

# MIAMIBEACH

**City of Miami Beach**, 1700 Convention Center Drive, Miami Beach, Florida 33139, [www.miamibeachfl.gov](http://www.miamibeachfl.gov)

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Dear Mayor and Commissioners,

In the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes (or if you prefer to quote the musical group The Byrds), a wise leader observes that “To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven.” The year 2020 has thrown so many challenges in our direction, and I am sure it has given many of us serious pause and stimulated contemplation of our own lives, our families, the nature of our society and our place in the world. I have always felt that there would be at least one more chapter in my professional and community life. What the pandemic has made clear to me is that now is the time, now is the season, for me to begin to explore that future. As such, pursuant to the terms of my Employment Agreement with the City of Miami Beach, I hereby provide formal notice of my decision to step down as City Manager, effective February 1, 2021. My agreement requires a minimum 90-day notice, but I wanted to afford additional time for the City to have a smooth transition.

For the record, I am not leaving to accept another job offer. This is more about chasing my next adventure in life while I am still young enough to do so. I have always wondered what it might be like to teach at a university, run a large not-for-profit or community organization, work at an investment banking firm, work at a different level of government or perhaps even explore my entrepreneurial side. My current job requires full time dedication. If I am going to explore that next chapter of my life, I will not be able to do it from where I sit today. I must admit that I have never left one job without having another in its stead. But I have also always encouraged young people to not be afraid to take risks and to embrace change. I am going to follow my own advice at this stage of my life.

Beyond my professional life, I also want to have the time to re-engage with the world in a way that I simply cannot do right now. When you run one of the most exciting cities in the world, it is truly all-consuming. I very much want to reconnect with my many community interests that have taken a back seat these past seven plus years, including supporting our local national parks, advocating for the autism community and supporting public education at all levels. Furthermore, as a city manager, I am always very careful that my personal political and community agendas never prejudice the city in any way. Given the incredible issues that have come up during this 2020, not the least of which is addressing existential issues like climate change, pandemics and systemic racism, I feel the need to regain my voice and use what I have learned in my many years of service at the local level to perhaps influence a broader regional, state and federal agenda. I am certainly not happy with the world that my generation is handing over to our children and grandchildren, and I would like to see if I can help improve on that reality.

I want to thank the Mayor and Commissioners, in fact all three of the Mayors and 15 Commissioners I have had the pleasure to work with, for the opportunity to serve my birthplace for nearly 8 years by the time all is said and done. It is something special that God gave me the opportunity to repay this community for all that it did for me during the formative years of my life. As a son of working-class immigrants, I was so warmly embraced by this community as I grew up here and received tremendous support on my path through the Beach High feeder pattern and my seven years in Cambridge. I will never forget the affection, good counsel and strong encouragement during my youth from folks like Seymour Gelber, Dr. Sol Lichten, Father Robert Allen, Ralph Carey, Nancy Liebman, Mattie Bower, Bernardo Benes, Harriet Glick, Dr. Robert Grayson, Jean Rosenfeld, Steve Herzfeld and so many others that helped me along my path. In many respects, I was that child raised by a village, or, better said, a shtetl.

I also want to thank the great team of city employees with whom I have had the honor and pleasure to work, including the finest City Attorney's and City Clerk's offices in the state. Whatever I have been able to achieve during these nearly eight years is a product of their hard work, creativity and dedication. I do not believe that there is a group of municipal employees anywhere in this country that works harder or smarter. The amount of output and accomplishments this team has generated is impressive in and of itself. But when you consider that we are often writing the playbook as we went (as we have done with our stormwater program, the response to pandemics like Zika and COVID-19 and our resiliency efforts), their effort and achievement is even more impressive. That we have made mistakes is undeniable. But we have not allowed fear of failure to stop us from pushing the agenda forward to address very difficult issues. As Mayor Gelber is fond of saying, we don't just check boxes, we create the boxes.

Some of you may recall that when I was sworn in as City Manager, I became emotional when I commented that I wished my dad was alive to see that day. He loved his adopted home city so much and would have been so proud to see that his son had been selected to help run this great city. I know he is looking down on me today and hopefully he is proud of what we all have collectively achieved during my tenure, including the following:

- A state-of-the-art Convention Center and soon a headquarter hotel
- First two LEED certified buildings built by the City
- Four new historic districts in North Beach
- The creation of a town center district in North Beach
- The creation of a North Beach Community Redevelopment Agency to promote responsible development and investment in infrastructure
- A \$450 million GOB program that will build critical infrastructure for the city's future
- A resiliency program and stormwater management program that will be critical to fighting the existential challenges of sea level rise and climate change
- Approximately 20 acres of new parks and greenspace
- Renovation of several historic structures, including the Carl Fisher Clubhouse, the Normandy Fountain and the 28<sup>th</sup> Street Obelisk and Pump station.

- Complete replacement and upgrading of the iconic lifeguard stands on the beach
- A citywide system of free trolleys
- Expanded City support of our public schools, (e.g. dual enrollment program with FIU and MDC, after-school enrichment programs and the Teen academy at Nautilus)
- Hosted a week-long Centennial celebration for the City
- Brought Little League and Pony League baseball back to Miami Beach
- The first municipal Chief Resiliency Officer in the Florida
- Creation of Business Improvements districts on Lincoln Road and Washington Ave
- Implemented a new state of the art public safety radio system for Police and Fire
- Achieved triple certification for our 911 unit, one of only a few in the US
- Creation of miles of green bike lanes and the city's first protected bike lanes
- The largest Art in Public Places collection on any one campus in the US
- Successfully combatted the Zika pandemic and recovered from Hurricane Irma
- Near completion of the beach walk
- Two new bridges, including the pedestrian bridge connecting Sunset Harbor and the West Avenue neighborhood

My tenure has certainly not been perfect, but where we screwed up, we fixed it, and if we came up short, it was not for lack of a good faith effort to do what was right. And I am most proud that no one can ever question that I led by example when it came to issues of integrity, honesty and transparency.

There never is a good time to leave an organization, particularly one like the City of Miami Beach. We have so many irons in the fire, and so many wonderful projects that we have just begun or teed up. But as you know, this is Miami Beach and there will always be lots of work and lots of exciting developments on the horizon. I am confident that my management team will be able to carry on and bring these to fruition. Whomever steps into my shoes will inherit a very talented group of leaders who have shown great dedication to hard work, integrity, communication, professionalism and innovation. They care and they show it every day.

Rest assured that I will continue to work hard every day on behalf of our residents, businesses and visitors through and until February 1<sup>st</sup> of next year. There is much important work to be done in these next four months, and I want to make sure we advance all the important agendas while I am still here. And of course, no matter where my life may lead me afterwards, always count on me to be a champion for this great city. When all is said and done, I am just another kid from Miami Beach who had the good fortune to grow up in paradise, but also was taught that we can make a difference in the world. As the preacher says, hopefully the good Lord isn't through with me yet.

Sincerely,

Jimmy Morales

