



FORT LAUDERDALE NEWS

Bahia Mar developer files \$10 million countersuit against boat show

By Susannah Bryan

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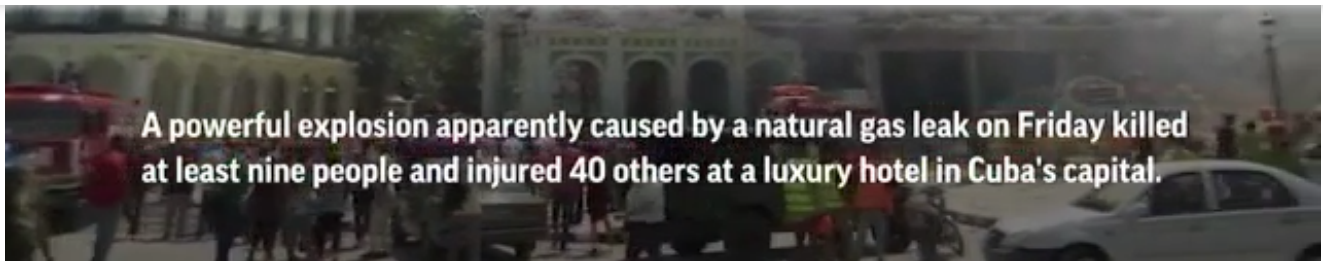
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Fort Lauderdale — The ugly feud between the boat show and its Bahia Mar landlord shows no sign of fizzling anytime soon.

First the organizers of the Fort Lauderdale International Boat Show sued developer Jimmy Tate and his partners in March [over a gag order](#) they say limits their right to free speech.

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Now Tate and company have filed a countersuit seeking more than \$10 million in damages.

The suit, filed on April 29, accuses the boat show of trying to derail the developer's attempts to redevelop taxpayer-owned Bahia Mar. The suit also alleges the boat show tried to block the developer — its own landlord — from securing a 100-year lease to the site.

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The lawsuit accuses boat show officials of “running their mouths all over town” in an attempt to discredit their landlord, Rahn Bahia Mar, and undermine a long-awaited plan to redevelop the site.

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Crowds pack the docks at the Fort Lauderdale International Boat Show at Bahia Mar on October 30, 2021. The boat show and its landlord have filed dueling lawsuits over a plan to redevelop Bahia Mar. (Mike Stocker / South Florida Sun Sentinel)

Fort Lauderdale commissioners [approved the 100-year lease](#) on April 5.

The developer plans to build a \$1 billion project with four condo towers, a 19-story hotel and a marina village but still needs site plan approval from the commission.

“We tried to bend over backwards to cooperate with the boat show,” Tate said Friday. “But they continue to prod us with a proverbial stick. They backed us into a corner and left us with no choice. When you push a bear into a cage, the bear is going to do what it has to do to get to the light.”

[[RELATED: Banking on Bahia Mar: Fort Lauderdale says yes to 100-year deal after developer promises big payout on public land](#)]

David Haber, Tate’s attorney, said boat show organizers are not allowed to talk to city officials in private about the terms of their lease with Rahn Bahia Mar, which took over the Bahia Mar property in 2014. But that is exactly what they’ve been doing, he says.

“They think, ‘We’re the boat show so we can do whatever we want.’ But they can’t. Because a contract is a contract is a contract. They want to be able to talk in private with the city about the development even though they agreed not to do so as part of their 2017 boat show lease.”

[[RELATED: Boat show operator sues Bahia Mar developers, claims they’re blocking dissent against site revamp](#)]

The boat show is in its 62nd year and would like to survive at least another 62 years, Sigrid McCawley, attorney for the boat show organizers, said by email.

“Bahia Mar is poised to reap a windfall in profits,” she said. “Bahia Mar filed this because it needs a distraction from the obvious question of why it insists on preventing the boat show parties from talking with the city and to the public at-large.”

Haber has filed a motion to dismiss the boat show’s lawsuit. He’s expecting a judge to rule on his motion in the next 30 days.

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