



Executive Summary

Estero Council of Community Leaders Meeting

May 10, 2013

Chairman – Nick Batos

If any AOL users are having problems receiving ECCL emails, please contact Nick Batos.

Commissioner Cecil Pendergrass

Commissioner Pendergrass stated he recently learned that Hertz is planning a 50-car sales and lease retail lot on its site. He stated he has concerns about that and he will bring the issue back to the ECCL once he learns more.

Lynda Thompson

Lee County Conservation Lands Program Coordinator

Back in the 1950's and 60's, much of the large urban areas of the County were platted and sold to people all over the world. These platted lands provide little environmental benefits; no water resources or wildlife habitat.

Back in 1994 only 8 percent of Lee County was conservation land compared to the state average which was 21 percent. In 1996 a referendum was passed by 54 percent of the voters to pay 0.5 mill to acquire, restore and maintain conservation lands in Lee County.

Ninety percent of the 20/20 funds are used for acquisition and 10 percent for land management. There are now 113 properties that total 24,500 acres, at a cost of about \$300 million. Eighteen preserves have been made out of these lands. The County is now at 18 percent conservation lands and the state is at 28 percent.

There is a citizen's advisory committee, made up of 15 board-appointed members, that determines which properties to pursue for acquisition. They're currently negotiating on 7 properties. All proposals are brought to the County commission for purchase approval.

In reviewing the budget for the coming fiscal year, County staff has come up with several scenarios to redistribute some of the 20/20 funds to the general fund. One proposal: the first year, 60 percent of the 20/20 money be shifted to the general fund; year two 40 percent; year three 20 percent, and year four all monies would stay in the 20/20 fund.

Noel Andress

Local Planning Agency

Chairman, Conservation 20/20 Blue Ribbon Committee

In 1996 the commissioners created the Conservation Land Acquisition and Stewardship Advisory Committee, which is known as the 20/20 Committee. This is a program that was supposed to sunset, but never did because the commissioners sent out a questionnaire and had overwhelming support to continue the program.

The 0.5 mill tax goes into the general revenue fund. Every year when the commissioners adopt their budget, they have to decide how much of that 0.5 mill to put back into the 20/20 fund in order to honor their commitment to this program. There's been an attempt by County staff to raid these funds. They state there is over \$66 million in the 20/20 fund so it's not necessary to add more.

The total build-out for Lee County, allocated by the state growth management act, is over 1.6 million residents; double its current size. All studies indicate that you need 40 percent "open space" in order to sustain quality of life for 1.6 million people, so Lee County is about 20 percent short of that goal.

The Blue Ribbon Committee is recommending a referendum in 2016. The concern is, if the County uses 20/20 funds for the general revenue, the taxpayers will vote it down because it's a breach of public trust.

On Tuesday, May 28, the commissioners will be voting on the Blue Ribbon Committee's 16 specific recommendations to improve the program. Address asked everyone to attend and support that meeting.

Resolved: Chairman Batos to send letter to the BOCC stating the ECCL's full support of the Blue Ribbon Committee recommendations and opposing all efforts to divert any current or future funds from the 20/20 program.

Ned Dewhurst

Sr. Vice President, Florida Operations

Oakbrook Properties

Hertz is purchasing roughly 34-acres owned by Oakbrook Properties on the southeast corner of US 41 and Williams Road. They are planning to create a first-class, campus-style complex which could include a 50-space maximum car lot. They're scheduled to go before the Hearing Examiner before the end of June and to the commission sometime in August. Their plans will be described in more detail before the Estero Community Planning Panel on May 20 at 5 p.m. at the Estero Recreation Center, and the public is invited to attend.

Bonita Springs Report – Hon. Steve McIntosh

Regarding the Bonita Springs DR/GR: The City of Bonita Springs is not going to put 5,000 homes out there. There isn't enough infrastructure to support 1,000 homes. They'd have to build overpasses on Strike Lane and Shangri-La Road, and create a 6-lane structure through Bonita Grande and probably Terry Street. That area needs to be protected for the future.

He's determined to save the Wonder Gardens, 3 acres of 100-year-old growth on the Imperial River. FGCU doesn't have the operating funds to purchase it, so he's contacting others.

Regarding annexation of the 20% of residents living in Pelican Landing who actually reside in Estero: Because they don't know what Vote Estero is planning, they're going to offer those Pelican Landing residents an opportunity to vote on whether they want to be part of Bonita Springs.

Estero Fire Rescue District Report – James Mendolera, Commissioner

The District bought two new pumper engines to replace old ones; they should go into service in August. May 19-25 is EMS Week. They'll be recognizing some of the firefighters at an Awards Breakfast on May 28. Contract negotiations will be starting soon and the audit has been completed. They're in the second phase of purchasing personal protective equipment. They're also planning their 50th anniversary celebration in 2014.

Chairman Emeritus – Don Eslick

Lee Memorial is filing a rebuttal to NCH's challenge to their application for a hospital in south Lee County. The state agency will make a decision on June 7. That decision can be challenged; there is one last procedure the state can perform which should be resolved by September. There were about 60 Estero and Bonita Springs residents who attended the state agency's public hearing and more than 2200 letters of support were submitted, setting a record for any hospital application in the state of Florida.

We're working to make sure that all the vacant land along Corkscrew Road and US 41 gets developed appropriately. We know that we're zoned for too much retail so we're in the process of negotiating an agreement with consultants to continue the process of evaluating the market for all of our vacant lands. We plan to issue a press release so that all of the land owners and developers will know what we're doing and how the research will be available to them. We'll be working with those land owners to create a forward-looking development plan for all the commercial property within the community.

The Estero Community Improvement Foundation (ECIF) board has been meeting with the Conservancy Foundation and the Southwest Florida Community Foundation. We're in the process of negotiating a designated fund agreement that will allow ECIF to access resources to supplement whatever governmental bodies might need in the future.

Environment Director – Phil Douglas

The FFD Mine rezoning came before the BOCC on May 6; they voted unanimously to support the Hearing Examiner's recommendation for denial of this mine.

The Florida Water and Land Legacy Campaign is continuing. This amendment would require the state to allocate one-third of the doc stamp funds to a designated fund to protect Florida's land and water. The goal is 684,000 signatures. About 2,000 Estero residents have signed petitions to date.

There are some environmental issues which need to be addressed regarding the Private Equity Group's donation of land to FGCU. We're working with our friends in the environmental community to develop a position statement that will look at the quality of life issues associated with this donation.

Community Planning Director – Roger Strelow

The County staff is in the process of identifying areas within Lee County to stimulate higher density development so that we can have better mass transit where there is more residential and commercial infill along those routes. A Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program could enable the County to bank any development rights associated with future acquisitions and then sell them to prospective development applicants. The TDR program would help protect the County's conservation lands within the Density Reduction Groundwater Resource (DR/GR).

Work is continuing on the Estero Community Plan to address the vacant lands zoned for retail within the community. With Hertz and Lee Memorial's proposed hospital, the driving force of future growth would appear to be office and professional space.

FGCU and Lee Tran have been jointly funding mass transit for the students living off campus. FGCU recently stated they would no longer be able to financially support this service. Talks are continuing.

Signage issues: There has been an increase in the use of temporary signage, banners and flags within the community. We've asked the Lee County Code Enforcement Department to contact those businesses which are violating Estero signage codes.

The next meeting will be **Friday, June 14, 2013**, from 10 a.m. to 12 noon at the Estero Community Park. Guest speaker will be Florida State House Representative **Ray Rodrigues**. For further information, go to the ECCL web site <http://esterofl.org/>.

Marilyn Edwards, Communications Director