

Mayor Pachota and City Council Members,

October 14, 2024

It is with a very heavy heart that we feel the need to write this letter. As you know the City failed once again to dig out the Flamingo Ditch, which was flooding Flamingo Dr, and Gardenia Dr, at 8:32 AM September 26th in the morning prior to Hurricane Helene. At 10 AM City staff posted a CAUTION FLOODING sign at the intersection of Gardenia and Villas Drive. Staff Activity Log also showed that they checked the outfall between 10AM and 12PM and took no action even though the weather was calm with only light rain . That afternoon Flamingo, Gardenia, Villas, Golden Beach Blvd, and Everglades Dr, flooded significantly with several feet of water from the backed up stormwater coming out of the Ditch onto these public roads. This was well before the sea surge that topped the dune area just before 6 PM. The City has also failed to hire the Consultant that was approved and budgeted in April 2024, to make recommendations for improvements to the Flamingo Ditch Outfall, which serves a large area of public streets, and to date has still not been hired.

Shortly after the flooding, residents put out all the damaged, unsalvageable household items on the street and also tore out sheetrock to prevent mold and mildew setting in and put that in big bags or neat piles on the street. Residents called the City and were told they did not have to make appointments for bulky waste since the City knew there was a lot of bulky waste on many streets and they would be out to pick it up. We also heard that at least one Council Member called for an emergency meeting to discuss the clean-up, but the meeting was denied.

Thursday October 3rd Florida Governor DeSantis ordered Counties and Cities to keep the dumps open and work 24/7 to pick up the waste from Hurricane Helene.

Friday, October 4th Not one stick had been picked up in Golden Beach. Residents started contacting the City, and were told the City was waiting for an ok from FEMA regarding reimbursement. It is unfathomable and unconscionable that the City did nothing during the week of Sept 29th to Oct 4th! The City could easily have documented with notes and photos the bulky waste pickup from the hurricane and submitted later for FEMA reimbursement. Given that our City is also sitting on a surplus of Reserve Funds double the normal amount for a city of this size, this was a monumental dereliction of duty!

Also on Friday October 4th The Assistant Manager and other staff were going around handing out Notices re: the FEMA 50% Rule on repairing after Hurricane Helene. This City document is woefully incomplete as it did not tell residents about the exemptions to the 50% rule. This frightened many residents who felt they were being harassed and intimidated. Some residents were asked if photos could be taken inside their homes, which is highly irregular prior to any permit applications. Many repairs do not require a permit. Furthermore, the FEMA 50% Rule states that repairs that are made for health and safety are exempt. Also, other improvements that are not exempt can be spread over several years so that the 50% isn't triggered in any one year.

Monday October 7th Residents were told by the Mayor that the City would be out that day to pick up. Only a small amount of items were removed from Flamingo Dr. That afternoon the work stopped because the workers were told that the City dump was closing at 7 PM.

Tuesday, October 8th not much if anything was removed, and it became abundantly clear that the City had no contingency response plan to handle the situation.

Wednesday, October 9th Milton hit around 6 PM. Bulky waste was thrown all over causing far more damage than either hurricane, flying onto other residents' property. One resident had a refrigerator and stove in her pool that did not belong to her! Others had windows and other parts of their homes damaged by large flying items that would not have happened if the bulky waste had been picked up by the City as promised!

Thursday, October 10th The bulky waste and hazardous materials including glass shards were found strewn all over the streets, and stormwater ditches were clogged by this waste. Glass and hazardous material also has gone thru the drainage ditches into Flamingo Ditch and other outfalls flowing into the Gulf of Mexico. The Gulf

water and beaches are now dangerously unsafe and toxic! The City has caused not only an unnecessary hardship on the affected residents, but also an unmitigated fouling of our public beaches which are the bedrock of our economy.

Friday, October 11th to Monday, October 14th No pick up work was done. There is a still a huge amount of bulky waste debris and glass on streets, which has been rotting and now smells like garbage.

For the reasons above it is very clear that City Management was not only completely unprepared, even if there had only been the first hurricane, but also profoundly disorganized and negligent in the management of this event. We feel that the City has let all of us down and rendered our beautiful city on the Gulf a disaster area that will take much longer to recover from, not because of the hurricanes, but due to the City's inaction and inability to make timely and necessary decisions.

Therefore, we the below signed feel strongly that Council should call for the City Manager and the Assistant City Manager to resign at once, and, for Council to fill these positions as soon as possible with qualified and capable individuals.

Sincerely,

Béat Lehmann Flamingo Ditch Steering Committee Chair on behalf of Committee Members:

Jack Thacker, Board President, Mac Arthur Beach Club Assoc.

James Clifford, Board President, Venice Villas Assoc.

Steven Mershon, President Windsong Villas Assoc.

Brian Piper, Flamingo Dr

Tony Bevington, Flamingo Dr

Chris Derbak, Hibiscus Dr

Stephen Meinsen, Gardenia Dr

Sue Lang, Golden Beach

And the following residents of Golden Beach:

Barry Lederman Windsong Villas

Mike Doherty Flamingo Dr

Barry Wagman Flamingo Dr

Rick Magee, Gardenia Dr

Sanchia Playfair, Gardenia Dr

Efraim Martinez, Gardenia Dr

Cheryl Rodems, Villas Dr

Julie Thomas, Goldenbeach Blvd

Marianne Robertson, Goldenbeach Blvd

Richard Nodler, Villas Dr

Tina Nepip, Goldenbeach Blvd

Bruce Caldwells, Gardenia Dr

Claude Abaecherli, Gardenia Dr

Cindy Nowakowski, Gardenia Dr

Mary Charles/Renee Britton, Villas Dr

There are many other residents whom we were unable to reach to sign this letter, but who have previously indicated they are of the same opinion. We are also aware of similar circumstances of failure by the City on the northern part of the Island.

