

ECCL Report: January 2018

Executive Summary: *167th meeting of the Estero Council of Community Leaders*



The Village of Estero has transmitted its **Comprehensive Plan** to state reviewing agencies and expects this important long-range planning document to be returned to Village Council for a final vote in March. The Village is undertaking a number of projects this year to improve transportation, safety and recreation opportunities in Estero. This includes studying potential land purchases for recreation and conservation.

The **School District of Lee County** is working with the Village to coordinate the location of new schools and colocation of recreational facilities in the future. However, the school district is facing a capital funding crisis. The School Board is considering a referendum for a half-penny sales tax later this year. In March, the Lee County Commissioners will consider the need to increase impact fees up to the 100 percent funding level for schools, transportation and parks from the current 45 percent.

Mining threats, health initiatives and economic development also are among ECCL priorities. The next ECCL meeting will be **Friday, Feb. 9, at 10 a.m.** at Estero Community Park.

VILLAGE REPORT - Mayor Jim Boesch

- Village Council voted to transmit the Village of **Estero Comprehensive Plan** to reviewing agencies in Tallahassee. After the state has reviewed this long-range visioning and planning document, the Comprehensive Plan will return to Council for a final approval vote and

adoption in March. The next step for the Village of Estero will be to develop its Land Development Code.

- Village Council supported the Lee County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) in the county's purchase of the 4,000-acre **Edison Farms** property with funds from the Conservation 20/20 program. Mayor Boesch credited ECCL Environmental Committee Director Pete Cangialosi for helping to make connections between the Village and C20/20 representatives, and he recognized Pete's recent volunteer award for serving five years at Six Mile Cypress Preserve.
- Current transportation projects under discussion by the Council include Estero Parkway improvements, interim improvements to the Corkscrew/Interstate 75 interchange and median landscaping along U.S. 41.
- Council members are working with many other organizations including Florida Gulf Coast University, Estero High School, Lee County Parks & Recreation and Lee Health.
- The Village will initiate a parks and open space master plan. Currently, the Village is working with Florida Greenways & Trails on a **SunTrails** bike/pedestrian trail which would run along the railroad track from Estero Parkway to the southern Bonita Springs boundary. There also is interest in a future public boat launch area for Estero.
- An **Estero Forever** Committee is being formed to evaluate future conservation and recreation land purchases by the Village. Estero is nearing build out, and it is important for the Village to acquire lands before everything is developed. "In 10 years, that land is all going to be gone," Mayor Boesch said.

SCHOOL DISTRICT OF LEE COUNTY - School Board Rep. Chris Patricca

The School District of Lee County has approved spending \$25,000 to address traffic backup issues on Corkscrew Road in front of Pinewoods Elementary School. The District also has drafted an Interlocal agreement with the Village to address future shared facilities and community involvement in schools.

Of great concern is the capital funding crisis the school district is experiencing. The District is growing at a pace about 2,000 students per year, which would require building one new school per year to keep up with growth. The state has approved Lee County's need to build seven new schools, including a middle school and elementary school in Estero. However, the state has not provided any funding. Over the next five years, the cost of funding new construction is projected to create a \$401 million revenue shortfall.

Funding from the state has decreased over the last 10 years at the same time enrollment has been growing, creating a widening funding gap. Restoring building impact fees to the 100% level would be helpful, but the BOCC is showing little interest in supporting this option. Borrowing is another option, but that would mean less money to maintain current school facilities. The state also has not shown interest in allowing the School District to increase property taxes. Issuing local bonds is another option, but the best option may be a half-penny

sales tax, Ms. Patricca said. This option would produce potential annual revenues of \$59 million for the next 10 years.

Much of the burden from this slight sales tax increase would be borne by tourists, she noted. The half-penny sales tax would need voter approval. To view a flyer on how this option could be implemented, [click here](#). To see Ms. Patricca’s full presentation to the ECCL, [click here](#).

IMPACT FEES - Don Eslick

Impact fees are imposed on the developer of newly constructed properties to fund the infrastructure improvements necessitated by the growth generated by these properties. It’s a “growth pays for growth” program. Florida law requires all municipalities to study and update their impact fees every three years.



From 2012 to 2015, the Lee County BOCC reduced impact fees for transportation, parks and schools to 20 percent of the amount necessary to pay for the cost of needed infrastructure. From 2015 to 2018, the County Board voted to raise impact fees to 45 percent — still less than the 100 percent, full funding level continuously imposed prior to 2012.

The total revenue shortfall this has created through Nov. 30, 2017 was \$81 million for transportation, parks and school improvements. By the time this 45 percent collection rate expires on March 13, 2018, the revenue loss will be \$86.6 million.

In Estero, this affects the county’s financial ability to improve Corkscrew Road, Three Oaks Parkway, Ben Hill Griffin Parkway and Estero Parkway (the four County roads within the Village). This also affects the Lee County School District’s ability to build the needed schools in Estero. To view an “Impact Fee Primer,” [click here](#).

MINE BLASTING - Don Corbett, Bella Terra

In November, many residents of Bella Terra began noticing an increase in noise and vibrations from blasting at the nearby Youngquist Bros. Mine located along the east side of Alico Road. Bella Terra resident Don Corbett met with mine representatives and learned they are purchasing new equipment to better measure and control blasts so these blasts will be fewer in number and intensity. Mr. Corbett also contacted governmental oversight agencies of local mining operations. The mine’s blasting monitoring consultant told Bella Terra residents at a recent meeting that all blasts have been within State Fire Marshal regulated limits. There is a federal impact investigations program which could be used to put a mine on a “hotlist” for

more frequent testing if the problem continues. Mr. Corbett found Youngquist representatives to be accommodating and will wait to see if further action is needed. The approximate life expectancy of this mine is another 10 years. To see a map of the mine and view communications between Mr. Corbett and the State Fire Marshal, [click here](#).

ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT - Pete Cangialosi

- The **Troyer Bros. Mine** zoning case is still not sufficient (does not meet County standards) and will be scheduled at a later date. A “No Mine on 82” public relations effort has been initiated to urge the Lee County BOCC to vote “no” on the Troyer Bros. mine. This website is <http://www.NoMineOn82.com>



- A Lee County Zoning Examiner Hearing has been tentatively scheduled for March 14 for the **Old Corkscrew Plantation Mine** zoning application. This is the second very large mine application filed in recent years and is located directly east of the Troyer Brothers property. It is a 4,205-acre property with 1,837 acres proposed for mining. Truck traffic is estimated to be between 700 to 1,200 loads a day.
- The ECCL is supporting an effort to **hire a hydrogeologist**, Gary Dannemiller, to provide expert testimony on the impact of this mine upon the hydrology of the region and the downstream communities including Estero and Bonita. Donations may be made online via the CrowdRise website, or checks may be mailed (and made payable) to: RGMC, P.O. Box 1826, Ft. Myers FL, 33902.
- To view the full ECCL Environmental Report, [click here](#).

HEALTH COMMITTEE - Don Eslick

This new ECCL committee aims to ensure that the new Lee Health Coconut Point “everything but a hospital” facility is fully utilized when it opens in November 2018 so that the Phase Two 80-bed hospital will soon be approved by the State.

The Health Committee also will support the Healthy Lee initiative and advocate for expansion of health and wellness programs to meet the needs of the Estero/South Lee community. Lee Health recently purchased an additional 43 acres on the northwest corner of U.S. 41 and Coconut Road. The Health Committee will work with Lee Health and the Village in long-range planning of this property so that it is developed into a world-class Healthcare Park.

The next Health Committee meeting will be **Jan. 30 at 1 p.m.** at the Estero Recreation Center in Estero Community Park. Lee Health’s new CEO, Dr. Larry Antonucci, will be guest speaker.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT - Jim Shields

The newly formed Estero Economic Excellence Outreach Council (EEEOC) will hold its next meeting on **Jan. 29 at 10 a.m.** at Estero Community Park. The goals of this council include

recruiting retired Estero professionals and businesspeople to support entrepreneurship students at Florida Gulf Coast University and other student career education programming in local Lee County elementary and secondary schools. Mentors and volunteers are needed. If interested, contact Jim Shields at jimshields@fl-office.com.

TRANSPORTATION - Bob King

- A county-selected Steering Committee met Dec. 18 to review initial findings from Lee County's Environmental Enhancement Preservation Communities Overlay (EEPCO) Study — aka. the **"Corkscrew Road Study."** This study identifies the costs and timing of needed transportation, water and wildlife improvements required by more intensive residential development along the road, and the proportionate fair-share obligations of each of the developers building new developments in this area. Currently proposed residential developments impacting this area are Wild Blue, The Place at Corkscrew, Pepperland Ranch and Verdana.
- According to this study, these developments will necessitate a widening of Corkscrew Road to six lanes from Ben Hill Griffin Parkway to Grande Oak Way and to four lanes from Grande Oak Way to Alico Road. Alico Road also will need to be widened to four lanes from Airport Haul Road to the northern Wild Blue entrance.
- The study is still in progress. More information will be provided later this spring on the cost of the needed improvements, the proportionate shares that each development will be required to pay, and the expected timing of each of the roadway improvements.
- The traffic signal recently installed at the Bella Terra entrance was funded by The Place at Corkscrew and will be credited to that development as part of its proportionate share costs.
- To help with traffic backups near Pinewoods Elementary, the County Department of Transportation (LDOT) will be extending the westbound turn lane on Corkscrew Road.
- FDOT also plans improvements at the I-75 interchange including two turn additional lanes for the northbound entrance to I-75 and one for the southbound I-75 entrance.
- Within Estero's boundaries, the Village has identified its capital improvement priorities in each zone. These largely align with the ECCL Transportation Committee's priority projects:
 - **Zone 1:** Estero Parkway, \$3.14 million, and West Broadway Avenue, \$1.16 million.
 - **Zone 2:** U.S. 41 landscaping from Estero Parkway to Coconut Road and studying the southbound left turn lane at Williams Road.
 - **Zone 3:** Curb ramps at U.S. 41 and Coconut Road. Total cost of U.S. 41 improvements in zones 2 & 3 is \$599,841.



- **Zone 4:** Landscaping Three Oaks Parkway from Williams Road to Estero Parkway, sidewalks on River Ranch and Sandy Lane landscaping, total cost \$911,560.
- **Zone 5:** Improve left turn lane from Ben Hill Griffin Parkway onto Everblades Parkway, \$1.47 million.
- To view the full ECCL Transportation Report, [click here](#).

SAN CARLOS FIRE DISTRICT REPORT - Alexis Rothring

- The San Carlos Fire District recorded an 8.2 percent call volume increase in 2017 over 2016 levels. This does not include hurricane and flooding calls resulting from extreme weather events.
- The fire district is hosting a free **“Heartsaver” CPR class** on Valentine’s Day (Feb. 14) from 1-4 p.m. Call Alexis Rothring at (239)267-7525 to register.
- Brush fire season is upon us, and it is anticipated to be worse this year due to brush from the hurricane. Residents are advised to create 30 feet of “defensible space” around their homes and to make sure trees are trimmed and not touching houses.

ECCL DIRECTOR ELECTIONS - Linda Tecco-Roach

- The ECCL membership voted to expand the ECCL Board by adding two new positions: **Economic Development Director** and **Health Director**. Nomination for these new positions are being taken and a vote will occur at a later date.
- The ECCL also confirmed six current directors to maintain their current duties: Don Eslick, Chairman; Tom MacDonald, Communications; Jim Tatoes, Community Development; Pete Cangialosi, Environmental; Bob Lienesch, Finance; and Bob King, Transportation.
- The former Governmental Relations Director position has been changed to **Membership Director**. This position is open, and candidates are being considered.
- Anyone who is interested in an ECCL director position should contact Chairman Don Eslick at doneslick239@gmail.com

FINANCIAL REPORT - Bob Lienesch

So far, 25 of the ECCL’s 32 dues-paying communities have paid their 2018 dues, which are due by January 31, 2018.

For the year ended December 31, 2017, we achieved a small positive cashflow amount as a result of receiving about \$8,000 of 2018 dues in 2017. Otherwise, we would have incurred a loss. The board is working on solutions to reduce future deficits. The ECCL finished the year with about \$16,000 in the bank.

To view the ECCL monthly financial statement, [click here](#).