

Estero Council of Community Leaders
Minutes of the 60th Monthly Meeting
Friday, January 18, 2008
1:00 – 3:00 p.m.

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Eslick at 1:00 p.m. at the Estero Community Park. A quorum was present.

Fifty people were in attendance representing *twenty-three* communities and three community wide organizations. There were *ten* guests.

Guests were introduced.

Minutes

Secretary, Faie Saunders reported that minutes of prior meetings are available on the website, www.esterofl.org. No minutes were approved at this meeting.

Treasurer's Report

Chris Smith, treasurer reported a balance of \$6,967.96 in the ECCL account with a carryover of \$4,368.00 from 2007. The balance includes \$2,600 received for 2008 dues. Chris has invoices for each community, if needed, for this year's dues. About 20 communities have not yet paid their 2008 dues. The ECIF had an expense of \$46 to print tickets for the March 14 Spirit of the Gulf concert at Estero High School. The ECIF's remaining balance is \$19,252.30. The treasurer's report was moved, seconded and approved.

Announcements

The **Regional Growth Management Association** is having its annual dinner at the Broadway Palm Theater on January 20th. The cost is \$25 per person. The time is 5:30 p.m.

House Speaker Rubio has created a **Committee of Condominium and Homeowners Association Governance**; you may track their activities at www.callbp.com.

CBS News will be highlighting the I-75 Coconut Road interchange story this evening and Mr. Eslick was interviewed for the program.

Interfaith Caregivers

Pastor Becky came to the meeting to speak about the Interfaith Caregivers which is a food pantry and agency to help the poor and struggling. They are located behind the Methodist Church at Broadway and US 41. They are a United Way partner and receive a lot of donated food. They welcome volunteers and encourage your giving to their pantry.

Expansion of Culverts under I-75

Nick Batos of the Brooks Concerned Citizens and Jennifer Hecker of The Conservancy spoke about the SFWMD plan to require FDOT to construction five new 60 inch culverts under I-75 as part of the ongoing 6 laning project. Early in December Commissioner Judah became aware of this request and informed The Conservancy and the Estero

community. The FDOT does not feel that they are necessary at this time, but the SFWMD could hold up the permitting with this request. It is felt that the sanctity of the adjacent wetlands, water quality, draining of the wetlands, affecting of the water recharge system in the DR/GR and possible flooding down stream are issues to be seriously considered. SFWMD had agreed only to the capping of the culverts when they are installed and to open them when needed. These culverts would cost the taxpayers \$2-3 million. They could be bored under the lanes at a later time, if felt they were needed at no higher cost except for inflation. The Conservancy and Brooks Concerned Citizens want a study done first before the culverts are installed. This maneuver on the part of the SFWMD is similar to the 4 mile “ditch” that they allowed in the Aronoff Agripartners property and was passed just before Christmas last year without the usual notice. Jennifer reported that the culverts would be placed eight feet lower than the level of the adjacent wetlands, therefore causing a lowering of the water level in the adjacent wetlands. The downstream area along Halfway Creek cannot handle the amount of water that could be forced upon them during the wet season with these culverts. Jennifer asked for attendance at the BOCC meeting on February 5th where public comment will be permitted. She asked that you wear a red shirt, to make it visible how many people are there in support of the Conservancy’s stand. A motion was made by Phil Douglas to support The Conservancy and the Brooks Concerned Citizens. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously by the members present.

Halfway Creek

Bill Hillemeier has been a “watchdog” on Halfway Creek. He reported that there is a blockage of water flow after the creek goes under US 41 toward Marsh Landing and Fountain Lakes. This obstruction is about 50 feet wide and prevents the water from flowing to the Estero River. Improvement of this obstruction would help prevent flooding in Fountain Lakes and Marsh Landing as well Rapallo and Coconut Point. Lee County has agreed to put aside money to remove this blockage. Flowing west, Halfway Creek is obstructed by a large berm that blocks the water flow. During widening and construction recently of Old US 41 one small 42” culvert was put in place. Mr. Hillemeier pointed out that with these new 5 culverts under I-75, the flow of water south would be larger than the present flow system can handle. Get further information on these subjects and be able to send e-mails to the decision makers by logging on to www.brooksconcernedcitizens.com.

Health Care Topics

Bonnie Olson reported that the “Race for the Cure 2008” will be held at Coconut Point on March 15. Education, screening and treatment are the focus of the Susan Komen organization. Last year \$435,000 was raised with over 3,500 participants. 75% of the money stays in the community. For further information go to www.komenswfl.org.

Mike Riley, CEO of the Bonita Health Center, will be leaving his position and going to the Naples Health Care center as their Chief Strategy Officer. He thanked the ECCL for their support of the Bonita Center. A health fair will be held at the Bonita Health Center on January 19.

Sam Levy reported that the March 8th health forum that was planned for the Coconut Hyatt Resort has been cancelled. He urged the residents to attend the health fair at the Bonita Community Health Center and a health care forum sponsored by ECCL and Pelican Landing at the Three Oaks Conference Center on January 31 at 7 p.m. This will be presented by Lee Memorial Health Care systems and will speak about the health care environment in our area from now through 2017. This is the result of the focus groups that were held last year gathering input from the community.

Fire District Consolidation Study

A White Paper was produced by staff of the three fire districts, San Carlos Park, Estero and Bonita Springs showing a forward looking attitude toward their consolidation. Sam Levy reported about the meeting, but as a Commissioner of the Estero Fire Rescue expressed no personal opinion regarding the procedure or outcome of the planning toward consolidation. He stated that the three fire districts agreed to take back to their respective Boards a motion and agenda item to move forward to find an independent consultant to do a feasibility study of the merger/consolidation of the three districts. Sam reported that the consolidation could take from 2-5 years because of union contracts, budgets, functionality, assets held, pension plans, equipment, etc. Long term savings and an increased variety and quality of services have been shown as the final result of consolidation. A motion was made to support the fire district's efforts to hire a consultant and come up with a consolidation plan; the motion was seconded and the membership voted unanimously to support the motion.

Estero Community Improvement Foundation (ECIF)

Dan Dronkers reported that he has posters for the Spirit of the Gulf concert scheduled for March 14 at Estero High School. He also has license plate frames for sale as a fund raiser. They are printed with Estero Florida, Village with a Vision. Cost is \$6 or 2 for \$10. The Bonita Springs Foundation may expand and add additional two Estero members. Dan and Jim Ramsburg are discussing a wine tasting as a fund raiser and/or a fashion show with Dillard's.

Ten Laning I-75 and Improving the Interchanges at Bonita Beach Road and Corkscrew Road

Jack Meeker reported that the BOCC voted to support an investment grade traffic and revenue study that could provide the necessary support for revenue bonds to be sold for the widening of I-75 to ten lanes using 4 or 6 toll lanes. This is the only way the widening will happen if the rating agencies and bond security firms in New York and elsewhere support the sale of these bonds. The question is will tolling lanes 5th and 6th provide the revenue necessary to 10 lane I-75 immediately. The Coconut Road I-75 Interchange has been removed from the five year road plan and the next step is to get it removed from the long-term 2030 plan. A group in Collier County is working against the use of tolls to finance the 10 laning of I-75. The support of the Bonita Chamber of Commerce and some members of the City council and the ECCL has been very important on this issue. 40,000 more vehicles use the expressway from the Lee County line to the airport than any other segment. If the tollway happens, monies would be made available

from the Expressway Authority to upgrade the interchanges at Bonita Beach Road and Corkscrew Road.

County DR/GR Planning Progress Report

Mr. Eslick serves on the DR/GR Advisory Committee which has met twice so far and will meet again on January 23. In February, the committee will tour the DR/GR including a mine. At the final meeting in February they will meet with the planning consultant. In April an opportunity for public input will occur and Mr. Eslick will keep the membership updated.

Mining in the DR/GR

The Aggregate Review Task Force met in Tampa in December; Don. Eslick and Jack Meeker attended. Neal Noethlich went to Miami for a meeting earlier this month. This task force is state run and heavily industry oriented. It appears that there is not much empathy toward citizen involvement. Neal reported that there are at the least 10 permits before a mine is permitted. He feels that zoning and planning before the mining companies go for permits is the only way local officials have any control.

Organizational Matters

Barbara Taefi is an alternate member for Pelican Landing; it was moved and seconded and approved that she fill this position.

Stephanie English of West Bay requested occasional meetings of presidents of community organizations to share information and to help lead new communities through their takeover from their developers. Her e-mail address is sae1581@comcast.net for those interested in sharing information.

All of the existing officers of the ECCL have agreed to serve another year. The existing slate was nominated, seconded, no nominations came from the floor, and all were unanimously reelected.

January 29th Presidential Preference Primary

A video is available on www.brooksconcernedcitizens.com featuring Ken Wilkinson, the County Property Appraiser regarding the Property Tax Reform Amendment to be voted on January 29th.

A two page summary is also on that site. Early voting and absentee voting is taking place. Information can be found at www.leeelections.com/voterreg.htm

Meeting with President Bradshaw of FGCU

Sam Levy reported on a meeting with the new President of FGCU, Dr. Wilson Bradshaw on January 17th. He showed great interest in the subjects presented. The University was invited to join in our efforts regarding health care, transportation and the DR/GR.

Golf Course Sprinkling Formula

ECCL met with Charles Dauray and representatives from SFWMD. The subject of the watering plan for golf courses during this drought was the major issue. Scotty Wood had reported at the ECCL's last meeting that the current formula was developed in Arizona, where they receive their rain at the opposite time of the year as Florida, therefore making

the restrictions for Florida apply at the wrong time. Restrictions should come during the rainy season.

Estero Fire Rescue

The Administration building is well under construction. The District's administration will be moving to the small office near Villagio until they can move into the new building.

Communicate with your communities

It was suggested that you go home with the message about the culverts, the tollway authority and the fire district white paper.

The meeting was adjourned. Next meeting will be on Friday, February 15th at **noon** at the Estero Community Park.

Respectfully submitted,
Faie Saunders, Secretary