Driving down I-95 last week, I exited at Palm Coast Parkway, turned east and decelerated along the canopies of the century-old oaks that line our Parkway. The road felt like it was cut out of a forest. As I approached, leaves blew open to allow the late afternoon sun to shine on me. As I marveled in this simple act of driving home, it struck me that I’d found the perfect topic to share with you for my first newsletter column as your Mayor.

What is it that inspires people to want to live, work and play in a City like Palm Coast?

How did we get to this point in time when we have so much beauty and peace to preserve around us? In Palm Coast, our history is not too distant. We know that in the 1970s, ITT Corporation purchased these forests, waterways and estuaries and built a planned community with homes, roads, utilities and recreational amenities. How lucky we are that our founding fathers laid out our community with so much of what we value today, including miles of hiking/biking trails, tennis and golf clubs, waterways and a marina for fishing, kayaking and boating.

These amenities drew visitors and residents who began fueling our economy. Executives and businesses started to locate here and we became a magnet for active retirees and young families. We swiftly grew from about 10,000 to 80,000 residents, so many attracted to our City by a vision of what a community can be when quality of life considerations are the heart of its soul. This is the sense of place here.

In a few months. If a tree does not grow new leaves by the spring or early summer following a hurricane, it is not likely to recover. 4

Trees that lose all or some of their leaves in hurricanes are not necessarily dead. A tree may be only temporarily unable to photosynthesize (produce food) and store energy. With time, a tree can produce new leaves which is a sign of recovery. Most trees will leaf out again after hurricanes but they may decline over a period of six months to a year after a storm. Some may remain green for a year or more, and then suddenly turn yellow and quickly progress to brown needles. Weakened pines may be more susceptible to beetles and diseases.

Price for Paradise

Living in our Florida paradise can come with a price. Palm Coast paid a heavy price on October 7 when Hurricane Matthew caused destruction of thousands of our magnificent trees. To protect your trees that survived the storm and keep them healthy, here is some helpful information:

1 Always hire licensed professional arborists to properly prune, trim or remove dead limbs. Workers who don’t know what they’re doing can make your trees more vulnerable to storms.

2 Even after experiencing high winds, many trees can be restored. To be a good candidate for restoration, a tree should not have cracks in major limbs or the trunk, decayed wood, or bark inclusions. Roots should not be exposed or lifted out of the soil.

3 Trees that lose all or some of their leaves in hurricanes are not necessarily dead. A tree may be only temporarily unable to photosynthesize (produce food) and store energy. With time, a tree can produce new leaves which is a sign of recovery. Most trees will leaf out again after hurricanes but they may decline over a period of six months to a year after a storm. Some may remain green for a year or more, and then suddenly turn yellow and quickly progress to brown needles. Weakened pines may be more susceptible to beetles and diseases.

4 Pines may show no immediate visible damage after hurricanes but they may decline over a period of six months to a year after a storm. Some may remain green for a year or more, and then suddenly turn yellow and quickly progress to brown needles. Weakened pines may be more susceptible to beetles and diseases.
NICK KLUFAS: I'm lucky; I found what I love to do early on in life. I'm passionate about technology and began programming at age 13 on a Commodore 64. After graduating college I was fortunate to find an opportunity with ACI, a local software company that specializes in building real-estate appraiser technologies. We are owned by First American Financial, which is a Fortune 500 company and a Forbes-rated Top 100 company to work for. I've been with ACI for over 9 years, and my official title is Senior Development Engineer. I'm privileged to work with a great team, building enterprise-level software solutions.

What about your community involvement?

MILISSA HOLLAND: I serve on the Board of Directors of the prestigious organization 1000 Friends of Florida, which promotes healthy urban and natural places by wise management of growth change. I served a two-year term on the Board of Directors of the Friends of the Museum of Florida History from 2010-2012. I also founded the James F. Holland Foundation, named after my father. The mission of the Holland Foundation is to “Grow Hope in the Children of Flagler County” and our focus is to raise funds and initiate programs that benefit the children and youth of Flagler County through the formation of partnerships with local, state and national agencies and organizations. I also spearheaded the annual “Feed Flagler” initiative that provides free Thanksgiving dinners for thousands of children each year. I am a member of the Palm Coast Elks Lodge 2709.

ROBERT CUFF: I served as a member of the City’s Planning and Land Development Review Board from 2009 until August 2016, helping oversee major commercial and residential developments in our community. I’m active in a number of community organizations including Rotary Club of Flagler County, Flager Education Foundation (past president), Flagler Humane Society, Flagler Senior Services, the Flagler Bar Association (past president), Flagler County Drug Court Foundation, Boy Scouts of America Golden Eagle Dinners and Flagger Habitat for Humanity, which I helped found.

NICK KLUFAS: My wife and I love to take advantage of all the spectacular amenities our City has to offer. I’m a member of the Flagler Runners Group and participates in the majority of our local charitable 5K/10K/15K runs. I’m involved with youth athletic leagues and am a huge proponent of summer technology programs that empower our youth.

What is most important for residents to know about you?

MILISSA HOLLAND: Looking back, I believe it may have been my destiny to become Mayor of the City of Palm Coast. When you make your life-long friends here, attend school here, learn how to give back to your community here (based on watching the accomplishments of my father), raise your children here – there is something special about living out your life in the beautiful growing city that always spoke to my heart and told me my fortune was to serve others in my community.

ROBERT CUFF: I came here to work for ITT for 18 years before there was a City of Palm Coast. That shapes my historical perspective on how this area came to be developed the way it is and how the City came to be. I understand the planning and vision for Palm Coast’s land development and code enforcement, and I have a deep understanding of how the City was built together.

NICK KLUFAS: I’m a major proponent of the amenities that make Palm Coast special – our running trails and sports amenities. I’m a runner, and I especially love Graham Swamp. I’m committed to maintaining the quality and keeping our high integrity as the City Council makes decisions about the future of Palm Coast.

If you could determine your own eventual legacy as a City Council Member, what would it be?

MILISSA HOLLAND: My family and I have a long history of public service in Flagler County, and I am excited to become Mayor. I treasure our natural resources and quality of life and have a strong vision for building on what we already have to add more jobs, expand cultural arts opportunities, and bring residents, businesses and government leaders together to make our community even better. Please read my first column in this newsletter for more information on my life and my commitment to the future of Palm Coast.

ROBERT CUFF: A lot of very smart and very dedicated people spent a lot of time not just thinking about what Palm Coast should be but actually making that plan a reality. The original planning reflected “state-of-the-art” community planning in the 80’s and 70’s. While much of it is still valid today, we have to be willing to adapt those earlier visions and plans to our modern realities. But when we do that, we need to remember this isn’t just some accident that happened. The City and its residents will be best served if we are able to continue this kind of deliberate planning into the future. That’s what I hope to bring to the Palm Coast City Council.

NICK KLUFAS: I’m extremely passionate about technology. I hope to lead the way to provide new career opportunities for young friends by attracting high-tech, clean industries and by expanding the City’s FiberNET service to help grow business. I believe we can expand our broadband access through FiberNET and partner with other companies to strengthen our economic base. I’d also like to be a part of the solution for bringing improved cell service to Palm Coast. So, in a word, I hope capitalizing on “technology” would be my legacy.