

City of Miami Beach

City Manager

Summary of Articles

Jay Boodheshwar

(Note: Articles Follow In Reverse Chronicle Order)

Articles

- *Wealthy Seniors Jump to Front of Line for COVID Vaccinations*, South Florida Sun Sentinel, January 7, 2021.
- *Palm Beach Officials: Preparation Meant Town Was Ready Once COVID-19 Vaccines Became Available*, Palm Beach Daily News, January 4, 2021.
- *Hurricane Dorian: Palm Beach Preparing for Weekend*, Daytona Beach News-Journal, August 29, 2019.
- *Town of Palm Beach Rescinds Ban on Plastic Bags and Polystyrene Containers*, CBS 12 News, August 20, 2019.
- *Town of Palm Beach Has Protections in Place to Combat Ransomware Attacks*, Palm Beach Civic Association, July 10, 2019.
- *Palm Beach United Way Salutes Outgoing Chairman Jay Boodheshwar*, Palm Beach Post, April 24, 2019.
- *Council Agrees to Slow Pace of Some Capital Improvements Amid Probes*, Palm Beach Daily News, April 1, 2012.
- *Jay Boodheshwar, Recreation Department Director, Lives His Values, Knows Worth of Hard Work*, Palm Beach Daily News, February 21, 2011.

Websites

- Friends & RPCVs of Guyana - https://www.guyfrog.org/our_team/jay-boodheshwar/.
- Town of Palm Beach - <https://www.townofpalmbeach.com/396/Deputy-Town-Manager>
- LinkedIn - <https://www.linkedin.com/in/jay-boodheshwar-ba045b4/>

Videos

- 2016 Town of Palm Beach United Way Annual Meeting - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ox99zn0UITg>

WEALTHY SENIORS JUMP TO FRONT OF LINE FOR COVID VACCINATIONS

SOUTH FLORIDA SUN SENTINEL

David Fleshler and Lisa J. Huriash
January 7, 2021

The advantages of wealth have allowed some seniors to skip the lines, delays and websites crashes that have plagued Florida's COVID vaccination process.

The town of Palm Beach, home to billionaires, CEOs and President Trump, obtained its own supply of the vaccines to distribute to its residents, the only municipality in the county to do so.

A five-star West Palm Beach nursing home has invited wealthy board members to receive vaccines distributed to the home for residents and staff, according to the Washington Post. And some doctors who run concierge practices, which charge high annual fees to provide more personalized service, have obtained their own supplies to distribute to patients.

Dr. Leslie Beitsch, former deputy health secretary for Florida and currently professor of medicine at Florida State University, described distribution of vaccinations to nursing home board members as "really reprehensible."

The favoritism showed to board members, as well as the advantages to Palm Beach residents and clients of exclusive medical practices, illustrate the existing divide in the delivery of medical services in the United States, he said.

"It's like everything in our health care system — who has the best insurance, who has the easiest access," he said. "And like other things in our health care system, the people who have the resources are the people who are less exposed to the disease or less likely to be adversely affected."

Palm Beach obtained its doses through a program available to any city or entity that can qualify.

Richard Radcliffe, executive director of the Palm Beach County League of Cities, said the Town of Palm Beach was the only municipality in the county that has obtained vaccines to distribute to its residents.

He said he didn't see favoritism at work here. Rather, it was that the town was first to submit the lengthy and demanding application to do so, which requires proof that the town could handle the administration of the vaccine. Similar applications are done for programs such as flu shots, he said.

Although perfectly legal, the exclusive vaccination operation shows the advantage of living in a wealthy town that can afford to offer such benefits to its residents.

“Any city can apply and go through the process,” Radcliffe said. “Palm Beach has the resources to do this.”

Jay Boodheshwar, Palm Beach’s deputy town manager, said the town has received 1,000 doses, of which about 800 will have been administered to residents by the end of the week.

He said the town was able to get set up quickly because it planned for it and already had the experience and authorization to issue medication to residents through a closed point of distribution, or POD, going back to the 2009 swine flu pandemic.

Starting about two months ago, the town’s fire-rescue leaders set up procedures, obtained scheduling software and trained workers to be ready as soon as the town received vaccines, he said.

“We understand that many other fire departments across Palm Beach County have signed up for the POD program,” he said in an email. “We think this is great! If more fire departments can become distribution sites, it could lessen the burden on the county health department and get more vulnerable residents vaccinated as the supply of vaccines begin to pick up each week.”

In another example of the advantages of wealth in the era of COVID, MorseLife Health System, a senior living center in West Palm Beach, made vaccines available to wealthy board members, even though the vaccines had been intended for residents and staff, according to an article this week in the Washington Post.

The board members, which included members of the Palm Beach Country Club, qualified for vaccinations, in that they were at least 65 years old. But the vast majority of Florida’s seniors have had to attempt to get through jammed phone lines or navigate overwhelmed websites for a chance at a scarce appointment, with many likely to have to wait weeks or months.

Board members of MorseLife Health System, however, received phone calls and written invitations from Keith Myers, the company’s chief executive, to come to the home, which promises “Five star senior living,” for the precious injections, the Post reported.

For example, the Post reported that Robert Fromer, a retired New York lawyer whose family foundation gave \$45,000 to MorseLife, said he and his wife received shots there in a process he described as well run.

“All I heard from the people who were there was that it was remarkably appreciated,” he told the Post.

The company did not respond to a call left at its corporate offices.

Jason Mahon, spokesman for the Florida Department of Health, said the state is looking into the issuance of vaccines at that nursing home.

“We will certainly look into the situation,” he said.

Gov. Ron DeSantis’s office issued a statement saying the state was investigating.

“Governor DeSantis has been extremely clear that vaccine should only be administered to Florida’s seniors 65 and older, frontline health care workers, and long-term care facility residents and staff,” the statement said. “We are investigating this situation and will hold any bad actors accountable.”

And on Thursday, Florida Sen. Rick Scott issued a call on Twitter for a full Congressional investigation.

“It is absolutely disgusting and immoral that anyone would take vaccines intended for nursing homes to distribute them to their friends. I am calling for a full Congressional investigation into reports of improper vaccine distribution by MorseLife Health System,” he tweeted.

“This type of gross mismanagement will not be tolerated,” he said in the tweet.

At MDVIP, a national network of high-end doctors who charge annual fees to provide more personalized care, two South Florida physicians have obtained doses of the vaccine for their patients.

“Like many other clinicians in South Florida, several MDVIP-affiliated primary care physicians have applied to the Florida Department of Health to receive vaccines,” said Nancy Udell, spokeswoman for MDVIP. “We are aware that two doctors in the network, who applied in early December, were recently approved by the Florida Department of Health to administer the vaccine to their patients who are 65 and older, per the current state guidelines.”

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MDVIP’s South Florida physicians charge annual membership fees that typically run from \$1,650 to \$2,200, in addition to charges for specific medical issues. The Boca doctor rented a special freezer to protect the vaccines.

Experts say these advantages for the wealthy highlight both the basic flaws in the nation’s health delivery system and the troubled execution of the COVID vaccine rollout.

“Favoritism should not be permitted,” said Dr. Aileen Marty, distinguished university professor of infectious diseases at Florida International University’s Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine.

Distribution should be centralized in each county, she said, with a single phone number and website, and decisions on who gets vaccinated based on their risk and the vaccine’s availability.

“The current system is flawed,” she said. “The vaccine distribution needs to follow the situation in the community, with locations with the most community spread and with the higher numbers of individuals who are at an increased risk of mortality.”

PALM BEACH OFFICIALS: PREPARATION MEANT TOWN WAS READY ONCE COVID-19 VACCINES BECAME AVAILABLE

PALM BEACH DAILY NEWS

Adriana Delgado

January 4, 2021

When the Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases Anthony Fauci said in September that five of the six vaccine candidates were already in phase 3 trials, Palm Beach officials and staff got to work.

And two months after Palm Beach Fire Rescue Chief Darrel Donatto told town council members he was very optimistic about the town having the first COVID-19 vaccines as early as December, the town sent out an alert on Thursday announcing that residents 65 and older could now make an appointment online to receive the first Moderna vaccines starting Tuesday.

Thirty minutes after the announcement was posted, all 800 appointments were gone.

As part of preparing for Tuesday, Donatto asked Town Council President Maggie Zeidman if she would be willing to be a "guinea pig."

She agreed because Donatto told her it would also serve to motivate residents who might doubt the safety of the vaccine, said Zeidman, who received the vaccine last week.

"I'm fine. My arm was sore for a little bit but ever so mildly. I would say it was absolutely nothing," she said. "I didn't want to get it because I felt I was jumping ahead of people. But Darrel (Donatto) reminded me that I was in the group anyway." Zeidman is 67.

Responding to questions about how the town was able to secure vaccines so quickly when other municipalities have yet to announce a distribution plan, Deputy Town Manager Jay Boodheshwar explained that there was already an infrastructure and a system in place to distribute the vaccines.

"There is scheduling, training of personnel and a lot of prep work that needs to be done to administer vaccines. We have been working on preparing to be a closed distribution pod for at least a couple of months," he said. "Paramedics have been trained, and software was procured. When we got word vaccines were available, we needed to demonstrate that if we were provided, we would be able to administer them ASAP."

Zeidman said Donatto and Division Chief of EMS Sean Baker had been ready to implement a registry and distribution plan, which was first implemented during the 2009 H1N1 epidemic.

“This vaccine has to be used in a certain time frame after it is defrosted and the vial is open. They (Donatto and Baker) were able to demonstrate they had that plan in place. You want to be able to hand out a group of vaccines; but you have to have a plan or otherwise, they just sit there,” she said. “It’s not because we’re rich and powerful. It’s because we’re old, and we were ready.”

Vaccines will be administered at the South Fire Station, 2185 S. Ocean Blvd., from 9 a.m. to noon and 1 to 4 p.m. Tuesday and Friday; and at St. Edwards Parrish Hall, 142 N. County Road, from 9 a.m. to noon and 1 to 4 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday.

As of Monday, the town reported 355 COVID-19 cases, an increase of 8.2% or 27 more cases than last week, and 12 deaths.

Boodheshwar told the Daily News that people who signed up would be screened to make sure they were town residents. Residency status will be verified before appointment dates and checked again on the day of the appointment when people will have to show a proof.

Boodheshwar said there had been about a dozen non-residents that tried to sign up, but those appointments had been automatically cancelled.

The town is working on plans for a second round of vaccinations starting Jan. 11, but Boodheshwar said there was no guarantee the town would receive vaccines on a weekly basis.

“Our responsibility, which we’ve taken quite seriously, is to be prepared and to administer vaccines as they become available. But we’re at the mercy of the county and the state in regard to actual vaccine supply,” he said. “Every week we will request vaccines, and we’ll see what we’re granted. We expect to have another round next week, but we still don’t know how many appointment slots we can give out.”

Boodheshwar said frontline workers like fire rescue, EMTs and first responders had already been vaccinated or were set to be vaccinated soon, but he didn’t have exact numbers of how many had been vaccinated.

Some police officers working with the vaccine distribution program, also will be eligible to be inoculated, Boodheshwar said.

Only residents of the town age 65 and older are eligible for the first phase of vaccinations under an executive order issued by Gov. Ron DeSantis in December, which restricts COVID-19 vaccinations in a first phase to nursing home residents and staff, people 65 and older, medical workers, and anyone they deem “extremely vulnerable” to COVID-19.

Zeidman said she was “very pleased” that the vaccination process was finally underway. “This is going to save a lot of people eventually from getting the virus. It’s important because we have a very vulnerable population all housed in a very small area, that has to be recognized,” she said.

She cautioned that mask wearing and other COVID-19 precautions still need to be practiced even after people have been vaccinated.

“You’re going to have to wear a mask even seven weeks after vaccination. With the Moderna vaccine, you have to get a second dose four weeks later and then wait three weeks to get to the 94.5% immunity,” Zeidman said. “This is the largest research study that has been done and no one know how long you have immunity after those seven weeks. We are the research subjects that will answer that question.”

This vaccine needs to be in people’s arms, not the freezer, she added. “We are a vulnerable population with a mean age of 68. We are in the middle of a pandemic with cases going through the ceiling and a viral variant that makes the virus more easily transmitted,” she said.

HURRICANE DORIAN: PALM BEACH PREPARING FOR WEEKEND

DAYTONA BEACH NEWS-JOURNAL

William Kelly
August 29, 2019

Palm Beach officials are keeping a watchful eye on Hurricane Dorian, which is expected to gain strength before slamming into the Florida or Georgia Coast by Monday.

Palm Beach is within the cone of uncertainty for the storm's path. An 11 a.m. update showed the storm could be a low-end Category 4 hurricane on a collision course with Florida.

"We're in an enhanced monitoring phase right now," Deputy Town Manager Jay Boodheshwar said today. "There's still a lot of uncertainty right now, especially with [Dorian] three or four days out" from landfall, he said. "We are still cautiously optimistic the Bermuda high may pull the storm into a more northern trajectory."

It is too early to know if an evacuation order will be necessary, he said. "Obviously [evacuation] is a possibility. Being a barrier island, we are extra sensitive to giving ample notice so people do not feel rushed."

Police are recommending that residents and businesses send their employees and household staff to the crime scene lobby at the Police Department to obtain Town of Palm Beach Voluntary ID cards.

Hours have been extended to 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. today, and 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Friday.

If an evacuation order is issued, police will establish checkpoints at all entry points to the town and the ID cards will be needed to get back onto the island.

After the storm, the town will evaluate conditions on the island in order to determine when it is safe for people to return.

The town has started a Hurricane Re-entry Pass program. Once it is safe to return, pass-holders can use dedicated traffic lanes when approaching security checkpoints. Only residents and businesses displaying a re-entry placard will be able to use pass-holder lanes.

The placards can be obtained in person at the Crime Scene Unit or on line through the town web site. All applicants needs to provide two documents proving residency or business status. There is a limit of two placards per residence or business.

There were no plans as of Thursday morning to activate the Emergency Operations Center, Boodheshwar said. The center will be activated if the town expects the hurricane to make a direct hit here, which would trigger a major recovery effort, he said.

Public Works Crews are making sure generators are operational, fuel tanks are topped off, and storm drains and catch basins are clear.

“Every department has a checklist of things we are doing,” Boodheshwar said.

Effective at the close of business Thursday, the town is asking all residents and businesses to suspend trimming and placing yard debris in stash areas or in the public right-of-way until after the storm has passed.

Waste placed curbside before the possible landfall of the storm will hinder collection and disposal efforts, and diminish storm drainage capabilities.

The Town may suspend all garbage, recycle, and yard waste collections prior to the storm and until feasible and safe to do so after the storm.

Throngs of shoppers were at Publix Thursday stocking up on water, food, batteries and other supplies. The store was limiting water sales to no more than four gallons per customer, but did not appear in immediate danger of running out of bottle water.

Island Animal Hospital was also very busy, with people bringing in pets for medication, vaccinations, or for health certificates so the animals could join them on flights out of town.

TOWN OF PALM BEACH RESCINDS BAN ON PLASTIC BAGS AND POLYSTYRENE CONTAINERS

CBS 12 NEWS

Kristen Chapman
August 20, 2019

Residents can once again buy and use plastic bags in the Town of Palm Beach.

On June 2019, the Palm Beach Town Council unanimously voted to ban plastic bags and polystyrene containers throughout the city. However, that changed during a meeting just several months later.

In July 2019, the town received a letter from the Florida Retail Federation, stating the ban violates Florida Statute Ch. 403.7033 and Ch. 500.90. The Federation warned Palm Beach that if it moves forward, then it will sue.

The councilors at first wanted to fight against the organization, but then learned Coral Gables, a city also fighting to ban plastic bags, lost a case against the state of Florida that same month.

Jay Boodheshwar, the Deputy Town Manager, explained, "That left our council really with no other option at this moment in time."

So in August 2019, town councilors voted to rescind the ban on plastic bags and polystyrene containers.

Even after the decision, the city says it still plans to fight and push for change.

Right now it's planning to create a coalition with other cities like Coral Gables and St. Augustine, who also want to move forward with the ban, to potentially take on the state together to make it happen.

"There's unanimous support from our elected officials to try to push for change not only for this community, but all Florida communities," said Boodheshwar.

For now, since Florida Statute does allow the banning of single-use plastic straws, Palm Beach will enact a ban on those effective at the end of the year.

The Loggerhead Marine Life Center also agrees with these bans.

Dr. Charles Manire is a Veterinarian at the center, and he's been working to save turtles for the last 30 years. He says the plastic problem is a bigger issue now than ever before.

"30 years ago when I started looking at those turtles we would see plastic occasionally, now we see it every single time," he shared, "The ones that are succumbing to the plastic, at least in our area, are the little tiny ones, the ones that are just hatched out in the first six months. They're eating little tiny shards

of plastic. Each one of these tiny vials is a plastic from one single turtle. And that's all it takes to kill them."

While Palm Beach works to enact change on a local level, Loggerhead is also doing its part to help reduce the trash found on its 9 1/2 miles of beaches.

In addition to hosting trash cleanups, it announced a new program to partner with local restaurants for a new "Blue Cable Restaurant Program."

It aims to work with places like Tommy Bahamas, Hogsnappers and Papa Kwans, to help them reduce their reliance on single-use plastic.

"We created the problem and we need to do something to stop the problem," said Dr. Manire.

TOWN OF PALM BEACH HAS PROTECTIONS IN PLACE TO COMBAT RANSOMWARE ATTACKS

PALM BEACH CIVIC ASSOCIATION

Michele Dargan
July 10, 2019

With some municipalities paying a ransom to get their information back during a recent flurry of crippling computer attacks, Deputy Town Manager Jay Boodheshwar said that Palm Beach has multiple layers of cybersecurity protections in place.

In the past few weeks, the neighboring city of Riviera Beach and the North Florida town of Lake City paid a ransom to retrieve the information from their paralyzed computer systems. Riviera Beach paid \$600,000; while Lake City paid \$500,000. In both cases, the hackers demanded the ransom be paid in bitcoin, a cryptocurrency that is hard to trace.

Key Biscayne is the third – and most recent – Florida town to be hit by a ransomware attack during the month of June. The incident happened on June 23 and all network systems were up and running within three days.

Mr. Boodheshwar said the cities that paid the ransoms may not have a strong and extensive back up system.

“If you pay a ransom, there is no guarantee you’re going to get the key code or that the key code will work,” he said. “Sometimes you never get the key at all or sometimes it doesn’t work, or it only opens partial files. Sometimes they will give you some information back and then ask for more money. I can understand the desperation to retrieve files that weren’t backed up; but, you’re basically negotiating with criminals.”

In September 2016, the Town of Palm Beach had two ransomware attacks within a two-week span.

“We lost a little bit of information,” Mr. Boodheshwar said. “We worked with the FBI when we had our situation and the FBI strongly advised against paying the ransom. We’ve improved our backup so that if there is some type of intrusion, we simply restore to the previous day. We may lose a couple of hours, but that’s the difference.”

Since those cyber attacks, the town has installed software that creates multiple barriers into the network, Mr. Boodheshwar said. In addition, the town trains staff on how to spot malicious, phishing emails. They look like legitimate emails, but they are from computer hackers looking to hijack the system.

“We also hire a white hat attacker,” he said. “He’s an attacker, but he’s a good guy and he finds the holes in our system. He will write up a report and we close up those holes.”

There have been dozens of cities, large and small, hit by ransomware attacks across the United States in the past few years. Among them: Atlanta, Baltimore, and Cleveland.

Professor Patrick Traynor, co-director of the Florida Institute for Cybersecurity Research at the University of Florida, says that extensive backups are essential to municipalities.

“Municipal officials should treat cyber threats like ransomware the same way they would consider a direct strike from a tornado,” Prof. Traynor said. “As such, the most critical things that for municipalities to do right now is to ensure that they are creating comprehensive backups and have a disaster recovery plan. It’s critical that administrators go beyond checking a box and saying, “we are ready.” Instead, they need to regularly attempt to restore from backups, to know which systems are actually backed up (and which aren’t), and to know who is responsible for what steps when disasters (be they fire, an earthquake, or ransomware) indeed strike.”

Regarding cities paying a ransom to get their information back, Prof. Traynor said, “There is no Better Business Bureau for ransomware victims, and therefore no guarantee that paying the attackers will indeed decrypt your files. There is also no guarantee that the attacker will not attack again after the first incident is resolved. The only sustainable plan is to put protections in place so that you do not need to pay the attacker if they are successful in their efforts.”

Harvey L. Poppel is chairman of the Civic Association’s Long Range Planning Committee. In his opinion, the most important thing is having an outside party test the strength of the cybersecurity.

“Every organization must have an outside party periodically check out the fidelity of the system and it can’t be pre-arranged,” Mr. Poppel said. “I can’t highlight enough the importance of an unannounced cybersecurity system.”

PALM BEACH UNITED WAY SALUTES OUTGOING CHAIRMAN JAY BOODHESHWAR PALM BEACH POST

Wendy Rhodes
April 24, 2019

It was an afternoon of foresight and reflection Tuesday when the Town of Palm Beach United Way celebrated its outgoing chairman Jay Boodheshwar, who has reached his three-year term limit.

“Getting to better know our volunteers and donors over the last few years has reassured me that our organization has a bright future ahead and we are in great hands,” said Boodheshwar, who has worked with the organization since 2007.

Boodheshwar, who is the deputy town manager, spoke to an audience of about 80 people at the United Way’s annual meeting at The Breakers. It was the same room that, in 2016, he accepted the chairman position and shared details about his personal journey.

“Sharing my story publicly for the first time with my parents in this room was one of my great life experiences,” he said of talking about migrating from Guyana in 1979 as a “scared little 6-year-old boy.”

To commemorate Boodheshwar’s last meeting as chairman, board members surprised him with a pencil drawing that depicted him wearing his “Live United” T-shirt in front of a colorful, tiled background.

“I feel like Christmas,” Boodheshwar said, tearing off the crinkly brown paper covering the portrait.

Evan Johnson, a 23-year-old artist with the Arc of Palm Beach County Community Living Program, was commissioned to create the drawing. A United Way partner agency since 1964, Arc provides services, education and advocacy for children and adults with developmental disabilities. Johnson, who has Down syndrome, and Boodheshwar held up the framed portrait as the audience applauded and cheered.

Later, shaking hands with incoming chairwoman Mary Freitas, Boodheshwar said, “It’s been my honor and privilege to serve as your chairman these past three years, and now it is time to pass the baton.”

Freitas, who has served on the board since 2010, closed out with some final words about her predecessor.

“Thank you so much, Jay, but don’t go anywhere, the bar isn’t even open yet,” she joked about the reception afterward..

“Jay is an inspirational leader and a true community advocate,” she summed up. “He cares deeply about the work we’re doing, the agencies we’re supporting and the people we’re serving.”

COUNCIL AGREES TO SLOW PACE OF SOME CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS AMID PROBES

PALM BEACH DAILY NEWS

William Kelly
April 1, 2012

The Town Council decided Tuesday to slow down the pace of some scheduled capital improvements.

Acting Public Works Director Jay Boodheshwar said it was necessary to delay some projects while police and administrative investigations continue into alleged criminal activity connected to the procurement of some construction contracts.

The investigations were launched after town Construction Manager Steven White's arrest on April 15 on charges that he solicited and received bribes from contractors for steering work to them. Three contractors also have been arrested in connection with the case.

There are 48 projects identified for design and/or construction this year, and 30 of those are either under construction or will continue as planned, Boodheshwar said.

Seven other projects scheduled for design only in 2010 will occur later in the year, but will be completed in preparation for the 2011 season, he said.

Eleven other projects were deferred until 2011.

Major construction won't be impacted. Much of the delayed work involves improvements to force mains, pump stations and the like.

Three of the Public Works Department's leaders, Director Paul Brazil, Town Engineer James Bower and Assistant Director Chuck Langley, have been on administrative leave with pay since April 15. The three were not accused of wrongdoing, but were placed on leave during the investigations because they each had a role in supervising White, Town Manager Peter Elwell has said.

Their absence has temporarily diminished the department's ability to manage its construction workload, according to Boodheshwar.

Additional modifications to the construction schedule may be required once the town's administration and police investigations conclude, and procedural changes are recommended, Boodheshwar said.

JAY BOODHESHWAR, RECREATION DEPARTMENT DIRECTOR, LIVES HIS VALUES, KNOWS WORTH OF HARD WORK

PALM BEACH DAILY NEWS

John Nelander
February 21, 2011

Jay Boodheshwar has plenty on his plate, searching for ways to run the Palm Beach Recreation Department more efficiently on a leaner budget.

He's a confident professional and enjoys talking shop, especially rising to the challenge of running local government services in a time of financial crisis. His vision for Palm Beach recreational services is clear-cut: "Work harder and work smarter, and be as efficient as possible without compromising services."

But in spare moments between his work on town recreation issues, the Palm Beach United Way, and volunteering in his own Royal Palm Beach community, Boodheshwar has taken on a much more personal mission — trying to make sense of a world in perpetual religious and racial conflict.

"The older I get, the more fascinated I am, trying to understand how the world got to be the way it is today," he says. "I'm attracted to ancient cultures and the history of mankind — how we started and how we moved. And why."

It's an interest that reflects his personal journey in so many ways. Boodheshwar was born in Guyana, a tiny tropical outpost on the northern coast of South America that has the unfortunate distinction of being infamous — in the United States, at least — as the site of the 1978 mass suicides of the Jim Jones cult.

Boodheshwar's parents packed up the family and immigrated to the United States a year later, following one of his uncles who had attended an American college.

"One by one, my father's brothers and sisters moved to the States," says Boodheshwar, who left Guyana when he was 6 years old. "They sold everything and took a big risk, moving here literally with a suitcase of old clothes and three kids. It was tough early on."

Culture shock

Guyana, a nation of 800,000, is considered a Caribbean country. Its official language is a form of Creole English, which doesn't translate well in the United States. And the family moved to Cleveland in the fall, so even the weather was a shock.

The city had more people than the entire population of his family's native country. But they dug into the community and slowly adjusted.

"I remember the first car we had, the first TV we had," Boodheshwar says. "I remember first grade and it being scary. There's a cultural difference, and an educational difference. I've seen other relatives coming over here in middle school and high school, and that's really tough.

"I learned a lot of good things from my parents, like hard work and caring for other people. They also knew they had to take advantage of opportunity. As I got older, I was tempted to mess around as a teenager and as a college student, and not really focus on my studies.

"But I had a tremendous sense of guilt because my parents had sacrificed so much to get me to that point. I still live that today and try to instill those values into my own kids. I want to make sure they know how hard their grandparents had to work and how hard I had to work."

Embracing heritage

Like most kids, Boodheshwar was consumed with the idea of fitting in. Looking back, he says, that was the most challenging thing about living in the United States.

"As a child, you're very conscious of being different. And you're ashamed, to some degree, that you're different. You have a tendency like I did to suppress your culture and your background. But as an adult, I'm ashamed I did that. I've really embraced my heritage as I've gotten older."

All that started to change, he says, when he married his wife, Anne, 15 years ago. He began to celebrate his roots and look more closely at the whole issue of race. "When you break it down to the molecular level, it's silly. The religious strife and the racial tension — all of the conflict that exists is man-made."

Introspection hasn't hindered Boodheshwar's professional ambition. He had the good fortune of knowing, in his college freshman year, that he wanted to major in recreation administration at Bowling Green State University in Ohio. He stuck with it and never looked back.

After graduation, he took jobs building recreation programs in Bloomington, Ind., Munster, Ind., East Chicago, Ind., and Massillon, Ohio, before coming to Palm Beach.

Redefining 'recreation'

The East Chicago assignment may have been the toughest for Boodheshwar, newly married and just starting a family (he and Anne have two daughters). "It's politically and socially a suburb of Chicago. It was a thriving steel community, but now it's a devastated community, and politically corrupt.

"The word recreation means something different in every community. And in East Chicago the word recreation was literally the difference between gangs and no gangs, and sometimes life and death for some of the kids. My role was to professionalize and build up the department. It was a great experience and I'd do it all over again, but it was tough."

In East Chicago, he was an assistant recreation director under Kevin Briski, who recalls: “He was the only person I considered for that particular job. Jay’s a real forward thinking and progressive administrator, and he instinctively knew how to set the right tone.

“He opened the gyms at night for basketball, got some private donations, and worked to make sure kids and families had the ability to get out and play.”

Briski, now superintendent of parks in Madison, Wis., says people liked Boodheshwar because he’s “grounded and humble,” except for his golf game. “He talks a good game. He’s much less humble about his golf game than he is about his professional life.”

Florida alluring

After East Chicago, Massillon was a garden spot for Boodheshwar and his family. But when he heard about the job as recreation director in Palm Beach in 2006, the idea of warmer weather appealed to him.

“South Florida is a very diverse place, and there’s a lot to do,” he adds. “I had a young family, so I figured it would be good to make the move now, or otherwise it would be harder to pry them away.”

He heads a department of 18 full-time employees, which is 18 percent fewer people than when he arrived. When the town is finished “restructuring” the department, it will be 35 percent smaller. The contraction is taking place through attrition.

Finding his golf game

Boodheshwar was a high school basketball star. Luckily for his future in Palm Beach, his father-in-law introduced him to golf while he was still in Indiana. A natural athlete, he thought he had the game figured out after practicing on the driving range. When he got to the first tee, though, he topped the ball and it rolled 30 yards.

Now, he has a scorecard from his best round ever framed on his office wall. It’s an impressive two strokes under par. He routinely shoots in the high 70s and low 80s.

All of which ties in with stories about his father, who made a living as a farmer in Guyana. He then worked his way up in the manufacturing industry in Cleveland to become — without a formal education — a production supervisor and “go-to guy.”

“He’s a quick learner,” Boodheshwar says. “I think I picked a lot of that up from him.”

Jay Boodheshwar

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JAY BOODHESHWAR

JAY BOODHESHWAR emigrated with his parents, brother and sister from Guyana in 1979, as a 6-year old. He grew up in Cleveland, Ohio, graduating from Berea High School with honors. Mr. Boodheshwar earned a Bachelor's Degree in Parks and Recreation Administration from Bowling Green State University. He also earned his Master's Degree in Public Administration from Florida Atlantic University.

Mr. Boodheshwar currently serves the Town of Palm Beach, Florida, as the Deputy Town Manager. Before his service with the Town, Mr. Boodheshwar served as the Director of Parks and Recreation for the City of Massillon, Ohio, Assistant Director of Parks and Recreation for the City of East Chicago, Indiana, Youth Services Area Manager for the City of Bloomington, Indiana, and as Recreation Supervisor for the Town of Munster, Indiana. Mr. Boodheshwar has been active with numerous professional and non-profit boards. He currently serves as the Chairman of the Town of Palm Beach United Way, Vice-President of the Palm Beach County City Management Association, Director with the National Alliance for Youth Sports, and Member of the Florida Atlantic University School of Public Administration Alumni Society Board. He currently resides with his wife, Anne, in West Palm Beach, Florida, along with his two daughters.

Jay Boodheshwar, Deputy Town Manager



Jay Boodheshwar was appointed to serve the Town of Palm Beach as the Deputy Town Manager in January 2015. He is responsible for the supervision of the departments of Finance, Human Resources, Planning, Zoning & Building, Public Works, Recreation, as well as the Office of Information Technology and the Town Clerk's Office. He is also responsible for providing on-going assistance to the Town Manager in running the day-to-day affairs of the Town.

Mr. Boodheshwar first began his service to the Town of Palm Beach as Director of Recreation in January 2006 and was promoted to Director of Recreation and Special Projects in April 2010. Before his service with the Town, Mr. Boodheshwar served as the Director of Parks and Recreation for the City of Massillon, Ohio, Assistant Director of Parks and Recreation for the City of East Chicago, Indiana, Youth Services Area Manager for the City of Bloomington, Indiana, and as Recreation Supervisor for the Town of Munster, Indiana.

Mr. Boodheshwar earned a Bachelor's Degree in Parks and Recreation Administration from Bowling Green State University. He earned his Master's Degree in Public Administration from Florida Atlantic University and currently serves on the board of the university's Public Administration Alumni Society.

Mr. Boodheshwar has been very involved in professional associations throughout his career, holding several statewide offices with the Indiana Parks and Recreation Association and the Ohio Parks and Recreation Association, including service on the Board of Directors for both organizations. He currently serves as the Vice-President of the Palm Beach County City Management Association, and is

 active member of the
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Florida City and County Management Association, and the International City Management Association..

Mr. Boodheshwar has been very active as a volunteer in the communities that he has served. He currently serves on the Board of Directors for the National Alliance for Youth Sports and the Board of Trustees for the Town of Palm Beach United Way, as Chairman.



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Contact

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Top Skills

Recreation Planning

Budgets

Trails

Jay Boodheshwar

Deputy Town Manager - Town of Palm Beach
West Palm Beach

Experience

Town of Palm Beach

15 years 3 months

Deputy Town Manager

January 2015 - Present (6 years 3 months)

Director of Recreation and Special Projects

January 2006 - January 2015 (9 years 1 month)

Education

Florida Atlantic University

Master of Public Administration (MPA)

Bowling Green State University

Recreation and Park Administration