



Mekhi Sargent

# KEYS CITIZEN

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Many Islands One Voice

Jaguars waive Key West product Sargent — 1B

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Thursday

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## CAYO CONCH



“Personally, I like the vessel-free zones ... and the swimming-free zones, as well!”



### Spraying Alert

Because of recent rains, the Florida Keys Mosquito Control District has scheduled an aerial larviciding mission Thursday, Sept. 1, from 6:30 to 9:30 a.m., over Key West.

The helicopter mission will be completed, weather permitting, using Bti, which is a mosquito larva-specific soil bacteria. It is mixed with water and applied as a mist to combat *Aedes aegypti*, the mosquito that can transmit dengue fever, chikungunya and Zika.

Keep track of FKMCD aerial adulticide, larvicide and fog truck missions by downloading the treatment notification app at <https://keysmosquito.org>.

For information, call Mosquito Control at 305-292-7190.

## ON THE RADIO



Key West Police Chief Sean Brandenburg updates News Director Joe Moore and Chuck Thomas with the latest on calls in the city and preparations for the Labor Day holiday weekend.

Also on Morning Magazine, • David Rice, Monroe County Mayor • Lance Martin, Marathon High School Athletic Director • Andy Newman, Tourist Development Council spokesman • Kerry Shelby, Florida Keys Aqueduct Authority Executive Director • Ana Maria Rodriguez, State Senator • Carlos Gimenez, U.S. Congressman

On Evening Edition, host Ron Saunders talks with State Attorney Dennis Ward

NEWS: 7:30, 8:30 a.m., noon, 5 & 6 p.m. Evening Edition 5-5:30 p.m.

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# Keys tax rates may skyrocket

## Local governments' costs increasing significantly going into new fiscal year

BY TIMOTHY O'HARA  
Keys Citizen

Non-homesteaded property owners might have a bit of sticker shock this month when they receive their Truth In Millage (TRIM) notices, which details what local government agencies have tentatively agreed to charge them

in property taxes for the upcoming fiscal year that starts Oct. 1.

The notices are also giving property owners a glimpse into the cost of doing business in the Florida Keys, as local government agencies grapple with higher costs of rents and mortgages and living for its employees, inflation and a significant rise in fuel and

electric costs in the past year. Those increases, if approved by local governments at meetings throughout September, don't just apply to transient rentals or second homes, but all commercial properties including apartments for workers.

Nearly all local government agencies have tentatively agreed to

significant property tax increases for non-homesteaded properties for the 2022-23 fiscal year. The number of non-homesteaded properties in the Keys has risen significantly in the past five years, and they now make up about 77% of private properties in the Keys.

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File photo

Raft-up parties, above, were common off White Marlin Beach before a vessel exclusion zone was created in 2021. However, boaters have lately been congregating in an area just outside the zone, and the village council recently approved on first reading an expansion of the swimming zone.

## Expanded vessel exclusion zone gets first OK

BY LEE WARDLAW  
Keys Citizen

The expansion of a vessel exclusion zone off Lower Matecumbe Key was approved unanimously on first reading by the Islamorada Village Council recently. A second reading is required for final approval.

In response to large raft-up boating parties in the area, the council adopted an ordinance in August 2020 to establish a vessel exclusion/swim zone area extending approximately 300 feet toward Florida Bay off the shoreline of Port Antigua and White Marlin beaches, with buoys delineating where boats were prohibited.



In 2021, the village of Islamorada installed 20 buoys demarcating a 300-foot swim zone from the shoreline of Lower Matecumbe Key's Port Antigua and White Marlin beaches. An expansion of a vessel exclusion zone was recently approved on first reading by the village council.

Photo provided

However, the weekend warriors simply shifted to a new location nearby that was outside the zone. The approximately 350-foot-wide section of White Marlin Beach was excluded from the zone to allow boat access to the owners of properties having docks within the swim area. A consequence of creating this excluded area is the concentration of recreational raft-up boaters into this

area very close to shore.

All four property owners living adjacent to this excluded area told village staff that they would like the waters behind their properties to be included in the swim area.

“My husband and I purchased our home in White Marlin Beach in 2019.

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## Keys focus of new dive show

BY CITIZEN STAFF

The Florida Keys are slated to be featured on the new recreational diving show, “Destination Dive,” which is set to premiere on Discovery Network on Sunday, Sept. 4.

The show will debut at 7:30 a.m. on the channel.

With an emphasis on conservation, protection and activism, “Destination Dive” will take viewers on exciting adventures as unique as the Florida Keys island chain it covers.

“The Keys are teeming with amazing diving, marine life and people who are passionate about protecting oceans,” said Mike Zimmer, the show's executive producer. “‘Destination Dive’ shares their stories in unique and compelling ways.

“Our production is truly the next generation of dive shows and it's all about protecting our oceans,” added Zimmer.

Among other topics, first-episode segments cover coral restoration,

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## Key Largo supermarket proposal draws objections

BY LEE WARDLAW  
Keys Citizen

Plans to build a supermarket with adjacent affordable housing in Key Largo drew opposition during a recent public meeting presented by the developer.

The property owner, Cemex/Singletary Concrete Products Inc., is seeking to build a 64,000-square-foot grocery and liquor store at the old Cemex plant in Tavernier, along with 82 affordable housing units at the back end of the parcel at 92501 Overseas Highway.

The corporation is asking the Monroe County Commission to amend the county's land use district zoning map to create a special commercial overlay that would allow up to 70,000 square feet of commercial retail space in an area

where no more than 10,000 square feet is currently allowed.

The forum-style community meeting drew a large crowd and stirred up a hot debate at the Murray E. Nelson Government and Cultural Center, with public comment from several residents living in the neighborhood bordering the proposed mixed-use commercial property.

Many from the community expressed concerns that the development's impact would be wide-ranging and harmful to the Tavernier community.

“There are people who will be impacted by this development, and we are here to support them in their efforts to actually stop the overlay,” said Dottie

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Dottie Moses, president of the Island of Key Largo Federation of Homeowner Association, characterized the applicant's request as ‘spot zoning’ that is out of character with Tavernier and fails to comply with the town's master plan.

LEE WARDLAW/  
Keys Citizen