

**City of Palm Coast
State of the City 2019
Mayor Milissa Holland**

Thank you, John Walsh and the Palm Coast Observer for partnering with us – giving us a chance to showcase this very special place, the place we call home: the City of Palm Coast. Thank you to all of the sponsors who helped make today possible.

I want to recognize the elected and appointed officials from our community who are here with us today.

- First, my fellow Council Members: Eddie Branquinho, and Vice Mayor Nick Klufas; Council Members Jack Howell and Robert Cuff could not be here.
- Sheriff Rick Staly
- Flagler County Commissioner David Sullivan
- Flagler County Administrator Jerry Cameron
- Flagler County School Board Members Maria Barbosa, Andy Dance, Janet McDonald, and Trevor Tucker
- Superintendent of Schools James Tager
- Flagler Beach City Manager Larry Newsom
- Former Palm Coast Council Member Jason DeLorenzo

I also want to express my gratitude to City staff for their efforts in serving our citizens. I would also like to welcome our new City Manager, Matthew Morton, who will help carry out the City Council's vision for Palm Coast.

We are here today to celebrate the State of our City. This is a very important year for Palm Coast. We have been a "place" on the map for 50 years, and on December 31st, 2019, we will celebrate our 20th anniversary as a City! Our population has nearly tripled over these past two decades – with 86,516 residents strong.

Our theme this year is "One Palm Coast."

I've been thinking about connection a lot lately – how we are all connected, past, present and future, as "One Palm Coast."

When I first became Mayor, I sat in my office and gazed out the window over Central Park and our future downtown and thought about the possibilities and the connections that would be necessary to move Palm Coast forward. I then looked around the room and thought about the things that I wanted to be surrounded by, to help inspire me, remind of the connections that brought me to this point, and forge ahead with the connections necessary to make "One Palm Coast."

I then asked our team for a collection of Palm Coast photos and I was very intentional about my selections for my office. The pictures in my office are reminders of the connections possible in Palm Coast and the truly exceptional quality of life found here. In our latest Citizen Survey, completed in February, Palm Coast earned high rankings for quality of life and overall appearance. We asked citizens what they consider our greatest assets to be, and to no surprise, the top 3 were natural habitat, beautiful appearance and recreational opportunities.

The images in my office reflect our greatest assets and drive me every day to move Palm Coast forward.

Our tree-lined trails and calming tree canopies connect us, and I'm proud that we now have more than 130 miles of connecting pathways and bicycle lanes with the addition of the Lakeview Drive pathway . We're just wrapping up two sections on Sesame Boulevard in Seminole Woods, and we have another project – on Citation Parkway – now in design. Thanks to our gorgeous weather, our parks and our location near the beach, we are fortunate to have an active outdoor lifestyle year-round.

Our shared experiences with friends, neighbors and family members connect us. This beautiful Palm Coast Community Center has been open for a year now, and already thousands of connections have been made

through social activities, recreational and wellness programming for seniors and toddlers and teens and children and active adults. The number of recreational programs we offer has more than doubled. In the past year we offered more than 1,300 activities and had 822 reservations for weddings, birthday parties and family reunions. Last summer, we hosted 1,337 summer campers!

Holland Park is another exceptional amenity for us as a community to come together to connect. I am excited to announce that construction of the second phase of Holland Park will begin in just a few weeks. This will make Holland Park even more exceptional, with improved amenities, including kids play and splash zones, activity lighting and more shade coverings.

Both of these projects were paid in full by sales tax dollars – with no need for us to take on debt – and this is one way our citizens can assist us with new capital projects. When we buy our gas and groceries here, shop at our local retailers and dine at Palm Coast's restaurants, it helps our local economy. But it also directly benefits our residents because a portion of the sales tax is returned to the City of Palm Coast for two purposes – to keep taxes down and to fund capital projects such as sidewalks, street improvements and parks. So Be Local Buy Local!

With our focus on an active lifestyle, we are fortunate to have a dozen beautiful parks, a sports complex, and our world-class golf course and tennis center. This year was our 10th year hosting a USTA professional tennis tournament at the Palm Coast Tennis Center.

In 2015, we were thrilled to have Palm Coast's very own Reilly Opelka play in the tournament, and later that year he won the Junior Wimbledon tournament at the age of 17. Reilly grew up playing at Grand Haven and other local courts. Obviously he got really good – former pro tennis player and coach Tom Gullickson helped in his development.

During my term, I have been most inspired by our talented youth who truly are our future. I have watched Reilly grow up and become one of the top tennis players in the world, recently winning his first major tournament, the New York Open. Today he is ranked 56th in the world. I truly could not be more proud of him and how he carries the Palm Coast banner to the tennis world.

Reilly Opelka is a shining example of the potential of the youth in our community. He shows us that you really can achieve anything if you work hard for it. For that reason, I have selected him to receive the Mayor's Next Generation Award.

His father, George Opelka, is here with us today to receive the award on Reilly's behalf – George, please join me – and please let him know how Palm Coast Proud we are of him!

The City's mission is to provide our residents, visitors and business community with exceptional services to improve your quality of life, grow the local economy and protect the natural environment through a planned, integrative approach using available technology. This year we had many accomplishments to support our six overarching goals. Our Annual Progress Report and a summary of our budget is being provided to each of you. I will highlight just a few.

We opened our second Wastewater Treatment Plant and expanded our use of reclaimed water.

We adopted a new master plan to add more streetlights on major roadways – and we have just completed installation of 42 streetlights on Lakeview Boulevard and Belle Terre Parkway is under design.

We improved intersections at Belle Terre and State Road 100 and also at Seminole Woods and State Road 100 to improve safety.

We are in our third phase for traffic signal optimization to improve traffic flow.

The Florida Department of Transportation has funded the first phase of our No. 1 transportation project – the widening of Old Kings Road from Palm Coast Parkway north toward Matanzas High School – and construction will begin next year on the first phase.

Following the last few years of unprecedented rain events, a big project we have launched this year is a comprehensive stormwater management plan to address drainage issues across Palm Coast. Using the latest technology, you will see a brand new approach to improving stormwater flow in our ditches and canals, so swales ultimately drain better. We've already started two major projects in the W and E Sections, and there's so much more to come over the next few years – to ensure our homes and property are protected from flooding.

Public Safety continues to be a major focus for us. With the retirement of Mike Beadle, we swore in a new fire chief – Jerry Forte. To date, 10 fire volunteers have become full-time career firefighters through the department's innovative Internship Program. We are providing hands-on experience and training to the students in Flagler Palm Coast High School's Fire Leadership Academy. And Palm Coast Fire Department has become a leader in strategies to reduce firefighters' exposure to cancer risks – a particular occupational hazard in firefighting.

For law enforcement, we are fortunate to have a strong connection with the Flagler County Sheriff's Office. Sheriff Rick Staly recently reported to the City Council that crime dropped 22 percent in 2018. We funded five additional deputies for traffic enforcement, and the number of fatal accidents decreased 42 percent.

Sheriff Staly restructured Community Policing to reflect the three distinct and unique communities of Flagler County – the beaches, Flagler West and Palm Coast – to allow deputies the ability to familiarize themselves with each area in order to build partnerships with the residents and businesses there. School safety is also a top priority, with a deputy in every school and two in the high schools.

82 percent of our residents surveyed said they feel safe in their neighborhoods and rate our law enforcement services as excellent or good. I have worked closely with Sheriff Staly over the past two years and have been incredibly impressed by his commitment to our citizens and to his efforts to decrease crime and to improve safety.

Today I would like to honor Sheriff Staly for his service. Sheriff, would you please come forward to receive the 2019 Mayor's Public Service Award?

So many accomplishments and achievements in one year! And yet, there is so much more to come. While the pictures in my office remind me of how special Palm Coast is and continues to be, peering out the window reminds me of the possibilities and the connections necessary to move "One Palm Coast" forward.

In 2018, the City Council charted a new course to transform Palm Coast into a Smart City – using technology to improve people's lives – and to attract more high-tech businesses to our City. And we are already seeing positive results and building momentum.

We are expanding our technology infrastructure and have launched a Kick Start incentive program to attract new development to Town Center so we can achieve a true, vibrant downtown community for Palm Coast.

One of our top priorities is to maximize the potential for our fiber optic network for high-speed data services. FiberNet already connects City facilities, Flagler Schools and some businesses with its 60 miles of conduit – generating \$600,000 in revenue for the City every year and saving us over \$3 million in data-related expenses since it started 9 years ago. It has more than paid for itself.

But it has the potential for so much more – especially as we recruit high-tech businesses to Palm Coast that need this kind of technology. Eventually we hope to bring FiberNet to residences as we all become more wired and need more and more high-speed connections.

The City Council has approved a new broadband business plan and now the City is seeking a public-private partnership to assist us in our goals of expanding FiberNet. We are hoping to name that partner this summer.

We are improving cell phone service across the City. Our first new cell tower has just gone up on Palm Coast Parkway west of Belle Terre. AT&T has antennas on the tower and other cell providers are being recruited. Two other cell towers will soon go up – one at the Palm Coast Tennis Center and one at Fire Station 24 on Palm Harbor Parkway.

We are expanding our digital City services – including online permitting, advanced meter reading and a pilot program for smart manholes to help us prevent sewage overflows during major rain events. This year we started a drone program for maintenance of the stormwater system and other infrastructure and for use during emergencies. We are currently working on high-tech solutions for security at City parks and facilities.

The City has partnered with Coastal Cloud, a local technology company, to build a world-class Citizen Engagement Platform. I am excited to announce that Palm Coast Connect will go live in May! Palm Coast Connect will allow citizens to be truly connected to their City, with the ability to access City services, resources and information using their smart phones, tablets or computers.

Previously, citizens could report various issues – such as broken equipment at a City park or a pothole or a Code violation that needs attention. But there was no efficient way for us to stay in touch with the resident as the problem was corrected. Palm Coast Connect will provide two-way communication so that citizens can remain connected to the City as the issue is resolved.

On the backend, Palm Coast Connect will allow City departments to automate work orders – and consolidate the many software systems our departments use currently. The technology uses GPS functions and geo-coding to allow City crews in the field to respond to reported issues quickly, in the same part of the City where they're already working. And all of this will occur while also communicating the progress back to Customer Service and the affected residents.

Today, you will be the first to see what we can all expect. Trevor Wilson, a consultant at Coastal Cloud, will come up to give you a demo to show you how it's going to work.

Won't this be an exciting new way to stay connected to our citizens using cutting-edge technology?

Now, I want you all to look out my office window and see the possibilities of our Town Center as a hub for innovation, technology and growth –a bustling center where residents can connect, live, work and play.

Close your eyes and visualize: sleek offices abuzz with software engineers and small-batch manufacturing entrepreneurs overlooking the lake at Central Park; young professionals and retired neighbors sharing coffee in the sun on the patio next door; medical researchers testing advancements in knee replacement surgery, just a mile down the road; and high school students participating in a hack-a-thon in partnership with a top university. This hack-a-thon will bring together programmers, technologists, and others to our downtown to collaborate and develop a technology solution to solve a problem in an intense and exciting event.

A mix of high-tech companies, housing, the park, cultural arts, coffee shops, entrepreneurs and retail in a walkable neighborhood. This is our vision for Town Center and the future of our City!

We are attracting new investment through an Opportunity Zone designation, and this year we launched an Innovation District and kick-started a development incentive program that provides qualified projects a reduction in their Utility impact fees. We already have our first two projects approved to bring upscale but affordable housing for teachers, nurses, firefighters and future employees in Town Center.

Innovation Districts are a fusion of business incubators, hospitals, schools and universities and high-tech companies. These creative firms and workers crave proximity so that ideas and knowledge can be transferred quickly and seamlessly. They are highly wired and share space supported by coffee shops and restaurants, public parks, clean industry, nearby housing and retail shops. Innovation Districts have the unique potential to spur productive and inclusive economic development. They provide a strong foundation for the creation and expansion of firms and jobs by helping companies, entrepreneurs and investors co-invent and co-produce new discoveries for the market.

Our Town Center has the perfect ingredients to join this movement – over 1,600 acres of high-quality development area near the interstate, healthcare facilities, high-performing schools and a master developer eager to help us realize our vision. Palm Coast has attributes that many in the high-tech, innovation world are looking for: easy access to the beach, amazing weather, exceptional quality of life and affordability.

This vision is why it's so important to expand FiberNet and upgrade our wireless infrastructure...to truly become a Smart City.

Our new priorities and strategies are already paying off! Palm Coast has been named a finalist in the 2019 North American Smart Cities Readiness Challenge and will be competing against other forward thinking communities, such as Dallas, Baltimore, and San Diego, to help Palm Coast turn our smart city vision into reality.

We have a laser focus – or I should say a ***fiber-optic*** focus – on becoming a Smart City, and the City Council is determined to fast-track those efforts. We have the backbone for the technology. This is the window of opportunity to accomplish our goals – and we're going for it.

We need to be able to compete in a global market to be successful with our goals for the Innovation District and Town Center, the expansion of our fiber optic network as an economic development driver, and the use of technology to improve our residents' lives.

None of this would be possible without the support of key stakeholders. We have aligned with strategic partners in an effort to connect and collaborate on these important initiatives and in doing so, our vision for downtown will become a reality. I want to take a few minutes to highlight some key strategic partnerships.

Flagler Schools is on the cutting edge of developing the workforce of tomorrow through their innovative Flagship programs for classroom-to-career success. We could not carry out our vision for our downtown without a world-class K-12 education system. And Flagler Schools is the keystone in our success. In fact, this fall we are partnering with the I3 program at Flagler Palm Coast High School to design a visual rendering of our future downtown.

We're fortunate to have strong leadership representing us in Tallahassee, as well. Representative Paul Renner and Senator Travis Hutson are outstanding leaders for us at the State level, and they share our vision for the future of Palm Coast as a hub of innovation and economic growth.

The success of Palm Coast could not be possible without private investment in the development of our community. We are fortunate to have Allete Properties as our largest single investor and proud of the vision they created for Palm Coast Town Center. And we are especially thankful for their continued dedication and investment to ensuring our high standards for quality of life as they continue building in Town Center and throughout Palm Coast. Allete's development team, Douglas Property & Development, has been an outstanding partner for us as we position our downtown for the future. I'm sure you have already seen the positive momentum and development activity that is currently taking place in our Town Center.

The arts play an instrumental role in Town Center, and I see great promise for how they will help shape our future. For the first time there's a larger conversation taking place with several art groups. They are working collaboratively to plan for a vibrant arts district in the downtown. The Palm Coast Arts Foundation is working on its Performing Arts Center and already offers high quality programming that brings activity to Town Center. We are so pleased by the Gargiulo Art Foundation's recent gift to start a Sculpture Garden at Central Park to add to our Art in Public Places program. I'm looking forward to watching all of these partners come together to enrich our cultural arts experience.

AdventHealth Palm Coast is not only a great provider in delivering cutting-edge medical services, but is also a great partner in helping realize our vision for the future of downtown. The hospital has invested millions of dollars into medical technology and robotics found in few other places in Florida. And their footprint will only grow as they build out their master plan in the coming years, providing additional medical access to excellent healthcare, bringing more employment opportunities, medical professionals and people looking to have state-

of-the-art procedures completed in Palm Coast. Recently the hospital announced a \$25 million project for a freestanding emergency department coming to north Palm Coast – providing even more access to high-quality medical care for our community.

AdventHealth Palm Coast also enriches us through its outreach programs and community education. One initiative I've learned about as Mayor is the AdventHealth Foundation's Palm Coast DiaBEATes Alliance. The purpose of the Alliance is to raise awareness for the prevention and treatment of this life-threatening disease and to expand education, support and resources within our community.

One member of the Foundation's board is especially passionate about Diabetes education and awareness – and she has been the driving force behind the work of the DiaBEATes Alliance.

Laura Gilvary is especially driven in her mission because her husband, John Gilvary, has Type 1 Diabetes, the form of the disease in which the body does not produce insulin.

Laura and the Foundation Alliance are working tirelessly to connect with our residents to promote better health and wellness. It's personal for Laura, but this mission is making a major impact on the overall health of our community – and in the process, they are literally saving lives.

Laura, to honor your leadership and dedication to helping others in our community, would you please come forward to receive the Mayor's Citizen of the Year for 2019?

Connections – they are all around us. Amazing citizens like Laura Gilvary, Sheriff Staly and Reilly Opelka. Our public servants. The civic organizations that give us our heart and soul. The businesses that drive our economic engine. Our strategic partners as we plan for the future for our downtown.

In conclusion today, I would like to go back to the theme of this year's State of the City: "One Palm Coast." The key word being "one." We come together with a purpose – for the future of our community.

All of us – business owners, civic leaders, government employees, elected officials and all citizens of Palm Coast – have a stake in the future of our community. It is of utmost importance that we continue working together to keep Palm Coast progressing in a positive way for future generations – so that we are a robust, well-rounded community that is always stretching, reaching and growing. We are poised for something big – for our residents and, above all, for the children who will be the future leaders of Palm Coast.

I especially look forward to our connections with Allete Properties, Douglas Property & Development, Flagler Schools, AdventHealth Palm Coast, PCAF, the Garguilo Art Foundation, our State partners, and others that are joining us to complete exciting projects in our downtown. Please stay tuned, as I am sure many exciting developments are to come in 2019 and beyond.

In just a moment, we're going to end with a short video to help you see the possibilities through my window and inspire you to join with us. But before that, I just want to tell you how honored I am to be your Mayor and how much I appreciate the chance to be part of this occasion.

I'm proud of the State of the City today and I am excited about our bright future ahead. Thank you for attending and thank you for being part of our future. We are One Palm Coast.