

LYNETTE WILLIAMS AUSTIN

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January 27, 2003

Mrs. M. Athalie Range, Chair
Board of Trustees
Virginia Key Beach Park Trust
3550 Biscayne Boulevard, Suite 510
Miami, FL 33137

Dear Mrs. Range:

I have sincerely appreciated the opportunity to serve as the Executive Director of the Virginia Key Beach Park Trust for the past one and one half years. As I indicated in my application and during the interview process for this position, I viewed this as an extraordinary opportunity to share in the restoration and preservation of such a special place in my own personal history. Therefore, it was not a responsibility taken lightly; rather, I understood the Executive Director's position to be a most important role. Further, the future impact that this project will have on the City of Miami, especially the African-American community, I fully embraced.

However, as a result of the meeting of the Executive Committee on January 20, 2003, at your request I am resigning as Executive Director of the Trust, effective Friday, January 31, 2003, as directed. Once again, it is in the spirit of cooperation and my very committed desire to see that this project is indeed successful, that I am doing so. Because I am forever resolved to see all the components of this project become a reality, I will be available to assist you, your new staff and the community in any and all ways possible as you so desire.

I would like to thank those Board Trustees who supported me for this position and during my tenure and those whose support I may have garnered during my employment here. The task of moving this project forward while also building an organization was indeed daunting and at times overwhelming; yet many significant accomplishments were achieved. Key accomplishments include:

- ◆ Completion of survey of the Park and commencement of the renovation process of existing buildings and water and sewer upgrades;
- ◆ Coordination of Army Corps of Engineers projects with the City of Miami;
- ◆ Initiation of the series of site planning community meetings to guide the future of the Park;
- ◆ Receipt of \$7,500 State grant to prepare a historic preservation plan for the Park;

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- ◆ Receipt of \$30,000 Dade Community Foundation "Miamians Working Together" grant which will engage youth from diverse backgrounds in the site planning process;
- ◆ Submission of 5 grant proposals requesting over \$1 million dollars to support the renovation of the Park and community outreach efforts of the Trust;
- ◆ Placement of the Park on the National Register of Historic Places and approval for the placement of a Florida Historical Marker at the Park;
- ◆ Received major print, television and radio coverage of our three event "Celebration" weekend;
- ◆ Conceived and successfully implemented the featured event of that weekend, "Senior/Senior Luncheon", which received coverage in all Neighbors sections of the Miami Herald;
- ◆ Hosted and sponsored over one dozen community events, including our "Hot Fun in the Summertime" family picnic and fun day, showcasing the Park to over 2,500 persons;
- ◆ Oversaw 10 major events held at the Park which hosted almost 30,000 persons;
- ◆ Began the Oral History Collection project, with the support of several schools as partners and an oversight Scholars Committee;
- ◆ Conducted two strategic planning sessions to guide the efforts of the Trust; and
- ◆ Developed a work program, job descriptions and hired staff to accomplish identified goals.

The minutes of our meeting of November 21, 2002 (as well as the 2003 Strategic Planning Session held on November 24 and 25, 2002 and our meeting of December 9, 2002) reflect the primary concerns and issues that I considered to be paramount to the progress of the Virginia Key Beach Park project. Essential throughout all of this dialogue was the reiteration of the necessity for the Board and staff to work as a united front to achieve our mission. I also noted that it was essential that the Board clearly understands and adheres to its role and recognizes that there should be a defined boundary between its role, my role as Executive Director and the supportive roles of staff. Imperative was the understanding that the Board needed to be supportive of my directives as they related to personnel matters and day-to-day operations of the management and administration of the Trust.

I tendered my resignation to you at that time because I did not feel that the Board understood the importance of the distinction between the roles and operations of the Board and the Trust staff, who were directly responsive to my immediate supervision and guidance. If my leadership was in anyway impeding the progress of the project, I requested at that time that we discuss what you considered to be issues that needed resolving. Further, you refused my resignation and I took that to be a vote of continued support for the management and direction to date of the Project. Therefore, it was in that spirit of understanding, that I remained - committed to reevaluating the current staff abilities and needs and increasing and refocusing my efforts to strengthen the organization and move forward. In an e-mail sent to Vice Chair Gene Tinnie on January 9, 2003, I relayed that many of the issues, that had plagued the administration in the past, were continuing to occur and that we needed to address constructive ways to reestablish "trust" between Trustees and the administrative team, as the new year began.

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I feel that I must speak directly to the management of personnel. You should know that the people selected to work with us on this project were hired based on several criteria, including strong credentials and experience exhibited on resumes and, in most instances, on the outcome of the interview process. Those who were subsequently relieved of their duties were dismissed because they could not or would not embrace the project, exhibit the team spirit and demonstrate the work ethics required to successfully execute assignments critical to operations and progress. The Board shared in the erosion of staff relationships and morale by continuing to participate in personnel matters. Case in point, a request by a subordinate staff member to change a title to reflect a position which was neither currently suited for this office nor where the responsibilities inherent therein a part of our work here. A Committee of the Board granted this request and forwarded it to another Committee that subsequently ratified this change without consulting with the Executive Director. I make these statements because I think it is important to note for the future, that whomever you select to lead you in accomplishing the mission of this organization will have the same difficulties if the Board continues to operate without understanding the importance of the delineation between staff/Board responsibilities.

Additionally, for the future success of Trust operations, I would strongly recommend workshops on several levels including: a complete understanding of the implementation of the Sunshine Laws under the State of Florida Constitution (violations of which I might add, are punishable by law); the legal ramifications of basic Board/staff relationships and roles; team building and personnel management, administration and supervision. I would also recommend that the Board immediately review imminent projects and deadlines to ensure continuity on current matters. At a later date I will be providing a transition report detailing the same, along with other recommendations, to assist you as well.

As I have often shared, Virginia Key Beach Park will forever occupy a most special place in my memories and I look forward to it reclaiming its place as Miami's "urban jewel." It has been my pleasure to have served you and this community and I want to thank you once again for that opportunity. I wish the Trust much future success in this important endeavor.

Sincerely,



Lynette Williams Austin

cc: Board of Trustees, Virginia Key Beach Park Trust
The Honorable Mayor and Commissioners, City of Miami
The Honorable Carrie Meek
The Honorable Barbara Carey-Shuler
City Manager and Staff
City Attorney and Staff
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