

**Estero Development Report**  
 Volume 11, Number 11, Issued August 2012  
 Produced by the Estero Council of Community Leaders (ECCL)  
**For More Information about Estero**  
 ...see [www.esterofl.org](http://www.esterofl.org)

**September Opportunities for Citizen Participation  
 That will Protect Estero's Quality of Life**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Location</b>
Tuesday, September 4 <sup>th</sup>	5:30 p.m.	Estero Community Planning Panel Workshop on Signage on Community Plan Signage Provisions	Estero Community Park
Wednesday, September 5 <sup>th</sup>	5 p.m.	First Lee County 2012-13 Budget Hearing	County Commission Chambers, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor, 2120 Main Street in downtown Ft. Myers
Monday, September 10 <sup>th</sup>	5:00 p.m.	Estero Fire Rescue Monthly Board Meeting	District Headquarters on Three Oaks just south of Corkscrew
Wednesday, September 12 <sup>th</sup>	5 p.m.	Estero Design Review Committee (EDRC) meeting	Estero Community Park
Friday, September 14 <sup>th</sup>	10 a.m.	ECCL Regular Monthly Meeting... will be our speaker	Estero Community Park
Monday, September 17 <sup>th</sup>	6 p.m.	Estero Community Planning Panel (ECP) Meeting	Estero Community Park
Wednesday, September 19 <sup>th</sup>	5 p.m.	Final Lee County 2012-13 Budget Hearing	County Commission Chambers, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor, 2120 Main Street in Ft. Myers
Friday, September 21 <sup>st</sup>	9 a.m.	Lee County MPO (Transportation Planning) meeting	Cape Coral City Council Chambers, 1015 Cultural Park Blvd, Cape Coral

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## **Estero Community Website ([www.esterofl.org](http://www.esterofl.org))**

### **The community groups sponsoring the site are:**

Estero Community Planning Panel (ECP)  
Estero Design Review Committee (EDRC)  
Estero Council of Community Leaders (ECCL)  
Estero Community Association (ECA)

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## **Estero Residential Construction Springs to Life**

July and August have seen a significant pick-up in activity in Estero's residential construction. Just as new home activity is winding down at Toll Brothers' Belle Lago, other developments are ramping up. It was reported that Toll Brothers is offering expanded home sites at The Reserve of Estero on Estero Parkway. Meanwhile, Lennar's Bella Terra development on Corkscrew Rd. east of I75, which had been obtaining about a dozen new home permits a month this year, was issued about 40 permits in total in July and August. D.R. Horton, another national home builder, has also stepped up activity by obtaining permits for 20 new units at its Terra Vista development on west Broadway. For more information on these builders and developments, see [www.tollbrothers.com/FL](http://www.tollbrothers.com/FL), [www.lennarbellaterra.com](http://www.lennarbellaterra.com), and [www.drhorton.com/swfla](http://www.drhorton.com/swfla).

### **Mirasol at Coconut Point**

The build-out of "Mirasol at Coconut Point," a condominium development on Via Coconut Point is also underway. D.R. Horton is building 166 new units in 24 new buildings. The condominium units include three plans that offer 2 or 3 bedrooms; also, two-story town homes will be available. The first two buildings are currently under construction at the corner of Coconut Rd. and Via Coconut Point. Permits were issued for two more buildings in August. Horton expects to have move-in ready units available in September. For more information, see [www.drhorton.com/swfla](http://www.drhorton.com/swfla).

The remainder of the 34 Mirasol units, which were built by another builder in 2006 and 2007, are listed exclusively with Pelican I Realty. For more information on the original Mirasol units, see [www.mirasolatcoconutpoint.com](http://www.mirasolatcoconutpoint.com).

### **The Preserve at Corkscrew**

Four homes are under construction at Estero's newest gated community, "The Preserve at Corkscrew." In all, 30 permits have been issued this year. The homes are being built by Pulte and Lennar. The development is located 2 miles east of I-75 on Corkscrew Rd., just west of Bella Terra.

As reported in the September, 2011 EDR, the Preserve is expected to include 441 single family homes, including estate homes. The amenity package is expected to include a swimming pool, fitness center with state-of-the-art equipment, gathering room, aerobics, library, conference room, tennis courts, and pool cabana with a fireplace. For more information, see the developer's web site: [www.preserveatcorkscrew.com](http://www.preserveatcorkscrew.com). For Pulte's homes, see [www.pulte.com/.../fl/estero/preserve-at-corkscrew/index.aspx](http://www.pulte.com/.../fl/estero/preserve-at-corkscrew/index.aspx), and for Lennar's homes, see

[www.lennar.com/New-Homes/Florida/Naples-Ft-Myers/Estero/The-Preserve-at-Corkscrew/Executive-Homes#](http://www.lennar.com/New-Homes/Florida/Naples-Ft-Myers/Estero/The-Preserve-at-Corkscrew/Executive-Homes#).

## **Midtowne Estero East Presents Plans to Estero Design Review Committee**

Neal Communities brought their plans for the Midtowne Estero East development to the Estero Design Review Committee on July 11. This property is located on Three Oaks Parkway, bordered on the south by Shadow Wood's Longleaf Trail neighborhood and on the north by the Lowes store on the southeast corner of Three Oaks Parkway and Corkscrew Road.

The developers are proposing to build 110 units, which will consist of 55 one-floor, single-family twin villas, or what they are calling "paired patio homes," with the base price starting around \$200,000. There are two somewhat different exterior designs for the units with approximately 1,500 square foot under air. Each villa will have extended lanais and a two-car garage with paver driveways.

There will be two gated entrances and exits to this property on Three Oaks Parkway. The southernmost entrance will be opposite the Estero Fire Station while the other will be just south of the entrance to Lowes. The amenities include a community pool with plantings around the pool deck, enhanced landscaping and buffering. The community will be 72 percent open space with native trees and wetlands, bisected by the Estero River.

This is the first of three Estero properties that Neal Communities will be building. The builders' representatives stated they are the second largest builders group in the Bradenton and Sarasota area and have completed 71 community projects to date.

## **Corkscrew Woods Rezoning**

Cameratta Properties representatives went before the Lee County Hearing Examiner in August to rezone the Corkscrew Woods development located just east of the Bella Terra community on the south side of east Corkscrew Road in the Density Reduction/Groundwater Resource (DR/GR) area.

Recently the Board of County Commissioners approved a Comprehensive Plan amendment for this development that keeps it in the DR/GR and creates an ad hoc system of Transfer of Development Rights (TDRs) which the developer will fund so that, in effect, the County will be compensated for the additional 550 units that the developer is seeking for the development.

Cameratta is proposing to increase the number of residential units from 254 up to a maximum of 800 housing units. Most of the discussion before the Hearing examiner focused on a provision for the developer to pay for all of the TDRs prior to the issuance of the first Development Order and the beginning of the development of the property.

The Hearing Examiner concluded the hearing and is now working on her report. Once that report is published the Board of County Commissioners will meet to reach a final rezoning decision on the property. Several members of the Estero community and interested environmental groups testified at the hearing. Only these people will be allowed to testify when the BOCC hears the matter.

Several of the members of the Lee County Local Planning Agency are working together to identify successful transfer of development rights (TDR) programs around the country in order to provide guidance for the development of a viable program here. The Lee Plan includes a strong TDR policy but has no actual TDR program in place for the DR/GR.

This group will be looking at what made these programs successful and how they may apply to our DR/GR area. In addition they hope to identify consultants Lee County may want to call upon to help in framing a workable DR/GR TDR program.

### **Bella Terra Commercial Property Rezoning Begins Review**

Habitat Lakes LLC, the developer of Bella Terra, is proposing to change the zoning and amend the DRI (Development Regional Impact) for the development with respect to the 12.35 acres of land on the west front of the Bella Terra community facing Corkscrew Road. The Bella Terra community is a very large residential community behind this small parcel of commercially zoned land.

The developer has applied to rezone this smaller parcel to include 196 multi-family housing units, 49,000 square feet of retail space and 180 parking spaces. The proposed multi-family units would be four buildings of rental apartments, accessed from the community entrance road by a side road located just outside the Bella Terra gate. The current zoning includes 120,000 square feet of retail space and only 30 dwelling units, with 540 parking spaces.

Representatives of the developer and Banks Engineering attended the April 16<sup>th</sup> Estero Community Planning Panel (ECP) meeting to present their proposal; however, they did not provide a formal submission package at that time.

Approximately 300 Bella Terra residents also were in attendance at that ECP meeting to demonstrate their opposition to the proposed rezoning. Their concerns include traffic congestion, safety, appearance and security issues, as well as the fact that these new plans for that commercial parcel are completely different from those presented to them when they purchased their properties.

The developer held another meeting for Bella Terra residents at the Estero Community Park on July 30. The developer has now met all of Lee County's requirements for public meetings for a rezoning request. Once the County zoning staff has completed its report, the rezoning application will be reviewed by a Lee County hearing examiner. The public is invited to testify at this Hearing and only those citizens that testify at this Hearing will be able to testify before the County Commissioners when they make the final decision on the application. This is not expected to happen until sometime after November 1.

Management of the Bella Terra community is scheduled to transition from the developer to the membership of the community on October 1<sup>st</sup> and very possibly in early 2013 because the County has just granted a developer-requested extension of the proceedings for up to 120 days from the end of August 2012.

## **Estero to Get New Healthcare Clinic**

In early July the nonprofit Family Health Centers acquired nearly 5 acres in Estero to build a new clinic, using federal money provided under the Affordable Care Act. Family Health paid \$800,000 for the 4.6 acres on the east side of U.S. 41 north of the Vines Golf and Country Club. The land was owned by Royal Canadian Bank and had been splintered off from the original Vines project in 1993.

The U.S. Health and Human Services Department awarded \$3.75 million in April to the nonprofit clinic group for the capital project as part of the government's objective to have primary-care clinics play a bigger role in health-care reform and reduce the demand for emergency room care.

Family Health soon will solicit for architectural work for a 15,000-square-foot building that will house 14 dental exam rooms, 7 adult medical exam rooms, 7 pediatric exam rooms, a women's health center and a disease management program. The clinic will have 35 staff members and will offer some clinic hours after normal business hours to be flexible for working people.

The clinic is projected to serve 8,900 patients in nearly 29,000 office visits by its second year of operation. The plan is to open in January 2014 after a year of construction, estimated to cost \$2.6 million.

The Estero-San Carlos Park site is 10 miles from Family Health's clinic in Bonita Springs and 10 miles from its south Fort Myers location near HealthPark Medical Center. Family Health's 14 existing locations in Lee, Charlotte and Hendry counties serve 64,000 patients annually with 240,000 patient visits.

Family Health provides medical and dental care to everyone regardless of ability to pay, offering low-income patients a sliding scale fee but nobody is turned away. The typical office visit costs the patient \$18.

## **Estero's June/July Home Building Permits Surge**

During June and July, one hundred ten (110) home building permits, with a combined building value of \$17.7 million, were issued in Estero. Included in the 110 permits were permits for sixty-three (63) single family homes, and forty-seven (47) condominium units. Both the 110 total housing units permitted and \$17.7 million total building value represent the largest consecutive two-month total since 2007.

Of the 63 single family home permits, over half were issued to Lennar's Bella Terra community. The other permits were issued to Toll Brothers for their Belle Lago and The Reserve of Estero developments, and to The Preserve at Corkscrew, where homes are being built by Pulte and Lennar. On a year-to-date basis, about 90% of the single family permits have been issued to Lennar and Toll Brothers.

All of the 47 condominium permits were issued to D.R. Horton for twenty-seven (27) units at Mirasol at Coconut Point on Via Coconut Point and for twenty (20) units at Terra Vista on west Broadway. *For more on recent residential construction activity in Estero, see article above, "Estero Residential Construction Springs to Life."*

The following table compares year-to-date figures through July with those of the prior twelve years. The figures suggest a significant increase this year in residential building activity.

Year	Annual Total Housing Units	Building Value of Units	Average Building Value Per Unit	Percentage of Single Family Units
2000	1,122	\$154,418,848	\$137,628	41%
2001	1,399	213,746,261	152,785	45
2002	905	153,144,578	169,221	57
2003	1,033	155,939,745	150,958	37
2004	1,049	225,941,691	215,838	65
2005	1,645	340,070,708	206,730	51
2006	969	236,835,506	244,412	31
2007	384	108,303,686	282,041	38
2008	107	36,466,055	340,804	83
2009	86	31,457,481	365,785	77
2010	139	27,170,158	195,469	77
2011	106	22,156,697	209,025	91
2012	205	34,817,062	169,839	72

### **Estero's June/July Commercial Permits Continue Stronger**

During June and July, commercial permits, excluding condominium units, totaling \$3.0 million were issued for Estero's [commercial buildings](#). This included \$2.0 million for a remodeling project at the Hyatt Regency Coconut Point Resort.

As shown in the following table, commercial investment in Estero fell precipitously from 2006 through 2010, and then began to improve in 2011. So far this year, the value of permits has continued to strengthen and is up significantly compared with the past three years.

Year	Year to Date	Annual Total
2000	\$71,541,520	\$77,250,835
2001	22,496,652	44,116,526
2002	15,288,582	23,135,139
2003	11,842,650	23,234,725
2004	13,548,400	60,859,820
2005	44,789,557	111,037,977
2006	150,602,944	184,709,240
2007	138,368,161	157,614,045
2008	35,018,481	39,261,677
2009	7,781,212	9,752,556
2010	4,925,558	9,322,546
2011	8,532,121	11,717,593

<b>2012</b>	10,663,365	?
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The major commercial projects permitted so far this year are:

- \$2,000,000 for remodeling the Hyatt Regency Coconut Point Resort;
- \$1,500,000 for expanding and remodeling Spring Run Country Club;
- \$1,400,000 for remodeling Shadow Wood Country Club;
- \$1,100,000 for various Coconut Point Mall remodeling projects, and
- \$1,000,000 for a new Goodwill Industries facility.

Note: The building values above understate the cost of each residence or commercial building because they exclude the value of the underlying land.

The County permit information used in this report may be found at <http://www.lee-county.com/dcd/Reports/EsteroReports.htm>

### **July, August and Year-to-Date Estero Single Family Home Sales Hold Steady**

Multiple Listing Service (MLS) figures indicate that 55 single family homes in Estero were sold in July and August. Compared with a year ago, July sales were up, but August sales were down by about the same amount. As shown in the following table, for the last two months, and on a year-to-date basis, sales are holding steady, albeit down slightly but not enough to signify a trend.

<b>Period</b>	<b>Sold in 2011</b>	<b>Sold in 2012</b>	<b>Inc (Dec)</b>	<b>Inc (Dec) %</b>
<b>Jan</b>	23	58	35	152%
<b>Feb</b>	45	21	(24)	(53)
<b>Mar</b>	39	32	(7)	(18)
<b>Qtr 1</b>	107	111	4	4
<b>Apr</b>	50	29	11	(42)
<b>May</b>	27	37	10	37
<b>June</b>	28	32	4	14
<b>Qtr 2</b>	105	98	(7)	(7)
<b>July</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Aug</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>(11)</b>	<b>(35)</b>
<b>YTD</b>	<b>269</b>	<b>264</b>	<b>(5)</b>	<b>(2)</b>
<b>Sept</b>	24			
<b>Qtr 3</b>	81			
<b>YTD</b>	293			
<b>Oct</b>	16			
<b>Nov</b>	21			
<b>Dec</b>	24			
<b>Qtr 4</b>	61			
<b>Year</b>	354			

As of August 31, 2012, there were 344 listings of currently active unsold homes in Estero. This is about the same as the beginning of the year, but 9% more than a year ago. The 344 figure this year represents a 12 month supply of unsold homes, essentially the same as at the beginning of the year, but up from a 10 month supply a year ago. A 6 month supply typically indicates a healthy market.

Of the 344 active listings, 19% represent “distressed sales,” i.e., short-sale listings or bank owned properties which, in each case, the bank is expected to receive less than its loan amount. This percent has hovered around 20% for the last few months.

Thanks as always to Joe Pavich, Sr. of Realty World in Estero for compiling these figures for the ECCL.

Note: These amounts include most of Estero, but do not include the Estero portion of Pelican Landing, which is not separately listed in the MLS. Also, none of the above amounts include listings of multi-family homes.

### **Lee Population Continues to Rise**

The annual population report issued today by the Bureau of Economic and Business Research at the University of Florida estimates that Lee County’s population grew in 2012 – by about 13,000 people or 2 percent – since April 1, 2011. Total population for Lee County was estimated at 638,029.

The population estimate for Lee County last April was 625,310.

The bureau’s annual report is based on a survey conducted each April. The recently released figures are subject to input from local jurisdictions.

Here’s a summary:

	<b>2012 Population Estimate</b>	<b>Change from 2011</b>	<b>Percent Change from 2011</b>
<b>Unincorporated Lee County</b>	353,139	4,899	1.4%
<b>Bonita Springs</b>	45,129	822	1.9%
<b>Cape Coral</b>	160,184	3,815	2.4%
<b>Fort Myers</b>	66,835	3,173	5.0%
<b>Fort Myers Beach</b>	6,253	(9)	(0.1%)
<b>Total Lee County</b>	638,029	12,719	2.0%

## **Research and Enterprise Diamond Strategic Business Plan**

Glen Salyer of the Lee County Manager's office indicates that FGCU will be hosting the initial Research Diamond Workshops that are expected to begin in late October. As reported earlier the Urban Land Institute (ULI) will be designing and facilitating these Charette style meetings to methodically assess how best to develop the substantial land near the University and the Airport in order to boost the County's economy.

On August 3<sup>rd</sup> Lee County Board of County Commissioners issued a Request For Qualifications (RFQ) from interested and qualified firms to conduct a strategic planning project for the regional zone of influence currently referred to as the Research and Enterprise Diamond ("Diamond"). The selected consultant will help create an economic development focused strategy that builds on previous planning efforts and future market opportunities to encourage investment, job creation, and sustainable development within the Diamond.

Interested consultants must submit their qualifications to the county by August 28, 2012. The applicant consultants will be evaluated by County staff and the best ones will be interviewed and then recommended to the BOCC for approval in early September and begin work on the project on September 24th.

The consultant's final report is expected to be completed by April 1, 2013.

### **Innovation Hub Progress Report**

On August 1<sup>st</sup> Dr. Ronald Toll, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs at FGCU, brought us up to date on the University's Innovation Hub project, located in the Diamond. During the recently completed legislative session the State of Florida appropriated \$3.6 million for planning the 40,000 square foot Innovation Hub alternate energy research facility on 5 acres donated to the University the north side of Alico Road east of Ben Hill Griffin Boulevard.

Projects like this are typically funded over a three year cycle. Next year FGCU expects the State to provide an additional \$8 million for the construction of the building. If all goes as planned the Innovation Hub facility should be available for occupancy in the summer of 2014.

Dr. Toll also indicated that the University expects to develop a five acre Solar Park in the same area that would become a demonstration site for various kinds of solar related technology and equipment.

### **Creating an Innovation Economy in Southwest Florida**

On June 6<sup>th</sup> several members of the Economic Development Task Force met with Tim Cartwright, President of the Gulf Coast Venture Forum, who is developing a second Tamiami Angel Fund and is seeking Lee County investors for that fund. The Gulf Coast Venture Forum is seeking to create an Innovation Economy in southwest Florida that relies on two of our underutilized assets:

- The private investment capital of the area's many retired and semi-retired successful entrepreneurs and business owners, and
- The intellectual capital of our experienced business retirees who can mentor the area's start-up entrepreneurs.

Cartwright suggested that we meet with Steve Walling, a founding Board member of "Jump Start" who recently sold his firm and retired to southwest Florida. JumpStart is a very successful entrepreneur support organization located in Cleveland Ohio that has now been encouraged by the Federal Government to facilitate adaption of its approach to other communities throughout the country. On June 15<sup>th</sup> some members of the Economic Development Task Force met with Walling to learn more about JumpStart and how it might be adapted to southwest Florida.

On July 23<sup>rd</sup> several Estero Task Force members met with Walling and Mike Mozenter, the President of Jump Start Community Advisors, to learn more about JumpStart's approach to regional entrepreneurship development. During his visit Mozenter also met with many regional economic development leaders and some of our successful entrepreneurs in order to assess the region's potential for selection by JumpStart as another area for the development of a Regional Entrepreneurship Action Plan. To date they have developed Action Plans in 11 regions including: Northern Indiana; Upstate New York; Minneapolis St. Paul; Akron Ohio; baton Rouge Louisiana; Detroit Michigan; Duluth Minnesota; and St. Louis Missouri.

Jim Moore, Lee County's Economic Development Director, has invited JumpStart to return during early September to meet with many of Lee County's leaders and enterprises that may have an interest in working with JumpStart to develop and implement a region action plan for southwest Florida. The ECCL Economic Development Task Force has been invited to participate in these meetings.

On November 1<sup>st</sup> the Gulf Coast Venture Forum has invited Ray Leach, the President of Jump Start, to be the featured speaker at the Forum's 2012-13 Season Kick-off Meeting at the Triannon Hotel in Bonita Springs. The event will be co-sponsored by the Florida Venture Forum, Tamiami Angel Fund I and Small Business Development Center of Florida Gulf Coast University. Leach is a serial entrepreneur, experienced angel investor, expert in technology entrepreneurship, and national thought leader on entrepreneurship and innovation. He has led JumpStart's effort in creating economic transformation through entrepreneurship since its founding in 2004.

The County permit information used in this report may be found at <http://www.lee-county.com/dcd/Reports/EsteroReports.htm>

## **Conservation 20/20 Blue Ribbon Committee Holds First Meeting**

A seven-member panel, comprised of real estate brokers, developers and a land appraiser, held their first meeting on August 8 to review Lee County's land conservation program, Conservation 20/20.

Conservation 20/20 has helped the county acquire and preserve over 20,000 acres of environmentally sensitive land. The 4,000 acre Edison Farms property just east of I-75 and The

Brooks has been found to be eligible for purchase under the criteria used by the Conservation 20/20 program but is presently involved in a foreclosure lawsuit so the ownership of the property is unclear. Once the ownership issue is resolved Conservation 20/20 could play an important role in conserving this important property.

At this initial meeting, the panel laid out a schedule of topics for discussion. It was determined that, for the next three meetings, the panel will concentrate on the county's land acquisition process. Once the panel has completed this evaluation, it will take up land stewardship and management.

In its final two meetings, the committee members will look at the program's future, including a ballot referendum.

The panel has been instructed to complete their task within a 91-day timeframe. Their recommendations will then go to the Board of County Commissioners for their action.

The Blue Ribbon Committee will meet at 9:30 a.m. every other Wednesday from September 5<sup>th</sup> through November 7 in Conference Room 4 of the Community Development Building, 1500 Monroe Street in downtown Ft Myers. All members of the public are invited to attend and speak during the public comment period.

### **Troyer Brothers Mine Denial Appeal Status Report**

In November, 2011 the Lee County Board denied an application for a mine for the Troyer Brothers potato farm that extends from Corkscrew Road to SR82 about 10 miles east of I-75. This proposed rock mine is 1,803 acres and proposes a 110 deep mine pit that would allow rock crushing for 35 years. Troyer Bros has appealed the Board's denial to the Circuit Court and ECCL and its civic and environmental allies are participating in support of Lee County's defense of the mine's denial. The case is still pending in the Circuit Court.

Two amicus briefs have recently been filed with the Circuit Court Judge who is hearing the Troyer Brothers appeal. One of the briefs was filed by Attorney Ralf Brookes representing the Conservancy of Southwest Florida, the ECCL, the Corkscrew Rural Residents and the Phil Douglas, a resident of The Brooks. The second brief was filed by attorney Michael Jacob for the defendant, Lee County.

Both briefs support the decision of the Lee County Board of Commissioners. The major argument is that the proposed mine is inconsistent with the Lee County Plan. The following points justifying the County's decision are included in both of the briefs:

- *Locating a mine adjacent to existing or future residential uses is inconsistent with the Lee County Plan.*
- *Mining within the Wetlands Future Land Use Category is also inconsistent with the Lee County Plan.*
- *The proposed mine use would not have access to adequate transportation facilities and therefore is inconsistent with the Lee County Plan.*

- *The proposed mine will adversely impact environmental resources (protected species, surrounding environmentally sensitive lands and mitigation areas and therefore is not consistent with the Lee Plan.*
- *The mine's design will push surface water to the south (water historically went west) which will put a further burden to the property owners to the south.*
- *Maintaining the current agricultural use of the property serves a legitimate public purpose.*

To summarize the situation, current Florida law and the duly adopted and approved DR/GR plan strongly support the decision of the Lee County Board of Commissioners in denying this mining request. Let's hope that the Circuit Court Judge applies this same standard of law.

### **Transition Committee Looks to Future Organization of ECCL**

Don Eslick, Chairman of the ECCL, notified the membership early this year that this would be his last year to serve as Chairman. He will continue to serve the ECCL in an emeritus capacity after January 1, 2013.

A Transition Committee was formed, chaired by John Goodrich, and several meetings were held since the beginning of the year. About 35 members attended the first two meetings to review the organization's structure. A smaller Steering Committee was then formed to further refine the organization's new functional objectives.

The Steering Committee's proposal calls for one chairman and six executive committee members; a vice chairman will be selected from and by this group. The six Executive Committee Director positions include: financial, transportation, communications, environment, community planning and government relations. Each director will serve one-year terms.

The ECCL membership was notified; both by email as well as at the August 10<sup>th</sup> ECCL meeting about the proposed available positions and were asked to nominate themselves for one of these new positions to the Nominating Committee which is comprised of John Goodrich, Beverly MacNellis, Bob Lienesch and Don Eslick.

On August 22<sup>nd</sup> the Nominating Committee met to discuss the seven persons who had self-nominated themselves for the ECCL leadership positions.

The Nominating Committee plans to offer a slate of proposed officers for vote by the membership at the September or October 2012 ECCL meeting.

### **Transportation Project Progress**

#### **Williams Road/US 41 Intersection**

Sarah Clarke, project manager for the Lee County Department of Transportation (LDOT), reports that the County has completed a design for a right turn lane for the western approach of Williams Road onto US 41. Several years ago the developers of the West Bay community, that also own the southwest corner of this intersection, entered into a written agreement with an

informal West Bay resident group to donate 15 feet of Right of Way (ROW) in order to improve the safety of this intersection.

Recently LDOT indicated to the ECCL Transportation sub-committee that is working on this project that 30 feet ROW would now be needed to add the right turn lane so that sidewalks, utilities and curbing could be installed. Since the original ROW agreement was executed a new developer has purchased the development rights of the community. That sale committed the new owners to the 15 foot ROW contribution. However this land has never been conveyed to LDOT so that the right turn lane could be constructed.

The new owners have resisted contributing more than 15 feet of ROW for this improvement. As a result LDOT has offered to construct a right turn lane without the sidewalks and curbing once the funds have been approved possibly as soon as the County's 2013 fiscal year begins in October. The cost of the project, including relocation of the utility lines and an irrigation ditch, is estimated to be about \$150,000 - \$200,000. The new developer of The West Bay Club and the adjacent property has been asked to convey the 15 foot easement for this right turn lane to the County.

### **Right Turn Lane from West Estero Parkway onto Three Oaks Parkway**

Lee County DOT has completed the design for the right turn lane on the south side of Estero Parkway onto Three Oaks Parkway. In order for construction to begin funds must be approved by the Board of County Commissioners in the county's 2013 budget. Since the LDOT fund for all intersection improvements is expected to be about \$1,000,000 the project must compete with all other projects in terms of improved safety impact. If funds are approved during this fiscal year the improvement will cost between \$100,000 and \$150,000 and would be completed in early 2013.

### **Improved Access and Egress from the Three Oaks Post Office**

The design of this improvement has been completed and the project is ready to go as soon as funding becomes available at the start of the new fiscal year in October

### **Traffic Signal at US 41/Sweetwater Ranch Blvd. Intersection**

Billy Hathaway, District Secretary, Florida Department of Transportation, and his team will meet with the ECCL Transportation Subcommittee on this project at the end of September or early October for an update on the community's proposal for a full working traffic signal at Sweetwater Ranch Blvd. and US 41.

This will be a follow-up to the June meeting where community representatives and several Estero residents had expressed concerns to FDOT about the dangers associated with this intersection, both with residents attempting to walk across US 41 as well as cars making U turns at this location.

### **Improved Intersection Identification for East Bound and West Bound Lanes Entering on to I-75 from Corkscrew Road**

At the request of the ECCL Transportation Committee the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) has painted new arrows on the entrance signs and on the appropriate lanes of Corkscrew Road so that approaching drivers will have a better understanding of where the turn lanes are located so that they can more safely enter both the north and south bound approach lanes onto I-75 from both the east and west. Co-chair Jim Boesch has requested FDOT paint two blue I-75 markings in both the east and west turn lanes. This is an ongoing project.

### **New initial Bike/Walk Map**

A new Bike/Walk Master Plan map was recommended for approval by the last Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) of the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). Both of the ECCL's Transportation Committee Co-chairs, Bill Williams and Jim Boesch, are members of the CAC. Later in the month the MPO approved this map as well. A copy of the map has been posted on the Estero website and can be viewed by clicking on the following link... .

### **Corkscrew Road Service Advisory (CRSA) Board**

The CRSA, at the last Board meeting advised the B.O.C.C. that even though the Corkscrew Road safety improvements have been completed from Stoneybrook to Bella Terra they want to continue to serve the County and the communities and businesses in the same advisory capacity. Items they are looking to complete with funds the new residents will pay, as well as the old residents, are an irrigation line for the median divider, better landscape plantings, possible lighting, and ultimately straightening out the curve by Bella Terra. Jim Boesch is chairperson of the CRSA.

### **Estero Fire Rescue Holds Budget Workshop and Sets Proposed Millage Rate**

On July 11, 2012, Commissioners of Estero Fire Rescue (EFR) held a public budget workshop. Chief Scott Vanderbrook reviewed the 2012-2013 budget proposal. The \$11.9 million expenditure budget calls for an increase of \$600,000, of which \$400,000 represents increased capital costs to replace aging fire trucks and \$200,000 for the increased cost of employee benefits.

Since Estero's assessed taxable values for existing properties dropped by 1.8% in 2011, if EFR held to the same 2.15 millage rate as last year, EFR's ad valorem tax revenue would decline about \$ 200,000. To hold the same revenue and minimize the budget deficit, the commissioners agreed to propose the state-permitted "rolled back rate" of 2.1881 in the "TRIM" (Truth in Millage Law) Notice. This means that, on average, individual homeowners will see little or no change in their fire-related real estate tax bill what will be included in their TRIM Notice.

Two public hearings will be held to further discuss the proposed budget and millage rate. *The commissioners could lower, but not increase, the rate from the TRIM rate.* The meetings will be held at 5:00 pm on September 10 and September 26 at the EFR station at 21500 Three Oaks Parkway. Comments from the general public are encouraged.

## **Pete Winton Updates ECCL On County Budget**

Pete Winton, Assistant County Manager, gave a short presentation on Lee County's budget status to ECCL members at their August 10 meeting. He stated that, at its peak, the County's property tax base was \$96.5 billion; that was 5 years ago...now it's down about 45 percent from that level.

Lee County and the City of Sanibel are the only two Lee County governments that have not raised taxes since the downturn in the economy. Lee County's current tax rate is 4.15, and it has been at that rate for the last 5 years, since 2008.

Winton reported that Lee County has been able to maintain this same tax rate by reducing the size of the government workforce, eliminating staff pay raises for the past five years and using reserves. By doing this the County has been able to maintain critical service levels; however, spending reserves is unsustainable and they intend to take a close look at this in upcoming budget hearings.