



Mayor Shelly Petrolia



Commissioner Juli Casale



Commissioner Shirley Johnson

DEBACLE OF THE YEAR, OR THIS IS WHY WE CAN'T HAVE NICE THINGS

Last August, with no notice—at a commission meeting—Mayor **Shelly Petrolia** and city commissioners **Juli Casale** and **Shirley Johnson** suddenly vote to evict the venerable Old School Square for the Arts from what has been the nonprofit's home since 1989, for allegedly sending in reports late and other accounting shortfalls Casale describes as “not being forthcoming with finances” (which Old School Square still vigorously denies).

As Commissioner Ryan Boylston said at the time, “To move to terminate an organization like this without any discussion and without any community input is a travesty. To sever a relationship with an organization that has not only been around for 30 years but holds a lot of the cards into us moving forward

with any new entity is a bad idea.”

The move sends shockwaves throughout the community, and despite 10,000 citizen signatures on a petition, a letter from all but one of the former mayors of Delray Beach, and repeated requests from Old School Square and fellow commissioners to have a meeting to discuss the situation, the triumvirate of Petrolia, Johnson and Casale do not waiver, and the institution is forced out in February.

Despite its ongoing lawsuit, Old School Square continues to solicit a dialogue. No dialogue has taken place. The Cornell Museum is dark as well as its art school. (Some programming, like movies and free concerts in the Pavilion, has resumed.) Although the city has solicited proposals for an alternative management group, there have been no takers, and the future of what many regard as “the heart of Delray” remains bleak.

BOCA INVASION?

The Boca Raton Museum of Art proposes to lease the Cornell Museum of Art for 18 months while the Crest Theatre is being renovated. There are rumblings in the Delray community that Boca (shudder) will take over (which, to locals, is

akin to an alien invasion), but the city commission rejects the offer in a surprise decision (Shirley Johnson breaks ranks with Petrolia and Casale). Boylston says it's not really “no,” just “not yet,” as he alludes to holding out hope that the city and Old School Square may actually talk one day.



Cornell Museum

DEBACLE OF THE YEAR THAT IS NOT OLD SCHOOL SQUARE: WATER, WATER EVERYWHERE—BUT NONE TO DRINK?

Last January, the **Florida Department of Health** concludes that Delray Beach has failed for more than a decade to exercise “institutional control” over the water department, including “failure to avoid ‘cross connection’ between the reclaimed—partially treated—water system and the drinking water system, following reports of some people on Delray’s barrier island sickened by poorly treated water. The city was also faulted for failing to “clean treatment facilities and finished drinking water storage tanks at least once every five years.” (In fact, one tank had not been cleaned since 1972.) The initially recommended fine of nearly \$3 million was negotiated down to roughly \$1 million, and water issues, including tank cleaning, are being resolved. The city is also preparing a bond issue for a new water plant.