



June 2, 2025

Via email

Mayor Henriquez

Vice-Mayor Carey

Commissioner Haskell

Commissioner Kaufman

Commissioner Lee

Commissioner Hoover

Commissioner Castillo

Dear Mayor, Vice-Mayor, and Commissioners,

Subject: Agenda Item 57 - Support for Liveboards at City Marina

The Last Stand of the Florida Keys is a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving the Florida Keys and ensuring a sustainable future for all. We advocate for promoting, preserving, and protecting the quality of life in the Florida Keys, with particular emphasis on the natural environment.

Last Stand would like to express its strong support for the liveboard residents at the City-owned portion of Garrison Bight Marina. For nearly 70 years, houseboats and liveboards have been an integral part of Key West's soul, with many residents referring to themselves as "The Sea Dogs," a tribute to the legendary Sea Dog boat on Historic Houseboat Row. These residents, many of whom are working-class individuals and retirees on fixed incomes, fear that the proposed rent hikes will force them out of their homes and disrupt one of the last remaining affordable housing options in Key West.

It is vital to have affordable workforce housing in an area where housing costs continue to rise, and this marina is truly the last affordable frontier for many of Key West's essential residents. As the City Commission has frequently emphasized, affordable workforce housing is one of our most significant challenges. Why take away one of the few remaining options? This is not who we are as a city, and we hope the City Commission will work with the liveaboards to find a fair compromise, allowing them to stay in their homes.

Additionally, the Market Rate study used to determine the proposed rent hikes is flawed. The study compares Garrison Bight Marina to for-profit private marinas, which is not an apples-to-apples comparison. Garrison Bight is a City-owned marina that does not carry acquisition debt, taxes, or comprehensive insurance, and its operating costs are minimal compared to those of private marinas. For example, the Perry Marina was purchased for \$100 million while Garrison Bight was given to the City for free.

Alternative financing options can assist in covering the necessary repairs to Garrison Bight Marina without burdening residents. We encourage the Commission to explore options such as the Infrastructure Surtax Fund, which was used to pay for seawall repairs at Spencer's Boatyard. Additionally, state and federal grants could assist with these costs. The City Marina's capital reserves currently hold \$5.6 million, which could serve as a starting point for necessary repairs. These repairs could then be "programmed out," meaning they would be planned and scheduled over a period of time, as part of a long-term capital improvement plan. The TDC fund might also be leveraged to help.

Finally, how can the City justify raising fees for liveaboards at Garrison Bight when those at the Key West Yacht Club, occupying publicly owned land, continue to benefit from a decades-old sweetheart deal? While working-class liveaboards face steep rate hikes, the Yacht Club remains shielded from any similar increases, despite its significant revenue from dockage.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
The Last Stand Board

Last Stand is a nonprofit organization of volunteer citizens dedicated to preserving the Florida Keys' unique quality of life and fragile, beautiful natural environment. We have worked tirelessly since 1987 to protect Key West and the Florida Keys.

Last Stand • P.O. Box 146 • Key West, FL 33041 www.keyslaststand.org