



Islander

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APRIL 2026

Sunny Isles Beach Police Department Achieves Certified Autism Center™ Designation

April is National Autism Acceptance Month and we are proud to share the International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards (IBCCES) has designated the Sunny Isles Beach Police Department and Ocean Rescue Division as a Certified Autism Center™ (CAC), recognizing their commitment to better serving and engaging with autistic and sensory-sensitive individuals in the community.

To earn the CAC designation, at least 80% of Sunny Isles Beach Police Department and Ocean Rescue personnel completed industry-specific training to enhance their ability to assist, support, and communicate with autistic and sensory-sensitive community members. The Sunny Isles Beach Ocean Rescue Division, as part of the Sunny Isles Beach Police Department's CAC certification, is the first ocean rescue division in Florida

to complete this training. This certification demonstrates a proactive commitment to equipping staff with the tools and training needed to respond with empathy and confidence, especially when interacting with individuals with autism, sensory sensitivities and their families.

“Becoming a Certified Autism Center™ is about making sure every person who interacts with our officers feels understood, respected, and safe,” said Chief Eddie Santiago. “This training gives our department the knowledge to better recognize, communicate with, and support individuals on the autism spectrum and their families. It strengthens trust and helps our officers respond with awareness, patience, and professionalism—because effective policing starts with understanding the people we serve.”



In addition to trained staff, the Sunny Isles Beach Police Department offers the Autism Outreach Program to better serve community members with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The program prepares responding officers for situations involving individuals with ASD, supports appropriate and effective handling of each incident, maintains a voluntary database of individuals with ASD, and provides decals for participants' vehicles and homes. Sensory activations are also available at select city events for individuals with ASD.

To further support inclusivity efforts, the Sunny Isles Beach Police Department is featured on the IBCCES Accessibility App, which is free to download. This app provides individuals with a variety of disabilities real-time guidance on certified destinations, sensory-friendly spaces, and tailored recommendations, connecting users to accessible locations worldwide, to help ensure seamless, enjoyable experiences for everyone.

Inside the City's Budget: Responsible Planning for Our Community

Mayor Larisa Svechin

It is my great pleasure to share this special update on our City's Annual Budget Process, which is an exemplary example of the smart, responsible stewardship that keeps Sunny Isles Beach the vibrant, safe, and beautiful home we all love.

Every year, our dedicated City Commission, City Manager, department heads, and Finance team begin this important work months in advance. We start by listening, truly listening, to your input through public meetings, resident feedback, and our ongoing commitment to transparency. Guided by a clear vision of excellence, departments carefully identify the programs, services, and infrastructure that improve daily life for every family, business, and visitor.

The process follows our City Charter: a proposed budget and five-year Capital Improvement Program are developed with fiscal discipline at its core. We hold public hearings so your voices shape the final plan. Then, in September, the Commission adopts the budget that will guide us through the new fiscal year beginning October 1.

As we continue this process for the upcoming fiscal year, I am proud of the budget already adopted for the current 2025–2026 fiscal year. For the 13th consecutive year, we did not raise property taxes; in fact, we reduced the millage rate from 1.8 to 1.7 mills per \$1,000 of assessed value. Thanks to a healthy 8.32% growth in our tax base, we are able to deliver even more value

to residents without asking for a single extra dollar.

That commitment to fiscal responsibility means we continue funding what matters most: world-class public safety with an accredited Police Department embracing the latest technology, beautiful parks and recreation programs that bring our community together, timely street and drainage improvements (including the major Central Island Drainage Project), and essential services that keep our beaches sparkling and our neighborhoods secure.

Because of this prudent approach, your standard of living remains protected and enhanced. Home values remain strong, with record-breaking increases continuing. Insurance pressures are mitigated where possible, and the high quality of life you expect in Sunny Isles Beach, from ocean breezes to family events, is not only maintained but strengthened for generations to come.

We are building a brighter future together, living within our means while investing wisely in the City we cherish. Thank you for your continued trust and partnership. I invite you to review the full budget documents on our website at sibfl.gov and to join us at upcoming Commission meetings, held on the third Thursday of each month. Your input always lights the way.

Contact Mayor Larisa Svechin at mayor@sibfl.net or [305.792.1753](tel:305.792.1753).



Cultivating Connection: The Journey of Our Residents' Academy

Vice Mayor Jeniffer Viscarra

At the May 2019 Commission meeting, I proposed the idea of a Residents' Academy. At the time, Mayor Scholl encouraged me to work with staff to gauge public interest in such a program. Having rewatched that meeting, I detect little enthusiasm, and I suspect the idea did not gain much traction afterwards. When COVID-19 emerged, priorities understandably shifted, and the Residents' Academy slipped further down the agenda. Yet, as our city began to recover and programs reopened, the Academy finally came to life, launching its first class in February 2022.

As I had hoped, the response was overwhelmingly positive. The inaugural session was so successful that we hosted another in the fall. Through experience, we learned that life's unpredictability—like unexpected storms—meant we should hold the Academy just once a year in the spring. I am happy to report that last month we concluded our sixth Residents' Academy. When I asked participants about their key takeaways, their answers varied, but one sentiment rang true: a deeper connection to the community. That improved sense

of belonging was always the heart of our mission.

In a city that brings together locals, newcomers, and people from around the world, misunderstandings and frustrations are inevitable. The Residents' Academy was designed to bridge those gaps by offering a non-partisan introduction to civic engagement and city departments. Each session improved, thanks in large part to our Chief of Staff, Mayra Aleman, whose attention to detail was invaluable, and to our dedicated department heads who stayed late and shared their time and expertise.

I am profoundly grateful to everyone who contributed, including our guest speakers, city staff, and especially the participants whose enthusiasm affirmed the Academy's purpose. Seven years later, I can confidently say there is strong interest in learning from and connecting with the "troublemakers"/"doers" in our community. We simply needed to offer a forum for it to happen.



Contact Vice Mayor Jeniffer Viscarra at seat4@sibfl.net or 305.792.1750.



Commission Recap

Below are some of the key approvals and decisions made by the City Commission at the March 19, 2026 meeting. For the full agenda and meeting recordings, visit sibfl.gov/meetings.

Motorized Scooter Regulations

The City Commission approved the second reading of an ordinance requiring additional safety regulations related to motorized scooter use. The ordinance establishes an age limit of 16 and up, requires scooter riders to carry a government-issued ID, and modifies fines to \$250 for a first offense and \$500 for all subsequent violations. Citations will begin to be issued on June 1, following an educational campaign.




Sunny Isles Beach Vision: Planning for Tomorrow Document

The City Commission approved a plan establishing a vision for the geographic areas known as Town Center North and the Neighborhood Business District. Through a significant public outreach and engagement series, the City's stakeholders made it known they would like a more pedestrian-oriented development pattern that shifts the focus away from Collins Avenue and establishes a place for gathering, dining, and enjoying the outdoors. This document will be used as the foundation to guide future amendments to the comprehensive plan and land development regulations, which will implement the vision.

YOU MUST BE 16 TO RIDE



New Ordinance Requirements for Motorized Scooters

-  AGE REQUIREMENT: 16 OR OLDER
-  RIDERS MUST CARRY A GOVERNMENT-ISSUED ID
-  \$250 FINE FOR A FIRST OFFENSE, \$500 FOR ALL SUBSEQUENT VIOLATIONS

Citations will be issued beginning June 1, 2026.
For more information, visit sibfl.gov/scootsafe.



CALENDAR

APRIL

OF EVENTS



April 1, 8, 15, 22, 29
Wednesdays | 3 - 4 PM
Gateway Center, 151 Sunny Isles Blvd.

Teens Only: *Egg Hunt*

Thursday, April 2
3:30 - 5:30 PM
The Spot, 215 185 St.
Pre-registration is required.

Full Moon Yoga

Thursday, April 2
7:15 - 8:15 PM
On the beach by Samson Oceanfront Park, 17425 Collins Ave.

EGG SCRAMBLE

SATURDAY, APRIL 4
9 AM - 1 PM

Pelican Community Park
18115 North Bay Rd.

Price: \$50
Resident ID Cardholder: \$5
Pre-registration is required

DBPR Resident Support Session

Wednesday, April 8
10 AM - 2 PM
Government Center, 18070 Collins Ave.
Appointments are required.

Mobile Driver's License Event

Saturday, April 11
9 AM - 1 PM
Pelican Community Park,
18115 North Bay Rd
Appointment required.

City Commission Workshop: *Agenda Review*

Tuesday, April 14
10 AM
First Floor Meeting Room, Government Center, 18070 Collins Ave.

Teen Talk

Tuesday, April 14
5 - 6 PM
The Spot, 215 185 St.

Sunny Spaces Art Unveiling

Wednesday, April 15
6 - 8 PM
Gateway Park, 151 Sunny Isles Blvd.

City Commission Workshop: *Special Presentations & Discussion Items*

Thursday, April 16
3 PM
Commission Chambers, Government Center, 18070 Collins Ave.

Regular City Commission Meeting

Thursday, April 16
6:30 PM
Commission Chambers, Government Center, 18070 Collins Ave.

Cultural Trip: *Golden Corral*

(ages 55+)
Friday, April 24
12 - 3 PM
Bus will depart from and return to Gateway Center, 151 Sunny Isles Blvd.
Price: \$45
Resident ID Cardholder: \$25

Beach Cleanup

Saturday, April 25
8 - 11 AM
Newport Fishing Pier, 16501 Collins Ave.

Multi-Agency Shred-A-Thon, Drug Take Back & Electronics Recycling

Saturday, April 25
10 AM - 2 PM
Government Center, 18070 Collins Ave.

Art Uncorked presents Poetry in the Park

Sunday, April 26
7 - 8:30 PM
Meditation Garden at Town Center Park, 17200 Collins Ave.

Senior Roundtable

Wednesday, April 29
12 - 1 PM
Gateway Center, 151 Sunny Isles Blvd.
Pre-registration is required.

Special Magistrate Hearing

Thursday, April 30
10 AM - 12 PM
Commission Chambers, Government Center, 18070 Collins Ave.

Disclosure: Events are subject to change.

FOR A COMPLETE LIST OF EVENTS, VISIT [SIBFL.GOV/EVENTS](https://www.sibfl.gov/events)

Miami-Dade County Sunny Isles Beach Branch

APRIL

LIBRARY PROGRAMS

Talking is Teaching – Talk, Read, Sing for Toddlers
(ages 18 mos. – 3 yrs.)

Wednesday, April 1, 8, 15, 22, 29
11 AM - 12 PM

Homework Help and Tutoring
(students grades K-12)

Saturday, April 4, 11, 18, 25
10 AM - 1 PM

For more information, contact tutoring@mdpls.org or call 305.375.1413.

Citizenship Class
(ages 19+)

Saturday, April 4, 11, 18, 25
10 AM - 12 PM

Talking is Teaching – Talk, Read, Sing for Preschoolers
(ages 3 – 5 yrs.)

Monday, April 6, 13, 20, 27
11 AM - 12 PM

Chess Club
(ages 19+)

Tuesday, April 7, 14, 21, 28
4 - 6 PM

The Kids Reading Club
(ages 6 – 11 yrs.)

Saturday, April 11
1 - 2 PM

Russian Social Club
(ages 19+)

Saturday, April 18
3:30 - 5 PM

Furry Tales
(ages 4 – 8 yrs.)

Saturday, April 25
2 - 3 PM

For more information on Miami-Dade County Sunny Isles Beach Branch Library programs, call 305.682.0726 or email vazquezh@mdpls.org.

Unless otherwise noted, classes and programs are held in the First Floor Meeting Room of the Sunny Isles Beach Government Center, 18070 Collins Avenue.





SUNNY

SPACES

THIRD ANNUAL
SUNNY SPACES
ART UNVEILING


WEDNESDAY, APRIL 15

— 6 - 8 PM —

Gateway Center, 151 Sunny Isles Blvd.

Join us for a night of art, live music, hors d'oeuvres, and drinks as we unveil the winning artwork from the 3rd Annual Sunny Spaces Art Contest, celebrating the theme ***"Living in Motion."***

This event is free but registration is required at SIBFL.GOV/ARTAWARDS.



Plus, be among the first to experience our new **Welcome Center** at our grand opening event!



Islander

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COMMISSIONER Alex Lama

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