



Dolphins camp (Day 9):
Skylar Thompson throws first
interception; plus stock up,...



Ira Winderman: Will Summer
of FOMO get best of the
Heat?



The painful leg
building: Behir
under lock and

ADVERTISEMENT

VIEWPOINTS

Why the city of Delray Beach lost my \$2.4 million donation to Old School Square | Opinion

By Margaret Blume

Special to the Sun Sentinel • Sep 03, 2021 at 10:32 am



Thank you for supporting our journalism. This article is available exclusively for our subscribers, who help fund our work at the Sun Sentinel.

 Expand



Old School Square, formerly the Delray Beach Center for the arts, boasted nearly 520,000 visitors in 2018. It's now the subject of controversy after the Delray Beach City Commission voted to end a contract with the nonprofit that runs the facility. (Courtesy, Old School Square)

Listen to this article



I am the private donor who gifted \$2.4 million in funding for recent, major renovations at Old School Square. In 2017, I funded the Cornell Museum renovation, which was so well-received that I decided to contribute again to support the renovation of the Crest Theatre. I donated because of my commitment to arts and culture, and because I was confident that Old School Square Center for the Arts (OSS) would continue to deliver quality programs and

education to fulfill my commitment.

I donated because I recognize the value the property offers its community, both historically and through the quality of life it brings area residents today. I donated so OSS could upgrade and enhance both facilities, enabling them to develop more programming, welcome more guests, increase revenues and become more financially solvent. I donated because OSS is a unique and special place, and because, at OSS, I feel surrounded by good, inspiring people, dedicated to working hard and supporting each other and their mission as an organization. I wanted to be a part of that legacy.



Margaret Blume is the proud benefactor of The Blume Literacy Center, The Blume Tropical Wetland Garden at Mounts Botanical Gardens, and the renovation of the Cornell Museum at Old School Square in Delray Beach.

On Aug. 10, the Delray Beach City Commission made the rash and irresponsible decision to terminate OSS's lease. In less than 180 days, the community will be left with empty buildings, facilities that lack the necessary equipment to function, and an incomplete renovation that leaves Crest Theater uninhabitable. This will inevitably cause a lapse in programming and services. It has taken OSS years of experience and dedication to bring together the multitude of art and cultural offerings that thousands enjoy every year. It will take significant effort, time and funds to get the property remotely operational again.

Since the city's vote, we've witnessed an outpouring of opposition from the

community — a community that loved OSS just as it was and who will suffer as a result of this decision. The heart and soul of Delray Beach have been destroyed.

As elected officials, the commissioners' foremost duty is to serve their constituents. The decision to terminate OSS's lease *does not* best serve our community.

We are now in a world of unknowns. For what purpose will my investment serve this now-empty campus? At best, Crest Theatre will be closed indefinitely, and who knows what will become of the beautifully restored Cornell Museum? I am astounded that a gift of this magnitude could be so disregarded. It's a harsh and detrimental message the city is sending to me and future donors. By any measure, my contributions have funded top-quality improvements that preserve and maximize a historic landmark, and their decision is the thanks I get.

I have advised our commissioners that the money I donated for the completion of the theater is no longer available, as the gift I endowed will not be serving the purpose for which it was intended. Although I am disappointed and angry, I will continue to be proud of the support I provided to OSS in the past, as my intentions were pure and for the betterment of my community.

Margaret Blume is the proud benefactor of The Blume Literacy Center, The Blume Tropical Wetland Garden at Mounts Botanical Gardens, and the renovation of the Cornell Museum at Old School Square in Delray Beach.

