

COUNCIL OF CIVIC ASSOCIATIONS, INC.

NEWSLETTER

APRIL, 2001

"When spiders unite, they can tie down a lion" - Ethiopian proverb

MEETING Thursday, April 19, 4-6 p.m., South County Regional Library, Three Oaks Parkway near Corkscrew Road, Estero. Call 283-3762 if you have an issue to be addressed. Public is welcome and encouraged to attend.

SPEAKER will be Jeff Lytle, Editorial Page Editor of the Naples Daily News and TV Talk Show Host.

POLITICALLY SPEAKING

We are sure you all have read that Lee County Commissioners John Albion and Andy Coy have announced their intentions to run for the congressional seat reportedly being vacated by Porter Goss. The election will be held in November 2002 and a large number of candidates are expected. On the amusing side we noted that Commissioner Albion plans to list the environment as his number one campaign priority. Excuse mee??? Coy plans to list a "flat tax" program as his mission in Congress. It will be interesting to see if the development and building industry associations pour money into this campaign. Will they continue to spend their campaign monies sponsoring county commission and more importantly, state representative candidates?

Of course we maintain that the leading candidate for the Goss seat will be State Senator Burt Saunders. He ran unopposed for State Senator last year and amassed close to \$200,000 in campaign donations even though he did not have a challenger. The majority of the money came from the health care field (his Mrs. is a doctor) and the legal profession (Burt is one of them). Imagine how much he can raise if he is competing for a seat? He is the only candidate we think is capable of raising the \$1,000,000 plus needed for that contest.

Let's not forget former Sheriff John McDougall. He has stated in the past that he would be interested in the Goss seat. What's our ex-Sheriff been up to? Reports have it that he is out selling those temporary tent cities for the same company that sold them to Lee County. We learned, from a source high in the ranks of the Sheriff's Dept., that McDougall is also writing a handbook on "How to Effectively Deal with Local Elected Officials". We really pushed this informant to see if it were a joke but he assured us that it was on the level.

NOW IS THE TIME

There will be two county commission seats up for grabs in 2002 and now is the time to start searching for candidates that share your political views. Only person we know looking at the North Ft. Myers seat is Carolyn Moore. Carolyn ran for the Lee County Electric Co-op seat some six or eight years ago and won as an unendorsed petition candidate. She was a controversial board member and after one term the Co-op "trotted out" retired Major General Jim Dozier to oppose Ms. Moore. The General won the seat and not much has been heard from Ms. Moore. Some intermediaries asked that we meet with her, as she would like to run for the Coy seat. Also on the political horizon is Jake Slot who is basically testing the waters to run for Ray Judah's seat. Ray has already made it well known this is his last term. His seat is not up for grabs until 2004. Jake is a lobbyist for a real estate organization and also serves on the CLASAC 2020 committee. Ray's most recent opponent, Anita Cereceda, has made it well known that she plans to make another run for the seat in 2004. If you know of someone who would like to seek the seat please have him or her contact one of our Directors. We are glad to assist however we can in getting their campaigns

off the ground. Encouraging people to become more involved in their government is what we do and that includes running for office. We would like to see more choices on the ballot.

STATE CONSIDERING LINKAGE BETWEEN WATER SUPPLY AND LAND USE PLANNING

The League of Women Voters (LWV) is reviewing state legislative action. Clara Anne Graham is a CCA Director and serves on the LWV board. Clara Anne recently traveled to Tallahassee and e-mailed back many pages of information on what's happening this legislative session. The League "Capitol Report" contained good monitoring information on growth management issues. Here is one excerpt from the report: "Though some changes are needed to the Governor's proposals (which we are continuing to promote with the Governor's Office), objections from the public interest community are focused on other issues, among them: virtually the same proposal that appears in the House bill on "Sustainable Communities" (referred to as "Livable Communities" in the Senate version), this being the issue of State oversight and local authority; authorization for the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) to delegate the review of local comprehensive plans to the Regional Planning Councils, absent a certification process to ensure that reviewing RPCs are qualified to do so and safeguards whereby appropriate State oversight will be provided; proposals that weaken Citizen Standing; providing lead responsibility to the DCA in recommending changes to the State Comprehensive Plan (the Plan being much broader in scope than the jurisdiction of the DCA); weakening certain aspects of the DRI process (though not to the extent that the House does) and creating the earlier referenced rural policy provisions. An issue not raised in the House, the bill begins to make long needed linkages between water supply and land use planning."

The entire report is available to League members. Contact Laura Miller, LWV President and CCA Director, at 765-6536 or e-mail elhmiller@juno.com for more information.

2001 LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

State Rep. Carole Green reports that this year is an unusually tight budget year but Southwest Florida managed to capture the following funding: \$120,000 for the Lee County Assessment Center; \$250,000 for Ruth Cooper "Family Treatment Center"; \$7,827,049 for Southwest Regional Airport terminal upgrades; \$4,000,000 for Treeline Avenue Extension; \$26,250,796 for road improvements in Lee County; \$16,052,979 for road improvements in Collier County; \$180,000 for Lee Memorial's Regional Perinatal Intensive Care Center; \$25,000 for planning of a new Dept. of Health facility.

BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU ASK FOR ...

was the response from a federal government source when we first discussed, years ago, petitioning the Army Corps of Engineers to undertake a study of the cumulative impacts of growth in southwest Florida. The Corps recently held several town hall meetings to explain the Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS). It is important not to confuse the rarely undertaken PEIS study with the more common EIS. The PEIS document is seriously flawed and everyone involved in the process knows it. The goal was to get a comprehensive handle on permitting to evaluate a range of problems which we won't bore you with (unless you ask), but sums up to either you have a program that protects clean water or you don't. The PEIS has all the earmarks of heavy lobbying in Washington, D.C. We have a plan of action. Stay tuned.

ARE YOU SURE YOU KNOW A SHEEP FROM A WOLF?

We applaud unincorporated communities in Lee county for putting their heads together to develop plans for growth that best fit their vision. However, we would like to suggest that before any final determinations are made, communities such as Estero, etc. seek the advice of an independent government agency i.e., the Fish and Wildlife Service, Naples, to review their plans. This will help avoid unforeseen pitfalls of development in ecologically sensitive areas. Decisions can become political. For example, an independent land use planner, engaged to assist communities may steer them towards implementing plans that support the agenda of their developer clients.

ESTERO BAY AREA NOT UNDER DEVELOPMENT PRESSURE

At last week's meeting to decide the ranking of Conservation and Recreation Lands (CARL) projects, Estero Bay dropped from high-ranking priority #8 to "B" in a newly devised "A" and "B" category list. The ranking committee no longer travels around the state for citizens' input but now does it all in Tallahassee. Everyone in Lee County who can read a newspaper is aware of the critical need to buy up parcels in the Estero Bay

Aquatic Preserve Buffer which is under heavy development pressure. It's unlikely any "B" listed parcels will receive funding. However, the Governor and Cabinet have the authority to put Estero Bay on the "A" list if other cost sharing partners can be found. We've got a partner! In 1997, the Council of Civic Associations wrote the Secretary of the Interior, Bruce Babbitt, requesting federal funding for land acquisition and, through the intensive grant writing efforts of Heather Stafford, manager of Estero Bay office, the Department of Environmental Protection received a federal grant of \$2,000,000. More good news! The Council of Civic Associations successfully lobbied federal and state agencies and legislative representatives to fund the Southwest Florida Coastal Conservation Corridor initiative. Estero Bay is a pivotal part of the conservation corridor project.

MORE ON CARL

Discussions with sources have informed us that they have some strong objections to the CARL process because of political influence on the CARL committee. There is too much political influence on the Carl committee and East Coast interests seem to take priority.

Each person on the CARL committee agreed to view all projects as a group and could vote for 43 projects in the "A" category. Any project that didn't fall into the "A" category becomes a "B". The DEP and DCA voted for the Estero Bay Buffer. Surprisingly, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and two governor appointees on the CARL committee did not. Two important considerations were ecological significance and development pressure. Lee County and the Estero Bay area are considered ecological hot spots in the country. So, Estero Bay did not rank high for development pressure? Is this political influence?

ATTENTION CIVIC ASSOCIATION PRESIDENTS

The Lee County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) announces the start of its annual transportation enhancement activity (TEA) application cycle, for projects to be undertaken in fiscal year 2006/2007. Approximately \$300,000 in federal transportation funds will be available to the MPO for numerous projects in your communities. Projects such as facilities or safety and educational activities for pedestrians and bicycles; acquisition of scenic easements and scenic or historic sites; landscaping; historic preservation; control or removal of outdoor advertising; environmental mitigation to address water pollution due to highway runoff; and several other projects. Contact the MPO at 656-7720, website address www.swfrpc.org/mpo.htm, or e-mail rgogoi@swfrpc.org. Completed applications are due by June 18, 2001.

SCHOOL IMPACT FEE UPDATE

As you know, we first exposed the lack of school impact fees back in 1997 and we've been struggling to convince the School Board and the County Commission to institute these much needed fees ever since. Finally, the School Board agreed to go ahead with a study of impact fees. The study showed we should implement fees immediately. The Building Industry fought hard to delay the implementation of new fees. The county commission suggested another study be done by a consultant they preferred. The new study is due shortly. The Building Industry is pushing to stall the new fees or delay the study. They hope to influence the legislature to come up with a plan to do away with all impact fees. The Building Industry heavily lobbies the School Board on a constant basis to fend off these fees. Some School Board members are saying that the school impact fees will be a drop in the bucket of what is really needed to solve the problem of keeping up with new school construction. That we need a sales tax. We are saying that until the development community ante's up their fair share of growth costs we will not consider a sales tax as a viable option. Why is it so easy to ask taxpayers for more money and so difficult to ask the development/building community to pay their fair share.

Of course we understand who puts more money into re-election campaigns and perhaps taxpayers are partly to blame for not being more involved in choosing and supporting candidates. The stall is on. Watch this one to see who among the School Board and commission members try to stall impact fees past the next budget session to give the building industry another gift from the taxpayers of one more year of no school impact fees which equates to over \$22,000 per day. Remember the increase in road impact fees that was delayed a month and cost taxpayers millions but softened the blow to the building/development

industry and was a gift from the commissioners.

JET SKIS, ONE PERSONS FUN IS ANOTHER'S ANNOYANCE

CCA Networker Harry Gottlieb has been researching the jet ski/personal watercraft issue for over a year. He has produced a 12 page comprehensive paper on the subject outlining effects on wildlife, pollution, safety and annoyance concerns and what's been done in other areas. Harry's paper states that "In 1997 (personal watercraft) represented 9% of Florida's registered boats, but were responsible for 37% of boating accidents and 48% of personal injuries." Anyone who has spent time on the water has a story or two to tell about Jet Ski miss-use. If you agree with Harry that personal watercraft should be restricted from Estero Bay and/or other Aquatic Preserves, or if you want more information contact Harry Gottlieb at 463-9202 or e-mail him at Gotherm@aol.com. Resolutions or petitions from civic associations are particularly welcome.

PUBLIC ACCESS TV

FREE PAT is changing their name to the Public Access Committee or PAC-TV. This group seems to be gaining momentum, contacting other public access TV stations around the country for advice and support, considering a petition drive for a referendum ballot, and gaining strength in numbers and commitment. People who are getting involved for the first time are being drawn to this issue which has now become one of freedom of speech. Some good will come of this. Perhaps a new commissioner or city council member? The cable companies, in return for using our road right-of-ways, are supposed to provide cable access for government, education and the public. Lee County government and the School Board have their channels. We have been denied our local program channel. If your organization would like more information or a presentation on this subject, a speaker's bureau is being formed. Contact Ernesto Lasso de la Vega at ernesto@peganet.com.

WATER MISMANAGEMENT WILL LEAD TO HIGHER WATER BILLS

The Council of Civic Associations recently sent a letter to Tallahassee, the Speaker of the House, the Senate President, Senator Burt Saunders, and Rep. Carole Green regarding what we feel to be mismanagement of the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD). This five-page letter highlights several egregious decisions regarding water permitting. We feel SFWMD is clearly over-allocating consumptive water uses in an area already in crisis. "In 1999, Collier and Lee counties had a combined total of 134 golf courses with 10-20 currently under construction. At 600,000 to 1,000,000 gallons of water per course per day, these courses consume upwards of 80 million to 134 million gallons/day. Less than half of these golf courses use reclaimed water." "By the year 2020, Collier and Lee counties are forecasted by SFWMD to have a combined total of 276 golf courses, of which 163 would be self-irrigated. The daily water demand for the 163 self irrigated golf courses will be about 100 million to 163 million gallons per day or enough water to serve the potable water needs of more than 1/2 million people."

This letter also discusses the serious salt-water intrusion of our aquifers, which have plunged to historic lows. Sinkholes and cones of depression indicating some aquifers are becoming unstable. All of this leads to more highly processed drinking water of lower quality and much higher price. By pulling more water out of the ground we are drying up our wetlands which serve as pollutant filters for re-charging our aquifers. The wheel of pollution goes round and round as we draw more water, dry up wetlands so there is more pollution, cause more salt-water intrusion and more highly polluted water. Surely, one of the basic functions of government is to ensure the health, safety and welfare of its citizens. We cannot live healthy lives without this most basic need, clean water. The SFWMD is supported by our tax dollars yet we have no say on who serves on the Board. Members are appointed by the governor. The main office is located in West Palm Beach with a district office in Fort Myers. Meetings are held on the East Coast and our tax dollars are largely used to support East Coast special interests. It's a long way to travel to make your voice heard only to be drowned out by the din of East Coast problems and concerns. So don't flush your toilets, let your lawns brown-up, but go play golf. There should be a golf course nearby. If not there'll be one coming soon.

There is much more information in this letter regarding serious well field problems in specific communities, SFWMD proposals for creating reservoirs and aquifer storage and recovery (at taxpayer expense,

of course), and our suggestions and recommendations. We will be glad to mail, fax or e-mail this information. See box below for contact information.

IS CONSERVATION 2020 HEADED FOR THE SCRAP HEAP?

In 1996 many of us championed the cause of 2020 under the assumption that it was a 7-year program. We all understood that 10% of the gathered funds would be used for managing acquired properties. We foolishly thought that at the end of the 7-year program 2020 would be put back out to the voters for reaffirmation. We also thought that purchased properties would be retained for passive use of our residents. How about the Del Prado Boulevard being extended right down the middle of the large 1000-acre parcel being purchased in North Ft. Myers. Is that passive use? This is not just a rumor; this is fact, as confirmed by our Commissioners in their discussions. How about the newly learned fact that 2020 does not have to go back to the voters. We learned several weeks ago that the Commissioners can just renew the program every year, WITHOUT A VOTE OF THE TAXPAYERS.

The present 10% figure for program costs is \$1,310,000. This pays for administration of program and maintenance of acquired lands. Now the Commissioners are being asked by Lee County Parks and Rec personnel to increase the 10% figure to 20%. Reason? Need to manage lands such as removing exotics, building caretaker's cottages and other similar so-called maintenance costs. If approved by the Commissioners the administration/maintenance annual cut will be \$2,620,000 and of course it grows each year as new properties are added to tax rolls and values of our present properties increase.

We ask all that care about this fine program to contact their county commissioners and let them know we felt we had made a deal with them. We voted to tax ourselves for 7 years and it should be up to us whether to continue the program. Commission Chairman Dough St. Cerny is opposing the proposed doubling of the administrative/maintenance portion, calling it "government creep". You're so right Doug! WHERE ARE OUR LEADER'S PRIORITIES? The year 2000 was a record year for deaths on Lee County roadways. 2001 is headed for another record with deaths already at 40+ persons compared to 29 deaths at the same time last year (the record year). What are our leaders doing to correct the horrible statistics? They authorized paying the Florida Highway Patrol an additional \$60,000. Is it for increased patrols? NO! It is to station highway patrolmen at our bridge tollbooths to catch persons not putting money in the automatic toll collection devices. Having not raised roadway impact fees for a twelve-year period, to satisfy their political contributors the real estate and development community, our commissioners are putting our lives on the line due to our inadequate highway system. We would encourage all to contact their commissioners, write letters to the editors, and do whatever necessary in getting emphasis on our safety, instead of being assured that we collect those all important quarters on the bridges.

NORTH FORT MYERS CIVIC HAS A NEW WEBSITE

This civic association is only a year old but is becoming a civic powerhouse. Check out their website at <http://www.nfmcivic.org>. They will be posting our newsletter along with their own. This community, known as the "Gateway to Lee County" now has a growing population of 50,000+.

DARE WE SAY THE "M" WORD?

Interesting that three separate letters to the editor in various Lee County newspapers recently are asking county commissioners to declare a building moratorium. The writers felt that Lee County roads and infrastructure should catch up before more new large developments are permitted. Our question is "Are the natives getting restless?"

INFO FOR OUR ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS

Wirthlin Worldwide, a polling firm associated with Republican causes, reports that "2 out of 3 Americans say we need to protect the environment no matter what it costs." In 1999, Zogby International, another pollster heavily used by the GOP, surveyed probable Republican primary voters in five key states and found about as much support for "protect environment" (92.8 percent) as for "encourage family values" (93.4 percent). And an Environmental Defense Fund poll says that young adults (18 to 25) are "remarkably skeptical" about environmental progress over the past 30 years, with 62 percent believing that conditions are now worse than in 1970. Republicans may count on the old rule of thumb: Everybody supports the environment in polls, but it's nobody's primary concern in the voting booth. (Excerpt from U.S. News &

World Report, April 29, 2001)

ALSO: The Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program is hosting a Watershed Summit at the Best Western in Punta Gorda, Florida, October 18-20, 2001. The Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP) has been completed and many studies and projects have been undertaken. If you or your group has abstracts to submit for this summit please use the form available at www.charlotteharbornep.com and send to mhilgendorf@swfrpc.org by May 7, 2001. For more information call 941-995-1777.

WEBSITE FOR HOMEOWNER'S ASSOCIATIONS

Homeowners Supporting Homeowners in Associations (HSHIA) claims to represent over one million homeowners nationally. They are looking for your support of Homeowners Bill SB1368 that is before Congress. Look them up at www.hshia.com or www.hshia.org. Also, The Community Associations Institute at www.caionline.org represents boards and their lawyers. Publications include a Community Association Factbook and the following data: American communities are changing. Fifteen percent of U.S. citizens live in a community association; the number of community associations has grown exponentially over the past 25 years (CAI estimates), and these numbers are increasing.

E-MAIL VIRUS ALERT

We receive virus alerts from a company that has been hit by viruses twice to the tune of millions of dollars to repair or replace equipment. Many of us depend on our computers, so we pass this information along. There is a new virus called VBS.Pleh.A@mm. It's a worm that sends itself to e-mail addresses in the Microsoft Outlook address book under the subject "I hate you" and contains an attachment named help.vbs. It overwrites files on local and remote drives and replaces them with the source code of the worm, destroying the original contents.

If you have information to share you can reach us at:

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