

# JOHN WALSH

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Wednesday, October 11, 2023

Key West City Commission

C/O Keri O'Brien, City Clerk

Josephine Parker City Hall at Historic Glynn R. Archer School

1300 White Street

City

RE: Resolution establishing a Fantasy Zone: Agenda item 51 for  
Thursday, October 12, 2023.

This morning's paper indicates that Mayor Johnston again supports the elimination of the "fantasy zone" required by City Ordinance 42-9. I write to support the fantasy zone, suggest modifying it through the addition of a curfew, and extend the time.

The *Citizen* quotes Mayor Johnston as saying, "Historically, the last week in October was a slow time for the town . . . Fantasy Fest was created to boost the economy. But things have changed, and we need to evolve."

I take exception to the minimization of the slow season. Our slow season was not, and is not, just a week long. It seems obvious that the slow season starts when the children go back to school and extends to Christmas/ New Years, when our New Year's Eve celebrations jump start the high season. Fantasy Fest is a hump near the middle of slow season to support our local citizenry.

This fall several well-known businesses have closed for "renovations" or vacations during September. Those that have struggled to remain open are offering unprecedented local discounts to survive. I have a tenant, a downtown bartender, who cannot make his rent. Usually, he holds two full-time jobs with unlimited overtime available, presently he is only working two days per week. I anticipate that he will get caught up due to Fantasy Fest.

This year seems to be the first time that the effect of the cruise ship ban is being felt by local businesses and their employees, the effect having been stayed by a bump in tourism as a result of Florida's relaxed COVID policies. Downtown businesses are starting to see Fantasy Fest celebrants arriving as many take monthly rentals.

We all want to live in a community where our children will live an idyllic life. To that end, we have maintained our tough public dress code, while many others have yielded to the civil rights of women, and modern casual clothing and swimwear.

The fantasy zone is a tool which allows us to continue a profitable adult-oriented event in a family friendly community. The zone allows us to isolate adult events from our children; a goal which I think all of us support. As such, it is in the best interest to approve the fantasy zone as several city officials agree.

We have the ability, however to improve the effectiveness of the zone. The present zone is a time, place, and manner restriction, which isolates fantasy festers from our children by restricting adult oriented activities. We can improve the isolation, by keeping children away from the adult oriented activities. This is easily accomplished by a sunset to sunrise curfew on children under sixteen years within the time and place restrictions of the fantasy zone. The systems in place to regulate adults can simply be used to advise families with small children of the curfew.

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The other improvement needed to facilitate the zone's ability to isolate adult activities, is to revisit the time and place restrictions. We all understand that Fantasy Fest is a ten-day event, not a two-day event anymore. For the zone to be effective, it should be in place from sunset on Friday, October 20, 2023 until Sunrise on Sunday, October 29, 2023.

We are killing off the economic engines that drive our once wealthiest community at the expense of those least able to afford living here.

Please approve a ten-day fantasy zone and coinciding curfew.

Cordially,

/s/ John Walsh