

ANNUAL REPORT 2022

**Estero Council of Community
Leaders**



The ECCL Annual Report

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The ECCL Annual Report

The Estero Council of Community Leaders (ECCL) is indebted to you for your continued investment in our community improvement efforts to ensure that the quality of life that everyone enjoys in greater Estero is maintained and enhanced. It has been a highly active year for us, and we prepared this report to keep you updated.

A brief history of the ECCL, established in 2004, will help to explain the positive impact of its persistent and committed unpaid volunteers that created our sought-after destination in Southwest Florida. You will see the significance, influence, and contribution of the ECCL on many issues that may be unknown or taken for granted.

While there have been many notable achievements, two stand out. At the comprehensive planning and zoning level, the ECCL made a difference in countering the development community's pressure and influence. Without ECCL's activities, the area would have been unchecked and adversely impacted Estero's architectural style.

"If the ECCL had not been there, we might have seen a large part of Lee County looking like wall-to-wall concrete." Frank Mann

The Village of Estero would not exist today if it weren't for the ECCL's efforts over the last 20 years. The upfront and behind-the-scenes work conducted by the ECCL leading to the incorporation of the Village of Estero in 2014 was vital in preventing the increasing effort by Bonita Springs to annex various sections of Estero to boost their tax revenues. There is a clear benefit to the "checks and balances" that the ECCL provides to rigorously evaluate the decisions affecting our area and influencing our lifestyle.

Past Lee County Commissioner Frank Mann said, "If the ECCL had not been there, we might have seen a large part of Lee County looking like wall-to-wall concrete, which I fear and oppose, as do you guys. Had the ECCL not been there, I just don't know what would have happened!"



Other selected activities and achievements in collaboration with other community organizations and advocates include:

- Prevented Estero from being **annexed** into Bonita Springs
- Stopped a **major intersection** at I-75 at Coconut Road
- Participated in the development of **Coconut Point Mall**
- Significant impact on the development and design of **Walmart Estero**
- **Limiting mining expansion** in the DR/GR (Density Reduction Groundwater Resource)
- Reducing the **noise from flights** in and out of RSW Airport
- Planning and advocating for the development of **Lee Health at Coconut Point**
- Convincing the Lee County BOCC to use the conservation 2020 funds to purchase **Edison Farms** in 2017
- **Transportation** and related achievements include:
 - Estero Parkway and Three Oaks right turn lane
 - Turnaround at the Three Oaks Post Office
 - East Corkscrew Road widening
 - Turn lanes into Estero High School
 - Traffic light at US 41 and Pelican Colony
 - Adopt a Highway on a four-mile section of Tamiami Trail (removed 8 tons of trash)
- An all-volunteer **Junior Achievement “2-5-8-Graduate” program** adopted by the ECCL and implemented in four Estero schools.

No other organization in greater Estero focuses on engaging our community to maintain and improve our quality of life. Who we are is evident. Why we exist focuses on informing greater Estero citizens of critical issues needing attention and encouraging engagement to impact our quality of life favorably.

We strived for clear, concise statements that reflect our culture, values, and ethics. Our mission explains what we do to fulfill our purpose, and our vision is an inspiring rallying cry that invites everyone who believes in it to contribute and become a part of it. We are on a quest, a journey to a destination where our community is significantly engaged in greater Estero. We hope you'll join and invest in us on our journey.

Be Informed, Be Engaged, and Make An Impact!

Thank you,

Jim Gilmartin,

President

Board Members



Joe Pavich, Sr.
Chairman



Chris Simoneau
Vice Chairman



Jim Shields
Director



Frank Moser
Director



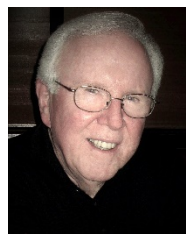
Mike Wasson
Director



Lou Fratterelli
Director

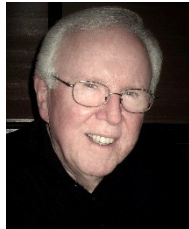


Reas Graber
Director



Jim Gilmartin
President

Executive Management Team



Jim Gilmartin



Allan Bowditch



Terry Flanagan

Community Engagement Council Chairpersons



Jenny Coleman
Environment



April Palmer
Education



Lou Fratterelli
Safety



Judy Kessel
Health

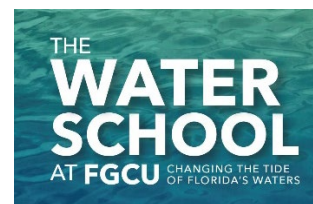
The ECCL is now a 501(c)3 Non-Profit Organization

Previously, the ECCL operated as a 501(c)4 organization with the expanded ability for political lobbying, and contributions were not tax-deductible. Recently the ECCL was classified a 501 (c)3 organization by the IRS because the organization provides information to Greater Estero residents about issues that could positively or negatively impact the quality of life in Greater Estero. With the 501c3 classification, the ECCL can solicit tax-deductible contributions to support our efforts directly. The 501(c)3 designation will help the ECCL continue its focus on monitoring and education to engage the community to improve the environment, safety, transportation, health, and education.

We have established a volunteer Finance Advisory Committee within the ECCL. The committee will provide the Chief Financial Officer, Executive Management Team (EMT), and the Board of Directors an outside independent resource that is recommended for all Not-for-Profit 501(c)3 Organizations.

Cooperation with other Organizations

The ECCL has agreed on a partnership arrangement with the Calusa Waterkeeper Organization and the Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation to increase our impact on specific issues such as water quality and environmental issues. We are also in a relationship with FGCU's Water School.



Key issues that have been Communicated and Addressed since January 2022

Hurricane Ian and the storm surge from Estero Bay severely impacted the residents along West Broadway. We joined forces with the Estero Forever Foundation, Estero Chamber of Commerce, and the Village of Estero and were instrumental in raising more than \$100,000 for the victims. Our volunteers also organized a 2-day barbeque event and provided a forum for residents to receive information about storm relief.

The ECCL awarded **\$2,500 grants** to Operation Barbeque Rescue, Riverwoods Plantation Foundation, and Estero Baptist Church for their support of this effort. The ECCL supported the local education community with a \$5,000 Diamond sponsorship for Bonita Springs High School and Estero High School, Jaws vs. Claws IV fundraiser.

During the year, the **ECCL's Monthly Meetings** have hosted many significant speakers that have addressed various essential topics. Some of those that have spoken either at the Zoom meetings or, more recently, our in-person meetings have included:

- Lee County Commissioner Ray Sandelli.
- Jon McLain, Estero's Vice Mayor, and council member.
- Mary Gibbs, Estero Village's Community Development Director.
- Don Scott, Executive Director, Lee County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO).
- Joe Ryan, Director of Ancillary Services at Lee Health, Coconut Point
- Dr. Krzysztof Biernacki - Director of the Bower School of Music & the Arts at Florida Gulf Coast University
- Lt. Frank Pisano from the Sheriff's Office Community Response Unit
- Kim Gaide, Founder and Manager of Lee Health's Military Support Program.

The ECCL **donated \$3,000** to the Historical Society to help pay for the work needed to ensure the historic buildings are in good order for the benefit of the community. The ECCL also sent out a request to residents to help donate funds for this successful purpose.

The article by **Spotlight Magazine** to be published in mid-February highlights our organization's new name and focus and will provide considerable insight and understanding of **Engage Estero's** purpose and mission.

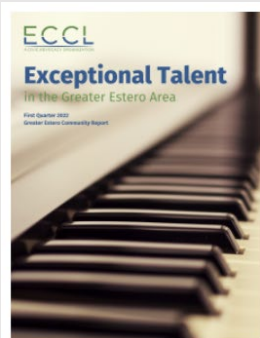
The ECCL's Book "**Forging a Better Path**" (sent as a complimentary copy to Members), which outlined the work of the ECCL over the last 20 years, was serialized in the Seabreeze and other publications.

The ECCL's **Adopt a Highway program** has continued to be extraordinarily successful. Since October 2020, the total litter collected along Hwy 41 between the Vines entrance (Breckenridge Road) to Coconut Road has been an astounding 9,380 pounds (just under 8 tons). Now, every section of the county roads in Estero has an Adopt a Road program through Lee County's Adopt a Road program. Volunteers have adopted other county road sections in Estero from Country Creek, Estero Rotary Club, River of Life Church, Suffolk Construction, Pro-line, and several FGCU organizations. In addition, with the support of the Estero Village Manager Steve Sarkozy and the Keep Lee County Beautiful program, an Adopt a Road program was initiated this season for:

- Estero Parkway (led by volunteers in the Cascades)
- Via Coconut Point (led by volunteers in Genova and including participants from Rapallo, Mirasol, Colonial Oaks, Shadow Wood, Wildcat Run, and Lighthouse Bay)
- Williams Road (with volunteers from Genova and Pelican Sound).

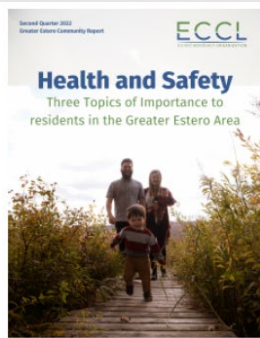
There has also been recognition of several other **important reports** and items of communication:

- The ECCL’s essay on the importance to our community of Workforce Housing
- The ECCL’s updates on Developments occurring in Greater Estero.
- The Health Council’s initiative to identify the locations of AEDs in Estero
- The Estero Village’s initiative to convert homes with Septic Systems to the Municipal Sewer System.
- Support Our World-Class Musical Talent on our Doorstep!
- A review of the MPO’s Initiative to establish a “Rails to Trails” system using the Seminole Railway right-of-way.
- Mental Distress in Children During COVID-19: Signs, Symptoms & What We Can Do to Help Our Kids & Ourselves.
- The Dangers of Cane Toads.



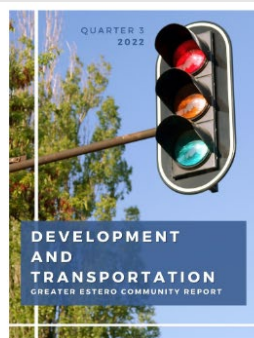
January 2022

- World Class Musical Talent
- FGCU Day
- Essay Contest



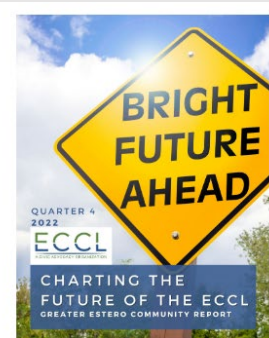
April 2022

- Dangers of Cane Toads
- Mental Distress in Children During COVID-19
- How residents can help to improve our water quality in greater Estero



September 2022

- Recent and New Developments Planned in the Greater Estero Area
- Latest Transportation and Infrastructure News



December 2022

- Resident Survey Results
- A Blueprint for Change

Some Future Developments



The ECCL is initiating a series of **Public Forum** (Town Hall Style) meetings. The first, scheduled for January 25, 2023, and held at FGCU’s Water School (details are on the www.esterotoday.com website, will focus on Water Quality and Environmental Issues impacting Greater Estero.

We are scheduling other forums covering Community Health and Local Development in the coming months. These will supplement the regular ECCL Monthly Meetings.



The **Education Council** is recruiting volunteers to continue the widely praised JA program for Estero’s students towards the end of 2022. In addition, Mike Wasson, the Education Council’s Co-chair, examines how the ECCL could implement an Ambassador Program for local schools.



The **Safety Council** monitors road and other Village capital improvement projects and, where necessary, proposes practical adjustments to benefit residents.

The Transition from the ECCL to *Engage Estero*

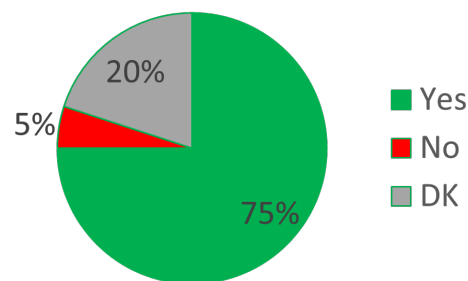
The ECCL completed a review of the organization’s purpose, mission, and vision to clarify the work and focus of the organization. We consulted with Eric Dent and Craig Randel, currently FGCU professors. We shared a draft of our effort to date and the results of the recent resident survey. At subsequent meetings with the members of the EMT, the consultants challenged aspects of our rebranding effort. Selected comments and recommendations are included in our recommendations.

During September 2022, we surveyed residents’ views of the ECCL, Estero, and the surrounding communities that would help direct our future activities and actions and identify their key priorities. There were more than 800 responses. In addition, more than 600 respondents wrote about personal perceptions, beliefs, criticisms, and suggestions.

Key Findings

- 12% claimed to know a lot about the ECCL.
- 36% said a moderate amount.
- 33% said they had little knowledge.
- 19% said they knew nothing.

We asked, “Is there a need for a community-based, 501c3 nonprofit, nonpartisan, nonpolitical, and volunteer community organization?”



The reasons the respondents considered the ECCL necessary included:

- We need nonpartisan and nonpolitical groups in our divided society.
- To be a voice for responsible growth and environmental issues.
- Keep development to a minimum to maintain our quality of life.
- To help shape Estero’s future.

Regarding our actions, while all items listed were considered necessary, the following were the top 5 cited.

1. To help protect our environment and preserve our clean water and wetlands.
2. To inform about Village, County, Regional, and State issues and ways to respond to issues threatening the quality of life in our communities.
3. To function as a watchdog organization to monitor the implementation of Village of Estero initiatives and plans.
4. To proactively respond to perceived immediate threats to our quality of life.
5. To help improve our safety by supporting the funding and planning for safe and adequate roadways, walking/biking/and multi-use paths serving our communities.

No other organization in greater Estero focuses on engaging our community to maintain and improve our quality of life. Who we are is now evident and why we exist focuses on informing greater Estero citizens of significant issues that may impact our quality of life.

Our mission explains what we do to fulfill our purpose, and our vision is an inspiring rallying cry that invites everyone who believes in it to contribute and become a part of it. We strived for clear, concise statements that reflect our culture, values, and ethics.

The Board has approved a name change to “Engage Estero.” The official launch date is February 1, 2023. The following contains a concise summary of our future direction.



A Blueprint for Change

Who Are We?

We are an all-volunteer, nonpolitical, nonprofit *Community Engagement Association*.

Purpose: Why Do We Exist?

To *inform* residents of significant community issues and encourage resident *engagement* to *impact* the quality of life in greater Estero favorably.

Mission: What Do We Do?

What We do, we do with purpose, passion, and pride in our community.

Our Volunteers:

- Build trust by providing transparency, listening to residents, evaluating government plans and other local activities, and communicating informed and collective opinions to residents and community decision-makers.
- Conduct research, communicate findings, seek opportunities, offer solutions, and challenge threats to stimulate resident engagement.
- Organize live and online educational forums providing government and resident decision-makers with expertise, articles, and insight to provide balanced information.
- Collaborate with organizations focused on bettering our environment, water, safety and transportation, community health, and local education to strengthen our voices and increase favorable community impacts.

Vision: To What Do We Aspire?

To have an informed and engaged citizenry, resulting in a community that delivers the desired quality of life.

Our New Logo, Name, and Tagline

Effective February 1, 2023



See The Attached Statement of Our 2022 Financial Position

ANNUAL REPORT 2022

**Estero Council of Community
Leaders**



**Estero Council of Community Leaders, Inc.
Statement of Financial Position 12/2022**

As of December 31, 2022

Cash Basis

December 2022 - FINAL

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

	Operations	Programs	Contributions	Other	Total
Revenue					
Member Support	\$ 20,315				\$ 20,315
Program Revenue		\$ 36,925			\$ 36,925
Grants Received (1)			\$ 20,976		\$ 20,976
Contributions			\$ 68,942		\$ 68,942
Investment				\$ 9	\$ 9
Total Revenue	\$ 20,315	\$ 36,925	\$ 89,918	\$ 9	\$ 147,167
Distributions					
Expense	\$ (11,700)	\$ (14,916)	\$ (101)	\$ -	\$ (26,717)
Scholarships/Awards		\$ (1,000)			\$ (1,000)
Grants issued			\$ (24,500)		\$ (24,500)
Total Distributions	\$ (11,700)	\$ (15,916)	\$ (24,601)	\$ -	\$ (52,217)
Net Surplus	\$ 8,615	\$ 21,009	\$ 65,317	\$ 9	\$ 94,950

YEAR TO DATE STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

	Year to date
Beginning Cash 1/1/2020	\$ 44,401
Total Revenue	\$ 147,158
Funds Held for IAN Relief	\$ -
Gain (Loss) Investment	\$ 9
Equipment / Fixtures	\$ (641)
Other Changes in Assets / Liabilities	\$ (130)
Distributions	\$ (52,217)
Ending Cash	\$ 138,580

(1) From SWFCF ECCL Advocacy Fund

Estero Council of Community Leaders, Inc.

	<u>Dec 31, 22</u>	<u>Dec 31, 21</u>	<u>\$ Change</u>
ASSETS			
Current Assets			
Checking/Savings			
Administration Fund	74,548	44,401	30,147
Advocacy Fund	64,032	0	64,032
Total Checking/Savings	<u>138,580</u>	<u>44,401</u>	<u>94,179</u>
Total Current Assets	138,580	44,401	94,179
Fixed Assets			
Equipment	641	0	641
Total Fixed Assets	<u>641</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>641</u>
TOTAL ASSETS	<u>139,221</u>	<u>44,401</u>	<u>94,820</u>
LIABILITIES & EQUITY			
Liabilities			
Current Liabilities			
Credit Cards			
Visa	187	317	-130
Total Credit Cards	<u>187</u>	<u>317</u>	<u>-130</u>
Total Current Liabilities	<u>187</u>	<u>317</u>	<u>-130</u>
Total Liabilities	187	317	-130
Equity			
Restricted Net Assets -- A&E	484	484	0
Unrestricted Net Assets	43,600	22,825	20,775
Net Income	94,951	20,775	74,176
Total Equity	<u>139,035</u>	<u>44,084</u>	<u>94,951</u>
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	<u>139,222</u>	<u>44,401</u>	<u>94,821</u>