

Estero Council of Community Leaders
Minutes of the 51st Monthly Meeting
September 21, 2007
1 p.m. to 3 p.m.
Estero Community Park

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

Forty-six people were in attendance representing *twenty-four* communities and *four* community wide organizations. *Five* guests were also present.

Guests were introduced. New members were present representing Osprey Cove and Colonial Oaks.

Minutes

Minutes of all prior meetings are available online at www.esterofl.org.

Treasurers Report

No revenues were received since the August meeting and the only expenditures were for Website maintenance. The Treasurer's report was approved as presented.

Joint Hospital/Emergency Medical Care Effort

Sam Levy stated that the Freestanding Emergency Department (FED) moratorium has been lifted by veto of Gov. Chris. There are two existing FEDs in Florida and they exist in 7 other states. The emergency services offered have to be equal to those in a hospital otherwise Medicare funds cannot be used. The Governor has a task force for free standing emergency rooms.

In May nurses graduate from FGCU. At the same time hospitals are looking to reduce staff for the summer while these graduates are being recruited to out of state hospitals. The ECCL website now has a section devoted to local emergency health care services. Efforts have been made to coordinate a combined Bonita/Estero emergency health care services website with the Bonita Springs Chamber of Commerce.

Common Bonita/Estero Transportation Concerns

At their most recent meeting the Lee County MPO removed the I-75/ Coconut Interchange from its TIP (5 year) plan. Letters have been sent by the MPO to encourage our Congressional members to pass corrective legislation that would restore the original language that allocated the \$10 million for the widening and improvement of I-75 in Lee and Collier Counties. A compromise solution may be to work with the City of Bonita Springs to use the \$10 million for the design of the Bonita Beach I-75 Interchange. This improvement will cost an estimated 40 to 60 million dollars and gain their support for later improving the Corkscrew I-75 Interchange. Meanwhile traffic problems in this area will be alleviated by the Estero Parkway flyover. Commissioner Judah continues to work to accelerate the segment of Sandy Lane south of Coconut Point to Old 41 in Bonita Springs.

County DR/GR Planning Progress Report

On September 11th the BOCC unanimously approved an Action Plan for the DR/GR that contains many of the goals what the ECCL has been advocating for the last two years. On September 18th the BOCC unanimously approved a moratorium on new private Comprehensive Plan amendments in the DR/GR and on all but a few rezoning applications that have been filed and their applications are complete. The Dunn Foundation financed DR/GR planning study is moving along well. The County will be creating a DR/GR advisory committee. All who are interested should make their interest known to the County.

Discussion of Ongoing Eastern Estero Mining Activities

The Hearing Examiner's review of the Estero Group rezoning/mining application will continue on September 27. This will soon become the longest zoning application hearing in the history of Lee County. Earlier this year the Legislature tried to take mining permitting authority away from local control, thus transmitting that control to the State. That effort failed but they did enact a one year limit on moratoriums concerning rock mine applications and established a Task Force to develop further legislation in this area.

The Local Planning Agency (LPA) will soon be holding another hearing on The Fountains development, that has been excepted from the County moratorium mentioned above. They will also soon be considering the proposed amendment of the County's Wellfield Protection Ordinance.

Other Transportation Issues

Neal Noethlich reported that the widening of US 41 from Corkscrew Road north to San Carlos Park is now being looked at in two segments, north from Estero Parkway and south from Estero Parkway. Wal-Mart's discussions with FDOT appear to be ongoing and Neal feels something will be happening there, thus the sectioning of this project makes it easier for Wal-Mart to deal with it. Siting a detention pond south of Broadway has been holding up the road for a long time. Wal-Mart **may** begin construction when road construction begins. Commissioner Judah told Neal that the location of the detention pond for the southern section of this project **MAY** be on a portion of the Boomer property.

Jack Lienesch reported about the excessive backups going west on Coconut Road during rush hour. He worked on a study to put an additional traffic light at Pelican Colony Blvd and US 41. He found that to put in a traffic signal the location must meet eight warrants from the federal manual on uniform traffic control.

Shorter term relief will come when the owners of Coconut Crossings, located on the northwest corner of the Coconut US41 intersection, implement the widening of the west entrance of this intersection. This will permit the east and west approaches to be properly aligned so that a two cycle signal can replace the three phase system now in effect.

ECCL Organizational & Membership Issues

New representatives were present. They are Mark Taylor from Copper Oaks, Hawley Smith from Osprey Cove and Sean Rogers from Terra Vista. None of these people have Boards in their community, but may be accepted by the ECCL on a temporary basis until the time that they have a Board that may select their own representation. A motion was made, moved and seconded that these people would be temporary representatives of their respective communities. It is important for each community to know what is going on; these representatives should go back to their various communities and report what was discussed at the ECCL meetings. Belle Lago has a vacancy to fill.

The Brooks Homeowners Association has a web site and is working on a method of communicating with public officials by the internet when necessary. The ECCL does not endorse any public officials, but ECCL members can do so in order to help their residents who vote in Florida. In addition, ECCL and its members need to inform their residents about issues that are or are not beneficial to the community and urge them to contact the decision making official and apprise them of their views.

Estero Community Improvement Foundation

Meetings have been attended by Chairman Eslick and Dan Dronkers to learn about how other local community foundations work. March 14, 2008 has been set for the 2nd Annual Joint ECIF-Spirit of the Gulf fundraising concert held at Estero High School.

Estero Fire Rescue Report

Susan Lindenmuth reported that the Fire District has contracted Kim Dailey of Papyrus to update their website. More information about the Fire District may be found at www.esterofire.org. On October 20 at Miramar Outlets, the Estero Fire Rescue will have their annual event with informative displays, competition and equipment displays. The event starts at 11:30 a.m.

The Vote Estero Initiative

The Vote Estero group has proposed a January 29th “straw vote” on Estero Incorporation for those people residing within the Estero Fire District. In order for this to go forward it must be approved by the BOCC. Prior to January, the group’s intentions are to educate people, giving both pros and cons and let the people decide by a vote whether or not they want to incorporate. They are presently working on a feasibility study. They made a presentation to the last Bonita Springs City Council/ECCL joint meeting. The Vote Estero group has a website, www.voteestero.com that will put all thoughts pro or con regarding incorporation.

Open discussion began with Neal Noethlich pointing out his opinion that using fire district boundaries was a lazy way of going about “forming a community”. The community should be formed by those people who have been involved in that community and this includes those residents who live north of the Estero Fire District boundaries and those within the two mile Bonita Springs buffer area. Developers and residents on the north side of Estero Parkway initially requested being put into the Estero Planning area, wanting to be a part of one planning area, not separate from it. Sam Levy stated that he felt that there is nothing sacred about fire districts determining city boundaries. Arnie Rosenthal stated that Estero used those boundaries initially to protect those people within that fire district, but as time went on community involvement spread outside those

boundaries. Sam feels that until the buffer zone and the “straw vote” boundaries are settled, incorporation should not be on any agenda.

Frank Byron from the Reserve at Estero, stated that when he bought his home, Toll Brothers told him, “this is Estero”; he states that many others who have bought after him also feel they want to be in Estero, not San Carlos Park or unincorporated. A resident of Coconut Shores spoke to Jim Boesch suggesting they get into all of the communities with complete information before going ahead with a “straw vote”. Jane McNew spoke for Belle Lago and stated that she felt this was a premature issue now. John Ruehl of Vote Estero and Stoneybrook talked about “will incorporation be an advantage to the citizens of Estero?” He feels that the feasibility study and additional community meetings will answer this.

Phil Douglas of Lighthouse Bay asked if this study will be done in time for the straw vote. The answer was “no”. A few others expressed the fact that you can’t have a vote if you don’t know the numbers; the numbers and answers given so far by Vote Estero have been insufficient, in the opinion of some ECCL members. Dan Dronkers stated that this was premature and that all numbers and information are insufficient at this time. He made a motion was made that the ECCL should take the position that this “vote” is premature and the public will not fully informed prior to a vote in January. Discussion followed.

Arnie Rosenthal suggested that we give Bonita Springs five years to try to annex property within the two mile buffer. If they find that those residents vote not to be a part of Bonita, he would hope Bonita would step back and stop insisting on the two mile buffer zone. Another person spoke stating he had experience in a lot of incorporation and seemed in indicated a lot of problems. The motion was brought back up. A show of hands was taken with three members voting “no”. With the majority voting “yes”, the motion to report to the BOCC the ECCL’s position was accepted. It was expressed that the ECCL will continue to work with Vote Estero; more information needs to come forth and both groups will continue to meet.

The meeting was adjourned. Next meeting will be Friday, October 19 at 1:00 p.m. at the Estero Community Park.

Respectfully submitted,
Faie Saunders, Secretary