



ESTERO DEVELOPMENT REPORT

Volume 12, Number 6, Issued April 2013
Produced by the Estero Council of Community Leaders (ECCL)

Tues., April 9, 5 p.m.	Estero Fire Rescue Monthly Board Meeting	District Headquarters, Three Oaks Parkway
Wed., April 10, 5 p.m.	Estero Design Review Committee Meeting	Estero Community Park
Fri., April 12, 10 a.m.	ECCL Monthly Members' Meeting, Suzanne Bradach, Lee Memorial Health System, Guest Speaker	Estero Community Park
Mon., April 15, 5 p.m.	Estero Community Planning Panel	Estero Community Park
Tues., April 23, 9:30 - 1:30 p.m.	Public Hearing, S. Lee Hospital Application, Agency for Health Care Administration	Hodges University, 4501 Colonial Blvd., Ft. Myers
Sun., April 28, 4 p.m.	"Music of Haydn & Schubert" Estero Concert Series	Koreshan State Historic Site

HOSPITAL COMMITTEE

The State of Florida's Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) will conduct a Public Hearing from **9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., Tuesday, April 23**, regarding the applications by both Lee Memorial Health System and Hospital Management Associates, Inc., to build a hospital in south Lee County. The Hearing will be held at Hodges University, 4501 Colonial Boulevard in Fort Myers. We urge all Estero and Bonita residents and organizations to attend and testify in support of LMHS's hospital proposal.

AHCA has until June to approve or deny the applications. Once AHCA approves a hospital application, the applicant must begin construction within 18 months of approval.

Background

On February 4, Hospital Management Associates, Inc. (HMA) filed a letter of intent with the AHCA to file an application to relocate all 88 acute care beds located at Lehigh Regional Medical Center to an undisclosed site in Lee County. From comments made by the HMA leadership, it appears they intend to relocate those beds to a new hospital at a location off of Alico Road, possibly near Treeline and Ben Hill Griffin Rd, just south of the SW Florida International Airport.

Lee Memorial Health System (LMHS) filed a competing letter of intent on February 20 to file a formal application that would allow Lee Memorial to relocate up to 80 beds to their property just across Coconut Road from the Dillard's store in the Coconut Point Town Center. This property was secured by LMHS in 2005 and 2006 in order to build a hospital in the Estero/Bonita area.

On February 28, the leaders of the South Lee County Hospital Committee testified before the Lee Memorial Board urging them to approve Lee Memorial staff's recommendation to apply for a hospital in south Lee County. The Board voted unanimously in favor of filing the application.

LMHS filed a preliminary application on March 6. They must file a full application by April 10.

The South Lee County Hospital Committee has solicited public support from the ECCL Community Representatives, and Estero and Bonita Springs residents and organizations. To date, over 1500 letters have been sent to LMHS in support of their application.

AIRPORT NOISE COMMITTEE

WebTrak Flight Tracking System

After over three years of working with the FAA and the airport, we finally have an operational aircraft flight tracking information system.

The system is called WebTrak. The flight tracking system provides near real-time and historical aircraft flight track information within the immediate area of both Southwest Florida International and Page Field.

You will be able to go to the site on your computer and view flights as they pass over your location. (Per federal regulations, some aircraft flight data is excluded. This includes operations by law enforcement and military aircraft.) Aircraft information, including the aircraft model, the origin/destination airports, and flight number, is included whenever possible.

One of the reasons we have been working to get this system was to enable the residents of Estero to monitor flights that they thought were too low (flights over Estero are supposed to be no lower than 4,000 feet) and with this system you will be able to report any violation to the airport with exact data about the flight.

The link below will take you directly to the instructions page for the WebTrak flight tracking system where you can learn how to use the system. At the bottom of that page you will find the link to the flight tracker.

<http://www.flylcpa.com/webtrak>

The Estero Council of Community Leaders is trying to get someone from the airport to give a demonstration of this new system at an upcoming ECCL meeting. We will let you know when we have arranged this presentation. We want to thank all the people who served on the Aircraft Noise Committee. It's because of their efforts that the flight tracker system is finally a reality.

GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

Annexation/Incorporation Study Committee

The city staff of Bonita Springs is still in the process of preparing a recommendation to be reviewed by the City Council regarding the processes needed to present the alternatives of annexation to the Estero residents of Pelican Landing and The Colony. The ECCL will comment and make recommendations to Estero residents upon completion and presentation of the report. Bonita Springs' representatives told ECCL that this effort was necessary because of efforts by Vote Estero to start an incorporation effort. Since this effort is no longer active (see below), it is hoped the annexation effort will no longer be necessary.

On March 5, Directors for ECCL met with Directors of Vote Estero to discuss Vote Estero's plans for their incorporation campaign. ECCL had requested information regarding incorporation plans from Vote Estero for the ECCL Annexation/Incorporation Study Committee to review. No information was provided.

The Vote Estero representatives said they will shortly be announcing that any public referendum or straw vote regarding incorporation of Estero will be put off until the November 2014 election. They plan to reconstitute as a study committee to review in detail the feasibility of incorporation of Estero, and to prepare the necessary feasibility study, budget, city charter and other documentation. Vote Estero may decide to change its name in order to facilitate such a study. Vote Estero may seek to have the feasibility study validated by an independent group at FGCU.

It is the ECCL's understanding that Vote Estero will defer any petition drive or community meetings until such time as the feasibility study and documentation have been prepared, vetted through the ECCL's Incorporation Study Committee, and the ECCL Board of Directors has taken a position on such feasibility.

It is the ECCL's understanding that both Vote Estero and ECCL, if asked about the status of the incorporation effort, will respond that this entire subject is under study and will be the subject of a thorough review process by both organizations.

In order to give Vote Estero the time to complete its feasibility study, the ECCL has disbanded the current Annexation/Incorporation Study Committee. When Vote Estero has completed its study and review of the feasibility of incorporation and has prepared the necessary documentation regarding incorporation it will be forwarded to the ECCL, which shall reconstitute the Annexation/Incorporation Study Committee to review such information and forward its review of the feasibility study to the ECCL Board of Directors for a decision by the Board as to whether or not it will support the incorporation of Estero as set forth in such study and documentation.

COMMUNITY PLANNING

Student Commuting at FGCU

At their recent joint meeting, the Lee and Collier County Metropolitan Planning Organizations agreed to send a letter to the President of Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU). The letter asks that FGCU reconsider their decision to no longer jointly fund the Lee Tran Route 60 bus that takes students to and from the campus, and meet with Lee Tran to discuss possible options.

The University has said the state funding which had enabled them to pay 50% of the Route 60 costs has been terminated; in addition, ridership is very low.

The ECCL and others pointed out that, despite the FGCU Master Plan's statements in favor of mass transit, the financial incentives facing students, and the several large parking garages on campus, clearly tend to promote the use of individual cars. Also, the lack of frequency of Route 60 service may be another factor causing students to not use the mass transit option.

A possible model suggested for discussion is the University of Florida which successfully incentivizes student use of mass transit by charging each student a transit fee. In return, students can use the local transit system without any ride-by-ride charge simply by showing his/her student ID.

The Route 60 bus service is scheduled to continue at least until the end of Lee Tran's fiscal year, which is September 30.

Lowe's Presented 2013 David Graham Award

The Estero Community Planning Panel and the Estero Design Review Committee presented Lowe's of Estero with the 2013 David Graham Award for Excellence in Development. The award was presented on March 15 as part of the spring program at the Southwest Florida Urban Land Institute meeting in Ft. Myers.

Lowe's was honored for its groundbreaking architectural design, landscaping excellence and commitment to the community.

Every year the Estero Community Planning Panel and Estero Design Review Committee selects a commercial or residential development in Estero to be recognized for its efforts in development design that best represents the standards as set forth in the Estero Planning Area.

The David Graham Award for Excellence in Development is named for long-time Estero resident, developer and community promoter David Graham. The Award, which has been presented since 2007, was created to recognize completed developments that have raised the bar of excellence for developments within the Estero Planning Area.

ENVIRONMENT

FFD Mine Rezoning Request

The Lee County Hearing Examiner denied the rezoning request by Florida Farms Development (FFD) for a lime rock mine on their Corkscrew Road property. The next step will be at the BOCC level, and only those who testified before the Hearing Examiner will be allowed to speak before the BOCC when this report comes before that body. Everyone will be kept posted once the BOCC public hearing is scheduled.

Troyer Brothers Mine Appeal

Troyer Brothers is currently appealing the decision of the Lee County Circuit Court which sustained the Lee County's denial of their zoning request for a mine. The appeal has now gone to the Appellate Court for review. Several environmental groups, including the ECCL, are supporting Lee County with amicus briefs. We are using Ralf Brookes as our attorney and are sharing the costs with the other environmental support groups. Troyer Brothers has already spent in excess of \$1 million in its attempt to get a rezoning for a lime rock mine. This kind of activity further justifies why it is important for the ECCL and its allies to have funds available to protect the DRGR from mining and to insist that all future mining be done in the mining overlay along Alico Road, which was incorporated as a part of the Lee County Comprehensive Plan.

The Lost Grove Mine

This proposed mine has been dormant for some time since the applicant had its rezoning request denied by the Collier County Planning Commission. We have recently been informed that the applicant, the Alico Corporation, has resubmitted their plans for the Lost Grove Mine in order to avoid Collier County determining the application withdrawn for lack of activity for the past six months. We are monitoring this situation very closely to determine what future action to take in this regard.

Conservation 2020 Program

Our next major environmental battle will be with the Board of County Commissioners over the Conservation 2020 Program. Commissioner Kiker has already admitted publicly to the ECCL that he considers the future funding for Conservation 2020 to be on the table when the BOCC

considers the upcoming shortfall in the 2014 county budget. From public comments made by several county commissioners it is clear that support for continued funding for the Conservation 2020 Program prior to a 2016 referendum will be a major challenge for all of us. It is evident that some intensive discussions with all of the County Commissioners will be necessary between now and the adoption of the 2014 budget. This effort needs to involve all of us and our friends. It is also important that we communicate that any diversion of Conservation 2020 funds to balance the 2014 budget is a *"violation of the public trust"* and will seriously undermine the credibility of the Conservation 2020 Program.

The Florida Water and Land Legacy Campaign

We are still in the midst of the petition drive. After the March ECCL meeting, we mailed an additional 200 completed petitions to Tallahassee. Thus far we have submitted approximately 650 signed petitions. Some of our communities have done well and others have struggled. We can certainly use more community endorsements and need to get more petitions from our larger gated communities. Thus far we have completed community endorsements from the ECCL, Breckenridge, Rookery Pointe, Lighthouse Bay, Spring Run and Shadow Wood. All of these endorsements have been sent to campaign headquarters.

The following are important points to remember about this campaign for the constitutional amendment:

- **It will ensure that our beaches, rivers, lakes and forests are protected for future generations.**
- **It will help Florida to retain and expand the huge amount of tourism, and associated revenues to Florida businesses, arising from the preservation of, and tourist as well as resident visits to, conservation lands.**
- **It will create a long-term fund for programs like Florida Forever and the Everglades restoration.**
- **If approved this amendment will direct one-third of existing state revenues from document-related excise taxes or ("*doc stamps*") to fund restoration and conservation projects in Florida. In the past the Florida Forever Program was funded from the revenue provided by the "*doc stamps*."**
- **The amendment would sunset twenty years after its enactment date,**
- **The amendment will provide a dedicated stream of revenue for 20 years. It is estimated that the amount of revenue provided each year of the duration of the amendment would be approximately \$500 million. Based upon current projections, it is estimated that somewhere between 5 to 10 billion dollars could be generated in Florida during the 20 year period of time.**
- **The revenue generated by this amendment would be dedicated for conservation and could not be comingled with general revenue or diverted for other non-conservation purposes.**
- **Since we know that state revenues have been reduced due to these difficult economic times, it is important to put in perspective that this vital expenditure for Florida's present as well as future will not be more than roughly .83% of the total state expenditures. This is hardly an unreasonable investment to protect in our environmentally and economically important treasured lands.**

The campaign for this amendment is a statewide effort. If you have any signed petitions it is important to get them to Phil Douglas, the Environment Director of the ECCL. He will see that they are mailed to campaign headquarters in Tallahassee. Phil also has extra petitions if anyone needs them. He can be reached at 239-948-4494 or via email at pdindy@comcast.net.

ESTERO CONCERT SERIES

The music of Haydn and Schubert will be presented at the fifth and final Estero Chamber Music Concert at the Koreshan State Historic Site's Art Hall at 4 p.m. on Sunday, April 28.

Joseph Haydn's String Quartet No. 2 and Schubert's Piano Trio No. 1 in B-flat major will be presented.

The Art Hall at the Koreshan State Park is located at 3800 Corkscrew Road in Estero. Tickets are \$30 per person and are available by calling 239-596-8404.

Estero's Improving Home Construction Trend Continues

During February, thirty-four (34) single family home building permits and an eight-unit condominium building permit for the Colony, with a combined building value of \$8.1 million, were issued in the Estero planning community. Permits for forty-two (42) housing units represent one of the best months since 2007.

Sixteen (16) of the 34 single family permits were for The Preserve at Corkscrew, which is being built by Centex/Pulte Homes and Lennar on Corkscrew Rd. east of I-75. The Preserve has been ramping up in the last six months as eight-two (82) permits have been issued in that period. In February, eleven (11) permits were issued to nearby Bella Terra.

So far this year, about 75% of the single family unit permits have been issued for the Preserve and Bella Terra, while the two Toll Bros.' developments on Estero Parkway, Belle Lago and the Reserve of Estero, appear to be winding down.

The following table compares year-to-date 2013 figures with the prior thirteen years.

Year	Year-to-Date Housing Units	Building Value of Units	Average Building Value Per Unit	Percentage of Single Family Units
2000	329	\$42,541,070	\$129,304	32%
2001	289	48,480,616	167,753	57
2002	191	35,231,265	184,457	56
2003	376	58,389,301	155,291	31
2004	248	46,184,756	186,229	76
2005	491	104,218,898	212,258	43
2006	165	35,590,117	215,698	27
2007	139	34,406,017	247,525	20
2008	37	12,238,274	330,764	89
2009	31	11,988,196	386,716	74
2010	38	7,277,277	191,507	79
2011	21	3,285,432	156,449	81
2012	50	7,856,640	157,133	76
2013	75	14,768,087	196,908	90

Source: Lee County Permit Reports for the Estero Planning Community; See <http://www.leegov.com/gov/dept/dcd/Reports/Pages/reports.aspx>. Click on the “Select the Report Type” drop down box to select “Planning Communities,” and then click on the “Select the Area” drop down box to access “Estero,” which displays the “Estero Planning Community” reports.

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

Estero’s Single Family Home Sales in March Continue Pick-Up

In March, thirty-nine (39) single family homes were sold in Estero, according to Multiple Listing Service (MLS) figures. As shown below, that is up from 25 sold last month, and 32 sold last March. On a year-to-date basis, sales are off 24% from a year ago, but January, 2012 was the strongest month in recent years. However, prior year monthly comparisons have been favorable for eight of the last eleven months.

Period	Sold in 2011	Sold in 2012	Sold in 2013	Inc. (Dec)	Inc. (Dec) %
Jan	23	58	20	(38)	(65) %
Feb	45	21	25	4	19
Mar	39	32	39	7	22
Qtr. 1	107	111	84	(27)	(24)
Apr	50	29			
May	27	37			
June	28	32			
Qtr. 2	105	98			
July	26	35			
Aug	31	20			
Sept	24	31			
Qtr. 3	81	86			
Oct	16	28			
Nov	21	21			
Dec	24	28			
Qtr. 4	61	77			
Year	354	372			
Year to Date	107	111	84	(27)	(24)%

As of March, 2013, there were 456 listings of currently active unsold homes in Estero. This compares with 422 listings a year ago and 438 listings at the end of February. The 456 figure is unusually high this month as it includes 146 pending sales, compared with an average of just 80 throughout the fourth quarter of 2012. This reflects increased activity and a potential increase in completed sales in April.

The 456 listings represents about a 15 months' supply of unsold homes, which is little changed in the last few months or compared with a year ago. A 6 months' supply typically indicates a good market.

Of the 456 active listings, 13% 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 month's 13% continues to be well below the 20% level of June last year.

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.