



## Executive Summary

### Estero Council of Community Leaders Meeting

July 12, 2013

The audience for this meeting consisted of 235 people, including Tammy Holliday representing State Senator Lizbeth Benaquito, Roy Hyman representing District 3 Lee County Commissioner Larry Kiker, Bonita Springs City Councilman Steve McIntosch, ECCL representatives and Estero residents.

The sole purpose of this meeting was to discuss, and request support for, a [resolution](#) passed by the ECCL board of directors authorizing the ECCL to begin efforts to incorporate Estero as a municipality. This would include the hiring of attorneys and consultants and the expenditure of funds necessary to accomplish this goal.

#### **CHAIRMAN NICK BATOS**

The concept of incorporation is not a new one; there have been several attempts in the past to incorporate Estero. These attempts, in the ECCL's opinion, were never successful as there was no compelling reason to incorporate.

The ECCL did not support incorporation because it was felt our Lee County Commissioners were providing everything the Estero residents needed. We have said that if we were presented with a significant reason for incorporation, we would consider it.

The Vote Estero group came to the ECCL earlier this year asking for support in their incorporation effort. The ECCL offered to evaluate the group's feasibility study; it has not yet been received.

Also earlier this year, the ECCL was informed that Bonita Springs intends to annex parts of Pelican Landing and The Colony which are located in Estero. This proposed annexation action will result in a referendum which will probably take place in March 2014.

Last month, the ECCL was informed that Bonita Springs intends to proceed with a voluntary annexation of 130 acres in Estero; 120 acres owned by WCI, and a marina owned by the Pelican Landing master association. These properties are located just south and west of the Hyatt Hotel.

A *voluntary annexation* involves landowners, not residents. The landowners can request to be annexed into an adjacent municipality. There is nothing the ECCL can do about this; it will happen in August.

The *involuntary annexation* for residents of Pelican Landing and The Colony will be a longer process; it is scheduled to happen in March 2014. Bonita Springs will be providing those residents reasons for annexation into the City. The ECCL will be offering those residents reasons why it's to their advantage to stay in Estero. Then it will be up to the residents to make their decision.

Since annexation can only occur when a piece of property is contiguous to other City of Bonita Springs' property, it is simple to see that, as each new property is annexed, more of our area becomes vulnerable. The actions taken by Bonita will now put the Hyatt hotel adjacent to the Bonita Springs City boundary, vulnerable to annexation.

Removing people and property from Estero is not something the ECCL takes lightly. We can't just stand by and let this happen. There is no better reason to incorporate than to protect the integrity of our community.

We feel the ECCL should take the lead on this incorporation issue, as it has on so many issues over the last 10 years. It has a proven track record of working successfully on issues and building coalitions. We have good working relationships with our county and state elected officials and have already informed all of them of our plans.

It should be noted that the ECCL will continue to work with the City of Bonita Springs on issues of importance to Estero, Bonita and the region, such as the south Lee hospital and economic development.

#### **CHAIRMAN EMERITUS DON ESLICK**

The first step in the process is a feasibility study which has to be submitted to the state by September 2, 2013. We will employ the necessary attorney and consultants in order to get that accomplished.

We plan to go into each of the Estero communities to have a discussion about the different aspects of incorporation, what the boundaries will be, the form of government, etc. We're in the process of putting together a power point presentation to talk about all of the issues and to assess the attitude of the community.

We will be sending out an invitation to schedule a meeting so that we can do this as soon as possible. Those meetings will have to be completed by mid-November 2013.

We will use all of our resources in addition to these meetings. We'll be using our web site, the Estero Development Report, and our email distribution list which includes about 2500 residents. We'd like to have the endorsement of every community board in Estero. We'll also have petitions for residents to sign, supporting the referendum.

The local legislative delegation meets in November or early December. There are four house members and two senators; it is their agreement that is required to proceed with legislation that would establish boundaries of a new municipality.

The bottom line is that by late November or early December we need to show the delegation that there is overwhelming support in the community for having a referendum for incorporation in November 2014.

In March through May 2014, the Legislature would need to adopt legislation including a charter for the new city which they would then submit to the governor for signature. The next phase would be the November 2014 election.

The [resolution](#) was read. After about one hour of discussion, a motion was made and seconded to accept the resolution. The vote to accept the resolution was 234 to 1.

**Editor's Note:** The ECCL will hold informational meetings in all those Estero communities that welcome them; will keep the web site up-to-date on all information pertaining to the incorporation plans; and welcome assistance from all those willing to volunteer in this effort to move forward with plans to allow residents of Estero the right of self-determination.

**Marilyn Edwards**  
**ECCL Communications Director**