

Martin County

CURRENTS

Volume 5 Issue 1 • March 2015

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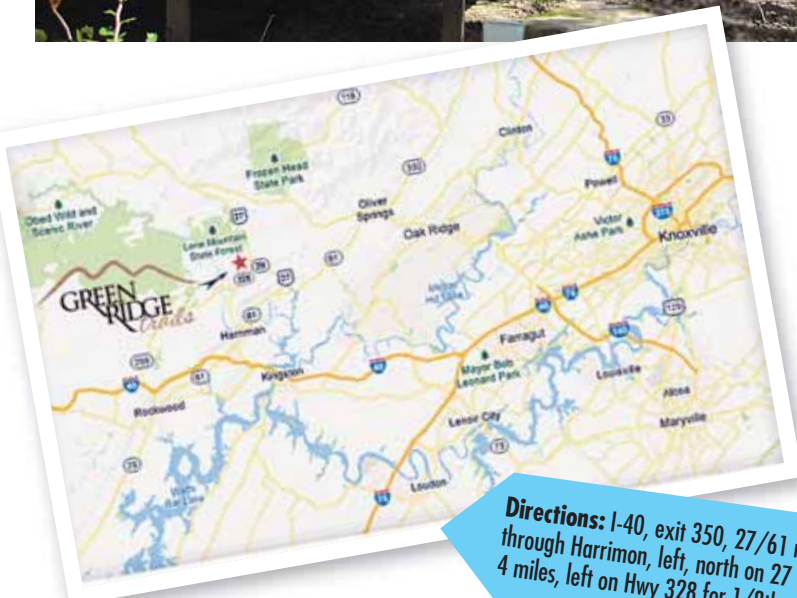


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SALES TAX: YES OR NO?

Not unexpectedly, the opinions voiced during the Board of County Commissioners

meeting Feb. 10 took nearly opposite tacks regarding whether or not to attempt another sales tax referendum, which was defeated by 68 votes in November. It would have raised \$88 million over four years and was narrowly restricted to repairs of roads, stormwater projects and bridges.

The current backlog of maintenance projects is more than \$250 million, increasing by approximately \$15 million annually, according to county officials.

Commissioner Anne Scott suggested that a consultant be hired to show them what needed to be done "to clean out our closets...We need someone to say, 'Look, these are the problems you and other governments are facing.'"

Commissioner Sarah Heard concurred, adding also that the county needs a long-term solution for funding infrastructure maintenance, particularly in light of the fact that a two percent sales tax hike would not cure the current—and now growing—maintenance backlog.

Commissioner John Haddox has often stated his support for immediately launching another sales tax referendum, because approximately 20 percent of the funds raised would come from non-residents visiting the county. He disagreed

with hiring a consultant, however, adding that a study would require too much time, all the while the county was "just digging the hole deeper," and would "tell us what we already know: You've got to cut expenses and bring in more revenue."

Commissioner Doug Smith reminded commissioners that County Administrator Taryn Kryzda had already slashed the county's budget by 63 percent as a result of the 2008 financial crisis, so there is "not a lot of fat" left to cut.

Kryzda said that the county had excellent department directors, and they would follow the board's direction. "If they're told to cut their spending by five percent, or eight percent, or whatever," she said, "they'll find a way to do it. It will be done."

No conclusion was reached as to the best method to increase county revenues; however, Commission Chair Ed Fielding said he felt the discussion had been beneficial, and hoped they would continue it during the commission's strategic planning session that followed the commission meeting. ■

INNOVATIVE WATER-USAGE MONITORS

The City of Stuart, whose commissioners committed some years ago to providing

city wide water and sewer lines, recently announced that its Public Works Depart-

ment launched the "AquaHawk" alerting program in order that customers may monitor their residential or commercial water usage from their smart phone, tablet, laptop, Mac or PC without additional charges.

The goal is to catch potential problems before they get out of hand, according to David Peters, assistant public works director, such as broken lines or water meters, even when out of town. Customers will have continuous data, so they also can use the technology to adopt more efficient water-usage practices to save money, if they so choose. For more information, contact the City of Stuart Public Works Department. ■

SARAH HEARD ETHICS INVESTIGATION ONGOING

The Florida Ethics Commission still is investigating three ethics complaints

filed during the summer against Martin County Commissioner Sarah Heard by Palm City businessman John McAuliffe, according to an FEC-spokesperson.



The complaints—about which the commission will not comment further until after either a hearing is held, or fines are levied and paid, or the case is dismissed—include charges that Heard allegedly falsified county expense reports, did not report ownership of an airplane, undervalued her property in Martin County, and omitted ownership of out-of-state properties on her financial disclosure form, which is required by law. In an additional complaint, McAuliffe also charged that Heard accepted gifts from the 1,000 Friends of Florida prior to voting on a case in their favor.

"The Ethics Commission requested transcripts of the behind-closed-door sessions of the two county commission meetings when the commission discussed the court sanctions of the 1,000 Friends of Florida and Martin County Conservation Alliance," McAuliffe said. "The (Martin County) commission forgave most of the attorney's fees and court-ordered sanctions for their frivolous lawsuit against the county. The Ethics Commission is looking at this as a possible Sunshine violation, as well as a violation of ethics law."

Three commissioners were members of the Martin County Conservation Alliance, Heard, Fielding and Commissioner Anne Scott, yet none recused themselves from the vote, which ultimately forgave about \$30,000 in attorney fees.

In addition, the commissioner discussions were held in executive session, which McAuliffe says the Ethics Commission also will look at as a possible violation of Sunshine laws. The county attorney, Michael Durham, advised the commissioners at the time that an executive session was appropriate, because the case was still listed as an open case on the court docket, even though the litigation itself had ended.

Commissioner Doug Smith refused to participate in the two closed-door sessions. ■

MELZER COMPLAINT CLOSED, THEN FILED AGAIN

The Florida Elections Commission closed its case in December regarding

Palm City businessman John McAuliffe, which had been filed by attorney Donna Melzer on Oct. 7, charging a violation of election laws since McAuliffe had filed his Martin County Residents for Tax Fairness Political Action Committee's reports too late for voters to examine the names of PAC contributors prior to the election. The PAC's fines for a late filing were paid to the Martin County Elections Office.

The case was closed, according to a letter from the Elections Commission to McAuliffe, because Melzer had failed to respond to a request by the commission for more information.

Within a few days, Melzer filed the same complaint against McAuliffe again, and a separate complaint with the same charges against John Hennessee of Port Salerno, also identified as a member of the Martin County Residents for Tax Fairness PAC.

Melzer also charged that the PAC had allegedly mailed political postcards in advance of receiving the funds to cover the cost, also a violation of election law, and which was based on the date that witnesses Virginia Sherlock, of Stuart, and Myra Galoci, of Rio, had allegedly received PAC postcards in the mail, in addition to other charges. ■

SHE PERFORMED AT CARNEGIE HALL!

Stuart music protégé, Hannah Geisinger, a student at Colburn's Young



Artists Academy in Los Angeles, spent part of her Christmas vacation playing viola at Carnegie Hall in New York City. She had been named first place winner (age category 13-18) in the American Protégé International Concerto Competition 2014, which earned her the prestigious assignment.

She began studying viola at age 7, and was the principal violist for the Treasure Coast Youth Symphony for three years and was a featured solo artist on WQCS "Young Artist Spotlight" from 2009-2012.

She recorded with the Treasure Coast Youth Symphony Academy Orchestra and Gabriel Silva on his CD, "Angelo Casto E Bel", as well as with counter-tenor Terry Barber on his CD, "Classical

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Support grows for legal action to stop All Aboard

Opposition to All Aboard Florida on the Treasure Coast and in Palm Beach is beginning to gel into a force that can no longer be ignored, in large part because money from county governments and citizen advocate groups have strengthened its underpinnings.

The Citizens Against Rail Expansion, comprising neighborhoods like Jupiter Island, Loblolly, Admiral's Cove and dozens of others, collected enough cash almost immediately upon its incorporation last summer to hire an expert in railway laws and administration, Washington DC attorney Steve Ryan.

They also commissioned an economic study released Feb. 18 that adds validity to the argument that All Aboard Florida's business model is flawed. The passenger rail company would have to charge \$273 for a one-way train ticket between Miami and Orlando to cover its debt payments, according to the study by John N. Friedman, an associate professor at Brown University.

The soundness of CARE's tactics, and the resolve by at least another dozen citizen groups, such as Florida NOT All Aboard, in all likelihood bolstered Commissioner John Haddox's move for Martin County to allocate \$1.4 million from emergency reserves to assist in funding the opposition effort.

"The way I look at it is, the destruction that will be caused by All Aboard Florida," Haddox said, "is the same as any hurricane."

All appropriations of those funds, how-

ever, must come before the commission and the public to be approved prior to spending.

The Indian River County Commission also approved \$500,000 to be allocated to the opposition effort this year, with a pledge of \$1 million more each year for the next two years.

Brevard County, the only Treasure Coast county to support AAF's project, voted 3-2 to participate in AAF's private activity bond financing. AAF agreed, in return, to pay for upgrades and maintenance of Brevard's rail crossings for eight years and to reimburse the county for costs associated with issuing the bonds, according to Florida Trend magazine.

The AAF financing plan calls for \$1.75 billion in Private Activity Bonds to be sold to private investors. (Its first loan request last year was for a \$1.6 billion federal Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing loan at 5.75 percent interest for 35 years that requires an Environmental Impact Study prior to approval. The draft EIS, released Sept. 18, received more than 10,000 public comments, the majority opposing the project.)

All three Treasure Coast counties with the most negative impacts, Indian River, St. Lucie and Martin, plus the villages of Jupiter and Tequesta, found the draft EIS statement to be "woefully inadequate," according to Terry Rauth, deputy county engineer for Martin County, explaining that it addressed only about 30 percent of the plan. The draft analyzed only two road



The inaccuracies in the draft Environmental Impact Statement and the lack of information regarding the All Aboard Florida project, was never more evident than during an AAF forum last fall, when Martin County Assistant Engineer Terry Rauth—among dozens of others—could get none of her questions answered by AAF officials, who referred her to FEC officials, who referred her to an AAF attorney. The apparent stonewalling by AAF has added to the frustration and mistrust brewing along the Treasure Coast.

crossings of Martin County's 26 crossings. All three counties called for a supplemental draft EIS; however the Federal Railroad Administration has given no indication of what may be included in their final report, expected some time this spring.

Congressman Bill Posey (Florida's 8th District) has requested that the GAO (Government Accountability Office) conduct a financial analysis of the AAF plan to determine the potential risks and costs to taxpayers, the possible interest rates that

would be appropriate for the RRIF loan and whether or not private financing could be sustained for the project. The loans will provide the funding to add a second rail to the FEC right of way to carry 32 high-speed trains daily between 6am and 9pm traveling between Orlando and Miami.

Freight trains also will increase to around 20 per day, according to FEC officials, who are quick to remind residents that prior to the financial crisis, there were 24 freight trains daily. Residents respond that those trains were not nearly as loud, neither were they as heavy as the trains apparently are today, perhaps due to FEC's recent purchase of 23 new engines.

Since railroads were deregulated in the '70s, many boating residents and the Marine Industries Association of Martin County look to the U.S. Coast Guard, rather than the FRA, for assistance. The Coast Guard is responsible for issuing bridge permits and ensuring the navigability of the nation's waterways, and is considered by many to be the county's last best hope for interceding with a project that will impact all boat traffic on the St. Lucie and New rivers. Bridge closings have been as estimated as much as 45-50 minutes per hour.

The Miami to West Palm service will begin in 2016 without the northern leg of the trip to Orlando, AAF officials announced in January, and will begin laying track to Orlando in 2016. After the Orlando intermodal station is completed, AAF plans to extend service to Tampa and to Jacksonville, according to the AAF website. ■

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for Everyone." In 2012 Hannah performed Debussy "Trio for Flute, Harp and Viola," mvmt #1, with Latin Grammy award winner Nestor Torres. ■

FALCONES' SON STILL RECOVERING

Shock waves rippled through the Jupiter Island and Hobe Sound communities

in December after learning of the murder-suicide deaths of former mayor and Jupiter Island Commissioner Charles Falcone, 72, and his wife, Nola Falcone, 75, at their second home in August, Ga.

The Richmond County Coroner report shows that Nola Falcone, whose father was once mayor of Augusta, shot her husband multiple times and then killed herself. Their bodies were found by their housekeeper the same morning as the shootings, say Augusta police.

The couple's son, the Rev. Charles "Chip" Falcone, pastor of the Hobe Sound Community Presbyterian Church, said recently that he is "still in shock...I'm the only child, the only one to have to deal with all this, and I just don't know how long it's going to take to recover."

He released a statement on behalf of his wife, Aimee, their two sons, and himself soon after his parents' death to his church congregation—which responded with standing-room-only attendance—

thanking them for their support and prayers in the loss of his parents.

A memorial service was held at the Hobe Sound Bible College on Saturday, Feb. 21. ■

AMENDMENT ONE RALLY

The "Rally in Tally" will be held after *Currents* goes to press, but organizers

say they expect hundreds of Martin, St. Lucie and Indian River county residents to gather in concert with the Floridians' Clean Water Declaration and Amendment 1 activists on the front steps of the historic Old Capitol in Tallahassee.

Those committed to attending include the League of Women Voters, the Rivers Coalition of Martin County, the Conservation Alliance of St. Lucie County, One Florida Foundation and others to let lawmakers know that citizens expect the doc stamp funds that will be collected—estimated at \$750,000 just this year—for the next 20 years will be spent only on conservation projects, primarily the purchase of land.

Some groups, including the Rivers Coalition of Martin County, will zero in on the purchase of agricultural land south of Lake Okeechobee—which was identified specifically for purchase in the new constitutional amendment—for which the state's option expires Oct. 12, 2015. ■



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Martin County's legal expenses continue to soar

The Martin County Commission's quiet approval Feb. 17 of an additional \$500,000 to pay outside attorney fees, plus its approval in January to spend \$200,000 to purchase land in Hobe Sound to settle a dispute there, brings the county's projected outside legal costs to \$1.2 million—or more for only the 2015 fiscal year that ends Sept. 30. The total for outside legal expenses since election of the 'New Majority' through the 2015 fiscal year will be more than \$2 million.

Included is a projected \$300,000 for the county to hire an outside attorney to fight the petition filed Jan. 15 by 10 Martin County farmers with the Florida Division of Administrative Hearings challenging the county's recent amendment to Chapter 10, the sewer/septic element of the county's Comprehensive Growth Management Plan.

Martin County Attorney Michael Durham estimated the cost of potential litigation to be "around \$300,000 to \$400,000" during the Oct. 21 county commission meeting as commissioners considered the suggestion by Commissioner John Haddox to work on the amendment further before transmitting to the state. He said that the amendment, as written, will likely violate the state's Right to Farm Act and "devastate" Martin County farmers; it would undermine agri-tourism and incur unnecessary legal expenses, when those issues could be addressed by county staff.

"We could've done that with the other Comp Plan amendments," Haddox said, "and saved ourselves a lot of money."

The county retained Tallahassee attorney Linda Loomis Shelley, legal counsel to two former state governors and a former Secretary of the Department of Community Affairs, the state's watchdog of local growth plans, which was later dismantled by Gov. Rick Scott. Shelley settled most of the challenges out of court resulting in rewritten amendments.

The one challenge remaining comes from Midbrook 1st Realty (owners of the



The 'New Majority' of the Martin County Commission, which took control of county decisions in 2012: from left, Commissioners Anne Scott, Ed Fielding and Sarah Heard.

former Hobe Grove development), which is continuing to challenge the county's new rule that would combine Indiantown's rural residential capacity with that of the densely populated eastern portion of the county to determine the county's total housing capacity. Midbrook's attorneys also argued against the super-majority vote now required for development approvals.

The judge's recommended order in the Midbrook challenge has yet to be filed, reportedly due to a backlog of cases from the summer, according to Nikki van Vonno, director of the Growth Management Department. "I expect we'll have that by the end of March," she said, during a recent Growth Management conference.

Shelley was retained again to litigate the farmers' challenge of the Chapter 10

Comp Plan amendment. The hearing dates of April 28-29 to have the case heard in Stuart before Judge Suzanne van Wyk. (More details of the farmers' challenge are on Page 8.)

Other significant legal challenges to county commission majority decisions include Flash Beach Grille, a restaurant in Hobe Sound contesting an unrecorded 40 x 60 preserve area; H.M. Properties, an industrial development on Route 714 in Palm City at the I-95 interchange; and the Seabrook condominium development in Hobe Sound, which was denied a zoning change to match their project's medium density, although the regulations call for a high density development.

Another ongoing cost to the county is the Lake Point Mining and Water Restoration Project, Lake Point Phase 1

Outside Legal Expenses Incurred by 'New Majority' County Commissioners*

2015 Fiscal Year – through Sept. 30, 2015

Martin County records show more than \$700,000 expended since Jan. 1, 2014, in legal expenses. Total legal expenses, including non-departmental, are projected to top \$1.2 million by Sept. 30, 2015.

2014 Fiscal Year, ending Sept. 30, 2014

Total Paid in Outside Attorney Costs – \$490,551.85
Insurance Settlements Received – \$2,400

2013 Fiscal Year, ending Sept. 30, 2013

Total Paid – \$493,417.26
Insurance Settlements Received – \$52,978.96

*Statistics Provided by Martin County Clerk's Office

Martin County's Outside Legal Costs in 2012, prior to "New Majority"

2012 Fiscal Year, ending Sept. 30, 2012

Total Paid – \$5,187
Insurance Settlements Received – \$11,691.66

and Phase II, a lawsuit currently taking place in the 19th Circuit Court in Martin County, although Lake Point's administrative challenge to the Comp Plan was one of the challenges settled out of court in Lake Point's favor in March 2014. ■

– Barbara Clowdus

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Heard and Lake Point tug-of-war over public records driving up cost

Two years of legal wrangling between Lake Point attorneys and Martin County Commissioner Sarah Heard over emails sent to and from her personal computer referencing the Lake Point project appear to be what's driving up the majority of the costs of outside attorneys in the Lake Point v Martin County, South Florida Water Management, Maggy Hurchalla lawsuit.

Then-chair Commissioner Sarah Heard in February 2013 told County Administrator Taryn Kryzda that she ex-

pected the county to pay her personal legal fees in the Lake Point lawsuit. The outside legal expenses for attorneys in the Lake Point case have been paid \$237,656 since April 2014, after the county settled Lake Point's 2013 challenge of its Comp Plan amendments by reversing its decision not to revoke Lake Point's development order for 1,008 acres of what had formerly been Lake Point Ranches, an exclusive, equestrian development near Indiantown.

The county's reversal eliminated all

the code enforcement actions taken by the county in January 2013 in its attempt to shut down the rock-mining operation by claiming it was still a housing development excavating rock outside the parameters of its site plan.

Negotiated by attorney Linda Loomis Shelley of Tallahassee, the settlement confirmed Lake Point's status as a bona fide rock mining and water restoration project, fully permitted by both the state Department of Environ-

continued on PAGE 6

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mental Protection and the South Florida Water Management District as a mining operation, verifying also the legality of its 2009 agreement with Martin County.

From January 2013 until February 2015, the biggest driver of legal costs in the Lake Point suit against Martin County and Maggy Hurchalla (for tortious interference with county and SFWMD contracts that benefited Lake Point) appears to be the answer to this question: Are county commissioners' emails sent from personal computers (or other electronic devices) regarding county business considered to be public records that must be protected and preserved to comply with state Sunshine Laws, or are they not? Lake Point says they are.

The county says all the public records that exist—more than 105,000 documents, according to

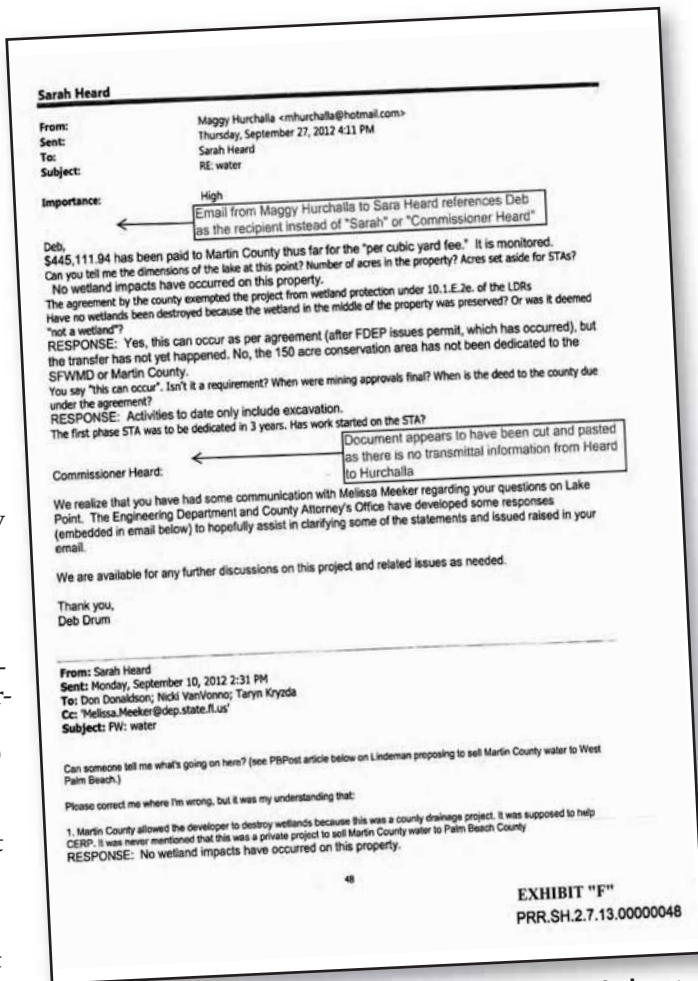
County Attorney Michael Durham—have been turned over to Lake Point, but Lake Point attorney Ethan Loeb insists that Martin County has not complied with Lake Point's public records request in full.

He points to two copies of emails provided to him that he says indicate the existence of other email correspondence regarding Lake Point, which is relevant to their case. (One from Commissioner Ed Fielding's personal computer from Hurchalla appears to inform Fielding of the steps to take to shut down Lake Point's mining operation, and since that email appeared nine months after Lake Point's first public records request, the court ordered a forensic examination of Fielding's personal computer. All those files have been turned over to Lake Point, according to Durham.)

The other is an email from Commissioner Heard to Hurchalla that Lake Point alleges has been "altered and manipulated" with portions being cut and pasted and deleted identifying email headers. Lake Point has asked for the email's "complete and original string" from Heard's personal computer, but Heard told attorneys that her computer "had been hacked" and some of her emails had been deleted.

Her attorney argued in court that Heard "cannot produce what does not exist."

Heard also reported that she had taken her computer to a local computer firm to attempt to retrieve the missing emails from her computer's hard drive, but they were unable to do so. Since Heard used the web-based Yahoo email service, Lake Point attempted to retrieve the deleted emails directly from Yahoo, according to court records; however,



A copy of the email allegedly from Martin County Commissioner Sarah Heard's personal computer provided to Lake Point attorney Ethan Loeb as part of a Lake Point public records request in 2013.

Yahoo will not conduct a forensic search except in a criminal investigation, Loeb told the court.

Circuit Court Judge James McCann, calling the Hurchalla and Heard emails "abundantly relevant" to Lake Point's case, ordered on Sept. 17, 2014, that Heard was to sit for a deposition within 90 days to explain how her emails got deleted from her personal computer and what attempts she had made to retrieve them. She complied on Dec. 10, 2014, according to court records.

As a condition of Heard's "legislative privilege" as a sitting county commissioner, however, Lake Point attorneys had "to exhaust all other possible means" of getting the same information that Lake Point alleges is housed on Heard's computer, said Judge McCann, before he would order the commissioner to sit for Lake Point's deposition.

That pre-condition resulted in the depositions of dozens of county employees, a dozen or more public records requests, production of thousands of documents, and resulted in extending the length of the discovery process, adding significantly to the county's additional legal costs.

A case management conference before 19th District Court Judge Shields McManus has been set for March 25 to settle some or all of the disputed issues before going to trial. The county attorney plans to hold an executive session with commissioners at their March 3 county commission meeting, according to the posted agenda, in order to discuss the Lake Point case.

If no settlement is achieved during the March 25 case management conference, the case will proceed to trial. ■

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DEVELOPMENTS CAUGHT IN THE MIDDLE

The most recent amendments to the Comprehensive Growth Management Plan, although not

yet fully clear of legal challenges, are beginning to snag small developments. All new development applications are being advised to conform to the new rules, although not yet enacted by law.

The concern expressed by the Growth Management Department Director Nikki van Vonno comes from the rule that the final site plan, which includes engineering drawings, landscaping plans, etc., must conform to the county's existing code, and it also must match fully the original master site plan as approved by the Board of County Commissioners.

In the case of some developers, such as designers of the Rio Town Center—the 10-year-old centerpiece of the Rio Community Redevelopment Area, originally called Stuart Harbor—initiated their Master Site Plan under the previous codes one year ago, but have had to redesign their plan to accommodate current rules with greater setbacks, thus fewer buildings.

The Rio Town Center, a mixed-use commercial development, will be 11.6 acres of land in Rio, which lies across the St. Lucie River from downtown Stuart, which was once occupied by a restaurant and a marina, built 50 years ago. The buildings, which had fallen into disrepair, were razed several years ago. The water runoff from the former development drains directly into the St. Lucie River, designers said, but the new plans will treat the water on-site.

"Our water management will actually clean up the site," said Raul Ocampo, project designer.

The property, owned by iStar Financial, is bordered by the St. Lucie River on the south and the revitalized County Road 707 on the north. Plans call for a new marina, restaurants, office space and condominiums, in addition to a 50-foot lighthouse (less than half the height of the Jupiter lighthouse) and a ferry to take passengers back and forth across the St. Lucie between Stuart's downtown and Rio's "downtown."

The developers plans to meet with the Rio Neighborhood Advisory Committee on Feb. 26 to go over the updated plans and to get neighborhood feedback prior to presenting the project to the Local Planning Agency.

Other developments running into obstacles are those with previous county commission approval of a Master Site Plan, such as the Pitchford's Landing project in Jensen Beach, approved in 2007. When designing their final site plan, however, planners were required to follow current codes—although not yet completely clear of legal battles—therefore, the final site plans of 2015 no longer match the approved Master Site Plan from 2008.

The staff-requested changes of the 83-unit, low-density project on 17.7 acres be-

tween Indian River and Skyline drives in Jensen Beach to comply with current county code will require a new Master Site Plan, thus causing the project to lose its previously "approved" status, according to Martin County Growth Management Department staff during a conference in February. The project will replace the 150 hook-up Pitchford's by the Sea RV Park west of Indian River Drive and renovate an existing 3,000 sq. ft. restaurant on the east side of the roadway.

As a public benefit, the owners had proposed a public fishing pier, which had been originally approved by the Department of Environmental Protection, and a public boardwalk with a public restroom. The entire project would be connected to existing water and sewer lines; however, the staff warned that the entrance to the pier would need to be moved due to wetlands recently identified on the shoreline.

"We moved that to here, because that's what you told us last year," said designer Ken Natoli, of the Cuzzo Design Group at the confere, "but it seems to me you're saying maybe this year, we can probably only have one access? That may be a bit of a stretch, if the pier can ever be built..."

The differences between the original approved plan and the new rules became more evident as the meeting progressed.

"And then the coup de grâce here is, since the Master Site Plan is being opened up," said Jim Christ of the utilities department, "there's design non-conformities with this project per Martin County design and construction standards on the single family lots that need be to addressed...Those designs were allowed because the Master Site Plan had been accepted by the county at that time." But not anymore. ■

PITCHFORD'S LANDING NOT IN BREACH



Much to the obvious frustration of some county commissioners and

the usually vocal critics of the Pitchford's Landing project in Jensen Beach, Martin County Assistant Attorney Krista Storey reported to the county commission Feb. 17 that the Pitchford's Landing development is not in breach of its development contract with the county.

"They filed in a timely manner for extensions..." Storey said, two of which were state-mandated, and one had been county-approved. The current project deadline to begin construction is August 2015.

continued on PAGE 9

continued from PAGE 8

The demand to investigate Pitchford's alleged breaches came originally from Stuart attorney Virginia Sherlock, who had filed a suit on behalf of the "Jensen Group" residents against Martin County after the project was granted approval in 2008, charging that the development of two-story condos and single-family Key West-style homes totaling 83 units violated the Affordable Housing Act.

Sherlock claimed in the suit that the new project would displace residents living in the Pitchford's RV campground, which has hook-ups for 150 RVs (recreational vehicles) on 17.7 acres between Skyline Drive to the west and Indian River Drive to the east. The court ruled that the county had not violated Affordable Housing laws; however, heated demonstrations that included vandalism of the owners' property, including unexplained fires, which were reported to police, and alleged dissemination of altered site plans showing five-story buildings on the property, rather than two-story, led to libel lawsuits and counter-suits that delayed the project until the private parties reached a settlement. But their criticism did not abate, and over the past 12 months, has increased in volume and frequency until the Pitchford's project is a topic of public comment at nearly every county commission meeting.

The project took advantage of state-mandated time extensions during the recession, and they emerged successfully from bankruptcy, but—just as dozens of other projects waiting for a better econ-

omy—their time extensions are running out. The Pitchford's Landing project deadline is August 2015. ■

EASTING CITY-COUNTY TENSIONS

After several Snug Harbor residents sought assistance last fall from the

Martin County Commission to protest the City of Stuart's annexation policies, the county requested a meeting with city officials. The residents complained during a county commission meeting that they felt the city was "extorting" them into signing a voluntary annexation agreement in return for hooking up to the city's sewer system.

The city was offering a discounted fee of \$5,000 per household (the county's fee would be approximately \$22,000 to reach the same residents), but since residents receive water through an interlocal agreement between the city and the county, residents said they should be compelled to pay city taxes on their property in addition to county ad valorem taxes.

Discussions between County Administrator Taryn Kryzda and City Manager Paul Nicoletti has led, not to a discussion about annexation, but a "workshop" that will cover the differences between city and county governments, as well as "local government ethics to meet the

statutory requirements for both entities," said Nicoletti at the Jan. 12 City of Stuart Commission meeting. "I anticipate the date (for the workshop) will be sometime in March."

The agreed-upon presenter will be Dr. Bob Lee of the Institute of Local Government at Florida State University at a yet-unannounced site.

In addition to annexation issues to address, the city and county are contemplating merger of their fire departments to reduce redundancy and lower costs. The county has issued a Request for Proposals in search of a consultant with expertise in such mergers. ■

S.P.A.M. TOURNAMENT

The Martin County S.P.A.M. robotics team and their supporters—some

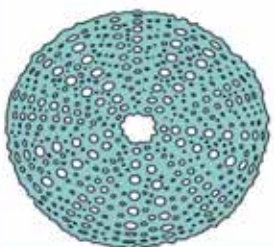
new and some old, like founding sponsor Pratt & Whitney—are ready for tournament play after six weeks of their build season. The challenge is called Recycle Rush (SM), a recycling-themed game played by two Alliances of three robots each. Robots score points by stacking totes on scoring platforms, capping those stacks with recycling containers, and properly disposing of pool noodles, representing litter.

S.P.A.M.'s 2015 robot, named "Bin



Diesel," weighs 110 lbs. and stands 6' 3" tall. Once the design was agreed on, there were sub-teams that worked on different parts of the robot. The mechanical sub-team built a robot that has two arms with wrists and elbows that elevate and rotate to pick up totes, which can be stowed on saddlebags on the back of the robot until they are able to be placed on a scoring platform.

The 2015 South Florida FIRST Robotics Competition will be held February 26-28 from 8:30 am to 6:30 pm at the Fort Lauderdale Convention Center. For more information, go to: www.firstinflorida.org. ■



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Editorial: All Aboard not county's greatest threat

As significant as it is, All Aboard Florida is not the greatest threat to our quality of life. The biggest threat is the ongoing pollution of our waterways, which we only half-heartedly address, while it harms our health, our wildlife, our tourism, our real estate values and our marine businesses, at the same time we proclaim "solutions" by changing the Comprehensive Growth Management Plan with substandard, easily challenged amendments that cost us millions of dollars in unbudgeted legal fees—before they get rewritten and parts tossed out. We pretend much, accomplish little, and at great expense.

The biggest threat comes from strangling the diversity of our tax base at the same time our infrastructure crumbles with a narrowly focused intent to replace our old Comp Plan that ensured a thriving community of arts, education, jobs, business, agriculture, historical preservation and environmental protection, subverting it to an extremist agenda that inevitably will lead to a menu of much higher taxes, more fees and random closings to make up the shortfall in revenues. We pretend to seek balance, but attain imbalance and high costs.

The greatest threat to our quality of life comes from the decisions currently being made by our county commission

majority when they vote as a bloc—Commissioners Ed Fielding, Sarah Heard and Anne Scott.

They adopted a pretense of getting tough on septic tanks to rewrite Chapter 10 of the Comprehensive Growth Management Plan affecting less than one percent of the septic tanks in this county, which are miles from water bodies, yet created NO plan to remove septic tanks along our riverbanks—beyond stealing TIFF funds earmarked for revitalization from Old Palm City and Golden Gate to build sewer line extensions there.

They banned sewer lines into the secondary urban services district over the objections of the Loxahatchee River District, whose testing proved that the enteric bacteria entering the Loxahatchee River is from a human source—most likely the septic tanks in the Rivers Edge community, who were subjected to intense myth-mongering that their rural community would transform into an intensely developed urban one. We should feel a moral imperative to rid our waterways of all septic tanks, as we did when we allowed ENCON in Jupiter to run sewer lines into Jonathan Dickinson State Park years ago, adding simple language to the Comp Plan that could be duplicated for Rivers Edge.

By banning sewer lines into our rural

lands and allowing only one septic tank per lot, even it's 600 acres, will address NONE of our current pollution issues, but it hog-ties our farmers, 10 of whom began legal proceedings against the county. We have yet one more substandard Comp Plan amendment that will cost us thousands in legal fees—again—before it's eventually rewritten.

Their hidden agenda, and that of their supporters, is to drive down the value of rural lands to make it easier and less costly to acquire more conservation acreage—taking more properties off the tax rolls and adding payroll to manage them—and to drive out or discourage business and industry.

Aside from the bungled Comp Plan amendments, our commission majority's decision to deliberately shut down a water restoration project that could divert at least 10 percent of the Lake Okeechobee discharges that impact our estuary, clean the water, and send it south at no cost to taxpayers, and without harming wetlands, not only stole a chance to mitigate the Lake Okeechobee discharges, but the lawsuit is costing hundreds of thousands of Martin County taxpayer dollars.

They not only shut down the restoration project, but attempted to shut down the entire rock mining operation we

know as Lake Point. Its contracts were valid, which the county has since quietly acknowledged, but we still are spending thousands of dollars for outside attorneys, in large part because Commissioner Sarah Heard refuses to turn over the public records regarding Lake Point housed on her personal computer, and taxpayers are paying for her private attorney to defend what most of us consider a violation of Sunshine Laws.

We now have dozens of projects whose deadline extensions are running out, but their old plans must now meet the county's new rules to get the county commission's approval. Not likely to happen.

But this we can be sure will happen: We will watch millions more dollars pour down the drain on multiple new lawsuits as a result of the extremist commissioners' decisions, as pollution continues to pour into our rivers and more limitations are poured onto the backs of business and industry. Then we'll see our residents, who already are carrying 75 percent of the tax burden, begin to pour sweat.

As potentially devastating as All Aboard Florida is, it is not the greatest threat to our quality of life—and at least we can see that train coming down the tracks. ■

Guest Editorial: Push lawmakers to fix reforms



Tina McSoley

Guest Editorial

Education reform, like dessert, can be so enticing at first, yet we leave the table feeling physically ill. The information coming to us now about the public education system we wanted to improve is difficult to digest. Parents are overloaded with information; it's virtually impossible to sort the wheat from the chaff and understand the issues.

Arguably, the most important thing a society does is educate its children. Over the last 20 years, we've moved from classrooms providing fun and engaging educational opportunities to classrooms concerned mainly with standards each child must meet. Today's classrooms are driven by data collection and attempts to monitor learning gains. The seeming question, "Which one worked better?" The answer, "Neither."

Prior to this shift, school was fun. But, students weren't challenged and performance rates in Florida were below the national average. With testing and accountability came the ability for teachers to isolate and analyze individual student data and target specific needs. This was similar to a yearly

check up at the doctor's office. Teachers and schools became experts at isolating why a child struggled to read, write or do math. Florida became a standard bearer for education. Data showed our students were improving at unprecedented rates. It was working. We were teaching children.

Instead of stepping back, however, we kept gorging ourselves on reform. Like the glutton at the dessert table, we kept eating, each bite less tasty than the previous. Since 2005, districts statewide have submitted legislative proposals evidencing the growing understanding that enough is enough. Unfortunately, the typical response to these proposals has been, "Several bills were introduced...however, none were taken up for consideration."

Pam Stewart's announcement indicating the Florida Department of Education will establish a task force, Floridians to Keep Florida Learning, to investigate the use of standardized testing in several key areas, leads me to believe we may be ready to put down the fork.

Teachers, administrators, districts and school boards have long understood the impact of these policies and the need for change. We have failed, however, to convey this understanding to our communities and rally the necessary public support to effectuate change. My goal is to change that.

Please read the Community Alert below and take a moment to contact

your legislators. Please join us, and others around the state, in alerting legislators of our insistence on both excellence and responsible oversight. Balancing these principles ensures districts make the best decisions for students, teachers and staff. We need your help.

COMMUNITY ALERT: STATE ACCOUNTABILITY & ASSESSMENTS

The Martin County School Board and Superintendent of Schools support state and regional School Board groups who believe: "Assessment and accountability measures must be designed to support and enhance student learning. Collaborative efforts that include education stakeholders such as parents, teachers, and district leaders must continue to ensure Florida's accountability system is valid, recognizes individual student learning styles, and accurately reflects student progress and achievement." There is widespread agreement on these issues throughout the state.

We are asking for your support to inform our legislators about these issues:

- Allow districts to identify their own means for determining student promotion, graduation, and educator evaluations during the transition period through 2016-17;
- Use state-required test results for diagnostic purposes only;
- Provide paper-based option, at the expense of the state, for all state required assessments;

- Increase state funding for educator professional development and training on Florida Standards, the related assessments, and required use of technology;

- Assemble an independent representative panel that includes stakeholders to oversee the implementation of the revised accountability system.

Call to Action -- Email our legislators and/or call them: **House Speaker Steve Crisafulli:** Steve.Crisafulli@myfloridahouse.gov (850)717-5051 or (321)449-5111; **Senate President Andy Gardiner:** gardiner.and@flsenate.gov (850) 487-5013 or (407) 428-5800; **House Education H. Marlene O'Toole:** marlene.otoole@myfloridahouse.gov (850) 717-5033; **Senate Education John Legg:** legg.john.web@flsenate.gov (813) 909-9919; **Senator Joe Negron:** Negron.Joe@flsenate.gov (772) 219-1666; **Senator Denise Grimsley:** Grimsley.Denise@flsenate.gov (863) 386-6016; **Rep. Gayle Harrell:** Gayle.Harrell@myfloridahouse.gov (772) 871-7660; **Rep. MaryLynn Magar:** MaryLynn.Magar@myfloridahouse.gov (772) 545-3482; **Gov. Rick Scott:** <http://www.flgov.com/contact-gov-scott/email-the-governor> (850) 488-7146.

Tina McSoley is a long-time resident, a mother, an education professional and a member of the Martin County School Board.

A Great Blue Heron who lost his way



**Barbara
Clowdus**

Unfiltered

The Great Blue Heron reigned supreme among other birds of the Everglades when my weekends were spent guiding tourists along the Anhinga trail in Everglades National Park decades ago. His sophisticated colors lifted straight from a designer's palette were unique among herons with a coat of slate blue over splatters of white that melted into gray, wearing a black mask tied with feathered wisps that floated behind his head.

When he took to the air, his six-foot, two-toned wingspan was as impressive as his size. His long neck curved into a flattened "S" to make his huge body more aerodynamic; his long legs trailed in the sky like streamers. Yet, this gigantic bird weighs only about four to five pounds.

They comb their feathers with a fringed claw on their middle toes, which frays the feathers to create a powder. The rangers told me it was to keep fish slime off their feathers, but I also saw them "powdering" fish they'd caught and tossed on the bank. My opinion?

They don't like slime running down their gullets either.

Several years later, after we were transferred to West Virginia, our chalet-type home in the mountains—among big hills, really—had walls of sliding glass doors on every level, giving us a window on the natural world. Drapes were pulled back to bring the outdoors in.

We lived on the side of a mountain—a hill, really—in one of those glass-fronted chalets with sliding glass doors on every level, giving us a window on the natural world. Drapes were relegated to only the living room, often open to bring the outdoors in.

During one of West Virginia's ferocious snow storms, a Great Blue Heron landed on my bedroom deck. He stood just three feet away from me, on the other side of one of those glass doors. He could not see me because of the reflective film, but I could see him clearly against the snow banked a foot taller than he. My breath caught in my throat, my heart pounded, and it seemed he was looking urgently at me for help as he clawed at the glass.

My husband was as surprised as I to see this heron so far away from home. It was not until later that I learned my education about Great Blue Herons had been incomplete. Other than those few permanent residents, the Great Blue Heron is less a child of the Everglades,

than a visitor—more Canadian than anything else, where tens of thousands of them live, most migrating across the US to warmer climes when the water begins to freeze there. Still, crossing the Allegheny mountains likely was not this heron's intended flight path.

We decided to slide open the glass door, with help from some hot water on the tracks, so perhaps the bird would come inside. After he was safe, we surmised, we'd call the rangers at the game farm across the road to come and get him. It was below zero outside, and the heron hopped on one foot, then the other, standing for only seconds at a time. We were racing to keep his feet from freezing to the deck.

Then, suddenly, as soon as we got the door open, he leaped into the air, flapping those gigantic wings, and soared over the hemlocks and maples. He was gone. We were silent. After a moment, my husband said, "At least he headed in the right direction."

The next day on the job, my husband, a project manager for a coal mine, heard his men talking about a strange bird one of them had never before seen in these hills flying overhead the previous night. My husband described the Great Blue Heron. "Yeah, yeah, that's it," the man said. "I ain't never seen nothin' like it. I shot him, so I could see what it was."

My husband, struggling to keep control, ordered the man to give him the bird, which was covered by a tarp in the back of the man's truck. His prized trophy. "Where you takin' him," the miner queried.

"I don't know," my husband snapped, "but my wife was born in the Everglades, and I cannot go home tonight and tell her you shot her heron and are hauling him around in the back of your truck like a circus sideshow. I've got to find a way to bury him."

He drove to the top of the mountain. In the storm's wake, the trees were draped, heavy with snow. The rarefied air transporting the senses to another plane, redefining silence. The ground was frozen solid, impenetrable. He found a sheltered spot under an oak, shoveled aside the snow, and laid his bundle on the ground. After a moment of self-debate, he removed the tarp. He laid stones and squaw wood over the lifeless, bloodied heron, then stood and looked up at the branches overhead.

This mountain top had once been home to hundreds of wild turkeys who nested in those same trees at night. One horrific winter storm had frozen all the birds' feet to the tree branches, the legend goes, and thereafter, the mountain was called Turkey Bone.

He thought it a fitting place to lay one magnificent bird to rest. ■

Mark Perry 'Loves His Lagoon': FAU/Harbor Branch honors his life and work for the SLR/IRL



**Jacqui
Thurlow-Lippisch**

*Guest
Columnist*

One of the great things about living in the town you grew up in is watching people you know "grow-up" and be recognized for their contributions to the Treasure Coast community.

One of these people, for me, is Mark Perry, who I have known since my earliest memories. Today, Mark is the Executive Director for the Florida Oceanographic Society, (www.floridaocean.org), the epicenter in Martin County for education, protection, and advocacy for the St Lucie River/Indian River Lagoon.

Mark is older than me. I was born in 1964, and I believe Mark is about 10 years my senior. When you're a kid, that's "a lot." But it's just enough for constant admiration "from younger to older." I have been admiring Mark Perry my entire life...

Mark, his brother, Chris, and his parents, Clifton and Mimi Perry, attended St Mary's Church as my family did and does today. I first met Mark at St Mary's...I was probably 3 or 4 years old.



1970 Martin County High School funeral for the SLR/IRL. Mark was one of the students who participated in this iconic Earth Day event. This event had a huge impact on me as a kid. (Thurlow Archives.)

As I grew up, I remember my parents talking about the "older kids" in the youth group getting to go on a canoe trip down the Peace River, chaperones, sleeping bags, marshmallows, etc....It was the 1970s....I wanted so badly to be older and get to do the "cool" things the older kids did, but I was just a "kid," and had to stay home.

Over the years, my parents kept me abreast of the Perry family, and what was always most interesting to me was Mark's journey with Florida Oceanographic, an organization his father helped found in 1964 that was originally located in my childhood neighborhood of St Lucie Es-

tates, along Kruegar Creek, in Stuart. I often visited there on my bicycle.

Over the years I grew up, moved away, attended the University of Florida, lived and worked in California, Germany, and Pensacola, and when I came home in 1997 to Stuart, to continue my teaching career, Florida Oceanographic had expanded from that neat place I saw on my bicycle to become the showcase institution it is today—an organization

that symbolizes the love and fight for the St Lucie River/Indian River Lagoon, and the life of Mark Perry.

Tonight (Feb. 6) at FAU/Harbor Branch's "Love Your Lagoon" gala, Mark Perry will be honored for his St Lucie River/Indian River Lagoon work. It is the foundation's fourth annual, and those who preceded Mark in being honored are: 2012 – Nathaniel Reed; 2013 – Bud Adams; 2014 – Alma Lee Loy.

Mark follows in big footsteps, and he has filled them "completely." Thank you, Mark Perry, for a lifetime of admiration, re-

spect, and guidance in our love and fight to save the St Lucie River/Indian River Lagoon! ■

View Mark Perry's FOS Presentation Library power point's on the SLR/IRL here: (<http://www.floridaocean.org/p/177/presentation-library#.VNTBDFriuR8>)

Palm Beach Post article: (<http://www.palmbeachpost.com/news/news/local/florida-oceanographic-society-headmarks-35-years-/nWnzC/>)

Reprinted from the Feb. 6 blog by Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch, community activist and Sewall's Point commissioner, at jacquithurlowlippisch.com.



Mark and his wife, Nancy, at 50th anniversary of the Florida Oceanographic Society. (Photo from event.)

Farmers challenge change to septic tank rules

More than one month ago, on Jan. 15, a total of 10 Martin County farming operations—from the nearly 20,000-acre Tesoro Groves, primarily citrus and cattle in Indiantown, owned in part by King Ranch, to the 20-acre Kai-Kai Farm on Kanner Highway, owned by a married couple committed to growing vegetables without pesticides—challenged the Martin County Commission's adoption of new rules regarding septic tanks in Chapter 10 (Amendment 14-6) of the county's Comprehensive Growth Management Plan.

Environmental objections also were submitted prior to the county's adoption of the new rules by the Loxahatchee River District Chairman Dr. Matt Rostock, who wrote a letter to Commission Chair Sarah Heard urging an exemption for the Loxahatchee River watershed.

The county's ban on extending water and sewer lines to Martin's rural areas run contrary to sound environmental practices and Martin County's stated goals, Dr. Rostock said, and will "result in an unintended consequence of allowing continued degradation of surface and groundwater ... by prohibiting proactive steps to improve water quality ..." He pointed specifically to the septic tanks in the River's Edge community, which lie within the Loxahatchee River Environmental Control District that can

provide sewage connections to all residences in the Loxahatchee watershed. Recent tests have confirmed that human effluent is polluting the Loxahatchee River at a testing site near Rivers Edge.

No exceptions were granted by the county commission in its 3-2 vote to approve the new rules, including also the agricultural exemptions recommended by the Local Planning Agency in September.

News of the petition asking the state Division of Administrative Hearings to remand the amendment back to the county for revision has received little attention in local newspapers, and neither did it get included on the list of cases itemized by County Attorney Michael Durham at the county commission meeting Feb. 17 as he explained the legal department's heavy workload over the past eight months.

The additional case also was not mentioned during the commission's approval at the same commission meeting of the transfer of \$500,000 from the general fund to pay outstanding invoices to contracted attorneys. Also not discussed was the selection of Tallahassee attorney Linda Loomis Shelley to represent Martin County in this Comp Plan challenge, in addition to the landowners' challenge of last summer's rewrites of Chapters 1, 4 and 6 of the Comp Plan. (Most of those issues were settled out of court, except in the case of Midbrook 1st Realty, owners

of the Hobe Grove development west of the Florida Turnpike on Bridge Road. Midbrook insisted on a legal review of the rewrites, which was heard by Judge Suzanne van Wyk on Sept. 30 in Stuart.)

The other plaintiffs in the case challenging the most recent rewrite of Chapter 10 include Tesoro Groves affiliate Turner Groves LP of Ft. Myers, Seminole Land Co. of Okeechobee, Agri-Gators, Inc. and its affiliate, Long Land Co., both of Palm City, Turnpike Dairy on Fox Brown Road in Indiantown, Hobe Sugar Co. of West Palm Beach, Star Farms Corp. of Belle Glade, Bull Hammock Ranch Ltd. of Indiantown, and Martin Land Co. of Palm City. Incorporated in 2009, Martin Land Co., the youngest of the operations—some of which have had farms or ranches in Martin County since 1968—filed a separate petition, which was consolidated with the first petition.

Filing Feb. 13 as interveners in the case are 1,000 Friends of Florida, Martin County Conservation Alliance, and the Treasure Coast Environmental Defense Fund, Inc. (a Florida not-for-profit corporation doing business as the Indian

Riverkeeper), according to state records.

The farmers state in their petition that they object to the lack of scientific data and analysis, which nonetheless, led the county to conclude that to protect the watersheds of the St. Lucie and Loxahatchee rivers and the Indian River Lagoon, the only remedy was to ban any septic tank larger than 2,000 gallons a day, to prohibit more than one septic tank per lot, regardless of whether the lot is 600 acres or one acre, and to prohibit regional sewer and water lines in the county's Secondary Urban Services District.

The farmers claim that the county's new rules will inhibit their ability to conduct bonafide farming operations on their property and violate the state's Right to Farm Act. Since the number of septic tanks in rural Martin County is less than one percent of the total, they also challenge the county's motivation for the new rules that apply only to unincorporated areas, without addressing the thousands of septic tanks on lots lining water bodies within the urban services district.

A hearing date has been set of April 28-29 in Stuart before Administrative Judge Suzanne van Wyk. ■



The Timer Powers Park arena roof first began to take shape with the placement of its "legs," huge beams that towered above the landscape.

Indiantown's rodeo arena gets long-awaited roof

Possibilities for new uses of the Timer Powers Park arena in Indiantown keep popping up in just about any Indiantown gathering, from statewide equestrian events—particularly barrel-racing—to high school graduation ceremonies, since the county does not have a civic center or any indoor venue for large gatherings...until now!

"I'm excited for so many reasons," says Hilary McKeich, executive director of the Indiantown Western Martin County Chamber of Commerce, "as this arena will allow us to showcase Martin County year round, rain or shine, but it didn't seem it was really going to happen, until I saw those huge steel beams start going up."

Martin County commissioners approved a request from the Martin County Parks and Recreation Depart-

ment to spend \$2.2 million to put a roof over the horse arena at Timer Powers Park from county sales tax funds and impact fees. The meeting in Stuart was attended by dozens of Indiantown residents, many of whom are equestrians who must travel long distances to compete in events.

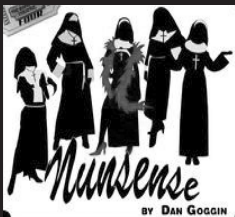
The first major event the Indiantown Chamber plans to host in the new covered arena, of course, is the next Indiantown Rodeo, Oct. 16-17.

"If you have not yet signed up to be a sponsor of this great event," McKeich says, "then you better get busy and contact the chamber office right away. This is going to be the best year ever!"

For information, contact the Indiantown Chamber of Commerce office at 772.597.2184, or by email: info@indiantownchamber.com. ■

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APRIL 17 -
MAY 3



The Man Who
Came to Dinner

MAY 29 -
JUNE 14



God of Carnage

TICKETS ARE \$20 'THE MAN WHO CAME TO DINNER' AND 'GOD OF CARNAGE'

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Times are Wednesday-Saturday 8pm, Sunday at 2pm.

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C-44 reservoir on track to completion by 2019

Already, the initial construction stages of a reservoir and stormwater treatment areas on the C-44 canal, which connects Lake Okeechobee and the St. Lucie River, has made a difference in how much fresh water is retained, according to Sue Ray, C-44 project manager for the South Florida Water Management District.

"We recognized the importance of retaining as much water as we could," Ray told a town hall gathering of Indiantown residents recently, "so we increased the height of the weir by 5.7 feet to a total of 19 feet, which adds 7,000 additional acre feet of water storage....not a huge amount, but every little bit we can keep out of the St. Lucie helps the estuary."

The state funded construction of the stormwater treatment area component, system discharge and pump station components to reduce stormwater runoff to the St. Lucie estuary and Indian River Lagoon, undertaken by the SFWMD, occurred at the same time the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers began working on the project in 2014 in order to "expedite" its construction.

When completed, the C-44 reservoir and stormwater treatment project will reduce the peak flow of water to the St. Lucie estuary by about 33 percent, Ray said, and will also reduce the nitrogen and phosphorous nutrient loads that spawn algae growth that kills native sea grasses.

During the first phase, several canals were backfilled and the Troup Indiantown Water Control District pump stations were relocated to make way for SFWMD's three-story, electric S-401 pump station with a 21,000 sq ft footprint, capable of pumping 1,100 cubic feet of water per second.

"Since the pump will not be used for flood control," Ray said, "we weren't required to have it diesel-powered; it will be electric."

Florida Power & Light had to relocate power lines, 12,000 acres of citrus trees were removed, a 300-ft microwave communication tower was installed – "So we can operate the pump station remotely." – an interim spillway was built, as well as raising the height of the weir, Ray added. Canals were filled and the first stormwater treatment area cell was constructed.

The Army Corps of Engineers completed construction last summer of the intake canal, the project access road, and the Citrus Boulevard bridge and culverts.

Currently, the SFWMD must remove soil that "poses an ecological risk" when inundated with water, Ray said. "This had once been a citrus grove, so there were areas with copper in the soils that must be removed."

The area is approximately 260 acres with approximately 440,000 cubic yards

of soil that must be removed, she said. The contractor is Guettler Brothers Construction of Ft. Pierce, and the work is anticipated to be complete by June 2015.

A permanent, poured-concrete system discharge spillway is expected to be finished by Nov. 2015, and construction of the stormwater treatment area is expected to be finished by September 2017.

The western berm of STA 2, which will be 6,300 acres, has been started by Blue Goose Construction of Fort Pierce, and is expected to be finished by September 2018.

No contractor has been selected as yet for the next Army Corps of Engineers project, the 3,400-acre reservoir, with 10 miles of embankment capable of maintaining a 15-foot water depth.

Approximately \$110 million is currently under construction with another \$150 to \$300 million expected to be awarded by June 2015. Ray said about 250 construction jobs will be created on the Indiantown project, and all construction will be completed by September 2019.

"That's not that far away," Ray said, "and although it's not going to fix everything, it is going to make a huge difference." ■

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Eikenberg, Reed: Must unite efforts to buy land

Land in the agricultural area south of Lake Okeechobee often is called the "missing piece" in Everglades restoration. Around 50,000 acres lie between the Lake and state-owned land that could redirect the billions of gallons of excess water currently flowing to tide in the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee rivers—destroying their estuaries in the process—to the water-starved Everglades and the aquifer that provides drinking water to six million residents.

Many feel it's the only solution to stopping the Lake Okeechobee discharges, but it's a missing piece in more ways than just one.

That land, for which the state currently holds a contractual option to purchase that expires in October, also is missing from any of the Central Everglades Restoration Plan projects approved by Congress in 2000, none of which have been completed after being on the books for nearly 15 years.

Not one plan or project targets use of that land or even suggests building a flow way to the Everglades through the Everglades Agricultural Area, since the Army Corps of Engineers determined that the flow way, called Plan Six, was not feasible and removed it from the CERP project list. Plan Six proponents, however, have increasingly gained traction among activists and residents, however, largely due to the Rivers Coalition's education efforts and rally-

ing slogan, "Plan Six, the Only Fix."

Purchase of agricultural land south of the lake also is missing from Gov. Rick Scott's proposed budget for 2015, causing alarm to reverberate through the state as the public becomes aware that this land purchase is considered crucial by many to saving the St. Lucie River and Indian River Lagoon.

"Passage of Amendment One ensures we'll have at least \$750 million available," said Eric Eikenberg, chief executive officer of the Everglades Foundation, when he spoke to the Rivers Coalition in Stuart on Jan. 29. "The agricultural land purchase would be around \$350,000 ... but we don't need all 48,600 acres."

He turned to a map of the Everglades Agricultural Area that included shaded spots to indicate the farmland currently under option. The largest parcel is about 28,000 acres and lies directly south of the lake.

"That is the piece we need in order to build a reservoir," Eikenberg said, as he tapped the wall, "and you'll notice, I said 'reservoir.' ... We can figure out how to get the water the rest of the way to the Everglades later, but we absolutely must have that land first."

Noted environmentalist Jupiter Island resident Nathaniel Reed concurred, noting that the particular parcel under contract is also considered the "most fertile farmland" in the U.S., so its purchase may be worthy of

reconsideration, but he added he's convinced there are "sufficient tracts of worn out land" no longer producing healthy crops that might be more suitable to building a reservoir.

Environmental engineer Kevin Henderson, of Stuart, objected to allowing the option to expire.

"If we own the land, we have a lever," he said. "We'll have what the other guys want....to get what we want. If we don't buy the land, we have nothing."

Reed stood up and shouted, "Right on! You're exactly right."

Former Gov. Charlie Crist negotiated with US Sugar when he was in office to purchase large tracts, putting other tracts under option. He bypassed the Legislature to initiate the contract, and only a portion was purchased by the water management district in 2010 due to the downturn in the national economy. Afterward, the Legislature also slashed the water management district's budget by 30 percent, and the talk of large land purchases evaporated ... then reignited with the passage in the last election of the constitutional amendment that sets aside 33 percent of the documentary tax to be used solely for conservation, including the specific

purchase of land in the Everglades Agricultural Area.

Critics of the plan, which apparently now also includes the U.S. Sugar Corp. itself, point to the fact that no plan currently includes building a massive reservoir or a flow way south of the lake.

Reed also seems to have changed his mind, since the last time he spoke to a Rivers Coalition meeting, he had advocated a more cost-effective solution than Plan Six that would include building a reservoir further east, so that the eastern canals already built could be used to shunt water southward.

He also advocated that a university, specifically the Water Institute at the University of Florida, study the issue, look at the alternatives, and decide "once and for all" the best method for moving water south. Sen. Joe Negron took that proposal to the legislature and secured \$250,000 to fund the study currently underway, due to be released in March.

"I'm worried about that report," Reed said to an audience member sitting next to him, and when reminded that it was his idea in the first place, he laughed as he shook his head. "I know, I know." ■

--Barbara Clowdus

LAKE OKEECHOBEE DISCHARGES

Martin County Commissioner Doug Smith dumped some collective

frustration onto the shoulders of Col. Tom Greco of the Army Corps of Engineers at the Jan. 20 county commission meeting when the colonel explained that heavy rainfall had been predicted for this year's rainy season, thus they had begun slow releases of water from Lake Okeechobee in mid-January.

"If the rains come, we're going to be dumped on by Lake discharges anyway," Smith responded, "which will wipe out everything anyway, so why start discharging now? Why not wait a little longer to see if (the rain that's predicted) actually comes?"

Attempting to protect the April-May oyster spawning season and sea grass growing season dictated smaller releases now, according to Greco, yet Mark Perry, of the Florida Oceanographic Society, agreed with Smith, reporting to the commission that the salinity already had begun to fall in the St. Lucie River threatening the survival of its oysters, which die in the presence of too much fresh water and are vital to achieving good water quality in the estuary.

The oysters likely will die in either case, so Perry also requested that the Corps hold off on discharges a little longer; however, with lake levels now exceeding those of 2013, the Corps announced in early February, it will be increasing the discharges. Lake levels must be lowered by more than three feet prior to June 1, the start of hurricane season, Greco said, in order to ensure the integrity of the Herbert Hoover Dike surrounding the lake. ■

NEW INDIAN RIVER LAGOON COUNCIL

The Martin County Board of County Commissioners voted unanimously

to pay \$50,000 annually to be a member of the new Indian River Lagoon Council comprising representatives from each of the counties bordering the lagoon—except Indian River County, which opted out—as well as two water management districts and the state and federal Departments of Environmental Protection.

The former Indian River Lagoon National Estuary Program, created 25 years ago after the federal Environmental Protection Agency designated the IRL an "estuary of national significance," proposed the interlocal agreement creating the new council, which was approved by the EPA.

The federal DEP will contribute \$500,000, as it always has for IRL estuary projects, the state DEP will contribute \$250,000 annually, as will both the South Florida Water Management District and St. John's River Water Management District.

Martin is the only county thus far to have affirmed its commitment, but Brevard, Volusia and St. Lucie counties all are expected also to pledge \$50,000 annually, according to the council's interim director, Maurice Sterling. All contributors will be represented on the governing board.

The intent is to broaden local participation in selection and implementation of IRL projects to increase education and awareness of the estuary's significance. ■



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After 22 years in the Navy, the last 14 as a commissioned officer, Travis Conley came home to his wife and children in Palm City as an O4, Lieutenant Commander, concluding a five-year deployment on Veterans Day, Nov. 11, 2014. Unable to find work in Martin County, he commutes 150 miles round trip to Ft. Lauderdale.

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Conference continues push to send water south

The St. Lucie River is part of the greater Everglades system, and the long-standing cry to “Send water south!” is familiar to most residents along its banks. This was the central conversation at the 2015 Everglades Foundation Conference in Key Largo in January.

Understanding Everglades restoration is not for the faint of heart. We all agree that the goal is to get water to the Everglades by moving it correctly to various parts of the entire system—from the Kissimmee River to the Florida Bay—in proper amounts and cleaning it in the process! It sounds simple, but challenges abound.

The St. Lucie River, for instance, never needs fresh water from Lake Okeechobee; however, the Caloosahatchee, at times, does need lake water to hold down its salinity. Also, when a restoration project is brought online anywhere in the system, the flow and quality of water changes.

There is no official plan in place right now that will halt the Lake Okeechobee discharges to the St. Lucie, which prompted One Florida Foundation to talk with hydrologists and meet with officials and experts from the South Florida Water Management District and the Army Corps of Engineers.

We asked a number of questions about sending water south:

- Can it be done with the current spillways?
- Will water managers be able to move water through the system fast enough to accommodate a million acre feet of water?
- Is there enough land area that the water will be cleansed by the time it reaches the southern end of the system, as required by law?
- When rain has already filled the much-needed water storage areas in the Everglades Agricultural Area before excess water from Lake Okeechobee can be moved through them, what happens next?

We asked the same questions at the Everglades Foundation Conference, but got few answers. The problem is so complicated, we also consulted with world-renowned Wolfram Research, of Mathematica fame, whose scientists have told us that the solution cannot happen....“Well, not without a lot of changes.” Some said, it’s even impossible. There simply isn’t enough land area south of the lake for all that water. Instead, Wolfram Research suggested some form of deep water storage, such as concrete reservoirs, as opposed to a more natural flow way. Concrete reservoirs are major infrastructure projects, however, which would be neither fast to construct nor inexpensive. (These roadblocks prompted One Florida to compile the ideas already being proposed by various engineers and scientists throughout the state that require less



Nyla Pipes

One Florida Foundation

time and money to implement, which we call S.T.O.Z.E.)

Environmentalist Nathaniel Reed, guest speaker at a Rivers Coalition meeting in Stuart in February, 2013, told the gathering that water storage south of Lake Okeechobee would take two lakes, “each the size of Lake Okeechobee, to do it.”

He also told the audience and Coalition members that Plan Six (for a southern flowway) was too expensive to implement, and he urged us to look at building a gigantic reservoir and use the existing eastern canals....or find some other way...to move water south. He suggested that a study be undertaken by a university, funded by the state, to give us an objective answer “once and for all.”

Florida Senator Joe Negron got the study funding of \$250,000 approved, and the University of Florida Water Institute is currently studying how best to move water south. One of the points made repeatedly at the Everglades Conference is that any proposal to government officials must be based on science in order to have credibility and any hope of obtaining funding.

We expect to have the report in March. Unfortunately, that’s too late to make our case to our legislators as they meet in committees before the session reconvenes, to consider the state’s option to buy 46,800 acres of land from U.S. Sugar south of the Lake for \$350 million, which expires October 12, 2015. The passage of Amendment 1 ensures that funding for the purchase will be available; however, with people all over the state clamoring for those Amendment 1 funds, the competition for them will be high.

Although we won’t have the credibility of the Water Institute’s study until March, One Florida believes that everyone acknowledges that the Everglades needs water and that Florida Bay needs it to combat hypersaline conditions.

We also need to store more water north of the lake, too, then not as much water will fill Lake Okeechobee, and we can replenish the northern aquifers, which are running out of drinking water. We certainly do not want to move all that water south, even to engineered,



Eric Eikenberg, CEO of the Everglades Foundation, brings to the Rivers Coalition meeting in Stuart on Jan. 29 the same message he gave at the Everglades Conference the previous weekend: Keep pressure on state legislators to buy the agricultural land south of Lake O, before time runs out. Photo: Rivers Coalition

deep-water storage facilities, then have to pump it north again should a drought hit the northern portion of the state. We need to plan carefully. We need to look throughout the system for land that the state can purchase for water storage—not just within the agricultural areas—and we all need to continue to pressure our legislators to follow through.

One Florida Foundation pledges to

continue raising awareness of water issues, as we wait for the study, which will back us up with science. We are closer to a solution to ending the lake discharges than ever before. ■

Nyla Pipes is a founder of One Florida Foundation, which addresses water issues throughout the state.



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Tackling challenge of making a real difference

One Florida Foundation officers, Nyla Pipes and Capt. Don Voss, attended several meetings, conferences and met with state legislators and water managers to continue their attention on water issues.

"Now is NOT the time to slow down," said Pipes.

— In addition to the Everglades Foundation Conference in Key Largo and FAU's Indian River Lagoon Symposium at Harbor Branch Oceanographic in Ft. Pierce, Pipes attended the Central Florida Delegation meeting where 29 government representatives, including the mayor of Orlando and representatives of the Central Florida Water Initiative were present.

"This was a great opportunity to talk with people in Central Florida about plans to hold back some of their water runoff and utilize it more effectively," Pipes said, "so that they aren't shunting it to the Kissimmee and out to tide through our estuaries."

Pipes used the opportunity to speak with Michael Minton and James Fletcher, both members of Central Florida Water Initiative, about the rate at which the state is running out of water and how regional partnerships can help.

"They committed to a meeting (with One Florida) in January to further explore how we can work together," Pipes added.

"Additionally, this was an opportunity to meet with many of our representatives in a more relaxed setting."

She seized the opportunity to "grab the ear" of Speaker of the House Steve Crisafulli to ask for a continued focus on the state's water issues, as well as speaking "for some time" with Senator David Simmons of Altamonte Springs.

"Sen. Simmons and I talked about how septic tank effluent and fertilizers have impaired Florida springs," Pipes said, "just like it has impaired our Indian River Lagoon and St. Lucie estuary."

— While Pipes was busy in Orlando, Voss stayed in Martin County to attend the groundbreaking ceremony for the Bessey Creek Hybrid Wetland Treatment Technology Project, which will clean water before it reaches the St. Lucie River.

"The Bessey Creek project is a prime example of the kind of work we need to be doing all over the state," Pipes added.

"The Martin County Board of County Commissioners can be proud of



Young volunteers from the SWORD community outreach group in Ft. Pierce paddled kayaks to search for underwater debris, which they retrieved and tossed to the bank to be gathered and bagged.



One Saturday's clean-up efforts for about half a mile of Moore's Creek netted two shopping carts. The creek meanders through Ft. Pierce and empties into the Indian River Lagoon near the Ft. Pierce Marina.



Capt. Don Voss, of One Florida Foundation, unloads kayaks for the Moore's Creek clean-up in December.

its effort to bring this collaboration together. While he was there, Captain Don reconnected with a number of our great local leaders, including Sewall's Point Commissioner Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch and Martin County Commissioner Anne Scott."

Voss also talked with Rich Budell, director, Office of Agricultural Water Policy with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, to assure him of a return trip by One Florida Foundation to Tallahassee during the 2015 legislative session.

— One Florida Foundation traveled to Kissimmee twice to attend meetings regarding the Kissimmee Water Reservation rule-making process. "Realizing that they do not have enough drinking water for the future," Pipes said, "many in this region are working to find other sources."

The Upper chain of Lakes and Kissimmee River is being considered seriously by water resource managers and legislators. The rule-making process outlines how to tap those water supplies with the least impact to the environment.

"We addressed the members of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and the South Florida Water Management District representatives who also attended," Pipes said, "and also got a few minutes in with Senator Darren Soto (minority caucus rules chair) who is watching this process closely."

— One Florida Foundation also addressed the Martin County Local Planning Agency and, later in the month, the Martin County Board of County Commissioners as they amended Chapter 10, the septic and sewer element, of their Comprehensive Growth Management Plan.

"We encouraged them to make some adjustments," Pipes said, "as we have

concerns that they haven't gone far enough to get residences off septic tanks."

— The One Florida Foundation mission requires not only a continuation of the conversations among residents and stakeholders regarding the state's water issues, which they do by participating in meetings statewide and by speaking out to make water issues a priority, but Foundation members also tackle projects to improve a situation immediately, such as a community cleanup of Moore's Creek in Fort Pierce, Pipes added.

"Alongside SWORD Outreach resource program members and The American Dream Factory volunteers, we removed piles of trash and two shopping carts from Moore's Creek in Ft. Pierce," she explained. "This is a wonderful opportunity to work with youth and teach them how good it feels to take care of our water, as well as show them that it's imperative we do more than just talk about the issues."

— A conference call with Congressman Patrick Murphy discussed immediate steps that can be taken on a federal level to help the St. Lucie River, in particular, dredging the navigational channels of Lake Okeechobee, which is a legal requirement for transportation and is normally funded by the Army Corps of Engineers in its regular budget.

"It is our understanding the money may already be available for this project," Pipes said, "and doing so would allow for more water storage in the lake."

And it would not take years of construction time for that to happen. ■


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When home rule conflicts with best practices



**Capt.
Don Voss**

*One Florida
Foundation*

Volusia, Brevard, Indian River and St. Lucie counties joined Martin County in a five-county Commissioners' Collaborative, founded and led by Martin County Commissioner Ed Fielding, that has been looking for more than 16 months into the issues of the lagoon and actions that could be taken to improve the condition of our estuary.

Over that same time period, One Florida Foundation has been researching the issues, which resulted in the release of our report called "STOZE" (see my December column in Martin County Currents), which outlines measures that, if taken, will stop the discharges by sending more clean water south and further cleaning it to attain state-mandated quality parameters; however, this also leads us to consider other pollutants, in addition to nitrogen and phosphorous, that affect the estuary, including pesticides, pharmaceuticals, herbicides, fertilizers, micro-beads, fecal discharges and ammonia.

Strengthening fertilizer ordinances was a huge step towards cleaning our waters, but until all pollutants are removed, our water is hardly healthy. Certainly legacy fertilizers are one of our biggest problems and one that we will be working on for decades—but that does not mean we should just stop working to solve other problems until that one objective is reached!

THE MARTIN COUNTY DIFFERENCE

The most important thing to understand is that One Florida Foundation sees Martin County as taking the leading edge in respecting and preserving the environment. They set the bar high in many areas. I just returned from the groundbreaking at the Bessey Creek Project, where Martin County put up \$50 million of the cost. They were recognized for taking the lead in the "putting their money where their mouth is" category, BUT, it is for that very reason, we are trying to encourage Martin County to reach even higher. Their goal should not be to be average or current, but to push themselves to achieve the optimum environmental goals for the next century. Without a plan to remove the thousands of septic tanks currently on lagoon shorelines, Martin County is falling short in its leading environmental role.

When I came to Florida as a child, I spent many a day in Disney World. As a

young boy, I also traveled to the New York's World's Fair. I saw what was then called, "Tomorrowland" or "Future-world"—the wonders of what we would be doing, how we would take control and protect the environment using amazing processes and the technology of the future.

The Future is not now. Just like time, the future moves forward, but when did we decide just to be "average" to get by? We are so close to taking the steps to save our waters ... if Florida communities work together to establish a comprehensive, statewide water policy and implement it, we would be the leaders of water solutions for the world's problems. Instead, like California, we are on the edge of collapse. The state that works the hardest at being proactive—looking at 2100, not 2020—will be the state that succeeds in ensuring clean water supplies for residents, healthy estuaries for fish and wildlife and a sound marine- and tourist-based economy.

So did Martin County take a step backward with its rewrite of Chapter 10 of its Comprehensive Growth Management Plan? A state agency has said that if the Martin County Comp Plan goes forward—as approved by a majority vote of its commissioners on Dec. 16—a lawsuit could be filed to determine if the county must comply with state law, or can Martin County legally ban the extension of sewer lines into their rural lands regardless of the effect on state rivers? This is a \$300 million crap shoot. The Keys lost the same kind of suit a decade ago. Is this really the best use of time and resources? Can the lagoon wait through five more years of legal haggling? We think not.

We addressed the Martin County Local Planning Agency and the Board of County Commissioners on this topic, because we just want more for Martin County. And from it.

HOW MUCH POLLUTION IS OKAY?

During the 2014 rainy season, nearly 100,000 acre feet of toxic water were released into the estuary. The difference, this time, was that this toxic water did not come from Lake Okeechobee. It came from what is referred to as "local waters," released from the C-44 canal to lower the level of other local canals; therefore, very similar conditions existed in the estuary during the summer of 2014, as if discharges from Lake Okeechobee were being made.

As this water was released, it polluted not only local waters, but it also flowed north in the Gulf Stream and back into our northern inlets to the Indian River Lagoon, and then back south. The water has to be cleaned. A good neighbor would work to do so, just to be a good neighbor. A good neighbor



**News reporters take photos of officials (in the shadow under the tent) at the site of one of Martin County's newest water projects—to help clean the water of Bessey Creek, considered one of the worst offenders in carrying pollution into the St. Lucie River.
Photo: Capt. Don Voss**

would join hands with the same communities that worked together to reduce fertilizer impact to begin eliminating septic tanks, too.

Scientific tests are beginning to prove that the thousands of old septic tanks lining our rivers and the Lagoon are, indeed, leaking pollutants into the estuary. (Even cursory data would suggest that there is no way coffee sweeteners and micro-beads could be in the estuary except with human waste, but we'll continue to look to scientific research to make the call as to how much and where.)

We know also that farm and domestic animals are an issue, too, but all of this falls into the same category: "Let's just get r' fixed!" ■

Capt. Don Voss, nationally recognized for his environmental initiatives to improve the water quality of the Indian River Lagoon, will be a regular contributor to Martin County Currents. All advertising on these pages will benefit One Florida Foundation, dedicated to addressing water issues throughout the state.



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Indiantown welcomes revived growth potential

The three Powers brothers, David, Kevin and Brian—as well as a whole of other people—are betting on Indiantown to become a hub of industrial expansion over the next decade, bringing much needed jobs to Indiantown and, also, an urgently needed tax-base boost to Martin County.

“The last time we had a town hall meeting was August 3, 2011,” said Indiantown resident and community activist Brian Powers at a town hall meeting in Indiantown the first week of February, with about 60 people attending.

Powers recognized his fellow members of an ad hoc community committee, who have been instrumental in charting Indiantown's effort to attract new business, including community activist “Mayor” Thelma Waters, Hilary McKeich, executive director of the Indiantown Chamber, Donna Carman, director of Indiantown Non-Profit Housing Inc., and Angelina Perez, on the board of Indiantown Community Outreach.

“When we were here last,” Powers continued, “the contract had finally been awarded for the John Monahan bridge (Route 710 over the Okeechobee Waterway); the contract had been awarded for the initial phase of the C-44 reservoir; we'd gotten a report from the county on



Florida Commerce Park in Indiantown

what an Enterprise Zone could mean to Indiantown; and we were reporting on our inaugural rodeo. ... Tonight is an update on our tremendous progress since then, and if we were a restaurant, we'd call it the 'sample' platter.”

Joining Powers at the lectern was Martin County Sheriff William Snyder, who reported that crime in Martin County “had taken a nose dive” over the past six months. He attributed that to two things: more aggressive action by sheriff's deputies, and residents themselves, who have been proactive in reporting suspicious people in their neighborhoods. “You know now that if you call the Sheriff's Department,” he said, “we will be there.”

Craig Bauzenberger, chair of the In-

diantown Neighborhood Advisory Committee, said the focus of the NAC now is on updating its Community Re-development Area plan, page by page, which was developed more than 10 years ago. The focus now, he added, is with an eye to the community's need to address critical infrastructure, and he urged the community to attend Indiantown's monthly NAC meetings to give input to the committee, all of whom were in attendance at the town hall meeting. He also said a day-long workshop is “in the works” for additional community input before the plan is finalized.

Jill Marasa, from the Martin County Business Development Board, talked about the recent tour of Indiantown by Florida Dept. of Agriculture and Martin County officials, who urged Indiantown to define itself now at the beginning of what could become a significant growth cycle. “It's up to you what you want to become,” she said, adding a cautious note about “not trying to go in too many different directions at once.”

She also talked about the impact of earning the Enterprise Zone designation that brought tax incentives to new businesses as an incentive to locate in Indiantown. It is the only designated Enterprise Zone in the county, which not only attracts business and industry, but opens the door to potential grant opportunities, she said.

Carman reported on the establishment of a multi-service medical center in response to serve the local population whose income prohibited use of the Dept. of Health clinic already operating in Indiantown, with the additional benefit of addressing the major flaw in infrastructure that had inhibited businesses from considering a move to Indiantown. The medical center, whose doctors are affiliated with Martin Memorial Health Systems, “is thriving,” she added, and it has real potential for growth.

“They can fill up that building (where Indiantown Non-Profit Housing is located on Osceola Street),” Carman added. “Nothing could make me happier; they can have it, and we'll just go someplace else.”

Rob Dawson reported that the state Department of Transportation had “unofficially” designated the Martin Grade as the state's 25th Scenic High-

way (thus protecting SR 609 to SR 710 from expansion to four lanes), but Dawson could not announce it “officially” until the non-profit group received the official letter from the state. Dawson added that the committee now is developing its public participation plan, particularly for trails and scenic hikes in Allapattah Flats adjacent to the highway.

County Administrator Taryn Kryzda talked about the failure of the sales tax referendum, which “means I didn't do my job well enough,” she said. “If I'd convinced 34 more people how

much we needed this sales tax initiative to address our backlog of infrastructure needs, it would have passed.”

Kryzda said that the Board of County Commissioners will be looking at several options to address the revenue shortfall at an upcoming meeting, including the possibility of seeking another voter referendum.

Kevin Powers, the governor's appointee to the governing board of the South Florida Water Management District, introduced Sue Ray, the SFWMD project manager for construction of the C-44 Reservoir along Citrus Blvd. in Indiantown, adjacent to the Indiantown airport.

“That's a \$115 million being invested in Indiantown right now and will create 250 jobs,” Powers said, “which is just incredible.” He introduced the project manager, Sue Ray, who presented a Power Point slide presentation that outlined all the work that had been completed thus far by both the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the South Florida Water District, and what to expect next.

“I am confident that it will be,” she responded in answer to the question as to whether the additional \$250 million in funding will be available to complete the project, “because the project now is fully underway and must be completed.”

Both Brian and Kevin Powers talked also about their nearly 10-year-old plans for a 97.35 acre industrial park in Indiantown, uniquely positioned among three major transportation corridors and with the advantage of having ITS technological services in Indiantown.

“Having that kind of broadband capacity is a huge factor in Indiantown's favor,” Powers said. “Every house in Indiantown could be a call center, if it wanted to.”

The lots will not be sold to developers, however, until after roads are built and the sewer and water lines have been run, Powers added. Indiantown is the only area in the county with a private utility company.

“What we used to call the Indiantown Commerce and Technology Park,” he said, “is now the Florida Commerce Par. We've been working on this a long time, and now we have county approval.” ■

—Barbara Clowdus



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Liquid natural gas the new “gold” for Indiantown?

Lots of pieces are falling into place in Indiantown, beginning with FPL's approved construction of additional natural gas transmission lines into Indiantown, the Floridian LNG Storage coming on line to convert the gas to liquid natural gas (LNG), and the county's approval of the Florida Commerce Park.

Two of the biggest hurdles were county approval for the storage tanks, which came last fall, as well as approval for the industrial park, which happened in mid-January this year.

At only about one-tenth the size of the proposed AgTEC industrial development west of I-95 just south of the St. Lucie County line, the new Florida Commerce Park (formerly known as the Indiantown Commerce and Technology Park) on Warfield Avenue in Indiantown does not claim to be the largest industrial development, but it survived the downturn in the economy, and—thanks to two state-mandated time extensions and one from the county—reemerged intact and ready for occupancy in mid-January.

First approved in 2007, as the Indiantown Commerce and Technology Planned Unit Development, the project will develop 1.3 million square feet of industrial space on 97.35 acres, near the Booker Park community. In what was then an innovative approach to industrial projects, David Powers and his brothers, Brian and Kevin, sought to create already permitted parcels for sale, thus saving about a year's time (based on 2007 estimates) and hurdles for potential businesses wanting to locate in Indiantown.

In 2010 the industrial park property was acquired by Skyfarm Strategic Investments, Inc., of Miami Beach, with all three Powers brothers as directors, and



David Powers



Brian Powers



Kevin Powers



Shay Grinfeld

the name was changed in December to Florida Commerce Park LLC. The final, post-approval conditions and documents were filed, fees paid and the county Growth Management Department acknowledged that all post-approval requirements had been met on Jan. 10, paving the way for the company's press release announcing its final approval.

Florida Commerce Park's chief executive officer, Shay Grinfeld, a businessman from Hoboken, N.J. and formerly an F-16 fighter pilot for the Israeli Air Force, also is chief executive officer for Fling Energy (Florida LNG Group LLC) in Indiantown, which began operations in Indiantown about 12 months ago. Kevin Powers is named as the company's contact, and Indiantown Realty is listed as the site of their company headquarters, which likely will relocate to the Florida Commerce Park soon.

All the projects have tapped into Indiantown's unique position as an Enterprise Zone at the crossroads of three Strategic Intermodal Systems, identified as critical routes by the Florida Department of Transportation for transporting goods, as well as for emergency evacuations.

The three major transportation corridors include Route 710 (Warfield Avenue) through Indiantown, the CSX railroad, which has a spur into the Florida Commerce Park, and the Okeechobee Waterway (the C-44 canal to the St. Lucie river) that connects the east and west coasts of Florida with a marina in Indiantown. There also is an airport

just outside Indiantown on Citrus Blvd., near Timer Powers Park.

Fling Energy will be adjacent to Floridian Natural Gas Storage LLC, that will convert natural gas from the Sabal Transmission Line to liquid natural gas (LNG) in early 2016, according to the Fling Energy website. Fling then will supply marine, industrial, on-road and off-road fleets with liquid natural gas, as well as assisting companies with transitioning their equipment from diesel burning to liquid natural gas, a cleaner burning fuel.

The company also offers financing options for operations “transitioning” to liquid natural gas from diesel. Fling Energy is within three hours of nearly all major Florida ports, and with the expansion of the Panama Canal, expects to export LNG internationally.

In more than one instance, Martin County Commissioner Anne Scott has remarked, “All I've got to say is, be careful what you wish for, Indiantown.” They've been wishing for growth for a very long time, and it now appears they're going to get it. ■

--Barbara Clowdus



FEC building LNG plant in Titusville

In mid-January, Florida East Coast Industries announced it was seeking approval from the City of Titusville to build a \$250 million liquefied natural gas production and distribution plant, touted as the first of its kind in Florida.

An FEC company, Tico Development Partners LLC, will build the plant on undeveloped FEC land west of U.S. 1 in Titusville, just southeast of Space Coast Regional Airport and north of an Orlando Utilities Commission power plant. Plans call for it to be in operation by mid-2016.

The plant would draw conventional natural gas from existing pipelines, which is purified and liquefied by cooling it to minus 260 degrees

Fahrenheit, and operating 24 hours a day would produce up to one million gallons of LNG daily.

The liquefied gas would be temporarily stored in a 5 million-gallon storage tank at the Titusville site, then loaded onto special 10,000-gallon insulated shipping containers to be transported by truck or rail. Currently, LNG is about 30 percent cheaper than diesel as a fuel source, according to the National Natural Gas Association, and more transportation modes are converting from diesel to LNG, even trains, which compete with long-haul trucks for the same cargo.

FEC, after receiving \$375,000 from the North Florida Transportation Plan-

ning Organization, plans to conduct a trial dual-fueled (capable of burning either diesel or liquified natural gas) train running from Jacksonville to New Smyrna Beach, according to a Florida Today news story. The 116-mile test zone will run from Jacksonville south to New Smyrna Beach. FEC had to submit a detailed report on the route's road crossings, trackbed types, signaling equipment and safety record to get approval to conduct the train test.

"I think it's pretty exciting," said Brevard County Commission Chairman Robin Fisher, as quoted in *Florida Today*. "It's innovative. They're taking a lead on alternative fuels. I think it's a great project." ■

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New shops fill the historic St. Onge building including the Painted Pineapple, opened by Nina Gelardi of Juno Shoe Girl, and her artistic friend, Roberta Shearer; Kip Kennedy's resort wear, the Sea Urchin, gifts and jewelry, and even around the corner and down the alley, you'll find Chez Bim's Boutique, with everything imaginable!

HoSo Art Stroll now first Saturday each month

Anyone who visited Hobe Sound's historic shops along Dixie Highway just a few years ago found that empty storefronts outnumbered the retail shops. Not so anymore. A host of businesses, art galleries and charming boutiques fill the formerly empty stores, and now even high-end clothing retailers like J. McLaughlin are competing for a spot in the new line-up, which is an-

chored by Taste Restaurant at the corner of Bridge Road and Dixie.

To showcase all the new activity, the Hobe Sound Chamber of Commerce, along with downtown business owners, are hosting the Hobe Sound Stroll & Art Walk on the first Saturday night of the month, from 6 to 9 p.m., through May.

As you stroll the sidewalks, local musician Ben Mejia (MejiaMusic.com)

will perform guitar and vocals in any genre...just ask....while more than 15 local craft vendors and food tents will light up the sidewalks and showcase their wares, according to Angela Hoffman, executive director of the Hobe Sound Chamber.

Your choices will include home décor, hand-crafted jewelry, sterling silver gifts, Tahitian pearls, skin care prod-

ucts, custom table runners, hot sauce and salsas, a photographer, stained glass, and face painting and henna for the kids and lots of surprises, so mark your calendar now for these Saturdays: March 7, April 4 and May 2.

It's time to rediscover Hobe Sound's historic downtown. For more information, or to reserve a booth, call Susan Janes at 772/545.3411. ■

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Deadline for all copy is **March 10!** Space is limited, so don't delay!

The first Brides Today section will be published in April!

County buys Hobe Sound lot for \$200,000 to settle

Most Zeus Park residents in Hobe Sound, it seems, consider the county's deal with Stewart and Jane Greenberg of Palm City to be a "win-win" for both plaintiffs and defendants. The county settled with the Greenbergs in January by purchasing their lot at the corner of Apollo Street and the Old Post Office Alley in Hobe Sound for \$200,000, after the Greenbergs won their court case against the county on an appeal.

According to County Attorney Michael Durham, the settlement was not what the Greenbergs had originally wanted to cover their expenses, but they also would retain ownership of the modular home that had been at the center of the controversy.

Although Durham proposed to county commissioners at their Oct. 28 meeting that Community Redevelopment dollars from the Hobe Sound CRA be used to purchase the lot, which had sold in 2012 for \$59,500, as it turned out those funds were unavailable for that purpose.

"The Hobe Sound Community Rede-

velopment Plan does not allow the purchase or to have ownership of property," said Kev Freeman, at the January meeting of the Hobe Sound CRA. "Other CRAs, like Rio and Golden Gate, do have that power, but not in Hobe Sound, because it's not in the Hobe Sound CRA plan. If it's not in the CRA plan, it cannot be done."

The funds came instead from the county's general fund.

The deal signaled the end of a long, contentious battle for the residents of Zeus Park, one of the oldest neighborhoods in the county. Residents protested loudly and immediately when the modular home rolled onto the lot that faced an alley, rather than a street, its foundation of stacked concrete blocks tied down with anchors, rather than attached to the concrete slab foundations of site-built homes.

They organized, collected funds, and retained Stuart attorney Virginia Sherlock to fight the county's Building Department's decision to issue a permit.

Although the case started well for



The modular home in Zeus Park, but the best insurance for ensuring compatibility is the new "Neighborhood District Zoning Code."

the Olympia Plat Defense Fund with County Special Magistrate Paul Nicoletti ruling that the Growth Management Department had the authority to overrule the Building Department's issuance of a permit, denied the Greenbergs' requests for an electrical hook-up to air-condition the home to prevent mold, and for a stay of code enforcement fines while the case was in court,

the momentum did not last.

After several weeks, on July 30, 2014, however, the Greenbergs removed the modular home from the site, however, the case continued when the Greenbergs appealed the county special magistrate's decision to the county appellate court. The three-judge panel overturned the ruling, issuing a scathing judicial opinion regarding the county's Growth Management Department's attempt to write its own specifications for a permanent foundation after the building permit had already been issued based on the county's current code. Durham told commissioners that the county "did have some exposure" in the case.

Modular homes, which cannot be banned from a neighborhood due to the federal Fair Housing Act, can be required to meet certain zoning requirements, however, which became the impetus for the county to develop a form-based code for the Zeus Park neighborhood that could be used as a model for other neighborhoods throughout the county. That process is currently underway. ■

County and Flash Beach Grille may settle case soon

Mark Miller, managing attorney for the Atlantic Center of the Pacific Legal Foundation, told Martin County Circuit Court Judge James McCann in January that the Breinigs, Robert and Anita, "are close to reaching a settlement with Martin County."

The Breinigs, represented by Pacific Legal, filed a suit against Martin County on August 28 to stop the county's enforcement of the Preserve Area Management Plan for a 40' x 60' piece of ground behind their restaurant, which the couple say they need in order to operate. The county says the ground must be restored as outlined in the PAMP to a natural habitat as part of the county's Comprehensive Growth Management Plan rules.

"As part of its enforcement crusade for this previously secret easement, the county is threatening Robert and Anita Breinig with massive fines, up to \$1,000 per day that could cripple or kill their business," Miller said after the suit was filed.

The Breinigs had appealed to the Board of County Commissioners in October of 2013 to be exempted from the requirement, supported only by Commissioners John Haddox and Doug Smith, because it had not been recorded when they purchased the property in 2011. The lot of primarily overgrown weeds lies within steps of the restaurant's back kitchen door and is not contiguous to any other conservation land.

The restaurant is in a commercial area within the Hobe Sound Commu-

nity Redevelopment Area, and surrounding Hobe Sound is more than 18,000 acres of permanent preserve.

The restaurant owners use the rear portion of the property to store a mobile catering trailer, which they use also as a back-up kitchen, and they have two large containers for food storage. No county planners had ever visited the site, the owners said, until after the Breinigs filed suit, and no alternative configurations had been provided to them previously; however, Miller handed to the court what he called "a schematic" drawing of the Breinig's property to illustrate that county Growth Management Department planners, in conjunction with County Attorney Michael Durham, had designed an

alternative placement of the preserve area on the couple's lot.

The tentative reconfiguration of the contested area will place it, most likely, to the west side of the property, adjacent to the asphalt parking lot of the Kwik Stop convenience store.

Judge McCann granted a stay of the case until March 31 to resolve any of the outstanding issues, which includes a stay of code enforcement fines against the Breinigs during this same time period. If a settlement is not reached prior to March 31, the case will go to court.

The Pacific Legal Foundation was organized in 1973 by members of then-Calif. Governor Ronald Reagan's welfare reform team to defend the property rights of citizens. ■

Workshop for first Neighborhood District Zoning

When the Community Development Department presented the new zoning code for Hobe Sound's Zeus Park to the Local Planning Agency, it was rejected.

"They said they felt the architectural guidelines were too much like HOA (Home Owners Association) rules," said Kev Freeman, community development director, who presented the new special district zoning rules to the LPA on Jan. 15. "This was done to protect the Olympia plat, but with some members of the public making inaccurate statements there, we really were stuck without having any apparent support from Zeus Park residents."

Angela Hoffman, chair of the Hobe Sound Neighborhood Advisory Committee, told Freeman she felt it had "been a mistake" to take the rezoning plan to the LPA prior to having the NAC and Hobe Sound community review the

final rezoning rules, a necessary step to raise awareness and engender community support of the project.

"I didn't even know it was happening," she said.

The community had not been receptive to Freeman's first zoning presentation last fall when he covered the walls of the Hobe Sound Civic Center with photos of existing styles of architecture and lot diagrams and drawings, because the community's focus then was ensuring another modular home did not come back into the neighborhood under the same circumstances.

"We cannot prevent modulares from being here" Freeman said, "but we can ensure that their design matches the character of the neighborhood. That's what form-based zoning is all about...making it simple, not really changing what's already there, but just

making sure that it will preserve the existing community character and rich history of that neighborhood."

Rezoning is necessary, he says, because Freeman and his staff have found contradictions in the regulations, one of which is the typical lot width in Zeus Park (the Olympia Plat), which is narrower than minimum lot sizes in the existing zoning code, as well as in the Community Redevelopment Area (CRA) overlay regulations.

"Do you realize that there are eight different zoning districts within Zeus Park," he added. "Some property owners are finding they have more than one zoning district on their lot, making it difficult to make property improvements."

The only solution is to rezone to a new "Neighborhood" zoning district for the Zeus Park neighborhood that will be simple, easier to understand, provide

clear parameters and be consistent in application, according to Freeman.

"The changes will contain every regulation relevant to Zeus Park all in one place," he said, "not in different books that are four inches thick and often contradict each other."

The proposed Zeus Park Zoning Code is on the Community Development Department website under Hobe Sound CRA, Zeus Park Zoning Code. Following Hoffman's suggestion, Freeman has arranged another community workshop to review the code, which will be conducted by Growth Management Department personnel, and will be at the Hobe Sound Library on Tuesday, March 31, at 6 p.m.

"This is such an important step for our neighborhood," Hoffman, "so please make every effort to attend, and please help spread the word to your neighbors." ■

Top 10 things you can do to reduce water pollution



1

Only rain goes down the storm drain. Never dump anything you wouldn't want to drink or swim in onto the street, down a storm drain or into a drainage ditch, including grass clippings or leaves.

2

Report any illicit discharges to Martin County's waterways or storm drains to our Stormwater Hotline at **772-288-5658**.

Our drains lead directly to our waterways

"All drains lead to the ocean..."

Don't forget about the HazMobile – our Mobile Hazardous Waste Collection Vehicle!



3

Throw trash in its place.

4

Clean up after your pet.



5

Check your vehicles for leaks – and repair them.

6

Think Green. Compost leaves and yard clippings. Use rain barrels to collect water or plant a rain garden with deep-rooted native plants and grasses designed to capture rainwater runoff and stop the water from reaching the storm sewer system.

7

Reduce household hazardous wastes. If you already have them at home, dispose of them properly. Take advantage of our Amnesty Days, held twice a year, where you can drop off your hazardous waste.

Shop wisely!
Buy products labeled biodegradable, non-toxic, non-phosphorus or water soluble.



8

Use fertilizer and pesticide sparingly. They pose a serious threat to your health and safety and pollute both ground and surface water. It's far cheaper to prevent pollution than it is to clean it up!

Comply with Martin County's summer fertilizer ban from June 1 – September 30



9

Wash your vehicle on your lawn rather than on pavement.

10

Tell a friend or neighbor about how to prevent stormwater pollution and get involved in your community's programs.

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Scoop the Poop

Pet waste may not be the largest or most toxic pollutant in urban waterways, but it is one of the many little sources that add up to a big problem. Pollutants from improperly disposed of pet waste may be washed into storm drains by rain. Pet waste contains nutrients that encourage weed and algae growth and carries diseases which make water unsafe for swimming or drinking. Martin County has a Pooper Scooper law but enforcement is a challenge.

Here are some things you can do to be part of the solution to pet poop pollution:

- Flush it down the toilet, put it in the trash or bury it in the yard (at least 5 inches deep, away from vegetable gardens, water wells and water bodies).
- Manure storage should be at least 200 feet away from water bodies.

Rain Barrels

Lawn and garden irrigation make up nearly 40% of total household water use in the summer. A rain barrel collects water and stores it for when you need it most – during periods of drought, to water plants, wash your car and for other uses. It provides an ample supply of free "soft water" that contains no chlorine, lime or calcium.

A rain barrel will save most homeowners about 1,300 gallons of water during the peak summer months. Saving water not only helps the environment, it also saves you money and energy. Diverting water from storm drains also decreases the impact of runoff to the river and estuary. A typical half inch of rain will easily fill a 55 gallon barrel. Connecting a soaker hose to your barrel is a great way to water shallow rooted plants.

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12-1:00	OPEN MIC	SCHEDULE SUBJECT TO CHANGE
1:30-3:30	"SISTER BABY" FEATURING CARLA HOLBROOK	
3:00-4:00	FREESTYLE MOTOCROSS SHOW	
4:00-6:00	THE NOUVEAUX HONKIES	BRING SEATING

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Acupuncture's role in a timeless, healing matrix

Art, the outward expression of our inner selves, remains a largely mysterious natural process, as is acupuncture, an ancient healing conduit that connects our physical self with formless Tao, or the eternal path. Stemming from the Chinese spiritual philosophy of Taoism, acupuncture channels for us what is innately ours, vis medicatrix naturae, translating from Latin as the healing power of nature.

Conceived by a luminary Chinese thinker, Lao Tzu, around the 4th century BC, the universal matrix of acupuncture was described and preserved in his treatise, Tao Te Ching. His instructions intended to cultivate also the spirit of the true healer: "I have just three things to teach: compassion, simplicity and patience." This formula for healing shapes the philosophy of Dr. Frank Ervolino, who founded Treasure Coast Community Acupuncture in Stuart six years ago and has since provided more than 12,000 treatments.

Indulge me, please, for speaking about only one acupuncturist among many fine practitioners of this healing modality along the Treasure Coast; however, my experience is personal, my health regained, and I find that walking into Treasure Coast Community Acupuncture, a part of the Soulville Center for Healing, Transformation and Education on Colorado Avenue in Stuart,



Maya Ellenson
Art Kaleidoscope

creates in me the same sense of wonder and spiritual connectedness as do the finest art galleries.

With a degree in naturopathic medicine and acupuncture from Bastyr University in Washington state, Dr. Ervolino also works as a "formulator" for several herb and supplement companies, complementing acupuncture with Chinese herbal formulas. A prolific writer for numerous health magazines and a public speaker, he also works for medical institutions that recognize the contributions of Eastern medicine in healing illness and maintaining health.

By implementing an altruistic philosophy in his practice, Dr. Ervolino and his colleagues created a gem in downtown Stuart, raising the culture of well being to an unmatched scale by offering a beautifully designed, fully equipped healing center attainable to anyone seeking the path to health through natural therapies...regardless of their income.

"Treasure Coast Community Acupuncture was established to provide



Dr. Frank Ervolino at the Treasure Coast Community Acupuncture Center begins a treatment enhanced by the center's soothing environment.

a low-cost affordable treatment option to the surrounding community," said Dr. Ervolino. "Our goal is to refuse no one."

With charges of \$20-\$40 per visit and a reserve of donations to allow some to be treated at no cost, the Center adopted a synergistic business model that provides acupuncturists a place to work and earn a wage, rather than tackling the expense of establishing a private practice, and treating patients in a "community" setting in which four or five may gather at staggered times in one large room, rather than in more expensive separate rooms. The Center also is available, as well as attainable, by being open six days a week, in the evenings and on Saturdays.

Surrounded by relaxing oriental music and a splendid auric field, we experience smoothly inserted ultra-thin needles in our skin working together in a way that we take with us not only the fully restored flow of life-force, or Qi, but an altruistic impulse and a sense of peace.

Dr. Ervolino explains the main advantage of acupuncture over other healing practices:

"Acupuncture is a proven therapy that excels for treating chronic health problems. It is non-addictive and does not

have side effects. It is safe to use in conjunction with other therapies and has been in clinical use for more than 2,500 years. Because it has its own method of diagnosis and treatment, it is considered a complete medical system. It is based on the principles of nature, so it is not only energetic in that it regards the body as a part of the whole universe, but also, like nature, it is mathematically correct. No other holistic modality can diagnose the patient in a way that gets to the cause of his or her illness. The methods of observation and diagnosis used in acupuncture can tie together seemingly unrelated symptoms into one clear constitutional diagnosis and complementary treatment plan."

He does not hesitate to make referrals to other medical professionals if the client needs additional medical help beyond the scope of the Center, but I see acupuncture as taking us beyond fears, disorders and negativity to activate our inner resources for self-healing and self-awareness, a useful adjunct to all medical treatments.

Unlike the conventional doctor-patient relationship paradigm, naturopathy is based on a dialogue of empathy and unity that offers a unique path to optimal health, clarity, and empowerment. Once plugged into a balanced state of being, going back to illness is no longer an option; therefore, many clients, including myself, continually retreat to Community Acupuncture, not necessarily from need, but from the urge to stay well.

When Dr. Ervolino heals, he is one of us, epitomizing the very nature of compassion. The beauty of such treatment rests in the fact that it feels compelling and natural. The atmosphere in the center is both pacifying and energizing. A vast ocean of energy pervades all who enter, both healers and those who need healing, but only the integrity and goodness of its navigator can determine whether it heals or just flows by. ■

Russian-American Maya Ellenson, who holds M.A. and PhD degrees in Russian language and literature from Moscow State University, has lived in Martin County for eight years. A free-lance writer, she has a particular interest in world culture and art.

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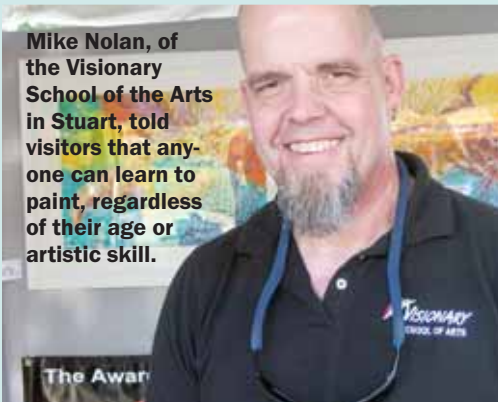
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The paintings by Tal Willis, of Hobe Sound, reflect his affinity for the lagoon that comes from his time spent fishing these waters.



Mike Nolan, of the Visionary School of the Arts in Stuart, told visitors that anyone can learn to paint, regardless of their age or artistic skill.



Jef Otten, of Hobe Sound, invites festival visitors to check out the retractable screens offered by Beck and Call, screen installation experts.

Possibly the most artistically challenging creations at the Hobe Sound Arts Festival were the "Whimses Pots" by Ayenne Applebaum, of Aviva Arts in Lake Worth. "Better than brown clay any day," she said.



Hobe Sound shines light on the arts

The weather was near perfect for an outdoors festival--on the cool side most of the weekend--as January slipped almost unnoticed into February. The crowds at the Hobe Sound Festival of the Arts, a Hobe Sound Chamber of Commerce fundraiser, ebbed and flowed, reaching their zenith in early afternoon on Saturday, and again around noon on Sunday, breaking a little early, perhaps so visitors could get home in time for the Super Bowl.

"I couldn't be more pleased with the numbers (of people) who walked in my door," said Hobe Sound art dealer Robert Lumppp, whose gallery drew some of the crowd as they strolled down Old Dixie Highway in Hobe Sound, "but this year's crowd did not seem to want to spend like they did last year." Many of the vendors and other shopkeepers concurred.

On the other hand, several festival visitors said they spent more than they usually do, because of greater variety from which to choose and with a greater range of prices.

"I've lived here for 10 years and come to every one of these," said Robert Devin, "but this is the first time ever that I've actually bought something....This festival was far better, I think, than in years' past."

The local restaurant tables seemed full, although the traditional food trucks were also on hand for sausage hoagies, funnel cakes and the like. Many of Hobe Sound's small shops brought their wares out on the sidewalk adding festive color to the streetscape.

A visitor from Stuart was overheard to say, as he walked past the quaint shops behind the art festival tents, "So this must be downtown Hobe Sound," he said to his wife. "I've always wondered where the 'historic downtown' was. We'll have to come back when it's not so busy, and we'll spend a little more time here."

Exactly what every Chamber of Commerce likes to hear. ■



My, my, how your garden does grow — in pots!



**Suzanne
Briley**

Hopscotch

As the days lengthen, my thoughts turn to spring, warmer days ahead and my favorite gardens. Two of them are in Hobe Sound, and there are many many more in England, where gardening is a favorite past time and activity for everyone.

Art and Beth Palma, here in Hobe Sound, have been gardening with a serious passion for the past seven years. Their rather small 12 X 70 garden plot is chock full of beautiful vegetables and flowers. They sharecrop their garden and harvest with Granny, age 96, who lives next door and can happily see the lovely garden from her kitchen window.

A massive Mango tree with a yellow orchid reaching down 8ft. from a limb fills a corner section providing shade. Its fruit provides Beth with mangoes for making chutney, ice cream and numerous exotic recipes.

It is a winter garden, facing south, and most of the day it is in 3/4 sun. Among the roses they tend, along with other flowers, the garden is filled with a large number of pots. They believe strongly in container gardening. A must in south Florida for success in growing the many varieties of tomatoes and other vegetables. It makes for easy care, and Art says he spends about an hour a day in caring for his plants. Watering by hand, (containers use a lot less water) and the occasional use of non-toxic Neem Oil, a natural spray for insect control helps to make his garden prolific. Once in a while he uses Miracle Grow to feed vegetables. He believes that insects attack weak plants, therefore he quickly removes any plant he finds not to be healthy and strong.

The Palmas collect their black plastic containers from garden stores, unused pots from landscapers and friends. The garden is brimming with good health, deep greens, the hum of bees and birds help keep the insect population under control. There are 8 bird feeders and 5 bird baths.

As I stepped into the delightful garden, I was surprised to see 50 pots of Minne Mita corn growing. It is a premium mini-size corn grown commercially and exported to Japan. Delicious and sweet! There was broccoli, cauliflower, (Beth cans them) parsley, basil, Malibu spinach, Swiss Chard and huge fat carrots. Several varieties of lettuces, some with curly, lavender edges grew in the ground through breathable grow cloth. Because of this, there is no weed-



Yes, you can grow corn in your backyard. Palmas' granddaughter, Andriana, works here among mini-corn plants that produce two to three small ears per stalk.



The Super Sweets tomatoes live up to their name.



The Palmas' granddaughter, Andriana, spends most of her visits outside in Grandpa's garden.



Tomatoes come in more colors than just red.



A favorite of cooks is the Campari, larger than a cherry tomato and rounder than plum tomatoes, they are sold as "tomatoes on a vine" in supermarkets.



The Palmas' raised-bed garden—framed by pieces of the old Zeus Park sidewalks Art gathered when the new sidewalks were being poured—include a variety of root vegetables, herbs, and vegetables galore.



Beth Palma picks cauliflower from their garden.

ing to be done. At least 24 vines of beans happily wound themselves around the strings attached to poles. Pots of roses, rosemary, and geraniums added color and scent.

My favorites were the bright red, yellow and orange peppers with cherry peppers growing alongside. WOW! a treat to see....

The prize of the garden were the tomatoes. There are over 120 of them growing in containers. Among them are Early Girl, Big Boy, Better Boy, Yellow Huges, Green tomatoes. Campari, and Mama Leone. Super Sweet are a favorite!

Art and Beth start most of their vegetable from seed. From 200 seeds started in plastic containers using small pods filled with water (a seed placed in each one) and covered with a dome, they will harvest 120 plants. They will gain about the same amount of pepper plants from seeds.

The soil is rich. That is the secret. Four large bins filled with compost from peat, kitchen waste, and cuttings supply the containers with dark soil, enriching them. The thriving tomatoes benefit greatly from this soil.

Can we better our lives and health from growing our own food in pots? I think so! Remember, a pot or two can

grace a patio, deck, or small space in a partially shaded spot producing delicious vegetables and lovely flowers or herbs!

Another favorite Hobe Sound garden is owned by Michael Post. He and his friend, Susie, are happy container gardeners when it comes to growing vegetables and some fruits.

From years of experience and great success, they have discovered that growing in containers and pots eliminate nematodes (a root parasite) giving them weed and water control as well. In the garden there are 70 pots with a variety of plants including beautiful, delicious tomatoes, blueberries, pomegranates,

ginger, pineapples, figs, and plenty of cabbages, spinach and root vegetables. Plenty of fresh food for another favorite hobby... cooking!

Michael, who lives in an old historic home, enjoys his Italian kitchen, often filled with happy guests from around the world enjoying delicious food from the garden. Baskets of arugula, lettuces, lemons and vegetables grace the old table and the many herbs, grown in pots, are used by Susie and Michael in their daily cooking, giving the kitchen a delightful scent.

When entering through a set of iron gates, you enter a different world. I love the peace and quiet of nature's home. Foxes, hawks, wildcats and squirrels reside undisturbed. Butterflies sail through colors of deep blue and green. Datura and lillies fill the spaces making me reluctant to leave, ever!

Michael's garden has it's own micro climate. Set in two acres of hickory and pine trees, one can sense the magic of charm and

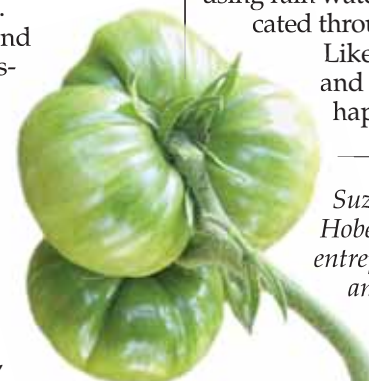
creativity. This is a shade garden and during the winter some trees are bare. There are hidden gates, a bamboo walk, hanging baskets of orchids, many varieties of palms (including a ribbon palm recently planted for Susie) little winding paths, long rope swings from a large Banyan tree, thousands of Caladiums, vines and Queen's Wreath that is breathtaking when in bloom. A mulberry tree is filled with dark purple berries for eating, a vanilla vine climbs a Sabal palm there.

The vegetable garden is in only partial shade, and like Art Palma, Michael uses grow cloth for his plants, has 70 containers which he filled with 20% seedlings and the rest from his own harvested seeds. He also uses compost bins and organic vegetable mix for container soil.

Michael advises one to never give up but to use the internet for questions and problem solving, buying garden magazines and his favorite web site is "Hoe and Shovel.com." He also advises using Martin County extension office and the Master Gardeners. Michael and Susie make use of using rain water from their barrels, located throughout the garden.

Like Art and Beth, Michael and Susie, all of us can be happy gardeners! ■

Suzanne Briley, who lives in Hobe Sound, is an artist, author, entrepreneur, environmentalist and world traveler. She may be contacted at hopscoth@hscurrents.com.



Staying in step with Floridians Fighting Falls

Floridians Fighting Falls, founded in 1912 through the sheer will and determination of octogenarian Hap Harrington of Hobe Sound, took some significant steps over the past year in the fledgling organization's growth.

Dedicated to preventing falls among adults of just about any age, but targeting seniors, Floridians Fighting Falls became a 501(c)3 organization in 2014, so contributions to their mission are now tax deductible (which Harrington is likely to mention often during any conversation). They more than doubled the size of their office space and now can now offer Tai Chi for Better Balance classes on site. They also renewed their partnership with Martin County firefighters, with whom fall-assessment inspections can be arranged through FFF, according to Audrey Burzynski, executive director.

After receiving a proclamation by the Martin County Board of County Commissioners last fall, the FFF board and staff, including Dr. James Harrell, chairman of the board, Harrington, Burzynski, and board members Doris Fenner and George Kleine, all left the county administrative building wearing full-sized grins.

"Sometimes I almost have to pinch myself," Harrington said. "When we first started, I didn't have any idea, really, if we would be successful, but, you know what? We did it, and they don't even need me anymore!"

There'll always be a desk for Harrington at FFF, whose vision of saving lives through a combination of education, exercise and removing hazards in the home has taken shape in creating the



Floridians Fighting Falls Executive Director Audrey Burzynski, far right, a certified Tai Chi for Better Balance instructor practices with volunteers Molly Shaver and Eric Vaughn, who are training to become certified instructors under the watchful eye of the FFF mascot, Freddie the Gorilla.

foundation that he expects to grow into a statewide movement...or maybe even a national movement. For now, though, it's growing strong roots in Martin and St. Lucie counties.

A simple fall among those over 65 is the leading cause of injury-related deaths, hospitalizations, and admissions to extended-care facilities in the U.S., according to the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta. That statistic alone translates to three seniors over 65 will fall some time this year.

Studies have confirmed that Tai Chi makes a significant impact on maintaining good balance and muscle tone in the aging population. She conducts Tai Chi classes that have been geared to the spe-

cific exercises that have the greatest impact on balance and coordination. The First Methodist Church in Hobe Sound hosts a class on Mondays and Wednesdays, and she has a class on Tuesdays and Thursdays at the FFF office, 8965 Bridge Road. (For those seniors enrolled in the Silver Sneakers program, there is no cost to attend.)

She also takes part in numerous educational outreach activities, most of

which have been sponsored by Well-Med, a medical organization committed to preventative care. Terri Watling, of Well-Med, is cofounder of Floridians Fighting Falls, as the FFF's mission "aligns perfectly with Well-Med's mission of preventative care," she said.

In addition to their partnership with Martin County firefighters, who recently obtained a grant to purchase smoke/fire alarms with a 10-year battery life to install in seniors' homes, FFF also has partnerships with EyeCare America to arrange vision checks, and with Well-Med for medication assessments. FFF also provides a "Self Help Safety Checklist" to highlight the simple steps anyone can take to help ensure a safer home environment.

Harrington currently is staying at a local nursing home as he recuperates from heart surgery, sidelining him from his daily trips to the office. A WWII Navy veteran who was one of the soldiers exposed to the radiation poisoning from atomic bomb tests, he said his health has been failing for some time.

"I know that this organization is on firm ground right now and in capable hands," he says, "so I'm superfluous, really."

For more information about any of the Floridians Fighting Falls programs or the Tai Chi for Better Balance classes, call Burzynski at 772.349.6452. ■

—Barbara Clowdus

Calling to always be in touch

Steven Snell, of Always Best Care of the Treasure Coast, a non-medical, in-home care and assisted living finder/referral service, recently announced a new service being sponsored by Always Best Care.

"To help reassure yourself and your family, there's now a free telephone reassurance service—Always in Touch—that provides a 'safety check' phone call every week-day," Snell said. "It is the only free national service of its kind in the United States."

It is not a medical emergency alert system, Snell is quick to add, neither is it a substitute for professional medical advice or the care that patients receive from their physicians and medical advisers. In an emergency, subscribers still must call their doctor or 911.

Always in Touch primarily serves seniors or disabled adults who are home bound, isolated, living alone or in need of daily contact. This may be temporary while recuperating from an illness or surgery, or it may be a more permanent situation. Individuals may refer themselves, or be referred by a caregiver, medical professional, social worker, family member or other service provider.

The service works like this: Once a day, an Always in Touch representative will call the home and allow the phone to ring 15 times. If there's no answer, the representative will call back in 15 minutes.

"If there's still no answer," Snell added, "they will try to reach designated emergency contacts."

It is just one more way to help ensure that older Americans, especially the 12 million over 65 who now live alone, may have a more independent, higher-quality life.

Other tips include: have regular doctor visits, stay up to date on vaccinations, don't smoke, eat healthy foods, exercise for 2.5 hours a week and include BALANCE exercises, drink alcohol only in moderation. In your home, install grab rails in the bathroom, get rid of loose wires and carpets, broken handrails or general clutter that can be a potential tripping hazard.

For more information, contact Snell at Always Best Care, Serving the Palm Beaches and Treasure Coast, at 772-205-3888 or (888) 316-6178; email: ssnell@abc-seniors.com. ■

Ahoy, me hearties!

Robert Louis Stevenson's classic adventure is adapted just for kids!
St. Luke's School of the Arts announces their summer musical production;

Treasure Island: Young Pirates of the Caribbean!

The kid-friendly and age-appropriate musical has challenging roles for beginner to experienced performers aged 8-15 years old. The three-week summer camp will have professionals in the field working with the students in acting, music and voice, dance, stage design and set building, costuming, and technical crew.

The professional staff is experienced in both performing and teaching and have gone thru through back ground checks and trainings. All this takes place on a beautiful campus with studios, practice rooms, and a performance space with commercial kitchen at St. Luke's Episcopal Church. We are nestled in a park-like setting providing a safe and healthy environment.

The cost, with pre-registration, is only \$100 a week with discounts for siblings.
For registration or more information call 772-286-5455 or see our website at: stlukesfl.org.

St. Luke's School of the Arts
St. Luke's Episcopal Church
at Cove Road and A1A.

This year the school offers 11 courses, including ballet, yoga, guitar, acting, and little chefs, as well as Arts and Crafts After School Tuesdays, taught by South Fork High School students in the International Baccalaureate program, as a community service.

Pomps will arrive with cold weather, easterly winds

Pompano stock in the estuary abounds, but spotty bites are due to the fluctuation of water temperatures. Whiting, blues and mackerel are staying well offshore due to a predominance of westerly winds. I'm sure very few of us are complaining about having 80-degree weather over the holidays and a wonderful influx of tourists—wonderful for those of us who depend on them to make living here in paradise—coupled with about a 50 percent drop in gas prices, but we need some constant easterly winds, some turbidity (which grudgingly is being supplied by the pulse discharges from Lake O) to funnel these guys back to the beach. Ft. Pierce north to Vero is the main stay as of late.

Carefully studying the weather conditions, commercial anglers recognize the potential of calm variable winds prior to the mid-morning northern bands kicking in. The bite is quick, short lived and over by 7:30 a.m. Hobe Sound and Stuart beaches entertain the bite. Most everyone buckets from 1 to 4 pompano during a 30-minute window.

Naturally everyone conjures up good times, expecting to catch more until the rain band and the winds blow straight out of the north. With the high tide starting to let out at 8 a.m. most would think they would make our surf rods bend.



**Rich
Vidulich**
*Pompano
Reporter*



A two-pound pompano surrenders to a chartreuse plug at Hobe Sound beach.

But not so my friends. Zero, zip, back to ground zero! Even the jacks, blue runners and lady fish found no reason to continue biting.

In general most pelagic fish eat through the evening when the light of the moon is most evident. Their feeding habits continue to sunrise and, potentially, an hour past. It doesn't matter much what the solunar major and minor times are, the moon rules! If the moon is rising mid-afternoon, there could very well be a second bite an hour before dark, but this is important to remember: The concept could be flawed under one condition. If the full moon evening is heavily overcast and possibly raining, there may very well be a solid daytime bite!

So, what were you doing on Christmas Eve? In my opinion, nothing could be better than landing a monster fish! At 1 p.m., the day before Christmas, I was on Jupiter Island at 1 p.m. on a (primarily) bonefish charter—until the north setup bent triple! Zrrrrr...my line was peeling for the Bahamas with surf spike struggling to hold her down! That first run was unstoppable with 150 yards of 14lb line on a 280yd reel capacity fast becoming very scary!

Visually, no fish was in sight, so I had no idea what species it could be! I slowed the freight train to a slow and steady swim. Two hours in and no visual yet on what type of fish I am latched onto. My hands are numb, my wrists are straining and the biceps are tired. My mind starts to schizo out! What if the the shocker knot weakens and breaks? How much stretch can the Sakuma line handle? Will the 2/0 hook straighten? Will I lose my touch and try to force him in? I've done this before, I tell myself. just stay steady and endure. I cannot fathom what I may be reeling in at the end of this line.

Finally, I'm gaining, but then, an interruption! I'm about to to have an "Old Man and the Sea" moment. Riding the swell is a big permit, and right behind him are at least six spinner sharks. Unholy fate, tons of surface turbulence, and



A 51 pound permit lost his tail to spinner sharks on its way to shore at the end of Rich Vidulich's 14lb line.

it's over! I land my fish with a huge blood trail across the sand, and no tail. There'll be no releasing this one unlucky game fish.

Everyone who's been watching takes a picture of the big guy, but not me. I'm lying on the ground! After a few minutes of recovery, I stuff him into 160-qt. cooler, ice him down and call my friend, Gino, who loves to eat permit. He tells me, "Yeah, bring it over, but, Rich, how big it it?"

"Gino, it will easily feed a family of 12," I respond. "The spinner sharks weren't able to penetrate the leathery



Dorothy Kite's 5-pound pompano taken on a blanched flea in the St. Lucie River—before the discharges started!

skin, and the permit is in great shape, except he's minus a tail!"

I'm often asked, will the pomps return? Of course, they will. Every time the jet stream lowers its fangs with an Arctic front, it will be followed by colder weather, and I feel sure the action will refresh when we are five to seven days on the dark side of the moon.

We really don't have much data on what kind of temps we're going to have the rest of winter, so we wonder if the Farmer's Almanac is on target for 2015? Well, it's not been accurate enough to dictate pompano patterns for the past five years, but I'm good with that. Just "go fishing" in 2015, and you'll be ensuring that you have a happy New Year! ■

Rich Vidulich, a commercial pompano surf fisherman who traverses the beaches of Martin County and points north for his "golden nuggets," lives in Jupiter. Send comments or questions to Pompano@MartinCountyCurrents.com.

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Keeping the dream alive



Most recently, 13-year-old Lacie Greenwald of Hobe Sound, has been training in Telluride, Colo., as she keeps her focus on being named to the U.S. Olympic Ski Team in 2018. She began competing at age 8, winning every race she entered. Several coaches named Lacie as the "best skier at her age" in the U.S. Her motto? Keep Believing!

Historic Preservation Month coming in May!

A Celebration of Martin County's Historic Past

The Golden Gate Building

The Golden Gate building stands as a remarkable relic of Florida's 1920's land boom.

The confluence of the new St. Lucie-Okeechobee Waterway (completed in 1923) and newly improved St. Lucie Inlet was expected to become a significant center of commerce. A major deep-water port planned for the region was to serve as a shipping point for the area's growing citrus industry, as well as a center of transfer for goods to be shipped along the new cross-state canal. Newspapers of the lower Indian River boasted that this new master planned "Port St. Lucie" (a separate plan and several miles south from the post-World War II development of the same name) would become a major port city.

In the midst of this enthusiasm, "Golden Gate," a 200-block "far reaching and modern development" was planned on land originally part of an earlier Progressive-Era town known as "Port Sewall." The Golden Gate Building was constructed in 1925 and became the cornerstone for Martin County's first planned major residential development. Its construction fell at around the same time that another developer had launched ambitious plans for a major development in Hobe Sound and Jupiter Island, called Picture City.

A major hurricane in Miami marked the end of the Florida real estate boom of the 1920s, and falling land values collapsed the planned community and commercial port. The economy of Florida had been stagnant for years when the Great Depression later spread to the nation in the 1930s.

In the three decades following its initial use as a sales office, the building changed hands several times and was briefly used as a place of worship by the Church of God, which purchased it in 1943. Stuart was hit by a major hurricane in August 1949 which likely damaged the building's main facade parapet. The building's last use ended in 1959 as a loft apartment and studio for notable local artist Jim Hutchinson and his wife.

After decades of neglect, the building was saved from destruction in the 1990s and ultimately purchased by Martin County in 2002. Fundraising efforts to restore the building's interior have continued since the 2008 reconstruction of the exterior.

Along with the Stuart Welcome Arch, which proclaimed the region the "Atlantic Gateway to the Gulf of Mexico," the Golden Gate Building is Martin County's most visible remnant of the enthusiasm of the 1920s land boom.

SAADIA TSAFTARIDES, founder of the Friends of the Historic Golden Gate Community, Inc., which has been instrumental in restoration efforts.

NOTED FLORIDA ARTIST Jim Hutchinson and his wife, Joan, lived for awhile in the building, and some of the sketches on the interior walls have been attributed to him.



THE INTERIOR OF THE BUILDING remains unfinished, although it has been reinforced. The photo is taken from the top of the stairs looking toward the front door.

★ Did you know?

The walls of the Golden Gate building are not perpendicular to each other. The building is a parallelogram, rather than a rectangle.

GOLDEN GATE
EST. 1925
MARTIN COUNTY, FLORIDA



THE GOLDEN GATE BUILDING was barely standing when a local community effort was launched to have Martin County purchase the building and restore it as one of its treasured historic places.



★ The restored Golden Gate building is listed on the Martin County Registry of Historic Places.



Now until May 31 The Art of Seating— 200 Years of American Design

A fascinating display has just been set up at the Elliott Museum on Hutchinson Island that's a completely different kind of history lesson. Titled, *The Art of Seating: Two Hundred Years of American Design*, the history, innovation and construction of chairs from the 1800s to the present will be on display. The Elliott Museum, 825 NE Ocean Boulevard in Stuart, is open seven days a week, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. For info: 772-225-1961.

Saturday, Feb. 28 Sandhill Cove Art Show

No admission fee, no entry fee, and all artists are welcome to show and sell their works at the Sandhill Cove Retirement Center, 1500 SW Capri Street, Palm City, at the corner of Mapp and Matheson, on Saturday, Feb. 28., from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. (Complimentary lunch for artists.) For more info or registration form, call Jill Burton at 772.220.1090.



Sunday, March 1 Special Olympics Equestrian Event

Come help cheer on what these special kids have learned about riding horses at the first-ever Special Olympics County Games on March 1 at Captains Quarters in Palm City from noon to 5 p.m. Come out and see them ride Western "He Haw," English "Good Day," and Trail "Giddy UP!" Judges and spectators of all ages are "Wanted." A special call also goes out to Special Olympians wanting to be cheerleaders or gymnasts. Cheerleaders practice on Sundays from 9-10:30am at 360 Gymnastics on US 1, and the contact person is Ivy at 772.215.1873 or imgerman3@gmail.com. Gymnasts also practice on Sundays from 9-10:30am at 360 Gymnastics on US1, and the contact is Jacque at 772.233.5616 or jlewis@whghotels.com. For more info, go to <http://specialolympicsflorida.org/martin>.

Weekend thru March 1 Jensen Beach BBQ & Blues Festival



The Annual BBQ & Blues Festival is a weekend of "Finger-lickin' Fine BBQ and Toe Tappin' Blues" at Indian RiverSide Park in Jensen Beach featuring two and a half days of mouth-watering barbecue, live entertainment and family fun on Jensen Beach's Waterfront while taking runners through some of the iconic areas of Jensen Beach, Stuart and Sewells Point. Beginning on Friday night, the festival will come alive with incredible energy when the soulful sound blues and the sweet smell of barbecue, fills the air. Road Races will kick off Saturday & Sunday mornings, followed by a full day of BBQ, great music and shopping along the Indian River at the Indian RiverSide Park. For more info, call 772-232-1818, email: info@flavorsfestivals.com or go to: <http://bbqbluesfestivals.com>.

Sunday, March 1 Piano Concert at St. Christopher's Church in Hobe Sound

A riveting piano concert by Argentinian pianist David Block playing Chopin, Liszt and Pizsaolla tangos will be Sunday, March 1, at 3 p.m. at the St. Christopher's Church on Federal Highway in Hobe Sound. Organizers say they hope this to be the first in a new musical series in Hobe Sound, calling the first concert one that is "dynamic, rhythmic and exciting by a star of the piano." Admission is a free-will offering.

Monday, March 2 Coastal Lecture Series at the Blake

The popular coastal education series by Florida Oceanographic Society continues its lecture series with Greg Braun, professional ecologist, who will give an update on "Bird Island." The photos are remarkable, and the lecture will begin at 6:30 pm on Monday, March 6, in the John F. Armstrong Wing of the Blake Library, 2351 SE Monterey Road, Stuart. The illustrated talks are free and open to the public.

Friday, March 6 Project LIFT Clambake & Comedy Show

The signature fundraiser for Project L.I.F.T. (Life Initiatives for Teens considered to be "at-risk."), the clambake and comedy show will be Friday, March 6, from 6 to 10 p.m. at Sandspruit Park, 3443 SE St. Lucie Blvd., in Port Salerno. For \$150, guests will enjoy the beautiful Port Salerno waterfront with a classic "clam bake" meal (lobster, clams, shrimp, mussels, crab legs) open bar, fantastic silent and live auctions, the live music of Jason Montero, and headliner comedians, Casey & Spaz. For more info or to buy tickets, call 772.341.9821.

Saturday, March 7 10th Annual Merrill Lynch Bull Run 5k

Runners and walkers in the 10th Annual Merrill Lynch Bull Run 5K will be helping United Way raise funds to support critical needs in the community, and also will benefit Helping People Succeed. "This is a family-friendly fun run and you don't have to be a serious runner to participate," said Wendie Berardi. "We're even offering a team challenge division for families and co-workers, so people of all ages and fitness levels are welcome." Registration is \$30 per runner before Feb. 21 and \$35 after. To register online, visit LIVE-UNITEDmc.org and click on the Bull Run link. Check-in starts at 6:30 a.m. Saturday, March 7, at the Merrill Lynch Building, 2301 S.E. Monterey Road, Stuart. The race begins at 7:30 a.m. For more info, call Sandra Stiger at 772.223.6762.



March 6-March 22 Nunsense at the Barn Theatre

In the wacky and wonderful "Nunsense," five of the 19 surviving Little Sisters of Hoboken decide to stage a variety show to earn money to bury their 52 sisters, recently deceased from eating tainted vichyssoise. The wildly funny musical will be presented by the Barn Theatre from March 6-22 with performances at 8 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday and at 2 p.m. Sunday. Tickets are \$25 and are available Mondays through Fridays at the Barn Theatre box office, 2400 S.E. Ocean Boulevard, Stuart from noon to 4 p.m., or call 772-287-4884 or on-line at www.barn-theatre.com.

Sunday, March 8 Lincoln Day Dinner at Willoughby

Former Presidential Advisor Dick Morris will be guest speaker for the Martin County Republican Party's Lincoln Day Dinner on Sunday, March 8, at 5 p.m. at the Willoughby Golf Club, 3001 SE Doubleton Drive, Stuart. Tickets are \$150 per person, and reservations are needed by Feb. 27 by calling 772.286.0615 or email: office@martingop.org.

Tuesday, March 10 Birding Trip to Wakodahatchee Wetlands

The Hobe Sound Nature Center invites you to join naturalist Debbie Fritz Quincy on a birding trip to Wakodahatchee Wetlands on Tuesday, March 10, at 10 a.m. This three-quarter mile boardwalk meanders through a wetland ecosystem near Boynton Beach that attracts a variety of wildlife, including many species of nesting wading birds at this time of year. The site is a constructed wetland managed through the Palm Beach County Water Utilities Department. Reservations are required to attend. Go to: www.hobesoundnaturecenter.com.

Saturday, March 14 Sailfish Splash will open for Spring Break

Mark your calendars! Sailfish Splash Waterpark will be open for Spring Break, March 14-22. Following Spring Break, the waterpark will be open weekends only through May 31. Regular, 7-day-a-week operation begins on June 3. To buy season passes, or for more info, go to: www.SailfishSplash.com.

Saturday, March 14 Appraisal Day at the Elliott

Have you always wanted to know how much that family heirloom gathering dust in the cabinet is worth, or even what it is? Now's your chance! Come to the Elliott Museum on Hutchinson on Saturday, March 14, and for a small charge, you'll find out what you've been dying to know! Sell it, or keep it? The appraisals will be conducted from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. The charge will be \$20 for the first item, \$35 for two items, and \$45 for three. Elliott Museum, 825 NE Ocean Boulevard, Stuart. 772-225-1961



Thursday, March 19 Burmese Pythons in the Everglades

These huge snakes have moved into the Everglades, but what can we do about it? Dr. Rebekah Kibble from the U.S. and Wildlife Service will address that topic for a special presentation Thursday, March 19, at 7:30 p.m. at the Hobe Sound Nature Center on Federal Highway south of Bridge Road. You will learn about their impact on native habits and ongoing efforts to control the spread of these invasive reptiles. No admission charge. For more information, www.hobesoundnaturecenter.com

Saturday, March 21 Rio Civic Club Indoor Flea Market and Bake Sale

This is your last chance of the season to get a table for only \$12 to sell your "treasures" at the Rio Civic Club Indoor Flea Market and Bake Sale! The popular event will be Saturday, March 21, from 8 a.m. to noon. The Rio Civic Center, 1255 NE Dixie Highway, is in the historic Rio district, where you'll find jewelry, antiques, collectibles, household items, baby clothes and much more. Breakfast and lunch will be available, as well as world-famous, homemade baked goods for sale! For details, call 772.334.2039. Proceeds support area student scholarships and community projects.

Saturday, March 21 Stuart Single Fin Showdown

The 7th Annual Stuart Single Fin Showdown will be Saturday, March 21, at the south end of Stuart Beach, beginning at 8 a.m. Presented by Ohana Surf Shop, entry fees for Single Fin and Longboard is \$40 before Feb. 21 and \$55 after; \$100 for SUP; and \$25 for Amateur Skim, \$50 for Pro Skim. Competitors are welcome to compete in one or more divisions, but additional fees apply. This year's festivities also include an event pre-party at 7 p.m. Thursday, March 19, at Terra Fermatta Tiki Bar, 26 S.E. 6th Street, Stuart, with live performances by The Ohana Band and The Ellameno Beat. The event raises funds for United Way of Martin County and for Team Brooke, a charity organized to help offset the cost of rehabilitation for a former Single Fin Showdown competitor, Brooke Thabit, who suffered paralysis from a severe spinal cord injury. For more information or to register for the Stuart Single Fin Showdown, call 772.287.0041 or visit Facebook.com/SingleFinShowdown.

Thursday, March 26 Apollo School Foundation New Lecture Series

Longtime Hobe Sound resident and author Paula MacArthur Cooper is the next speaker in the Apollo School Foundation New Lecture Series, "Local Reflections." She will present "A History of Hobe Sound" on Thursday, March 26, at the newly renovated Apollo School in Hobe Sound from 7-8 p.m. Light refreshments will be served. Cost is \$10 per person per event, and tickets are available through the website and patrons are encouraged to purchase them early as seating is limited: www.apollofoundation.org.

Thursday, March 26 The Secret Lives of Dolphins

The Hobe Sound Nature Center hosts local marine biologist Russell McFee for a program on "The Secret Lives of Dolphins" at 7:30 p.m., telling the audience some of the interesting and unusual habits of these marine mammals and provide updates on the local population found in the Indian River Lagoon. Located at the Hobe Sound National Wildlife Refuge, 13640 SE Federal Highway, Hobe Sound. For details and reservations, contact the Center at (772)546-2067 or at www.hobesoundnaturecenter.com.



Saturday, April 4 4th Annual Oyster Festival in Ft. Pierce

The 4th Annual Oyster Festival, which boasted attendance of nearly 8,000 last year, benefits Sea-Life Habitat Improvement Project, Inc., so be sure to mark your calendars now for this great event of music, oysters, fun and sun on the Treasure Coast. The proceeds will aid in deploying a large Navy-type vessel as an artificial reef on the Treasure Coast and bolster the Police Athletic League and Fort Pierce Police Explorers programs. According to event coordinators, 700 gallons of oyster shell were donated to the St. Lucie County Oyster Reef Restoration Project last year. For more information contact April Price (772) 285-1646 or go to www.FtPierceOysterFest.com.

Saturday, March 28 Night on the Loxahatchee Benefit

Night on the Loxahatchee, the annual benefit for the Loxahatchee River Center, will be Saturday, March 28, from 7 to 9:30 p.m. The annual event raises funds to support the outstanding environmental education programming the River Center offers to all ages throughout the year. The evening includes good music, great food, and storytelling about the Loxahatchee River. Advance tickets are \$60. Tickets purchased after March 13 are \$70. For info or to purchase tickets, call 561.743.7123.

Friday, March 27 ArtsFest After Dark at the Gazebo Weekend, March 28-29 ArtsFest 2015 at Memorial Park

Get your tickets now for the ArtsFest After Dark Paella Party, sponsored by the Arts Council of Martin County, from 7 to 11 p.m. on Friday, March 27. Tickets are only \$35 includes paella (chicken or seafood), a paired beverage, admission into the After Dark Party and one day (Saturday or Sunday) admission to ArtsFest! ArtsFest After Dark will be at the Gazebo, and ArtsFest 2015 will be at Memorial Park on Osceola Street. Hours are Saturday, March 28, from 10 am - 6 pm, and on Sunday, March 29, from 10 am - 5 pm. Admission is only \$5 per person, and children under 12 are free. For more information about this signature event, go to: www.martinarts.org.

Now until they're all sold Photography Exhibit at Alice's to Benefit House of Hope

An "Images of Hope" exhibit by local photographers at Alice's Restaurant in Stuart is raising money for House of Hope in the fight against hunger and hardship in Martin County. Check out the pieces submitted by the members of the Treasure Coast Photography Group displayed on the restaurant's walls inside. Alice's Restaurant is at 2781 S.E. Ocean Blvd., in the Cedar Pointe Plaza, in Stuart.



Tuesday, March 31 Getting set for the Battle of the Gospel

A VIP reception for sponsors and for those who purchase a minimum of \$50 in tickets for the upcoming Battle of the Gospel will be Tuesday, March 31, from 5:30-7:30 p.m. to benefit Gertrude Walden Child Care Center at Stuart Lodge on Ocean Blvd. Hors d'oeuvres, wine, live music, more. For information or to buy tickets call 772.283.6310 or 772.485.1930.



Martin County firefighters serve as Santa's elves

The call went out more than once during the 2014 holiday season for the most reliable, helpful "elves" in Martin County – our own Martin County firefighters and paramedics, who got out their tools and donated their time to put together dozens of new bicycles. On this day, their work was for the White Doves, who coordinate all the toys for the local Toys for Tots program in Martin County.