

The Honorable Scott P. Russell Kicks Off the New Year as the Keynote Speaker at January's General Membership Meeting



Monroe County Property Appraiser Scott Russell spoke to members of the Key West Chamber of Commerce at the January luncheon.

As the property appraiser for Monroe County, Scott Russell represents yet another angle of the uniqueness of the Florida Keys.

“Monroe County is the largest county in the state of Florida by area, stretching 3,738 square miles. I say this with a smile because the total land mass is only 983 square miles - 73% of the county is water.” Addressing the Chamber’s January meeting at the Margaritaville Resort and Marina, he went on to explain that of the county’s total land mass, 87% is found on the mainland, while 99% of the total population of almost 74,000 lives in the Keys. Another fun fact, Russell has a five-hour drive to his farthest constituent. “I actually go through Miami-Dade and Collier County to get to a property in Cape Sables on the mainland.”

Monroe County boasts over 1700 islands, of which only forty-three are connected by the forty-two bridges. The median household income is \$63,030, compared to almost \$51,000 statewide, while the median value of a single-family residence is just over \$496,000. The county boasts seventeen public schools

and a millage rate of 9.54 mills. The highest price ever paid for a single-family home was nearly \$17,500,000 in 2006 in Ocean Reef. The most recent highest price paid was \$13,820,000 in June of 2018 in Ocean Reef Club.

The property appraiser covers a lot of ground as he identifies, locates, and fairly values all property, both real and personal, within the county for tax purposes. “People may use this information for other purposes, but that is not the intention of the information,” Russell shares. The market value of real property is based on the current real estate market. Finding the “market” value of your property means discovering the price most people would pay for your property.

“Determining a fair and equitable value is the only role of this office in the taxing process. The property appraiser does not create value. People make the value by buying and selling real estate in the marketplace.” The property appraiser then has the legal responsibility to track and analyze those sales and appraise your property accordingly. The Computer

continued on page 10 ▶



Message from President Greg Sullivan

An exciting time for the Chamber as we start a new decade, 2020. We had a great Installation Banquet, thanks to all who attended. If you haven’t met Scott Atwell, our new Executive Director, you’re missing out. Scott is originally from Key West and has hit the ground running. He has great ideas on how we can better serve our members by getting out their business message, how it serves the community and how it can serve you.

Scott, Chamber Research Director Ed Dawicki and I just attended a meeting with FDOT in reference to the Cow Key Bridge construction. There will be some pre work by ATT to move lines that will occur in March. The construction is slated for April 16th. Both Mayor Carruthers and Johnston chaired the meeting and laid out our concerns. FDOT is committed to have an on-site contact person who can be reached to address issues as they arise. The College Road and US1 intersection closest to the bridge will allow traffic to leave College Road as right turn only. College Road entrance East Side will serve as the main access to College Road and will receive a new traffic signal. The blinking light by CVS will be converted to a full signal. FDOT will have a web site with at least weekly updates. Both city and county will have links on their pages to this information, and we will feature it on the new Chamber web site. During this time there will be construction on Bertha and First Streets. PLEASE give yourself time and be patient.

I again brought up the overhead pedestrian cross walk at the Triangle, and we as a community need to

continued on page 5 ▶

Table of Contents

Business Spotlight	2
Gavel Handoff	3
Extraordinary Educators	4
Cooper is Honored with Athena Award	5
Business Trends.	6-7
Tiger in the Woods Golf Tournament	8
Business After Hours	9
Welcome New Members!.	10
Community Calendar	11
Cruise Ship Calendar	11
Chamber Calendar of Events	12

Spotlight Shines on ... Joyce Unke, Director of Real Estate for Historic Tours of America



Each month, the Key West Chamber of Commerce spotlights a business or professional person whose business card is drawn at the Business After Hours. This month's winner is Joyce Unke, Director of Real Estate for Historic Tours of America.

Joyce Unke was just getting settled into the Keys when Hurricane Andrew came through. "I was talking to a friend about changes in my career and my relationship, and she said to me, 'Why don't you move to the Keys?'" To which Joyce quipped, "Got a job for me and a place to live?!" Her friend had both.

Unke worked as a legal assistant and roomed with a teacher while adjusting to the warmer climate. Then one day she met Michelle Cates, the daughter of one of the partners of Historic Tours of America, who happened to mention that her father was looking for an assistant. "I interviewed and got the job." It was in the real estate arm of HTA and that was twenty-five years ago. "We had a few properties and I did the property management."

As she was learning the ins and outs of real estate, business grew—from ten properties to 300. "Michael (Cates) and Mr. Moe (the late Moe Mosher) mentored me and I ended up running the real estate division. It's like family, a great company, and we do so much." Early on the team saw the connection between a solid employee base and housing, and filled the need by developing the city's first workforce housing. "We wrote the code," she remembers. It started at the Welcome Center when they rented efficiency apartments for \$700 per month, helping to build a foundation in the local workforce. "We still hear about it, Unke says"

Being one of the largest employers in town, HTA feels strongly about supporting their employees by developing housing that's affordable. "We have the reputation of being hands on. I know all their names - and there's

a lot of them. People come back year after year and we are running out, we need more. That's why workforce housing is such a big part of my job, because there is always such a need."

The diversity of never doing the same thing on different days is what Unke also likes about her job. With the new acquisition of the old Clinton's Square Market, the job changes and evolves again. "I say I'm the dinosaur of HTA," Unke jokes, "I have the history and the knowledge of the island and the company, and now I'm on the other side of the mentorship, imparting my skills and experience to the next generation."

Her roommate situation also changed from those early years here. She met her husband while working for that attorney, and married him five years later. He's a principal at Stanley Switlik and they live on Sugarloaf.

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701 Whitehead St.

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The Chamber Chowder Heartily Thanks These Businesses for Their Generous Support of this Issue of the Newsletter

Ernest Hemingway House Museum
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305-294-1136

La Concha Crowne Plaza
430 Duval St
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305-296-2991

Horan & Higgins, L.L.P.
608 Whitehead St
Key West, FL 33040
305-294-4585

Porter Allen Insurance Company
513 Southard St
Key West, FL 33040
305-294-2542

Old Town Key West Development
201 Front St, Suite 301
Key West, FL 33040
305-294-3225

Gavel Handoff Marks a Paradigm Shift for Chamber Leadership



Outgoing president Mike Morawski passes the gavel to Sullivan.

The passing of the presidential gavel at January's Key West Chamber Installation and Awards Dinner was more than ceremonial. It literally marked the end of one era and the beginning of another, as outgoing president Mike Morawski praised the success of outgoing CEO Virginia Panico and incoming president Greg Sullivan pledged his support of incoming CEO Scott Atwell.

Panico served in the volunteer role of Chamber president before taking over the

executive's role 29 years ago, and the 2020 Installation had the tone of a going-away soiree. The more than 150 attendees honored her with a lengthy standing ovation, and Panico seemed content—even relaxed—in her new role. “Her inspiration, motivation, and stern directions have served as a guiding light for all who have chosen be a part of this organization,” Morawski said of the retiring Panico. “Her body language is quick to respond. It’s not about who you are, it’s about the good we all will do together.”

Sullivan’s taking of the gavel for a third time is not without precedent. The late Duval Street businessman Billy Appelrouth similarly served three terms, as did Everette Russell in the early 1940’s, but Sullivan’s return to the position was as much about having an experienced leader on hand to help Atwell’s transition to the role.

“My singular focus this year as your Chamber president is to support, champion and assist our new executive director,” Sullivan said in his prepared remarks.

The evening began with an hour-long cocktail reception, underwritten (as it is annually) by Stewart Appelrouth, whose mother Rachel was in attendance and serenaded by song just two days shy of her 94th birthday celebration.

Monroe County Sheriff Rick Ramsay presided over the traditional swearing-in of the Chamber board and executive committee, before administering the president’s oath to Sullivan, Waste Management’s district manager for the Florida Keys. Sullivan acknowledged challenges that lie ahead in 2020, rhetorically asking “did someone say Cow Key Channel Bridge, or paving of roads, or affordable housing?”

In his outgoing address, Morawski, CEO of the Hemingway Home and Museum, framed



Michael Knowles and Cara Higgins illustrate that past presidents relish the tradition of passing the gavel.

the city’s current economic environment in the context of the 1970’s shift from a government-based economy to one buoyed by tourism. “Those were the days that originated the phrase that you could fire a cannon from one end of Duval Street to the other without hitting a soul,” Morawski said, recalling a time when he helped move his Great Aunt’s iconic Beachcomber Jewelers from Duval Street to new town. “Two nighttime break-ins and locals refusing to go downtown were the icing on the cake.”

Morawski then underscored the Chamber’s role in turning around the old-town economy. “You saved a town from economic ruin, but your efforts went much further. Today, Key West, Florida isn’t just a city, it’s a lifestyle and a World-Renowned Brand.”



Virginia Panico was rightly revered during the evening.



Sheriff Ramsay installs the Board of Directors.

The Chamber Honors the Island's Extraordinary Educators

As part of its ongoing commitment to education and the future of Key West, the Chamber regularly honors the area's best and brightest teachers. These individuals are nominated by their peers and school principals because they touch the lives of their students in a way that leaves a lasting impression. Extraordinary educators make a difference in the classroom that ripples out into the community, contributing to a better world for everyone.

Chamber members wishing to show their support of teachers provide gift certificates, merchandise, or cash donations totaling nearly \$1,000 per educator. The plaques are sponsored by Local Awards & Engraving and their lunch at the general membership meeting is paid for by Royal Furniture & Design.

The Chamber is proud to honor the following Key West teachers for their unwavering dedication to the island's youngest residents:

▶ **Nina Kane, Sigsbee Charter School**

In the warm words of school principal Eli Jannes, "there's a special place in our hearts for kindergarten teachers." Mrs. Kane was selected for this award because of her endless patience, positive attitude, and masterful instruction with Sigsbee's youngest learners. "Mrs. Kane has seen it all!" he continues to boast. "She is talented at creating a productive and engaging learning environment. She welcomes parents to several celebrations, supports her new colleagues as a team leader and mentor, and spreads joy (with glitter) throughout the school as the Chairperson of the Social Committee." Mrs. Kane is a cherished professional, admired by teachers, parents, and of course, her little Jellyfish students.

▶ **Madalyn Pappadakis, Gerald Adams Elementary School**

Madalyn is a kindergarten teacher and though only in her second year of teaching, she is recognized as a leader among her peers with limitless potential. "Ms. Pappadakis greets every situation with a level of kindness and professionalism that makes her the perfect ambassador for Gerald Adams Elementary and the Monroe County School District," brags Principal Frannie Herrin. "Yet, behind her gentle disposition is a fierce competitiveness and work ethic that leads to an unmatched educational experience for her students--many of whom are brand new to the U.S." Her principal proudly states, "Ms. Pappadakis is a natural-born educator, and we are happy that she has found her home at Gerald Adams!"

▶ **Alicia Shook, Poinciana Elementary School**

According to principal Dr. Larry Schmiegel's accolades, Alicia has served on the Building Level Planning Team for 3 years. "In addition, during her first year at Poinciana she served as co-sponsor of the National Elementary Honor Society. This year she serves as a co-sponsor on our school's Safety Patrol and the school's Social Committee." Mrs. Shook was nominated and voted for the Inclusion Teacher of the Year, so her plaques are stacking up. Dr. Schmiegel praises Alicia in her role as a co-teacher in fifth grade, "she does an excellent job working with challenging students to make sure their needs are met."

▶ **Colleen Blakley, Horace O'Bryant**

"Colleen Blakley is truly the personification of patience!" exclaims Christina McPherson, principal of Horace O'Bryant. "As a middle school special education teacher, Colleen works with some challenging personalities and does it with humor, grace, integrity, and honesty. She is a proactive thinker who truly tries to understand children, adults, and behaviors from a non-judgmental perspective. She is always teaching new strategies to tackle



Front, left to right: Colleen Blakley (H.O.B), Alicia Shook (Poinciana), Nina Kane (Sigsbee Charter), Madalyn Pappadakis (Gerald Adams); Back, left to right: Angie Walterson (Chamber Education Committee Vice Chair), David Erhard (Key West High), Joanna Gray (Key West High), Dr. Matthew Semcheski (H.O.B), Jennifer Barrios (Chamber Education Committee Member).

any situation deemed difficult to work through by students and teachers alike. There is never a day that goes by that Colleen doesn't have a positive message to share with anyone she comes in contact with. What a blessing it is to have Colleen on staff at Horace O'Bryant School."

▶ **Dr. Matthew Semcheski, Horace O'Bryant**

Dr. Matthew Semcheski, also lovingly known to those at the middle school as the 'good doctor', is one of the science teachers on staff. Principal Christina McPherson commends Matthew not only for fairness and understanding with his students, but also for his calm and gentle nature that maintains an ordered classroom at all times. "He gives them every opportunity to succeed and works overtime to see that they do." She continues her praise by saying, "he provides exciting, creative, and engaging activities for his classes. He is especially appreciated as a colleague who is always willing to pitch in with whatever is needed. Dr. Semcheski goes above and beyond by working with ecology club endeavors (and we heard he had a fantastic holiday door display last month). He is a welcome addition to the eighth grade team this school year. Horace O'Bryant School is lucky to have Dr. Semcheski on our staff."

▶ **David Erhard, Key West High School**

"David Erhard is a prominent figure at Key West High," admires Principal Amber Archer Acevedo, "whether it's serving as the English Department Chair, working on district curriculum or being a person always willing to give extra." Mr. Erhard is further appreciated for his part in the lead group for Differentiated Instruction, providing challenging work to his English 1 and 2 students. "In addition, he serves as the lead teacher of our school newspaper staff, the Snapper, and moved it to an online production. Each morning, voluntarily, he helps keep our campus secure by checking students' identifications at the gate. We are very fortunate to have David's leadership in our school community."

▶ **Joanna Gray, Key West High School**

Joanna Gray is commended by her principal as an exceptional teacher who utilizes a variety of resources and hands on strategies in her classroom that prompt in-depth discussions on the topics she teaches including World Cultural Geography, Psychology and Advanced Placement Psychology. Amber Archer Acevedo nominated Mrs. Gray for this honor because, "entering her classroom, you immediately feel the positive culture and see the students highly engaged in the learning process. In addition to her outstanding work with students, she also mentors colleagues, sharing her vast knowledge and skills with others. She is truly an asset to Key West High."

Lazy Dog Gets Her Day: Cooper is Honored with Athena Award

Sue Cooper built her business on the premise of teamwork, so it was hardly a surprise that her team was out in force when the 52-year old entrepreneur was honored by the Key West Chamber with the 2020 Athena Award.

“That was the ultimate actually,” Cooper said. “That’s such a big part of my life in Key West and they’re the reason why I still like to go to work. They’re the face of my business when I’m not here and they represent this company like their own. I completely trust these guys to the moon and back.”

Nearly 20 “teammates” from Cooper’s Lazy Dog water tour company were in attendance for the Chamber’s Installation and Awards Banquet. Cooper was recognized for her philosophy on business and life, which has inspired four books and a corporate speaking tour.

More than 28,000 customers come through the Lazy Dog doors in the course of a year, and it’s well-known that customer service is the differentiator between Lazy Dog and others.

“My dad wrote the leadership manual for IBM in the 80’s, so I always had business in my blood,” Cooper said. “He taught me at young age that you can build a company with two pillars: trust and confidence. By instilling that in your staff you can see how it carries on in your business and products. So, this is not my success, it’s the staff’s success. It comes down to people. People make great business.”

Past Chamber president, and Athena alumna Kim Works presented the award to Cooper, saying “she’s more than just a hands-on owner/operator, she also mentors her staff in a way that she believes



Sue Cooper and Athena Award sponsor Jack Niles.

in them more than they believe in themselves. Her philosophy is to support her team so they can be the best version of themselves—whether they stay at Lazy Dog or move on.”

Cooper is known as the shoe executive who ditched her corporate career 20 years ago and ran off to Key West to start her own business. Lazy Dog has grown into a successful kayak and paddleboard business with brand merchandise sold nationwide. Along the way, she’s been a vocal champion for her island home.

“During (Hurricane) Irma all my friends were leaving town and I said ‘I’m going down with the ship. If Key West is going down, I’m going down, too.’ I love Key West and I love

growing it as a destination. I know my business will grow if Key West grows.”

The Athena Award recognizes the achievements of outstanding business and professional women in communities across the country and around the world, and more than 5,000 have been presented since the Lansing, Michigan Regional Chamber of Commerce originated the honor in 1982.

“I’ve always felt that what I do as a women in this community, as a business leader, a friend and an employer, I know at night when I go to bed I know I have made an impact, and that’s ultimately what matters,” Cooper said. “To be recognized outside of that is super nice, and it’s a really nice trophy. I carried it all over downtown dancing and it’s a great conversation piece.”

The award itself is a stylized bronze sculpture of Athena, the dynamic goddess of Greek mythology, featuring a marble base and cut crystal with outstretched arms that celebrate achievement and reaching out to others. The award is underwritten locally by Jack Niles, of Niles Sales & Service.

In addition to her business success, Cooper is a marathon runner who has also played in the Division I Final Four, as a member of on the U-MASS soccer team. She is an east coast paddle board champion and has been invited into the Explorer’s Club.

Previous Athena Award recipients were on hand to honor Cooper, including Virginia Panico, Sue Barroso, Diane Schmidt, Melissa Kendrick, Cara Higgins and Brenda Donnelly.

President’s Message cont. from page 1 ▶

keep asking for this—for many reasons. Bicycle and pedestrian traffic at the triangle are a major safety concern of mine. At Waste Management we complete close to 80 trips per day thru the Triangle where we see several walkers and riders trying to cross. More to come on this issue.

The Chamber has also taken positions on no more regulation in the Marine Sanctuary, and in support of the Wreckers Cay workforce housing project on Stock Island.

Our committees are gearing up for 2020 (Economic Affairs, Education, FDOT, Golf, Marketing & Public Relations, Membership, Tourism, Workforce Housing and IT). If any of these topics interest you, please call the Chamber and get involved.

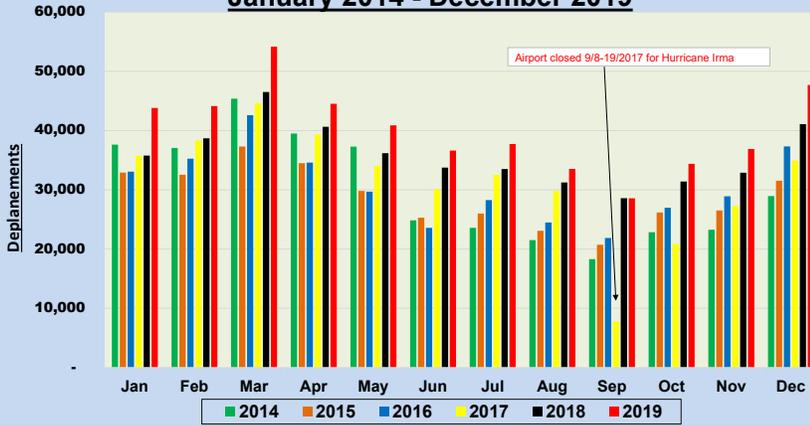
Finally, our own Dorothy Schmida was in a very serious car accident and is recuperating. Please keep her in your prayers.



The Lazy Dog team celebrated their leader in a big way

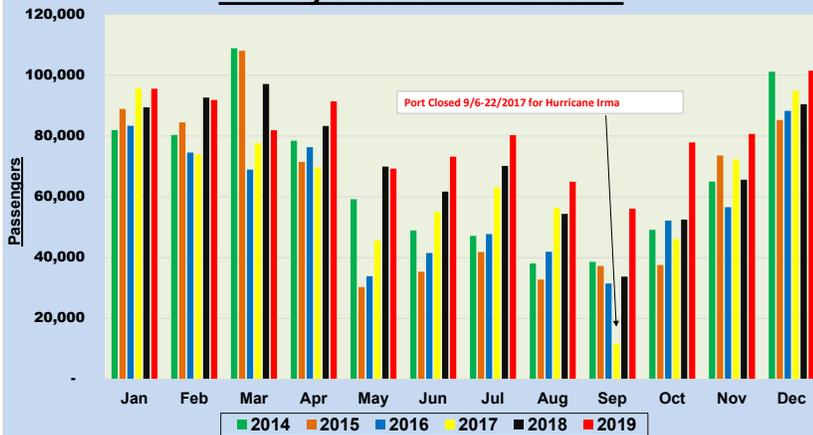


Key West International Airport Arrivals January 2014 - December 2019



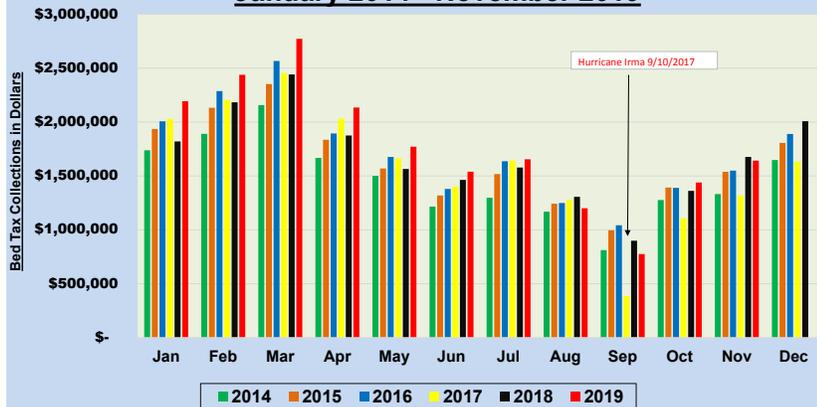
Source: Key West International Airport

Key West Cruise Ship Passengers January 2014 - December 2019



Source: City of Key West Port Operations

Key West Bed Tax Collections January 2014 - November 2019



Source: Monroe County Tax Collector

Passenger arrivals to the Key West International Airport in December, 2019 totaled 47,703, an increase of 16.1% when compared to 41,079 from December of 2018.

For the year 2019, the 482,930 deplanements were 12.2% more than the 430,266 passengers that arrived in Key West for the year 2018.

Currently, American Airlines is providing service to Miami, Dallas and Washington National, and seasonal direct non-stop service to Charlotte, Chicago, and Philadelphia. Delta is offering year round service to Atlanta and seasonal service to LaGuardia which started March 9th. United Airlines is offering direct non-stop service to Newark and seasonal service to Chicago O'Hare. Silver Airways provides direct non-stop service to Fort Lauderdale, Orlando, and Tampa.

December, 2019 saw 777 planes land at Key West International Airport which was 9.7% more than the same period in 2018. For the year 2019 the 8,264 total landings was 2.1% less than the 8,443 planes that landed in Key West last year. The last two years are the only years that Key West International Airport greeted more than 400,000 passengers.

In 2019 Key West welcomed the most cruise ship passengers since 2003, when more than a million arrived in the Southernmost City. In December 2019 alone, a total of 47 cruise ships disembarked 101,516 passengers, representing a 12.2% increase over December 2018 when 90,463 passengers arrived. For the year 2019, the 964,795 passengers represents a 12.2% increase over the same period in 2018.

In all, 417 ships made port in Key West during 2019, representing a 10% increase from 2018 when 379 ships arrived. Both the number of passengers and the number of cruise ship arrivals were higher in 2019 when compared to 2018. The first few month of 2020 have started off very strong. Only once in the last decade has there been a month with 50 or more ships visiting Key West, and it may happen twice in the next two months (see below).

Number of Ships

	2019	2020
February	40	52
March	35	52
April	39	42

The reported Bed Tax Collections for Key West in November, 2019 were \$1,642,794 which is 2% higher than the same period in 2018. The year to date Bed Tax Collections total stands at \$19,561,487 and represents a 7.6% increase over the same period last year.

The November, 2019 "occupancy rate" for Key West was 78.4% according to the Smith Travel Report. That is a 7.3% decrease over the 84.6% reported in November, 2018.

The Average Daily Rate (ADR) was reported at \$253.82 for November of 2019, representing a 6.1% increase from the ADR of \$245.37 posted in October, 2018.

For the year 2019 thus far, Key West has seen an increase of 0.5% in occupancy rates, and a 4% decrease in ADR year to date compared to the same period in 2018.

Since Hurricane Irma passed on September 10, 2017 and caused damage to some hotels, the number of rooms available had declined. Key West saw 145 more rooms open up in recent months, but witnessed another hotel close 48 rooms for long-term renovations.

COMING
Soon



COMING
Soon

The 2020 Key West Chamber of Commerce Wage and Benefit Survey has begun, and your participation is as important as ever! In these days of historic unemployment rates recruiting and retaining the best people are as challenging as they have ever been. With your assistance our survey will be able to identify local compensation rates and job perks comparable to various positions within your industry.

The 2019 Survey

Respondents from the private sector reported 85% of them offer full time employees health care coverage, and that on average they pay 67% of that employee's premium. All public entities polled reported that they offer their employees health care coverage, and that they pay on average 94% of each full time employee's premium. All public entities also offer healthcare coverage for dependents whereas only 71% of private entities reported doing the same.



52% of private sector respondents reported paying employees for meal breaks



The 2019 Survey

Respondents from the private sector reported 6% of them offer some sort of housing benefit to some employees. On average 8% of their employees are eligible for the housing benefit, while no public entities responding claimed to offer a housing benefit.

Of the private entities who responded in last year's poll many reported their employees receiving across the board wage increases. Almost 47% of public sector respondents reported wage increases for their employees in 2019.



In the 2019 Wage and Benefits Survey private sector respondents reported offering full time employees an average of 19 PTO days (holiday and vacation days) per year compared to the 31 average days offered by the employers representing the public sector.



The latest unemployment rates for Monroe County and Key West are 1.8% and 1.7% respectively. Results from last years survey show private entities rating the ease of hiring as "very difficult", and their satisfaction from the applicant pool as "rarely satisfied". Public entities rated their ease of hiring as "difficult" and their satisfaction from the applicant pool as "sometimes satisfied". Two more reasons to participate in this years survey!

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TITLE SPONSORS



BUSINESS AFTER HOURS | TUESDAY, JANUARY 14, 2020

Sponsored by: Stock Island Yacht Club & Marina 6000 Peninsular Avenue



Welcome New Members!



The Key West Chamber of Commerce welcomed the following new members at our January luncheon. Front, l-r: Matt Wills (Spice and Tea Exchange), Theresa Dryden (Midway Specialty Care), Cara Higgins (Cara Higgins Law) and Tracy McClellan (Anahara Spa). Back, l-r: Membership Committee Chair Britt Myers and Vice Chair Mike Williams.

Anahara Spa, LLC

1128 Duval Street
Key West, FL 33040
305-587-9115
www.anaharaspa.com
Contact: Tracy McClellan
Spa Services

Norstar Telecom, Inc.

2797 Creekbridge Court
Southport, NC 28461
305-942-9535
Contact: David Albright
Telecommunications

Cara Higgins Law

604 Whitehead Street
Key West, FL 33040
305-294-6030
www.carahigginslaw.com
Contact: Cara Higgins
Law Firm

The Spice & Tea Exchange of Key West

511 Greene Street
Key West, FL 33040
305-741-7352
Contact: Matt or Katie Wills
www.spiceandtea.com/keywest
Spice & Tea Retail Store

Midway Specialty Care Center Key West

1434 Kennedy Drive, Unit 1
Key West, FL 33040
305-395-7677
www.midwaycare.org
Contact: Theresa Dryden APRN
Medical Center

“The Honorable Scott P. Russell” cont. from page 1 ▶

Assisted Mass Appraisal (C.A.M.A.) system is a big component in that process. “I used to come into your home and you would show me what kind of appliances you have. But now, it’s all done streetside.” There are trends in sales prices, construction costs and rents that get analyzed to best estimate the value of assessable property.

Russell’s office of thirty-five employees (“I’m always looking for good people to add to my talented team”) also has the duty of tracking ownership changes, maintaining maps of parcel boundaries, and keeping the descriptions of buildings and property characteristics up to date. His office also accepts and approves applications from individuals eligible for exemptions and other forms of property tax relief.

And the tax relief that Russell gets really excited about? The homestead exemption. “There are a number of state and local laws providing exemptions that can result in a lower taxable value on certain properties. The homestead exemption is the most common and can provide up to \$50,000 off the assessed value of a property used as the owner’s primary residence. This includes an initial \$25,000 exemption and an additional exemption (up to \$25,000) off the assessed value over \$50,000. The additional \$25,000 exemption does not apply to the school tax levy, and does not require an application.

The deadline is March 1, and homeowners can apply in any of the three offices: Key West, Marathon, Plantation Key. Perhaps that should be a new holiday, in the lull between the flowers and chocolates of Valentine’s Day and the green beer and corned beef cabbage of St. Patrick’s Day, homeowners who have established Monroe County as

their legal domicile and reside on their property, could give themselves the gift of lowered property taxes.

Another benefit of the homestead exemption is the establishment of the “Save Our Homes” cap on annual increases in the assessed value. The assessed value of homesteaded property cannot increase more than 3% each year unless there are changes made to the property or the homestead removed.

Other property tax exemptions include deployed military exemption, disability exemptions and discounts, senior citizen’s additional exemption, tangible personal property exemption and the widow/widower’s exemption.

“My office also analyzes trends in sales prices, construction costs, and rents to best estimate the value of assessable property,” Russell explains. A Computer Assisted Mass Appraisal (C.A.M.A.) system is used by experienced appraisers to ensure that fair values are set for all Monroe County property owners. Appraisers are also assisted by our Geographic Information System (GIS) which helps them to provide detailed and up-to-date property ownership maps for field appraisers. The GIS is frequently updated to reflect changes to the land in Monroe County. This information is also used to analyze property data and gives appraisers yet another tool for comparing similar properties.

For more information on exemptions and other benefits, forms to apply and the documents required, as well as answers to frequently asked questions can be found at www.mcpafl.org.

Community Calendar

February 2020

- 2 Historic Tours of America Locals Day 305-293-7249
- 2 Annual Conch Republic Polar Bear Plunge, call to pre-register 305-296-0240
- 2 Locals Day at Key West Botanical Gardens 305-296-1504
- 4-8 Prime Time written by Blake Hunter, directed by Murphy Davis at the Studios of Key West 8:00PM 305-296-0458
- 6 4th Annual "Back in Time" Bash at Key West Theater 6:30pm KWHAS; 305-295-6616
- 5-8 Sloppy Joe's 16th Annual Put-In-Bay Music Festival 305-294-5717
- 7 20th Unsung Heroes/Volunteers of the Year Luncheon 11:00AM - 1:00PM www.cffk.org
- 8 Art Stroll on Stock Island www.ilovestockisland.org 305-731-5780
- 8 Red Cross Florence Spottswood Gala at the Key West Marriott Beachside 305-389-4778; 6:00PM-8:00PM
- 8 Mardis Gras Ball Masque presented by Mystic Krewe of Key West 7:00PM; 850-221-2338; www.krewofkeywest.com
- 9 Canellakis-Brown Duo, Impromptu Classical Concerts, St. Paul's Church 8:00PM info@keywestimpromptu.org
- 9 Southernmost Mardi Gras featuring Trombone Shorty & Orleans Ave with Tank & The Bangas, Rebirth Brass Band and Big Sams Funky Nation www.keywestconcertseries.com 305-985-0433
- 12-15 Lady Day at the Emerson's Bar and Grill, Waterfront Playhouse, Tickets TBD; 305-294-5015
- 13 Johnnysmith Old Town New Folk Series 8:00PM 305-296-0458
- 14 37th Annual Wesley House Valentine's Day Gala at Curry Mansion; 6pm-9pm 305-809-5060
- 14 Mandy Patinkin at Tennessee Williams Theater 8:00PM 305-296-1520
- 14-15 Key West Home Tours 10:00AM-4:00PM www.oirf.org 305-294-9501
- 15-16 Tommy Emanuel at Key West Theater 8:00PM; 305-984-0433
- 2/17 Willie Nelson at Key West Amphitheater 7:00PM www.keywestconcertseries.com
- 19-22 Anna in the Tropics at The Studios 8:00PM; 305-296-0458
- 8-3/14 Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune at Red Barn Theatre; 305-296-9911 www.redbarntheatre.com
- 21 Village People w/Kool and the Gang at Key West Amphitheater 7:00PM www.keywestconcertseries.com
- 21-4/12 Sanford Birdsey: A Retrospective, Key West Art & Historical Society 305-295-6616 ext.112
- 22-23 The 55th Old Island Days Art Festival www.keywestartcenter.com
- 22 Tom Papa (comedian) at Key West Theater 7:00pm 305-985-0433
- 22-3/30 Annual Tennessee Williams Birthday Celebration at Tennessee Williams Museum www.KWAHS.org 305-295-6616 ext. 112
- 22 Cemetery Stroll at Key West Cemetery 9:30AM, 9:50AM, 10:00AM 305-292-6718
- 23 The Rascher Saxophone Quartet, Impromptu Classical Concerts at St. Paul's Church 4:00 info@keywestimpromptu.org
- 27 Beginnings: A Tribute to the Music of Chicago at Key West Theater 8:00PM 305-984-0433

Cruise Ship Schedule

FEBRUARY 2020

2/1	N. Stanendam	8:00am-5:00pm
2/2	Rhapsody	11:00am-6:00pm
2/3	Carnival Valor	7:00am-2:00pm
2/3	Celebrity Edge	7:00am-5:00pm
2/4	Carnival Victory	7:30am-1:30pm
2/4	Brilliance	11:00am-7:00pm
2/5	No Ships	
2/6	Majesty	7:00am-3:00pm
2/6	Celebrity Infinity	8:00am-4:00pm
2/7	Empress	7:00am-5:00pm
2/7	Sensation	7:30am-1:30pm
2/8	Norwegian Sky	7:00am-4:00pm
2/8	Viking Sky	8:00am-4:30pm
2/9	Celebrity Equinox	7:00am-5:00pm
2/9	Equinox	7:00am-5:00pm
2/9	Disney Wonder	7:45am-4:00pm
2/10	Majesty	11:00am-5:00pm
2/11	Carnival Victory	7:30am-1:30pm
2/11	Celebrity Infinity	8:00am-5:00pm
2/12	Disney Magic	7:45am-4:30pm
2/13	Norwegian Sky	7:00am-4:00pm
2/13	Veendam	8:00am-5:00pm
2/14	Zuiderdam	8:00am-5:00pm
2/15	N. Statendam	8:00am-5:00pm
2/16	Rhapsody	7:00am-5:00pm
2/16	N. Amsterdam	8:00am-5:00pm
2/17	Celebrity Edge	7:00am-5:00pm
2/17	Carnival Freedom	11:00am-7:00pm
2/18	Carnival Victory	7:30am-1:30pm
2/18	Empress	10:00am-5:30pm
2/18	Norwegian Sun	11:30am-8:00pm
2/19	Sirena	7:30am-5:00pm
2/20	SS Explorer	7:30am-5:00pm
2/20	Majesty	8:00am-5:00pm
2/21	Sensation	7:30am-1:30pm
2/22	Norwegian Sky	7:00am-4:00pm
2/22	N. Statendam	8:00am-5:00pm
2/22	Viking Sky	8:00am-4:30pm
2/23	Celebrity Equinox	7:00am-5:00pm
2/23	Seven Seas Splendor	7:00am-4:00pm
2/24	Empress	8:00am-6:00pm
2/24	Carnival Legend	12:00pm-6:00pm
2/25	Celebrity Infinity	7:00am-5:00pm
2/25	Carnival Victory	7:30am-1:30pm
2/25	Silver Wind	8:00am-4:00pm
2/26	Disney Magic	7:45am-4:30pm
2/27	Majesty	7:00am-3:00pm
2/27	Norwegian Sky	7:00am - 4:00pm
2/27	Veendam	8:00am-5:00pm
2/28	Norwegian Pearl	7:30am-4:00pm
2/29	Ventura	9:00am-5:30pm

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Greg Sullivan, President
Waste Management/305-434-9140

Melissa Kendrick, First Vice President
Mel Fisher Maritime Museum/305-294-2633

Cara Higgins, Second Vice President
Cara Higgins Law /305-294-6030

Joe Caso, Treasurer
Caso & Company/305-453-6378

Diane Schmidt, Secretary
Margaritaville Key West Resort & Marina/305-292-4350

Michael Morawski, Past President
Hemingway Home/305-294-1136 5

David Clay, Appointee
Lower Keys Medical Center/305-294-9200

John Toppino, Appointee
Charley Toppino & Sons/305-296-5606

Mark Rossi, Appointee
Rick's/Durty Harry's Entertainment Complex/305-296-5513

Scott Atwell
 Executive Vice President
Key West Chamber of Commerce
 305-294-2587

CHAMBER STAFF

Scott Atwell
Executive Vice President

Edward Dawicki, III
Director of Research

Kerry Baker
Membership Director/Special Events Coordinator

Christina Birmingham
Executive Assistant/Bookkeeper

Dorothy Schmida
Administrative Assistant

Gladys Clarks, Lily Williamson
Tourist Information Receptionists

Scott Atwell
Newsletter Editor

Cindy Jefferson
Art Director

Jennifer Juniper
Newsletter Writer

Karrie Bond
Social Media Director

Key West Chamber Calendar of Events

February 2020

Business After Hours
 Date: Tuesday, February 11, 2020
 Time: 5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.
 Sponsored by: Bayfront Suites & Marina
 Location: 801 Eisenhower Drive
Members Networking Event!

General Membership Meeting
 Date: Wednesday, February 26, 2020
 Time: Noon
 Location: Key West Marriott Beachside Hotel
 3841 No. Roosevelt Blvd
 Speaker: The Honorable Mayor
 Heather Carruthers
 Monroe County Board of County
 Commissioners
 Topic: The State of the County

March 2020

Business After Hours
 Date: Wednesday, March 4, 2020
 Time: 5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.
 Sponsored by: Insurance Office of America
 Location: 2816 North Roosevelt Blvd.
Members Networking Event!

General Membership Meeting
 Date: Wednesday, March 25, 2020
 Time: Noon
 Location: The Casa Marina Resort
 1500 Reynolds Street
 Topic: Cow Key Channel Bridge Project
 Discussion and how major businesses are
 navigating the delays: Waste Management,
 Keys Energy Systems, Monroe County School
 Board, and the Florida Dept of Transportation

For Tickets and Information Contact the Key West Chamber at 305-294-2587.

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