This past fiscal year has been many things to many people in ways that we’ve not seen for more than a century.  We begin by remembering where we ended the year with Tropical Storm Debby and Hurricane Helene, then in early October Hurricane Milton topped off our hurricane season – not in a good way.  With 2,900 structures impacted and more than $200 million in structural damages to properties across the island, and with the loss of more than 600,000 cubic yards of sand off our beach, we have experienced unprecedented damage in our lifetime.  I heard from a resident that living on Longboat Key is high risk, high reward and this year we saw the risky side of life for sure.

The Town’s response and recovery effort in coordination with a number of different local, State, and Federal agencies worked well, all things considered.  Debris cleanup was conducted ahead of schedule and services were restored in relatively short order.  And now we are into full recovery mode which for probably 600-700 property owners means a total rebuild.  We are committed to working through this process of rebuilding and renovating in the most efficient manner possible to get everyone back to where they want to be, building back better than before and always remaining Longboat - #LBK Strong!

Other than our stormy season, we did see a number of important projects move forward.  The very long utility undergrounding project was marching toward completion in October before the storms reprioritized FPL’s work.  The good news from FPL was that the areas that were already undergrounded fired back up more reliably when the power was restored than other areas not yet completed.  Greer Island dredging on the north and New Pass groin tightening were completed.  A planned interim beach nourishment project for the Gulfside Road area got underway.  A new 3-year firefighter union contract was approved and the Fire Department received a new Fire Engine and Ambulance.  The Police Department was approved for State Accreditation.  Two important Gulf of Mexico Drive projects received full FDOT construction funding – Country Club Shores turn lane and the Broadway roundabout, saving the Town several million dollars.  The Town successfully facilitated two community conversations with Sarasota County libraries regarding the design elements of a new public library to be built at the Town Center.  One of the largest water pipe replacement projects in our history kicked off in Country Club Shores and will be completed in 2025.

From the grand opening of the St. Regis Resort to the ribbon cutting and dedication of the Karon Family Pavilion at the Town Center, from an expanded Community Open House to additional pickleball courts and artificial turf installed for both dog parks at Bayfront Park, and all things in between, this past year is one we will not likely forget (even if we wanted to).  As always, we share appreciation for the leadership and support of the Town Commission and for an amazing and dedicated team of Town employees who continue to provide exceptional service every single day!