



From the desk of Commissioner Robert S. Weinroth

Text to 911 Emergency Service

It's been one year since the inception of this emergency service, and I am pleased to report that hundreds of county residents have received help using the service.

Since the program started last June, emergency responders have responded to emergency text messages about 25 times a month instead of telephone calls to 911.

Text to 911 guidelines:

- “Call if you can – Text if you can’t.”
- Do not include anyone other than 911 in the text message.
- Always provide your location. Text to 911 location information is not equal to current wireless-location technology.
- When communicating with 911, use plain language. No abbreviations, shortcuts, slang or emojis.
- Photos and videos cannot be sent to 911 at this time.
- Language interpretation is not currently available when texting 911.
- As with all text messages, texts to 911 may take longer to receive, may get out of order, or may not be received at all.
- Text to 911 is an enhancement to the existing 911 system and is *not intended to replace traditional emergency voice calls*. Text messages are routed to the appropriate Palm Beach County 911 center in a designated queue.

The benefits to the public are significant especially in cases where the caller cannot communicate verbally. Examples of Text to 911 scenarios include an individual who is deaf, hard of hearing, or has a speech disability; someone who is in a situation

where it is not safe to place a voice call to 911; or a medical emergency that renders the person incapable of speech.

County Library Ends Overdue Fines and Adds Passport Services

I am pleased to report that Board of County Commissioners recently voted to eliminate overdue fines for late materials from the Palm Beach County Library System starting October 1.

If a library cardholder doesn't return an item within seven days after the due date, the replacement cost of the item will be charged. When the item is returned, however, the charge is waived.

The library system will also raise the block limit, the point at which borrowers are prevented from taking out items with accrued fees, from \$5 to \$25.

These new initiatives are the result of a national library trend in support of the library's core values of equitable service, support of early literacy and free access to information.

In addition, the county is currently working with the U.S. Department of State Passport Services to establish an acceptance facility at the main library on Summit Boulevard in West Palm Beach. Once the service begins, the facility will accept and execute passports applications for first-time applications and minors. The service is expected to begin in early 2020.

To learn more about the county library system, please visit www.pbclibrary.org.

New Artificial Reef includes Mermaids

Part of the allure for many of our tourists is the county's pristine shoreline. In addition to the abundant activities our coastline offers, Palm Beach County is considered a top destination for snorkelers and divers due to its exquisite reefs.

As your "coastal commissioner," I am dedicated to protecting habitats along our coast with ongoing initiatives such as the artificial reef program. These man-made habitats provide food, shelter, protection and spawning areas for hundreds of fish species and other marine and estuarine organisms. They also provide relief for the natural reefs which have shown a decline in marine organisms over the years due to user pressure, hurricanes and coastal development.

Over the years, the county has deployed over 45 vessels, 82,000 tons of concrete, and 130,000 tons of limestone boulders in offshore waters to create artificial reefs which mimic natural reef systems.

The latest artificial reef, deployed south of the Lake Worth Inlet, consists of 100 tons of concrete donated by GL homes and 18 sculptures created and donated by Boynton Beach-based artist Chris O'Hare. The project, "1000 Mermaids," features mermaid sculptures, abstract coral reefs, poetry and a selfie station where divers can pose with a mermaid tail. The site is good for divers with any level of experience because the depth reaches just 45 feet.

For more information, on the county's artificial reef program, visit <http://discover.pbcgov.org/erm/Pages/Reefs.aspx>.

Vaping in County Playgrounds Banned

The Board of County Commissioners recently prohibited vaping in playgrounds at county parks. The ordinance prohibits the use of vapor-generating electronic devices (including e-cigarettes) at county-operated public park playgrounds.

This is in response to recent reports including one from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that states the use of e-cigarettes is unsafe for children, teens, and young adults.

Any individual in violation of the new ordinance will receive a civil citation for a first occurrence with a fine of \$50 plus court costs.

Nonprofit Highlight: Faulk Center for Counseling

The mission of the Faulk Center for Counseling is to promote emotional well-being through a variety of free and low-cost programs for counseling, therapy and support in a safe and confidential environment.

Since 1973, the center has provided a variety of counseling services to people of all ages at its facility on Boca Rio Road and at outreach locations throughout Palm Beach and Broward counties.

Mental health services are provided by graduate students pursuing master's or doctoral degrees in psychology, social work or mental health counseling, as well as clinical volunteers who hold degrees in a mental health field. All graduate students and volunteers are trained and supervised by the center's staff of licensed psychologists.

For more information on the Faulk Center for Counseling, visit <http://faulkcenterforcounseling.org>.