COCONUTS ARE ALLOWED: In a city permeated with all sorts of palm trees, city leaders have given the official OK on planting Coconut Palms. City commissioners approved a resolution directing the city manager to allow the planting of Coconut Palm Trees (Cocos Nucifera) and Royal Palm Trees (Roystonea Regia) in the public rights-of-way on the same or similar basis as other tree species found in the Miami-Dade County Landscape Manual. The legislation notes that the city administration had been discouraging the planting of Coconut Palms and Royal Palms due to a perceived safety hazard to both people and property. Miami-Dade County does not prohibit the planting of Coconut Palms or Royal Palms, it says. The city commission deems the trees not to be "detrimental to native plants, native wildlife, ecosystems, and human health, safety or welfare."

CONSUMER PRICES FLAT: A consumer price index nationally rose 0.2% in July, the same as the annual increase for the two-month period of July and August, according to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics. Energy prices rose 1.2%, and food prices rose 1.4% in the two months and the price of food remained unchanged, the bureau reports. The largest South Florida increases in the two months were rent of primary residence, up 1.5%, and medical care, up 1.1%. Nationally, the cost of medical care rose 1.5% in just August, the largest one-month jump in medical care since February 1984.

STATE OF DOWNTOWN: Roughly 10,000 residents call downtown Miami home and another 50,000 are expected to move to downtown in the next five years, according to the Miami Downtown Development Authority. Additionally, the median downtown income is $66,098, roughly 182,000 downtown workers are employed downtown and a 1.4-million-square-foot increase in livable space is expected over the next three years.

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Champions of the Miami River appreciate that the city has a working river, with vibrant maritime industry uses and down both banks. A working river means import and exports, jobs, tax base and more – including noise and smells.

The Miami River Commission is considering plans to develop Shahab-Karmely to transform a trio of old warehouses into a dining and event space called River Arts Complex.

The property is located at 125 and 131 NW South River Drive, a key location as it faces a redeveloped Lummus Park on the river’s north side, just northwest of the West Flagler Street Bridge.

The property is zoned for maritime industrial use, a restaurant would be allowed with special permission.

The River Arts Complex proposal was reviewed Sep. 4 by the river commission’s Urban Infill and Greenways Subcommittee. Mr. Offutt said his business is local, soundly and opens around the clock. He said a restaurant east of its incompatible with his shipyard and he’s worried he will be regulated out of business.

His emergency maritime towing business deals in heavy towing and launch work. It services ships in distress and tows them into the shipyard, he said. Mr. Offutt also has a contract with the county to collect and dispose of derelict vessels on the river and Biscayne Bay.

"My belief is that a restaurant is incompatible with my business," he said. "It’s unwise to disturb the rest of the community."

"I want to stay in business," he said. "I don’t want to move."

"We have to acknowledge it’s a working river," said Iris Escarra, an attorney representing Mr. Offutt.

The developer sees the river as the “jewel of the city,” she said, noting that he’s also the developer of a major mixed-use project downtown.

Mr. Karmely, CEO of KAR Properties, is the man behind the River Point project, planned dual-story condominiums at the top with a private club and at the bottom with a giant waterfront.

"He likes the elegance of a working river," Ms. Escarra told the committee.

"We always consider the neighbors," said Committee Co-Chair Jim Mulroy, "but our job is to find a balance."

Phil Everingham, a commission member, asked why Mr. Offutt was worried about being displaced or forced to move.

"I’m a small fish in a big pond," Mr. Offutt said, and he’s afraid so many complaints would be lodged against his business for noise and disruption that he’d be "regulated out of business."

"We want to co-exist with the working river," said Ms. Escarra.

The committee gave Mr. Karmely’s team a week to meet with neighboring property owners, tweak the plan to create a wider public riverwalk and better access from the street, and design a sound buffer abutting the shipyard. The plan is expected to reach the full river commission in November.