

Executive Summary
Estero Council of Community Leaders Meeting
February 8, 2013

District 2 Lee County Commissioner Cecil Pendergrass Speaks to ECCL

Commissioner Cecil Pendergrass spoke about some of the current County priorities including the ongoing search for County Manager. Interim County Manager Doug Meurer recently appointed three acting assistant county managers including Glen Saylor who also was in attendance along with David Loveland, Director of Lee County Department of Transportation.

On February 18 the BOCC will be discussing the budget and looking at what cuts may be made in order to discontinue spending money from reserves.

On the legislative agenda, he stated the governor is proposing cuts in the upcoming budget, so he'll be monitoring those to see which might affect Lee County. He is a proponent of home rule advantage and wants to ensure that continues.

Regarding a moratorium on impact fees, he believes if a moratorium is put into effect it should be limited to certain areas of Lee County, such as the Research and Enterprise Diamond, where we want to spur growth.

Bonita Springs Report – Hon. Steve McIntosh

The Hon. Steve McIntosh reported that when the impact fee moratorium was brought up the ECCL and the City of Bonita Springs worked together. Both entities believe that this issue is two years late, as the economy has turned around.

Regarding annexation of a portion of Pelican Landing into the City of Bonita Springs, he stated that when the city was incorporated, the state determined the fire district would be selected as the city limits. This didn't take into account neighborhoods and cut 20% of the Pelican Landing community off from the city. When the Vote Estero group came across with the message "we're going straight to Tallahassee" it became an issue. He stated the city is going to put together information on how those residents can be annexed into the city should they so choose.

(Editor's Note re Bonita Springs/Estero Relationship: The ECCL and Bonita Springs City Council started conducting joint meetings about 6 years ago. Later it was determined that Bonita Springs would appoint a liaison to the ECCL. ECCL Chairman Emeritus Don Eslick has been serving as co-chair with Bonita Springs Mayor Ben Nelson on a Hospital Committee for the past 5 years. Just recently, Mayor Nelson and ECCL Chairman Nick Batos coauthored a letter to the BOCC and a guest commentary for the Naples Daily News and News-Press expressing their joint opposition to a moratorium on impact fees.)

Estero Fire Rescue District – Chief Scott Vanderbrook

The Fire District has gone to a tablet-based system which allows fire inspectors to be out in the field more now that everything is computerized. All fire districts in the County are working on “closest unit response” so that it doesn’t matter where you live, the closest life support response unit will come to your rescue.

If that 20% of Pelican Landing, currently in Estero, were to be annexed into the City of Bonita Springs, those residents would still pay Estero Fire Rescue District ad valorem taxes because there is a state line there and the Estero Fire District would still be responsible for that area.

Vanderbrook stated he believes the BOCC will exempt Fire and EMS from the impact fees moratorium. There’s also a state statute which allows for the fire districts to impose their own impact fees.

Chairman – Nick Batos

Regarding impact fees: During the economic boom, Lee County imposed the highest impact fees ever assessed by the County. Also during that time, the County had the largest growth in the country, so there is nothing to indicate that impact fees affect growth.

As a reminder: About two years ago, the membership approved a resolution allowing the Board to make expenditures of up to \$1,000 without the prior approval of the membership. The upcoming action regarding the Troyer Brothers’ court case will cost about \$800 and would fall under that resolution.

Environment – Phil Douglas

Troyer Brothers Excavation has decided to appeal the circuit court’s decision upholding the BOCC’s decision denying their mining rezoning quest. Their property is located adjacent to conservation lands on East Corkscrew Road. The ECCL is going to file an amicus brief, along with our environmental and rural residential allies, supporting the County as this goes to the Appellate Court.

Florida Farms Development (FFD) went before the County Hearing Examiner and basically put forth no case. County staff made a complete report. Once the Hearing Examiner has made her decision and recommendation, it will go to the BOCC for their decision, probably in the next several months.

We have until the end of April to make a meaningful impact for the Florida Water and Land Legacy campaign to protect Florida’s natural areas for water, wildlife and recreation. We will participate in the Bonita Springs native plant sale on February 9 to gather further signatures. We’re looking for volunteers to solicit signatures for the petitions. Contact Phil at pdindy@comcast.net.

Chairman Emeritus – Don Eslick

The Estero Community Improvement Foundation (ECIF) is a 501c3 organization. Therefore, it can receive tax deductible contributions for projects of value to the community. The first accomplishment was the high school landscaping project. ECIF also has received grants from a variety of foundations. One grant was used to hire a consultant to conduct a study of the Density Reduction/Ground Water Resource (DR/GR) area that resulted in the new DR/GR Comprehensive Plan.

Next Thursday, ECIF will have a meeting with representatives from the Southwest Florida Community Foundation and the Conservancy. We want to work out a way for ECIF to be more productive by working with the resources of other major foundations so that residents can make substantial contributions to the future of Estero.

Community Planning -- Roger Strelow

The Estero Community Plan is undergoing a periodic update, and the ECCL has provided input to the Estero Community Planning Panel regarding the Plan. One of the primary ECCL concerns is the commercially zoned but unbuildt property in Estero. One of the things we're recommending is that there are innovative incentives for high-quality development, such as the Coconut Point Mall.

Signage issues: Some temporary signage has gotten out of hand. We are now starting to visit those businesses which have those signs on their property to encourage them to take them down. If not, we will go to the County enforcement officials.

Economic Development: We have a steering committee of about a dozen members and Don Eslick has agreed to chair this committee.

Transportation – Jim Boesch

The Metropolitan Planning Organization's Citizens Advisory Committee voted to support the County retaining impact fees. That resolution will be forwarded to the BOCC.

The contract has been awarded for the turn into the post office on Three Oaks Parkway; however, no construction date has been set.

The Estero Parkway right turn onto Three Oaks Parkway project will not be completed this year as there is no funding available.

Light fixtures along US 41, from Corkscrew Road to Broadway, will accommodate banners reflecting special events, versus the expensive historic lighting previously considered.

Met with the Florida Department of Transportation regarding the Corkscrew Road I-75 overpass. Requested they make the striping and markings more distinctive so that drivers can distinguish which lane they should be in when wanting to travel north or south on I-75.

Government Relations – John Goodrich

The Hospital Committee met with Lee Memorial with respect to emergency care. The Committee informed them that they were not satisfied with their progress in providing the type of care that is needed in southern Lee County. The Committee is going to start talking with other organizations. Don Eslick will continue to co-chair this committee with Bonita Springs Mayor Ben Nelson.

At the last ECCL Board meeting, Vote Estero presented their intent to renew efforts of incorporation. The Board elected to reinstitute the Annexation/Incorporation Committee. We've solicited members for this committee and, to date, we have 35 volunteers. The committee was going to meet on February 22, however, that was based on Vote Estero providing information for the committee to review. We haven't received anything from Vote Estero to date. We will be meeting soon for organizational purposes.

It is not the purpose of this Committee to go forward with incorporation or to fight annexation; it's our purpose to find out what organizations are doing and give them the opportunity to use the ECCL as a sounding board. The Committee will then move forward with recommendations to the ECCL Board and then the Board to the ECCL membership. Our position is that we're waiting for definitive information from Vote Estero at which time we will convene the Committee to study the proposal.

We are recommending that petitions not be signed and funding not be provided because the information has not been made available on which to make that decision.

Next meeting: Friday, March 8, 2013, 10 .am., Estero Community Park. Our guest speaker will be Lee County Commissioner Larry Kiker.

Marilyn Edwards
Communications Director