. Scholl and Ms. Smith,

Please add to the record for Tuesday, April 5, 2016 City Commission Meeting, Agenda Item #28

I find it very disturbing that the letters and comments from the Board of the TDA these last few days on social media have been predominantly negative and flat out false. Threats and ultimatums are how toddlers in a sandbox play, not educated adults who allegedly have the best interests of the City at heart.

For a group who say they love their brand so much that they want to run it even as it is losing money every year you would think they would welcome the City's support in finding additional funding. It seems they want a blank check and to do what they want because...that is the way it has always been done. When what they should be doing is taking to the streets, finding financial support from the hotels, the bars...anywhere so that they could continue putting on their event. But that is unfortunately, not happening.

What is happening, is that the support for Fantasy Fest is waning. Not because people want it to end – that is far from the case – people want it to be better. Closer to what it started out as and the current organizers are refusing to listen. Concerned more about not paying more for using City services and threatening law suits to anyone who uses their “intellectual property.” Wanting kudos and pats on the back for how great Fantasy Fest was and how appreciative everyone should be. Demanding just a straight out passing of their contract, under the current terms without even a hint of remorse that they did not get on the ball and start these negotiations last year when everyone was more than aware that their contract was ending with the 2015 Fantasy Fest. I would think any responsible Event Organizer would have been on top of this well over a year ago for an amicable agreement instead of trying to incite anger and panic among residents/business owners and tourists by threatening that it will not go on unless their demands are acquiesced to.

Organizers refuse to see that the festival has changed and not necessarily for the better, that they are the ones who have steered this ship in this direction and they need to take some of the blame and be part of the solution. Comment after comment on social media, says that the Friday and Saturday nights are the worst of the 10 day festival – and yet, those are the same days TDA wants to take credit for. Complaint after complaint about the parade, the Miami busses, the tone and tenor of the festival is heard year after year and yet, very little is changing. Maybe some of the hard edged ways towards artists and businesses has caused this rift and it is up to them to fix it, if the brand means as much to them as they say it does.

One thing the City should not do though is cave to threats. Give in to fear mongering. “Your taxes will go up if Fantasy Fest is canceled.” “Fantasy Fest will be canceled if our permits are not approved.” “Fantasy Fest will be canceled if we are required to pay any more.” “Someone needs to steer the ship, or else.”

Let’s be realistic, the events not promoted by Fantasy Fest would still go on. The parties that were typically promoted by Fantasy Fest would probably still go on. In fact, posts from certain large groups who come to Fantasy Fest are saying that it may be just what the festival needs to stop the ever growing busses and element that are having an impact on the creative and fun aspect of the festival. It’s very possible without the advertising and promoting of a no-holds barred event, the issues may just right themselves. The hotels may have to come down on their rates and not require minimum stays – would that be such a bad thing? Our police and fire departments are well equipped to handle large crowds and have been, in my opinion, steering this ship for years so I don’t see that as a major obstacle. Pretty much everyone can agree that people would still come, so no one should be having a fit that our taxes would go up if we don’t cave to the demands of a 2 day festival just because that is the way it’s always been. I hear more complaints and comments that we are busy year round without a rest that the need to get people here during a slow season is not necessarily the case anymore.

There are certain times that it is in the best interest of all to do things the way they have always been done because that is what works. In my opinion, it’s time for a change because it hasn’t been working and if a reasonable compromise cannot be reached with TDA then it is time to let it go and see what the residents of today can come up with. You might be surprised at how much creativity and positivity can come with change.

So, please, do your best to come to a reasonable compromise with TDA and Market Share this year but do not let them draw a line in the sand to get what they

want. It is not fair to the taxpayers, it is not fair to the other Event Organizers who do play by the rules and is not fair to our City to be held hostage to the past.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Lloyd  
Key West Resident