



Anne Scott



Maggy Hurchalla



Sarah Heard

Anne Scott's undisclosed private email account prompts judge to reopen public records trial

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FREE

Martin County CURRENTS

Volume 6 Issue 2 • April/May 2016

Eucalyptus:
renewed hope for citrus farmers
in Eco-Gen plan pg 7

County's attorney fees skyrocket pg 8

Comp Plan change rejected AGAIN pg 9

Impact fee: new home prices will rise pg 21

A stand of 100-ft tall eucalyptus trees grows at the Becker Tree Farm off Bridge Road and I-95 near Hobe Sound. Supplied photo by U.S.Eco-Gen.

Rio Town Center Roundabout "Swimming Dolphins" Sculpture Coming Soon

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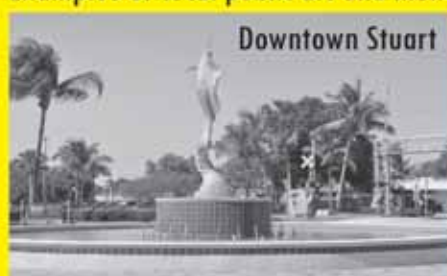
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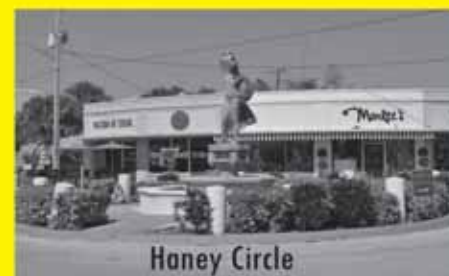
Examples of local public art and monument



Downtown Stuart



Port Salerno



Honey Circle

After discussing many options at numerous meetings, the Rio Neighborhood Advisory Committee requested a stone public art piece for the Rio Town Center roundabout that would represent Rio's environmental nature, character and location on the north shore of the wide St. Lucie River. The Martin County Public Art Board recommended the "Swimming Dolphins" sculpture for the Rio Town Center roundabout at Dixie Highway and Martin Highway. The Board of Commissioner awarded \$40,000 to C. R. Gray, sculptor from Key West, to create the 9 feet tall, 3.5 feet wide granite sculpture. Mr. Gray will have the public art sculpture ready for installation in August, 2016. The needed pedestal and roundabout site improvements are estimated to cost \$30,000.

Your contribution is needed to finish the roundabout

Realtors want county to reconsider disclosure rules

One of the county's homeowners associations already has encountered the reality of Martin County's new disclosure law for development applications adopted in January. Commissioner Doug Smith, at a recent gathering in Palm City, recounted one HOA's dilemma when it contemplated a facility expansion.

"They found out they would have to list every homeowner's name and address and their children's names on the development application as part of the county's new rules," he said, "but that's not all. They have to keep updating that paperwork and resubmitting it to the county if there's any change in owners, or risk having their development order declared fraudulent, and then revoked by the county."

Smith had brought up homeowners associations being required to reveal its members during the public hearing of the disclosure ordinance as an example of the "unintended consequences" of the county's disclosure language for all development applications in unincorporated Martin County.

Commission Chair Anne Scott called Smith's observation "scare tactics," and would not permit discussion.

All five commissioners supported disclosure of the names of developers, particularly when a development would require a change to the county's Comprehensive Growth Management Plan (six changes to the Comp Plan were approved at the commission's April 21 meeting); however, only Smith and Commissioner John Haddox objected to the county's insistence that even the names and addresses of children, real estate brokers, bankers, and a host of others involved in a property transaction be revealed.

"You need only one line," Haddox said, "and that is (for the name of the) owner."

The approved language that is now law, crafted primarily by attorneys

Ginny Sherlock and Howard Heims, according to Heims' public comments, includes the following language:

...disclose the names of each and every natural person or entity with any legal or equitable interest in the property of the proposed development, including all individuals, children, firms, associations, joint adventures, partnerships, estates, trusts, business trusts, syndicates, fiduciaries, corporations, limited liability company, professional associations and all other groups or combinations. For those entities which are a firm, association, joint adventure, partnership, estate, trust, business trust, syndicate, fiduciary, corporation, limited liability company, professional association and all other groups or combinations, every natural person or entity that enjoys a legal or equitable interest in the property shall be disclosed including but not limited to any partners, members, shareholders, trustees and stockholders. Disclosure of any interest in a contract for sale or a conveyance of any interest in the property, including but not limited to, real estate brokers, salespersons, and mortgagees would also be required.

After first asking "What are we fixing?", Commissioner John Haddox queried Growth Management Director Nicki van Vonno as to the number of incidents over the past 36 years that might warrant the legislation. She recalled one incident some years ago; however, Commissioner Ed Fielding interjected, "How do you know what you don't know?"

Haddox also said he had referred to the US Constitution, and although there is no explicitly stated right to privacy, some amendments provide some privacy protections, as he quoted former Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis.

"I'm not saying that this (disclosure ordinance) is unconstitutional, because I'm not qualified to make that statement," said Haddox, "but if I'm going to err on legislation regarding privacy rights, I would rather err on the side of

giving someone the right to privacy than to err on the side of an invasion of privacy."

Haddox and Smith both expressed concern regarding "the emotion" that often erupts in Martin County over proposed developments, which now could be directed toward children in school if names and address "are plastered all over the place," a primary reason Haddox said he would not support the ordinance.

Haddox also called the requirement for disclosing real estate sales associates names and addresses in a development application "totally meaningless."

The Realtors Association of Martin County agrees, and addressed a letter to commissioners reaffirming Haddox's and Smith's observations, urging the county to reconsider their disclosure requirement.

"We share the County Commission's concerns about the importance of transparency, accountability and fairness in the development-application process," wrote Bill Dean, Realtors board president, "however, we fear that this requirement raises questions that may very well undermine its intent."

Another point raised by Smith is the county's pride in following its rules, therefore, those rules should blindly guide the process. If a developer followed the rules, he said, the application gets passed; if a developer has not, it gets rejected, with no opportunity for discrimination charges.

He also objected that the disclosure requirements exempted interveners, or those who might be hired by a developer's competitors to disrupt the process. Scott assured Smith that the disclosure discussion will continue to include all parties, including interveners and lobbyists, and a workshop will be held on other tenets of the ordinance sometime in June. The disclosure portion is now in effect. ■

a more formal county policy toward non-profits, seeking direction from the commission in January. She returned in March, telling commissioners she followed the county's current written policy last updated in 2014, and used its scoring system as a template for the current update, which was approved. (All funding to non-profits was eliminated during the economic downturn in 2009 and resumed in 2014.)

Haddox argued that it makes sense to support non-profits, which make an impact on residents' quality of life. "Non-profits can turn whatever little money we give them into double the original amount, or more," he said, "because they can match that with grants. That means taxpayers get much more value out of those dollars than the county ever could providing those services."

Commissioner Doug Smith concurred, adding that "it's important to understand the value of the services that our non-profits provide," and their role "in making Martin County the special place that it is."

Among the 48 or so non-profits that receive funds annually is the Treasure Coast Humane Society, under fire recently by former employees for its animal euthanasia practices, at \$560,047. Others include (with amounts rounded) Keep Martin Beautiful at around \$48,000, the Treasure Coast Wildlife Hospital at \$45,000, the Martin County Historical Society & Museum at \$76,000, the 211 information service at \$10,500, Council on Aging, Senior Dining, \$11,800, New Horizons at \$331,000, Alzheimer's Community Care at \$5,000, the Arts Council at \$44,000, Veterans Homeless at \$10,000, Helping People Succeed at \$11,250, ARC at \$12,600, Council on Aging, Log Cabin, \$88,000, Treasure Coast Homeless Council, \$25,000, and Children's Home Society, \$30,000, among others.

During budget discussions in March, Scott, as commission chair, pushed to leave the non-profits at their current funding levels and to postpone further discussion to the 2017 budget discussions, which was approved. ■

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NON-PROFITS continued from PAGE 3

adopt a written policy for leasing its buildings, included that task as part of the scope of services for the CB Richard Ellis study of county properties, released in February; however, the CBRE recommendation was only that the county should have a leasing policy.

In their discussion of building leases, the commissioners turned also to having a strict policy in place for funding Martin County's non-profits, with Commissioners John Haddox and Doug Smith quite vocal about continuing non-profit funding and with Heard and Fielding expressing a desire to end all funding or limit requests.

Manning took on the task of creating

Wildlife officials: Coyotes are here to stay in county

More good news can be gleaned from facts about coyotes, than bad news, according to Angeline Scotten, an officer with the Florida Fish & Wildlife Commission. But forget about relocating them elsewhere.

"We've found that if we remove them from an area," she told county commissioners April 21, "then to compensate, the remaining coyotes go from two or three pups per litter to 12 pups. It doesn't take long for the numbers to

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Judge: Scott's undisclosed emails enough to reopen trial

The sigh by Martin County attorneys likely was heard throughout the office, around the corner—all the way to Indiantown—when they received yet one more public records request from Lake Point in March.

After all, they'd already gone to court once to ask the judge to sanction Lake Point because the county was "drowning" in public records requests, but were denied in a September 2015 ruling.

For this latest public records request, Martin County told Lake Point attorney Ethan Loeb that they had already provided all the email correspondence that exists to and from commissioners and former commissioner Maggy Hurchalla about Lake Point—from both public and private email accounts.

Assistant County Attorney Amy Petrick added, however, "to be sure the record is clear," the county would have its IT Department perform one more search of Commissioners Anne Scott's and John Haddox's private email accounts, as Lake Point had requested.

They found five emails from Hurchalla in a previously undisclosed private email account belonging to Scott, which a month later resulted in District Court Judge Shields McManus ordering a new trial.

Lake Point, a 1,005-acre rock mining and water restoration project near Indiantown between the C-44 canal and the Palm Beach County line, is a public-private partnership among Martin County and the SFWMD with plans to mine rock for 25 years, then turn over the property to the SFWMD for a stormwater treatment facility.

The public records charges at issue became Amendment VII and VIII in Lake Point's original lawsuit against Martin County and the South Florida Water Management District on Feb. 5, 2013, over a contract dispute, and against Maggy Hurchalla for tortious interference with those contracts.

Lake Point alleges that Hurchalla convinced county commissioners through secret emails and meetings to shut down the operation, but has had difficulty obtaining those emails through public records requests from Martin County.

The county's IT Department search, three years after the first public records request, found that Scott had a previously undisclosed private email account with five emails between her and former county commissioner Maggy Hurchalla, which neither Scott nor Hurchalla had remembered, turning them over to Lake Point in early March. Haddox had no Hurchalla emails.

Immediately, Loeb asked the 4th District Court of Appeals in West Palm Beach to relinquish the appeal he'd filed of McManus's order exonerating Martin County and Commissioners Ed Fielding



Anne Scott



Maggy Hurchalla



Sarah Heard

The Florida Supreme Court ruled in mid-April that county officials or governing bodies may not claim inadvertence or ignorance in following the state's public records laws, which will likely cast a different light on the issue of Commissioner Sarah Heard's "hacked" email account that destroyed public records, in addition to Commissioner Anne Scott's alleged undisclosed emails from Maggy Hurchalla on an undisclosed private email account in a new public records trial in Martin County District Court.

and Sarah Heard of public records violations last fall.

Loeb asked for a new public records trial, based on this "new evidence," and the order April 28 from McManus was unequivocal.

"The newly discovered emails from a heretofore unrevealed private email account of Commissioner (Anne) Scott are direct evidence of an unlawful refusal to disclose public records," McManus wrote in his order on April 28. "As such it will probably change the result if a new trial is granted."

NO AUTOMATIC ANSWER

The previous day, however, as McManus listened in court to arguments from Loeb to grant a new public records trial, countered by vigorous opposition from Martin County's new outside counsel, attorney Edward de la Parte of Tampa, the outcome seemed less clear.

Those in the courtroom got a lesson in the fine points of the law that must be met prior to granting a new trial. McManus had to determine first if he had jurisdiction to reopen the previous case since his final order in 2015 and all the evidence in the first public records trial last August pertained only to commissioners Fielding and Heard, not Scott, which was de la Parte's argument not to reopen a closed case.

At first, District Court Judge Shields McManus appeared that he was considering ruling April 27 against Lake Point's motion for a new trial on public records violations, thus conceding to Martin County's arguments that Commissioner Anne Scott's previously undisclosed private email account did not constitute "new evidence."

"You are definitely due your day in court," McManus told Loeb, "but I just question whether or not I have jurisdiction to reopen the old case, or if we're talking about a new public records trial (for Scott)."

Loeb reminded McManus of Lake Point's public records requests on Feb. 7, 2013, of Commissioners Fielding, Heard and Scott for emails "between you and

Maggy Hurchalla" regarding Lake Point; however, no emails were produced, which was included in Lake Point's amended complaint with a copy of the original public records request.

On Nov. 11, 2014, Lake Point filed an additional complaint requesting that the court require the county to comply with the public records requests, including all public records from "all county commissioners" in their original format from both public and private email accounts, and to award attorney's fees and costs.

After Lake Point had filed a public records complaint with the court, the county handed over one email from Maggy Hurchalla, signed "Deep Rockpit," found on Fielding's personal computer in his previously undisclosed private email account, which appeared to have been "manipulated," according to court records.

The judge allowed a forensic examination of Fielding's computer, however, no further "significant" emails were found. At the same time, the judge also blocked Lake Point's attempts at deposing Anne Scott or examining her private email account under the court's supervision following Martin County's then-outside attorney John Fumero's repeated assertions to the court that Lake Point had been provided all the public records that exist, and none existed for Scott.

Fumero told the judge he had sat personally with each commissioner and had asked each about private email accounts and for any correspondence they had had with Hurchalla about Lake Point.

"Lake Point has all the public records that exist," Fumero told the judge.

McManus took less than 24 hours to make his decision to order a new trial, writing a four-page order overturning his previous judgment in the public records case heard by McManus in August last year that had cleared Martin County, thus also denying Lake Point's attempt to recover attorney's fees and costs.

McManus granted Lake Point a new trial, but no date has been set. The county argues that it does not have time to get ready for a new public records trial prior to the main trial in mid-September.

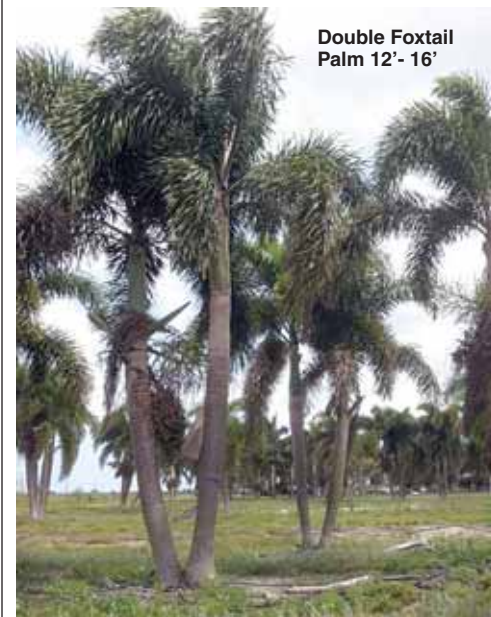
COMMISSIONERS TARGET LAKE POINT

Commissioner Anne Scott attempted to shut down the mining operation during the Feb. 5, 2013, county commission meeting for alleged violations of its development order (for an equestrian housing development), refusing to recognize the authority of Lake Point's state mining and environmental permits and ignoring the plea of Lake Point employees not to shut down one of Indiantown's few employers.

Lake Point also intended to become a water project for American Water, the largest water utility in the US, to convey excess water from the C-44 canal, across their property through lined rockpits to remove phosphorous, and into the L-8 canal for further distribution to West Palm Beach and other points south, which was targeted for criticism by Hurchalla's alleged misrepresentations to commissioners and SFWMD officials through her private emails and meetings. Her emails caused discontent among its public partners, says Lake Point, and resulted in an alleged contract breach.

Martin County also is fighting Lake Point's motion in April to depose Scott, as well as Haddox, who questioned the Lake Point project in early 2013. ■

—Barbara Clowdus



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Heartbreak in Hobe Sound as search for missing mom continues

In the shadow of Mothers Day, in the sleepy safe village of Hobe Sound in southern Martin County, the unthinkable happened: A young mother of a two-year-old daughter suddenly went missing April 27. The sheriff now says it appears to have been an abduction.



Tricia Todd

Hundreds of citizen volunteer searchers joined Martin County Sheriff's deputies each day since Thursday, April 28, joined by search-and-rescue teams from as far away

as Maine, who began the arduous search on foot, by ATV and horseback looking for clues in the disappearance of Trisha Todd, 30. A team of bloodhounds joined the search May 4, a week after Todd failed to pick up her toddler from her visiting former husband.

Stationed with the Air Force in North Carolina, Steve Williams, returned to his base the day that Todd went missing, but Sheriff Will Snyder declared that Williams was not a suspect. He passed a polygraph and two days of intense questioning.

The toddler's parents had taken their daughter to the hospital around midnight

the night before, returning around 2:30 a.m., according to the sheriff's office's report, after which Todd drove home.

Her car was found at a neighbor's, near her brother's house where she was staying, across Federal Highway from the now-vacant Algozinni's with the key still in the ignition, her purse inside with only her wallet and cell phone missing.

Sheriff's crews have searched extensively, during the day with helicopters, examining a wilderness area near the Hungryland Wildlife and Environmental Area, off Pratt Whitney Roads. The DEMMI search crew from Maine reportedly searched a pond in Poinciana Gardens, as well as off-road trails. Now the search has been joined by cadaver dogs.

The sheriff began scaling back the search on Wednesday, May 4, but continued to promise the family and the public that his investigative team will continue to pursue every angle possible.

"As of now," he said, at a press conference, "we do not have one scintilla of evidence..." even after a forensic search of Todd's car and home.

The family, who often expressed appreciation for the public's support, has asked that if anyone has any information, to please contact the Sheriff's Office.

Todd has red hair, hazel eyes, weighs about 110 pounds and is 5 feet, 4 inches tall. Anyone wanting to join the private search effort may go to Facebook at "The Search for Tricia Todd." Those with information should call 911 or sheriff's detectives at 772-220-7060. ■

Residents uneasy about talk of fire department merger

Mention the fire department anywhere in Martin County these days, and you're going to hear an earful. Not complaints about firefighters; it's the uncertainty about what might happen TO the fire departments that's giving rise to criticism.

Some of those concerns were aired Tuesday, May 3, in a joint meeting of the Martin County Commission, the City of Stuart, Ocean Breeze, Sewall's Point, and the Town of Jupiter Island. The county and its municipalities discussed the study by Fitch & Associates, commissioned by the county and City of Stuart and released to the public on Thursday, April 21, but no conclusions were reached.

"Please, commissioners," said Helen McBride, a Stuart resident and civic activist, during a recent City Commission meeting, "don't go and change anything about our fire department. We like it the way it is. We don't want the county to take it over, because then we don't know what we'll wind up with."

McBride reminded commissioners that this is not the first time the city considered a proposal to merge departments. During the previous discussions "some years ago," the cost to Stuart residents nearly doubled, she added, and McBride is not alone in being uncomfortable with the idea of a merger.

The firefighters have trepidations themselves, although Fitch's report says that no layoffs will occur. The reduction in the number of firefighters will come

only through attrition, but it appears the numbers already are declining.

"Right now, we're losing firefighters to other counties at an alarming rate," said Chad Cianciulli, fire union president, "which is driving up overtime, but our guys are not leaving because of pay. There's not that much difference between us and Palm Beach County. It's the instability. They just don't know if they're going to have a future here in Martin County."

The city's current response times are currently less than those of the county, according to the report, but members of the firefighters union disputed the methodology applied by Fitch to clock response times.

"Our response time is 60 seconds out the door," said firefighter Bryan Richardson, union vice president. "That's it. What Fitch did was track the time of the dispatcher, from the time of the call to the time she finished her report. That has nothing to do with the the actual time it takes for us to get out the door."

Other recommendations that have raised the ire of residents include closing two fire stations, including the new City of Stuart station #1 on Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd, for which the city is still paying its construction bond; decreasing staffing at other stations, including Indiantown, and increasing response times slightly.

Adding to the sense of instability is the failure of the contract negotiation between the firefighters union and the

continued on PAGE 21

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Eucalyptus: bringing revitalization to Indiantown, hope to citrus growers

Indiantown folks are somewhat used to seeing Rick Melchiori, general manager of Becker Holdings, stopping by to talk with other citrus farmers, but on April 13, his visit was different. The Indiantown Neighborhood Advisory Committee was hosting Melchiori for a presentation on Eco-Gen, a prospective bio-mass energy plant slated for Indiantown, and the civic center filled quickly with residents.

“What took you so long to come and present this to us,” asked NAC member Art Matson. of Melchiori and his partner, Eco-Gen’s CEO Bill Quinn. The gossip about this plant—and the promise it holds for the hard-hit Indiantown economy since the demise of the citrus industry—had been gaining warp speed locally.

Although underway since around 2012, according to Quinn, the steps to getting state permits, the Public Service Commission approval and contracts all came first, before they could call it a project.

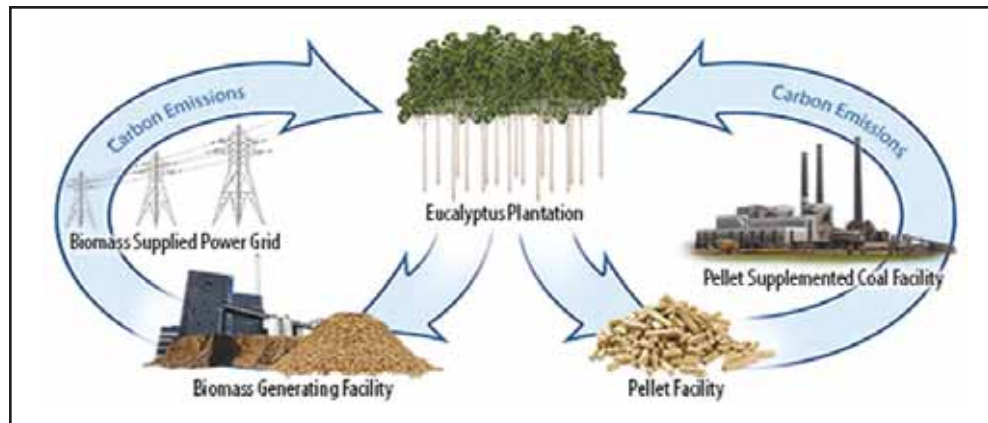
Everything is now in place, Melchiori added, including identifying the “perfect” parcel of property adjacent to the FPL transmission lines at the western end of Farm Road in Indiantown, with the last hurdle being the final approval by the Martin County Commission.

Melchiori and Quinn had already presented the Eco-Gen project at the March 22 commission meeting at the request of Commissioner John Haddox and with the support of Commissioners Ed Fielding and Doug Smith. Fielding said he felt Eco-Gen was “an intriguing opportunity” that fell in line with the county’s overall objectives of sustainability.

“Finding viable crops for our ag land, especially our citrus land is vital,” Fielding added. “This has potential...” The project also has “complexities,” he added, because the land use is designated agriculture only and would require a comprehensive plan amendment to change it; however, should Martin County approve it, Eco-Gen will convert biomass from woody waste material, supplemented by new growth eucalyptus trees to ensure consistency, in a state-of-the-art, low-emission power plant, selling the electricity it creates to FPL by connecting to the FPL transmission lines. Excess wood pellets produced by Eco-Gen would be sold to coal-fired plants, reducing air emissions.

Melchiori, who had discussed alternative crops with Fielding for several years, said he was introduced to US Eco-Gen about six years ago, learning of their plans for a biomass power plant in Martin County and agreeing to a eucalyptus trial at the Becker Tree Farm near Hobe Sound, the success of which can be seen by motorists traveling on I-95.

“Obviously, there’s a strong economic benefit to Martin County for this plant, including job growth, renewable energy, and it’s a green project,” Melchiori told commissioners, “but what was most important to us at the time was that these trials were going to find



an alternative use of our lands, which had been decimated by canker and citrus greening ... finding alternative uses has been difficult.”

The success of the eucalyptus trial was beyond expectations, Melchiori added, planting 10-inch seedlings that grew nearly 100 feet tall in a span of less than five years.

After the first year, the trees required no additional water or fertilizer—far less than the needs of an orange grove or of sugar cane.

The early success convinced Melchiori to join the Eco-Gen development team as vice president. Currently two additional Eco-Gen biomass power plants are planned, in addition to Martin, in Okeechobee and Clay counties, with one in Polk County nearing completion; however, the company is based in Jupiter.

“We all have lived in Florida for some time,” added Quinn, who calls their enterprise a “home-grown” project that’s sensitive to the needs of their communities.

“We’ve spent a lot of time embedding state-of-the-art technology to reduce water consumption from 1.5 million gallons of water a day (for the same size electrical generating plant) with a typical cooling tower to the dry cooling tower of Eco-Gen’s,” he said, “which reduced water consumption to less than 100,000 gallons a day.” About the same as a car wash.

“Our environmental footprint has been managed significantly to reduce impacts,” he added.

They have already earned the state’s designation of “targeted industry” to expedite permitting, as well as Martin County’s own “targeted industry” designation, and they’ve entered into a 30-year purchase agreement with FPL, winning approval from the Public Service Commission in 2013.

They expect to receive their Department of Environmental Protection air quality permit this summer, which

clears the project to begin construction—if they have county approvals to change the land use from agriculture to electric generation.

The only portion of the parcel zoned for electric generation lies underneath the transmission lines that transect the 536-acre parcel Eco-Gen is purchasing from Tesoro Groves. The rest is zoned agriculture, although the former citrus groves now are fallow.

Melchiori asked commissioners for their help to expedite the Martin County approvals, not cutting corners in any way, he said, but to allow them to start the process before September, since the county allows submission of comprehensive plan amendment applications only once a year, in September.

Growth Management Director Nick van Vonno told commissioners that previous boards had already set a precedent by allowing the process to begin earlier for a private enterprise, if they wished to do so; however, after the Eco-Gen officials concluded their presentation, Commission Chair Anne Scott said, “I guess we’ll see you in September.”

The questions that followed the Indiantown community presentation began with employment projections, which Quinn said would include around 30 to maybe 35 permanent employees after the energy plant is commissioned; 250 employees during two and half years of construction, many of whom are specialized craftsmen; plus an additional 50 or so employees to collect the biomass and bring it to the plant, which will convert the woody mass to pellets.

He expects the biomass to comprise a 50-50 split between refuse that goes into county landfills and the eucalyptus new-growth woody mass. “That may even be more like 80-20, at least to start,” he added.

When Quinn described their water-saving technology, one Indiantown resident quipped: “Can’t you use MORE water than that? This is Martin County, we want to get rid of water, the more water the better,” drawing a chuckle from the crowd.

Other questions focused on the eucalyptus trees, has did those from commissioners. Quinn explained that eucalyptus trees, although not native, are not invasive. “They grow from their stumps,” he said, “and can be harvested in three, four-year cycles.” The lack of need for replanting annually, or for water and fertilizer after they’re established, makes them not only environmentally friendly, but profitable for landowners, especially those with fallow orange groves.

They are more environmentally compatible than orange trees, which also are not native to Florida, but grow as well here as in their native Spain.

Craig Bauzenberger, chair of the Indiantown NAC, encouraged the audience to show commissioners their support of the Eco-Gen project.

“We desperately need this plant in Indiantown,” Bauzenberger said, “especially now that Louis Dreyfus (orange juice plant) has slowed to a trickle of what it was, and if we don’t support this for Indiantown, no one will.” ■

—Barbara Clowdus

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Record-setting legal fees tap county's resources

The county's fees for outside attorneys since 2012 to battle lawsuits likely will near \$4 million by the end of the 2016 fiscal year on Sept. 30, based on county budget fund transfers to the County Attorney's Office and a report by the county comptroller.

The legal fees for outside attorneys in just the Lake Point lawsuit against Martin County likely will reach \$2 million by Sept. 30.

Overall, since the 2012 election, the county has spent more than \$3 million in outside attorney fees, in addition to purchasing a small lot in Hobe Sound to settle another lawsuit for \$200,000.

This amount includes slightly more than \$1 million in outside attorney fees to battle All Aboard Florida, and is the

net amount after an insurance payment of \$225,330.

The Martin County Commission approved in January a transfer of \$850,000 from county reserves to cover anticipated expenses for outside attorneys to defend the county in Lake Point's upcoming breach-of-contract trial against Martin County, now set for mid-September in District Court in Martin County.

This does not include, however, possible legal defense fees for Martin County and Commissioners Anne Scott, Sarah Heard and Ed Fielding in the newly reopened public records case that could also potentially be retried this summer.

In actual numbers, as of April 5, 2016, the county had spent \$871,133.52 for outside attorneys in the Lake Point

matter, according to a report by county Comptroller and Clerk of Courts Carolyn Timmann. Included in this amount are the costs of outside attorneys to defend County Commissioners Sarah Heard and Ed Fielding in the previous public records trial, as well as assist former County Commissioner Maggy Hurchalla with her defense.

Lake Point, a mining and water restoration project near Indiantown, is suing Martin County and the South Florida Water Management for breach of contract, and Hurchalla for tortious interference with those contracts.

The county recently entered into a new contract in January with the legal firm of Edward de la Parte of Tampa, which specifies payments to de la Parte

at \$300 an hour and his associates at \$250 an hour to take over the Lake Point litigation from Boca Raton attorney John Fumero, who spent the first two years on the case.

The county also is covering the cost of a special magistrate to resolve evidentiary disputes among the parties in the Lake Point case at an additional \$250 an hour. Original estimates were that four or five special hearings would be needed to settle their disputes, but the number has now ballooned into more than two dozen evidentiary hearings, with Martin County covering the cost of Hurchalla's share.

The county also had an agreement with the South Florida Water Management District to share the cost of one forensic accountant to examine Lake Point's bookkeeping records; however, the county has now rejected SFWMD's offer and retained the services of three accounting experts, for whom they will take full payment responsibility.

In addition to Lake Point, the county has spent \$1,326,241 in outside legal fees for other lawsuits, primarily filed by landowners in defense of their property rights, since the November 2012 elections. Most of the cases were settled out of court, with the exception of the Lake Point case and the breach-of-contract lawsuit filed by Reily Enterprises of Jensen Beach in regard to the Pitchford's Landing redevelopment project.

Outside attorney David Acton of Stuart, former assistant county attorney, successfully defended Martin County in a 2008 suit against Pitchford's Landing, led by attorney Ginny Sherlock, and was retained by the county attorney last summer in Pitchford's breach-of-contract suit against the county filed in August 2015.

District Court Judge Shields McManus dismissed the Pitchford's lawsuit initially last month, but without prejudice, leaving the door open for the redevelopment project to refile this week.

The expenditures for Hurchalla's defense and hearing costs, according to Heims, are recoverable, should Hurchalla and the county win their case against Lake Point, which is seeking \$80 million in damages and attorney fees from Martin County, Hurchalla and the South Florida Water Management District.

County Attorney Michael Durham also expanded his staff to 11 members, including two attorneys—one at \$127,000 annual salary and another at \$120,000 annual salary—plus a legal secretary with a search ongoing now for an additional attorney in the “\$85,000 a year range,” according to meeting minutes.

The county attorney and county administrator also created a four-member public records “team” of IT engineers and professionals to fulfill the current demand for public records. The county does not charge for the first two hours of search time; but after two hours, the charge is \$16.38 per hour, plus the cost of any paper copies, CDs, DVDs or thumb drives required to fulfill the request. ■

A LIFELONG LOVE of MARTIN COUNTY

“The Martin County we love deserves our protection and solutions that 'politics as usual' won't solve. I hope to earn your support, since I have deep connections to our community and bring the outside perspective of a business owner, which Martin County so desperately needs.”

-- Harold Jenkins

A father, grandfather, business owner and lifetime resident of Martin County, Harold Jenkins understands the challenges facing working people, families and retirees. His judgment is not clouded by politics or personal agendas.

HAROLD WILL

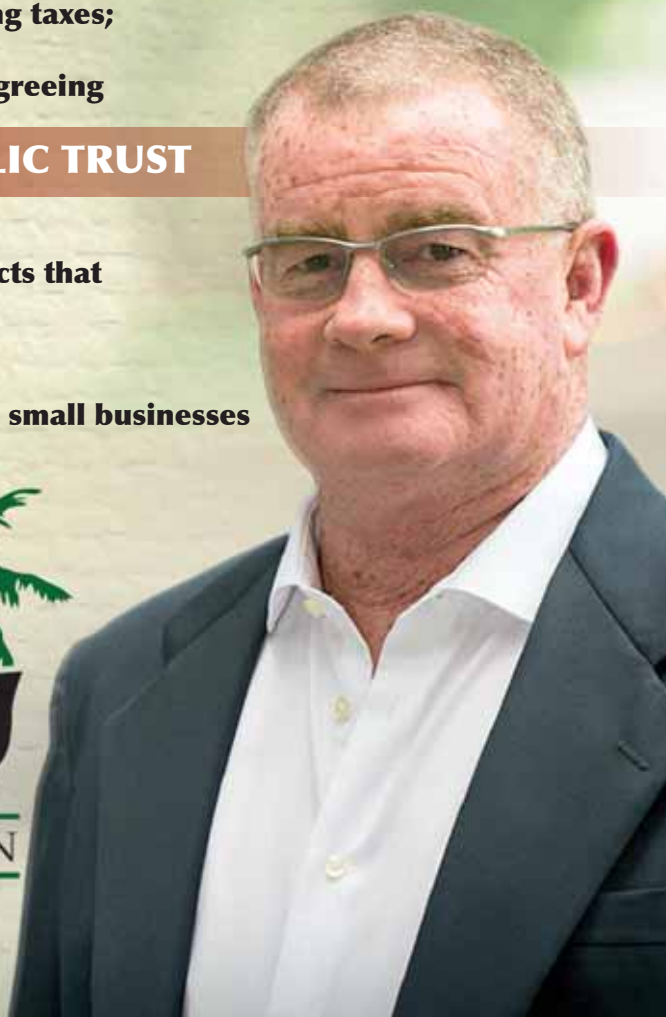
- restore the bedrock of democracy, the people's voice;
- make smart use of tax dollars, instead of just raising taxes;
- embrace a countywide customer-service mindset;
- respect county staff and residents, even when disagreeing

HAROLD JENKINS WILL RESTORE PUBLIC TRUST

HAROLD WILL

- work with state and federal partners to fund projects that move Lake O water south;
- continue the fight against AAF;
- protect rural areas from urban sprawl;
- fight for our Community Redevelopment Areas and small businesses

VOTE **HAROLD** 
Jenkins
for MARTIN COUNTY COMMISSION
DISTRICT 3
ON AUGUST 30



Door left open for Pitchford's to re-file lawsuit

When District Court Judge Shields McManus dismissed the suit by Reily Enterprises LLC (Pitchford's Landing) against Martin County on April 6, he rejected the county's argument that a Planned Unit Development zoning agreement is not a contract, and left the door open for the suit to be amended and refiled by May 6.

The contradiction between a complaint and its exhibit led to the judge's decision to dismiss the case, rather than a rejection of Reily Enterprises' claim that a PUD zoning agreement is the result of the county's contractual authority, rather than its regulatory authority, thus subject to a breach of contract claim.

Reily's complaint states that the county rules that were in place at the time the Master Site Plan was approved by the county (in 2007) should take precedence when considering the project's Final Site Plan; however the Pitchford's PUD agreement, attached to the complaint as its own exhibit, states that the Final Site Plan must comply with the county's "laws, ordinances and regulations" in place at the time of the final approval (in 2015).

The county's initial approval of the Pitchford's redevelopment of an 158-unit RV park on 17.7 acres in Jensen Beach, between Skyline Drive and Indian River Drive, into a mix of 83 units of Key West-styled single-family homes and two-story condominiums survived a court challenge in 2008 by residents of Jensen Beach, known as The Jensen Group, led by attorney Ginny Sherlock.

When Reily Enterprises filed for their Final Site Plan approval in 2013, the former members of the Jensen Group and Sherlock re-launched their complaints during nearly every county commission meeting until Commissioner Anne Scott called for the county attorney to investigate possible breach proceedings against Pitchford's Landing during the summer of 2014.

Six months later, Senior Assistant County Attorney Krista Storey reported to commissioners that Pitchford's Landing had not breached its agreements, and one minor code violation by a business leasing restaurant space from Reily Enterprises had been immediately rectified. She added, "The project is in full compliance."

Storey also reminded commissioners that applicants are entitled to due process when coming before the county commission for development approvals, thus commissioners are obligated by law to consider each application "with an open mind and without bias."

Reily Enterprises charges in their complaint that Scott directed Growth Management staff from the commission dais to find a reason that the project had to return "to square one," which allegedly led to the staff's recommendation not to approve and the county's breach of contract. ■

Comp Plan amendment fails AGAIN

For three years, Martin County and its team of attorneys have tried to get the state to approve changes to Chapters 1, 2, and 4 of the Comprehensive Growth Management Plan crafted by Maggy Hurchalla. After its second legal review by the state on April 26, Comp Plan Amendment 13-5 still was not approved when three of the changes were rejected by the Administration Commission (Gov. Rick Scott and the cabinet) as not being in compliance with state statute.

Martin County Commission Chair Anne Scott traveled to Tallahassee to speak personally in support of the plan amendments, telling the members of the Administration Commission prior to the legal presentations that she represented all the people of Martin County.

"The Martin County Commission takes the comprehensive plan very seriously; we work hard to make sure it reflects and protects the growth and development goals of our citizens," she said. "The amendments before you today are a small part of a large package adopted August 2013. There were other challenges that were resolved quickly and amicably by settlement, with language revisions. This case is all that stands between Martin County and putting the amendment package into effect."

The county, represented by outside attorney Linda Loomis Shelley of Tallahassee, reached settlements with those who had challenged the legality of Amendment 13-5, including Martin County landowners Tesoro Groves, Running Citrus LP, Becker Holding Corporation, Consolidated Citrus LP, and Lake Point Phase I and II LLC. She crafted changes to definitions—including the definition of a wetland—and other language to resolve the majority of landowner issues, as well as to resolve the threat of an additional challenge by the South Florida Water Management District.

Lake Point agreed to drop its challenge to the amendments if the county agreed to revoke Lake Point's development order per their agreement, which had been at the center of the county commission's code enforcement actions in January 2013 that led to a separate—and still ongoing—civil action in District Court.

The only landowner with whom the county was unable to reach an out-of-court settlement was Midbrook 1st Realty (Hobe Grove), which owns 2,800 acres adjacent to the turnpike and Bridge Road in Hobe Sound. After a review by Administrative Law Judge Christine Van Wyk in Sept. 2015, the amendment was found not to be in compliance with state statute.

Also speaking to the Administration Commission during the hearing was Warren Wilson, senior vice president of Coventry Development Corporation that manages the Midbrook property. Wilson described the company as one that specializes in creating sustainable planned communities anchored by major corporate employers that create jobs prior to building homes.

Midbrook had purchased 2,800-acre property in 2011 because it fit Midbrook's criteria: adjacent to the turnpike and near the I-95 interchange; no wetlands due to active agriculture; and it qualified for the state's Section 298 Municipal District designation that provides landowners with infrastructure development rights without reliance on public financing.

He described two current projects: Ridgeway, south of Denver, a 3,500-acre planned community anchored by the Skybridge Regional Hospital employing 2,500, Charles Schwab headquarters with 4,500 employees with plans to add 2,000 more, plus hotels and some retail space for a total of 7,000 jobs, yet only 1,000 homes.

The other project he talked about is Springwoods Village on 2,000 acres outside of Houston on I-45, which was an-

chored by the Exxon Mobil North American headquarters, employing 12,000 people on its 400-acre campus. Southwestern Energy employs another 1,000, plus a hotel and some retail space, according to Wilson, yet only 500 homes.

"One thing I want to point out is that there was no zoning there," he added, "yet we have one-third open space, because it's the right way to develop a project, and it's what corporations are looking for today."

Wilson said that these projects require 20 to 30 years to complete, made possible because they operate exclusively on an all-equity model with no debt.

"We'd like to proceed with our project on a long-term basis in Martin County," he said. "We'd like to be treated fairly, so we can bring forth a logical plan in a logical process." ■

—Barbara Clowdus

The Comp Plan measures rejected by state

The Administration Commission ruling April 26 found Comp Plan Amendment 13-5 not in compliance with state statute as a result of

- the way the supermajority vote was written, which created sub-categories scattered throughout the Comp Plan requiring data and analysis and a separate voting standard for each;
- failing to base residential housing capacity (not considering unbuilt residences on already approved multifamily developments as part of the county's housing inventory) on professionally acceptable methodology;
- and failing to consider the separate and distinct real estate markets in the Eastern and the Indiantown Urban Services Districts in the plan's attempt to merge both districts into one.

Van Wyk had previously rejected the argument that the supermajority vote was a substantive change (meaning it could impact a citizen's fundamental rights) which would require substantive relevant data and analysis to support the change.

She ruled in favor then of the county by agreeing that it was just procedural, thus did not need data and analysis. The legal counsel to the Administration Commission, Peter Penrod, disagreed, however, after considering Midbrook's exception to her ruling that brought the supermajority vote back into consideration.

The county commission will need to decide if it's going to attempt to rewrite that measure by supplying relevant and substantial data and analysis to support the 4-1 supermajority vote for its "critical issues," or instead require a blanket supermajority vote requirement for any Comp Plan change.

In a statement released by the county Wednesday, April 27, County Attorney Michael Durham said two of the issues are easily addressed with remedial amendments, then the commission will deliberate the action they wish to take on the supermajority vote. The item will be placed on an upcoming meeting agenda, and Durham will meet with commissioners in executive session for a briefing prior to public deliberations.



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Editorial: Commissioners out of sync with reality

The headline on the Board of County Commissioners' press release announcing that Anne Scott's previously undisclosed private email account would force the 19th District Court to reopen its public records case, read: **Martin County looks forward to second public records trial.**

Are you kidding?

What disregard for Martin County taxpayers who are going to wind up paying perhaps a \$1 million or more for this case to go back to court, but that's only half of it.

The county blames the Florida Supreme Court's ruling that no government official or any government body can be excused for not "preserving and protecting" and keeping control of its public records, regardless of inadvertence or ineptitude, even when showing good faith. That may result in new verdicts for Commissioner Sarah Heard and sanctions against Martin County, but that ruling had absolutely nothing to do with the judge's order for a new trial.

He ruled just on the fact that Anne Scott had not disclosed one of her (at least) two private email accounts, even though she had been asked directly in multiple public records requests by Lake Point, the mining and water restoration project suing the county for breach of contract and charging Maggy Hurchalla for interfering with those contracts.

The district court has already ruled that emails among Hurchalla and county commissioners are "highly relevant" evidence in the case that's expected to go to court in September. Martin County wants to postpone the public records issue, because, they say, they don't have time to prepare for both trials.

Lake Point needs the evidence that may still be housed on hard drives, so their attorneys have asked the court to expedite the proceedings. We suspect they also will request a forensic examination not only of Scott's computer, but Hurchalla's, since she had not previously revealed the existence of the Scott emails in her court-ordered depositions, according to court records.

The county was unabashed in the spin they so blatantly put on reality.

The same holds true whenever they release anything about the Lake Point case, giving out information from their perspective without qualifying that the issue is being contested.

They also never mention that taxpayers are paying for commissioners' legal fees.

So now, are we really to believe that county attorneys, including the outside legal firm from Tampa and their two new attorneys added to the staff, are much too busy? Or is the reality that commissioners want the court proceedings to be postponed until after the election—re-

gardless of how much it costs taxpayers?

We are wondering, as well, if the county will wind up refunding the \$250,000 insurance payment they received for legal fees after the first public records trial, if they are sanctioned, which would bring the cost of the Lake Point litigation to far more than \$1 million....before the main case even goes to court.

Now we're beginning to hear the same spin from Scott, who seems to mention at every commission meeting once or more her commitment to transparency.

Listen to how she just framed the county's LOSS to Midbrook's legal challenge after three years of legal wrangling over the commission's first set of massive, Hurchalla-authored Comp Plan changes: "Finally, after three years, our Comp Plan has been restored," she said during the May 3 County Commission meeting.

Restored? Hardly. Hurchalla overreached, and taxpayers paid for it. Once again.

The largest landowners who filed their challenges won their points after the first year in out-of-court settlements (so why wasn't that done prior to adoption, without hiring an expensive outside attorney from Tallahassee?). Some landowners just were exempted from the proposed changes so they'd drop out of the lawsuit against the county.

The county also provided more pre-

cision to the language, or gave up on forcing changes that contradicted state law—such as imposing Hurchalla's own definition of a wetland, or of usurping the authority of the South Florida Water Management District to control water flow.

All except Midbrook 1st Realty, which owns Hobe Grove had settled. Granted, they have vested in interest, because at some point—even if it's 20 to 30 years from now—they hope to convince Martin County that their project fits Martin County's long-term objectives and lifestyle, but it was Midbrook that just won its three-year court challenge to prevent these changes:

- requiring a supermajority vote of the commission for some Comp Plan changes;
- requiring the maximum according to land use for the count of homes when analyzing need, instead of the number approved;

- combining the eastern urban services district with that of Indiantown's to determine if the eastern urban services area still had room to grow, essentially stopping home-building and ending commercial or industrial development for another 15 years. So how would we have maintained our infrastructure and quality of life then?

By increasing taxes and fees, of course, to which Scott says, "It's just the cost of living in Martin County." ■

Letters:

Letter to County Administrator Taryn Kryzda from Martin County Taxpayers Association:

First let us congratulate you and your staff on a very well done CIP (Capital Improvement Projects list). The materials are well laid out and fairly easy to understand. The Plan is very thorough and well thought out.

Grants & partnerships can help jump start & defray today's capital costs. In review of the Plan, we are reminded that every grant and partnership leads to future capital infrastructure costs and maintenance costs. Something to keep in mind moving forward.

We do have some concerns and comments.

- We do not support acquiring debt to do the Phipps Park improvements.

- We object to the proposed plan to restructure, re-plan and rebuild the

Martin County Golf Course. We strongly object to the sale of any of its properties.

- We are skeptical, at best, as to the need for new water slides at Sailfish Splash. If the teen market is down, ask our teens why? We think an increase in admission will directly lead to a drop in attendance. We are well pleased with Sailfish and applaud its success; work on making the existing facility better.

- We support the re-purposing of an existing building (former bunker) to the computer center. We don't care for the politically correct labeling to "Disaster Recovery Building."

- We support the rebuilding/replacement of Fire Stations #14, 33 & 36 with the following comment. Before embarking on rebuilding, a site assessment should be thoroughly conducted; these structures seem to be in the wrong place. Perhaps we even need an additional ambulance station? Our question: **Can we build stations for less money?**

- We strongly support all of the CRA projects proposed.

- We will look closely at the St Lucie

Inlet Plan and further comment later. Our question: **Can we look into the sales tax statute changes to include inlet & waterway dredging?**

- We strongly support the Port Salerno Fishing Docks. This is the last vestige of one of Martin County "heritage" industries.

- We strongly support the All American STA (Stormwater Treatment Area) in Palm City and thank Kevin Powers for his leadership on this important project.

- **We encourage the County Commission to strongly suggest that the Towns of Jupiter Island and Sewall's Point convert from septic tanks to sewer as soon as now.**

- We suggest that the Gomez Preserve is a duplication of the F.I.N.D. Park just south of it that is very much under used. Gomez is not necessary.

- We are very skeptical of the need for the Jensen Beach Impoundment project. Do we really need this one? Do we need it now?

- We applaud and encourage the neighborhood restoration projects as presented.

- **We strongly encourage adding the four-laning of Cove Road from US#1 to SR #76 and the four-laning of High Meadows for CR # 714 to I-95 and the extension of Willoughby from Monterey Rd. to US#1 to the CIP.**

- The County Road A-1-A streetlights have been a disaster since they were first installed. These cutesy lights are the wrong fixtures in obviously the wrong place.

- **We encourage the County to do a real, professional traffic signal study for US#1. This for all intents and purposes is Martin County's aorta. We need the ability to travel this corridor without having to stop for every light.**

- Finally, we support the septic to sewer conversion using the vacuum assisted sewer systems, **AND we would like the Commission to reverse its opposition to extension of sewer along Indian River Drive.**

Thanks again for your good work. We hope you find our comments helpful.

Thomas G. Kenny III, President
Martin County Taxpayers Association

Shine some light on the truth about Kev Freeman's departure



Barbara Clowdus

Unfiltered

Let's drag one fact out of the closet and into the sunshine: The county's Community Development Department under Kevin Freeman, the former Community Development Director, was not broken until Commissioner Sarah Heard took over as chair in 2012 and abolished one of the most productive programs ever created in Martin County—the Community Redevelopment Agency—and orchestrated a campaign to disparage Freeman.

The commissioners took over the agency in 2013, going from two to three hours a month to discuss CRA business to around 15 minutes a month. Heard fired all the Neighborhood Advisory Committee members, although she had promised she would not, and had the CRA program not been protected by the Comp Plan, it likely would have been abolished then and there.

After a 2014 strategic planning session, held out of sight of cameras, Commissioners Ed Fielding, Anne Scott and Heard changed county priorities to infrastructure only, abandoning economic development and jobs as a county priority.

They ignored their own \$60,000 economic development study commissioned in 2013 that directed the county should focus on the economic potential of the CRAs, particularly the US 1 commercial corridor of the Golden Gate CRA. The study sits on the shelf, untouched and unused.

Fielding, Heard and Scott began their new attack on the CRAs since they are not "aligned" with county (meaning, their) priorities. Scott, bolstered by the biased "case studies" of CRAs by former Commissioner Donna Melzer—less objective than if Hobe Grove did a study of housing needs—and a steady flow of emails by Maggy Hurchalla, began targeting Freeman and his staff with additional false claims that \$23 million was "unaccounted for."

Her most disingenuous practice, however, is that she continues to comment: "All I know is, when we started asking the hard questions, the Community Development staff all left. ... What does that tell you? I know what it tells me."

Since she continues to beat that drum, in addition to her claims that Freeman left the county in a "mess," many NAC members have quit in disgust.

The truth is that Freeman, who landed a highly lucrative consulting position to teach municipalities in England and in the United States to set up CRAs properly and productively, was driven out of Martin County by Ed Fielding, Sarah Heard and Anne Scott.

He waited to leave until after all three of his staff had found new jobs first, because whatever Scott, Heard and Fielding have in mind for our CRAs does not even vaguely resemble what the program was intended to be—revitalization, which includes economic development, of our oldest areas of the county to bring prosperity to areas left behind by gated communities, shiny malls and libraries built miles away.

Prosperity—that's what Freeman worked tirelessly to achieve, and that's why the commission majority wanted Freeman out.

IN THE BEGINNING

He was hired in March 2010, and one of the first things he saw about Martin County's CRA program was that it was NOT in compliance with the state's statutes for CRAs. None of the economic elements of the CRA program MANDATED by the state had been incorporated into Martin County's CRA plans; thus, the CRA program was operating with one arm tied behind its back.

He advocated and the county approved to contract a CRA consultant to analyze each of the seven CRA plans for compliance with state statutes and the county's Comp Plan, and SDI Strategic Development Initiatives, founded by Don Delaney, was selected from a half dozen proposals.

One of the state's preeminent experts in CRAs, appointed by then-Gov. Lawton Chiles to rebuild and revitalize the City of Homestead following Hurricane Andrew's devastation, Delaney had helped write some of the state's CRA legislation.

SDI reviewed all seven CRA plans for statutory compliance with the state and the county's Comp Plan for a fee of \$8,500 apiece, which he completed in 2012. He presented his findings in a public hearing to county staff, the county attorney, and the appointed CRA board, but after the 2012 election, the report was not allowed on the commission agenda to be heard by the Board of County Commissioners.

Since the majority of non-compliance issues with the CRA plans involved economic development, SDI also had been contracted to complete an Economic Element for the Rio Community Development Area, to be incorporated into the Rio CRA plan as an update, which was never done.

Delaney presented Rio's economic element plan to the full county commission prior to proceeding with the update of the other plans, and commissioners asked for a workshop. After the 2012 election, however, the workshop was never scheduled, and now, according to Delaney, his agreement with the county to continue with the updates was recently revoked.

Even after 15 years with more than \$23 million invested into the CRAs, which averages to around \$220,000 a



Martin County lost a fine family last November, as well as exceptional urban planners, when they moved overseas. Deanna and Kev Freeman with their three children, Alisha, Ellissa, and Lukas, American citizens all!

year per CRA, the cumulative values of CRA properties still falls two percent below that of the county's overall total—largely in part because of the missing economic piece to their plans.

Other Freeman's projects were killed, also, including a "micro-entrepreneurial" program for CRA businesses, as well as employing county engineers to incorporate stormwater treatment into the Old Palm City Mapp Road project that would put parking in front of vacant lots to attract businesses to Mapp Road.

His ability to incorporate the utilities and engineering departments to create a synergistic approach to CRA projects, resulted not only in innovation, but in turning dreams into reality and a reputation among NACs as "heaven-sent."

DIVINE GUIDANCE

My first interview of Freeman in 2011 showed me how divinely directed his life seemed to be.

"I guess that's what you could call it," he said. "Something from the cosmos, something unseen and inexplicable that's always been at play in my life..."

Born to a family of modest means in a part of England where the sons traditionally followed their fathers into the mines, Freeman instead continued his education, influenced by a grade school teacher.

"She had inspired me with photos of the astronauts and of Neil Armstrong on the moon," he said, "and I wanted to know, where is this place that such exciting things were happening?"

That's when he vowed he would live in the US, telling adults: "I will work in the United States, and I will marry an American woman."

Life interrupted, it seemed. After college, he met another urban planner working on the same project, fell in love and

married her. Their lives had rotated on the same axis, growing up within blocks of each other, attending the same college, choosing identical careers, yet their paths had taken different planes. They'd never even bumped into each other.

"I knew that my wife, Deanna, had been adopted," he said, "and when she expressed an interest in finding her birth parents, I encouraged her."

Their research uncovered far more than old records. Deanna's birth mother was living in Palm Beach County, Florida, where Deanna was born. Freeman had married an American woman. They moved to Florida with their first-born child, and Freeman became a US citizen just months before he left Martin County. "Kev's more American than he is British," said Deanna, also a much-admired urban planner for the City of Stuart and, for a time, for Martin County.

Freeman's initial interview for his new job had been over Skype. His second interview was in person at the company's headquarters in England. One of the company's principals told him that they knew when they heard Freeman's life story that providence had led him back to England. He pointed to the opposite wall.

Freeman turned to look, and what he saw was a full-sized mural of Neil Armstrong walking on the moon. "I got goose-bumps," he told me. "Literally, my arms popped out in goose-bumps all over." He accepted the job offer and returned to Stuart to pack. He and Deanna and their three children—a family of American citizens—left Martin County in November 2015.

They are gone now, onto greener pastures, but they also will forever remain behind in the CRA projects that were once allowed to bloom in Martin County. ■

It's time we take a closer look at our own backyard

Volusia County

Volusia County
99,000
Septic Tanks

Recent site of fish kill

Brevard County
91,000
Septic Tanks

Brevard County

Indian River County
37,000
Septic Tanks

Indian River County

St. Lucie County
44,000
Septic Tanks

St. Lucie County

Martin County
30,000
Septic Tanks

St. Lucie Waterway

Martin County

Lake Okeechobee

According to a recent Martin County study, by Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute, there are more than **300,000** known septic tanks located on the Indian River Lagoon.

It's estimated that **2 MILLION** pounds of sewage nitrogen per year enters our lagoon which fuels algae blooms.

Recently, the northern portion of the lagoon in Brevard County experienced a massive fish kill as a result of nutrients coming largely from local sewage pollution.

We all agree that harmful Lake Okeechobee discharges need to stop, and there's no one single solution. We must work together to remove septic tanks near our precious waterways that contribute more than \$639 million a year to local businesses and tourism. Addressing local septic drainage into our waterways and these four critical projects need to be our top priority.

Kissimmee River Restoration

Herbert Hoover Dike (Lake Okeechobee) Restoration

The Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Projects (CERP)

The Central Everglades Preservation Projects (CEPP)

LET'S FINISH THE JOB!



ECONOMIC COUNCIL
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Sources: Dr. Brian Lapointe, Florida Atlantic University Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute • Florida Department of Health

STOZE: explaining each concept one at a time

It was brought to my attention that the "constraints" imposed by the short length of these columns might leave a novice water advocate at a bit of a loss; therefore, I will go into greater detail regarding the chapters—one at a time—of the One Florida Foundation report, STOZE, a compilation of facts and scientific methods to address our water issues. So, here is a more detailed explanation:

Short history: For our purposes here, we will use the 2013 "Lost Summer" numbers for comparison albeit that amount of seasonal rainfall is just the seventh largest amount recorded. In 2013, 1.6 million acre-feet of water flowed into Lake Okeechobee and was flushed to tide. That is a huge number with little meaning without some explanation.

An acre-foot of water is a foot of water spread out over one acre, and Lake Okeechobee increased in water depth by three feet to equal that 1.6 million acre-feet. Every inch of water in the upper basins becomes six inches of change in depth when confined in the reservoir.

Although some people like to use equivalent billions of gallons or X number of Olympic swimming pools, I prefer to use more understandable numbers. Every nine inches in or out of Lake Okeechobee equals 400,000 acre-feet; therefore, nine inches equals 25 percent of the discharged amount in 2013.

With that as a quick explanation, let's talk about diverse water storage and see if I can better lay out how that works, because "S" in STOZE means storage. Again, the best way to start is to lay out a few known variables:

1. Scientists tell us that Florida will have a drinking water crisis by about 2035.
2. Our population has increased since 1996 from nine million people, exceeding 20 million in January 2016, to an expected 35 million in 2035.

3. There has already been a 40 percent reduction of natural wetlands, which is important because wetlands are where water naturally would sit and either filter down into aquifers or evaporate, with excess water flowing south, being filtered, and eventually going to Florida Bay.

4. Because of construction of the "Ditch" through what was the beautiful oxbows of the Kissimmee River basin, water that would have taken six months to reach the Lake now can be there in six hours. This not only overwhelms Lake Okeechobee, but it does not allow any time for the water to filter and remove pollutants.

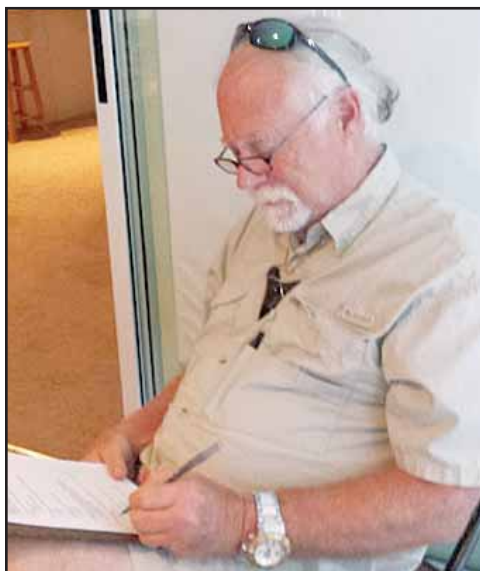
Most arguments among river advocates over ideal water movement stem from agricultural land south of the Lake owned primarily by U.S. Sugar. We will refer to this as the "drain." How this industry got in the way of our historic "River of Grass" flowway is the Hatfields-and-McCoys story of Florida, but they ARE there and have been for 100 years.

As mentioned, water comes into Lake Okeechobee at a 1-to-6 ratio. That same ratio must be considered when ridding the lake of excess water. If all the gates are opened from Lake Okeechobee, east, west and south, STILL they



**Capt.
Don Voss**

*One Florida
Foundation*



No one got excused from taking the test at the "H2O to Go" summer camp, even Capt. Don.

could not release enough water to match the inflow of water when the system is under stress from heavy rainfall.

As a result, buying land south of the Lake will not end the discharges when the Lake is stressed. There must be another option.

ENTER DISPERSED WATER STORAGE

Using private land, such as former orange groves, to store water for a modest price does several positive things: It keeps this land from being sold to developers, thus removing forever any chance of helping the water situation, and it allows water to be held any number of places around the lake.

Remember, if we had just one reservoir south of the lake during stressed periods, we would require 17,000 acre-feet a day to be moved south, cleaned and sent to the Everglades to allow room for more water EACH day for 180 days to equal 1.6 million acre-feet. Not to be forgotten, sometimes it rains over where you want to store water, therefore, diverse storage is the better option.

Water storage could be a retention pond, a reservoir, or private land holding a few feet of water to evaporate, filter and be returned to the flow if needed. The concept is simple. If the drain cannot keep

up with the inflow, fix the faucet. Slow the water, store the water, hold the water and send it when the pressure on the Lake is not as great.

Two Federal projects, Central Everglades Planning Projects (CEPP) and Central Everglades Restoration Projects (CERP), will not be completed until 2035. Diverse water storage addresses discharges until 2035. Those projects will only address 27% of the discharges; therefore, dispersed water storage is a perfect companion.



Although not discernible in the photo, the restored section teems with wildlife in sharp contrast at this "intersection" with the yet-to-be-restored oxbows of the Kissimmee River.

After just two years, dispersed water storage accounts for 16 percent of those discharges, or in other words, a reduction of 30 days of water flushed to tide.

WATER STORAGE ESTIMATES

The Kissimmee basin increased retained water by 2 inches = 250,000 acre-feet

The Upper Chain of Lakes increased retained water by 2 inches = 200,000 acre-feet

Current projects on-line now or to be completed next year = 175,000 acre-feet

The total represents 37 percent of the water discharged in 2013—measurable progress in a reasonable amount of time! ■

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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Tackling yet one more threat to our estuaries



**Nyla
Pipes**

*One Florida
Foundation*

As Lake Okeechobee discharges to the St. Lucie River continue, the river's and the Indian River Lagoon's ecosystems face various threats from pollutants, including fertilizers, herbicides, pesticides, and sewage from aging infrastructure and septic tanks. Yet a hidden threat to our waterways, as well as to our near-shore reefs, swims beneath the surface—the invasive Indo-Pacific Lionfish.

This attractive but harmful fish first showed up in the 1990s and has taken over the eastern seaboard, including a confirmed sighting in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, according to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. Many believe the invasion really began with Hurricane Andrew, and the accidental release of several Lionfish from aquariums. No matter how they got here, it is incredibly difficult to get rid of them.



**2015 LIONFISH SAFARI
CHEF'S CHALLENGE**

One of the reasons they are hard to eradicate is that they reproduce quite rapidly. The Indo-Pacific Lionfish spawn



NYLA PIPES

year round, with females releasing about 30,000 eggs every 3-4 days. These fish also reach maturity and begin reproducing in under a year, whereas our native fish generally take 3-5 years to reach maturity and reproduce.

Our native fish are also at a distinct disadvantage when it comes to sharing the ecosystem with these predators, because the natives are all on the menu! Lionfish have a voracious appetite, and there is virtually nothing they won't eat. Lionfish consume more than 70 species of fish and many invertebrate species such as shrimp and crabs. And they feed often.

Many native species consumed by the Indo-Pacific Lionfish are commercially important, and studies show that the presence of Lionfish on a reef can reduce the number of juvenile native fish by 90 percent in as little as five weeks. Think about what this means to our Indian River Lagoon, which is home to hundreds of species of native fish, many of which spend their juvenile years in the estuary before heading out to sea.

Another reason Lionfish are difficult to get rid of is that human beings are their primary predator, and

Lionfish are most effectively caught by spearfishing. There are some anecdotal reports of Lionfish taking a hook, but this seems to be a rare occurrence. Currently, there are traps being developed, but in the meantime, we really need our diving community to be spearfishing these fish whenever they see them!

There are no seasons or limits on Lionfish. They can grow up to 15 inches in length and weigh up to 3 lbs. Of

course, the bigger they are, the more they eat!

Many divers also are reluctant to handle these fish, because there is a lot of misinformation regarding how dangerous they are. These fish do have venomous dorsal, ventral, and anal spines, and it is important to learn how to properly filet them.

Lionfish stings are painful, and if a person is allergic to their venom, they could have an anaphylactic reaction. The fish do not have to be alive for a sting to occur. Lionfish, however, can be eaten, as they are venomous, not poisonous. The difference is in the delivery.

Venom is injected into the bloodstream to cause injury through a spine or fang. Poison must be consumed. The

meat of a Lionfish is perfectly safe and contains no poison. Actually, Lionfish taste quite good, and can be prepared and eaten just like other fish. They do not even have to be cooked, and make good ceviche and sashimi. The meat is a delicate, white meat which readily accepts flavors from the method of preparation. Many people compare the taste to that of snapper.

If you are interested in trying Lionfish, you will have an opportunity on June 10, 11, and 12. In order to bring attention to this threat to our estuaries and reefs and remove some of the Lionfish from our waters, One Florida Foundation is hosting the annual Treasure Coast Lionfish Safari. This three-day event kicks off with a captain's meeting and cocktail party on Friday night at the Old City Hall in Fort Pierce. Saturday and Sunday divers will be weighing in and having their fish counted at the City Marina in downtown Fort Pierce starting at 1p.m. There will be vendor booths, Lionfish tastings, an art show, and a chef's challenge, as well as live bands and other fun activities all weekend long. For more information, to become a sponsor, or to register to dive and help us rid the water of these invasive fish, please go to www.treasurecoastlionfish-safari.com. We cannot let our estuaries and reefs be overtaken by these predators. We need your help! ■

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

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Hook kids on ecology at 'H2O To Go' summer camp

One morning last July, Captain Don Voss and I drove north to the Riverwoods Field laboratory next to the Kissimmee River. We were both excited and nervous, as the weather didn't look like it was going to hold up, and we had been planning this day for a few months.

We had been invited to join a group of students from the FAU Pine Jog "H2O to Go" summer camp as they toured the Kissimmee River by boat and studied both the restored section and the channelized section. Many of these students were there on scholarships from One Florida Foundation.

Riverwoods Field lab, managed by the Florida Center for Environmental Studies in partnership with the South Florida Water Management District, was established in 1995. Riverwoods' main objective is to support research and educational activities related to the restoration of the Kissimmee River and greater Everglades ecosystem.

We arrived at camp just before the students. We were introduced as they came off the bus and got settled into a conference room for the first part of the day's education – a video explaining the history of the Kissimmee River, including the reasons it had been channelized and the effects of that channelization. Imagine our surprise when we were handed a quiz to take alongside students in order to evaluate what we had learned!

After the video and discussion, we were instructed to put on our sunscreen and bug spray, grab our hats, and meet out by the dock. As we followed the group of students, it was fun to watch them joke around and laugh with one another. You could tell they had formed friendships in the last few days of camp, and they were really enjoying themselves.

As we boarded the Kissimmee Explorer II, a large pontoon boat, we asked the students about their camp experience thus far. They shared many stories about what they had seen and learned on Lake Okeechobee the past couple of days, and some anecdotes about the camp counselors. As our tour guide, a researcher who is stationed at Riverwoods boarded the boat, the tone shifted and the kids started digging in their backpacks for pencils and notebooks. Again we are handed school-

work, and the kids snickered when I had to borrow a pencil.

As we moved through the Kissimmee River system, we were asked to take notes. We participated in a bird count and took water samples. We spent quite a bit of time floating in the middle of the river examining the flora and fauna, much of which they brought aboard using buckets. We observed the differences in vegetation and habitat between the restored section of the river and the unrestored section. Students were knowledgeable and asked intelligent questions. We all learned.

After several hours on the river, we headed back to Riverwoods. Students were already talking about how much they were looking forward to spending time on the Indian River Lagoon and learning from the researchers at Harbor Branch the next day.

Driving home, Captain Don and I

were tired, but thrilled. Our day visiting summer camp was even more fun than we'd expected, and in spite of a few distant rumbles, the weather held up.

One Florida Foundation will be sending students to the FAU Pine Jog "H2O to Go" Summer Camp again this year. During this week-long residential camp, students will work with research scientists and develop an understanding for the interconnectedness and complexity of south Florida's water systems and the environmental issues facing them. Recreational activities such as kayaking, canoeing, snorkeling, hiking and swimming are included throughout the camp, which ensures students will have a great time as they learn.

We have an opportunity to send up to 10 students to this camp, and we are actively seeking sponsors. The cost is \$595 a student. If you'd like to support our efforts, a tax-deductible donation can be made at www.onefloridafoundation.org.

We hope to start seeing some major improvements to our rivers and waterways over the next decade, but it's the next generation that will continue the vital work of caring for and protecting Florida's unique ecosystems. We must plant those seeds while they're young and help them create great memories of a very special summer camp! ■

--Nyla Pipes
One Florida Foundation

FAU Pine Jog Center, along with FAU Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute and CES Riverwoods Field Laboratory, will offer a unique, week-long, residential research institute for high school students July 25-29, "H2O to Go." They will work alongside environmental research scientists and earn 3 credit hours, if dual-enrolled. To nominate a student for a One Florida Foundation scholarship for the "H2O to Go" summer institute, send an email to nyla@onefloridafoundation.org.



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The war of billionaires makes patsies of us all

Has it dawned on any of you yet that we all are caught in the middle of a war between the billionaires.

They are using our very real issue of water discharges and pollution to enlist us in their personal agenda that really has nothing to do with water, but has everything to do with real estate. They are doing a very good job of distracting us from the facts and the science that will allow us to correct the real environmental issues we face.

This war is not about restoring the Everglades, as they want us to believe. That is the distraction they are using. The "Battle Royale" is over who gets the biggest chunk of the 700,000 acres of the EAA (Everglades Agricultural Area south of Lake Okeechobee) for DEVELOPMENT. There is no other land in South Florida for development other than the Everglades and the EAA.

All across Florida, agricultural lands are rapidly disappearing. One big example is our citrus industry. They have been hit hard, and their land is being rapidly developed, particularly in central Florida. As we continue to lose our agricultural land, the cost of food production will rise, and we will need to depend on more and more of our food being imported. Not a good thing.

We all know, if the land is not growing crops, it's being paved over. We also



James Sasser

Guest Columnist

know which activity puts the least amount of stress on the environment.

ATTACKING AGRICULTURE

This attack on agriculture – an industry that feeds us – does not make any sense, unless you factor in DEVELOPMENT! At the most recent River's Coalition meeting in Stuart, Thomas Van Lent with the Everglades Foundation gave a presentation. When faced with the crowd bemoaning that Big Sugar buys the politicians and gets their way, he made the statement that "Ag (interests) is one percent. The real power is real estate." Bazinga!

The billionaire Fanjul brothers with Florida Crystals and US Sugar Corporation have been vilified for decades. If you are a self-proclaimed environmental group, River Defense Fund or River Warrior, what a great way to fill your piggy bank by constantly blaming sugar for everything. Adolf Hitler said, if you make up a lie and tell it long enough, people will start to believe it. So it seems.

Now the attacks are aimed at the billionaire Mott family, the major stockholders of U.S. Sugar. The latest absurdity is to try and draw a connection between the water crisis in Flint, Mich., which the Mott Foundation calls home, to our own issues here. Losing credibility rapidly.

Who is fueling this hysteria? Well, could it be the billionaire creators of the Everglades Foundation? One of the founder's families made their money developing the Orlando area—the area whose runoff is doing the most damage to the northern section of the Indian River Lagoon. This is also the area that needs to have its own water retention areas.

The other Everglades Foundation founder made his billions in hedge funds. Most hedge funds are heavily invested in real estate holdings. Paul Tudor Jones spent \$71 million on a home in Palm Beach. I don't think the Fanjul brothers houses COMBINED cost that much money. You know the old saying that the definition of an environmentalist is someone that already owns their beachfront home!

I recently saw a plea from Mary Barley on behalf of the Everglades Trust begging for money. She said they needed \$50,000 to fight Big Sugar lobbyists in Tallahassee. She was begging for people to send \$10, \$15, \$20 or "whatever you can afford" to make up the \$8,725 short fall. Really?

She is rich and her designer handbag probably costs more than \$8,700!

So these billionaires are asking us to spend our hard-earned money so they can keep theirs. BIG SUGAR is buying off politicians, but BIG DEVELOPERS are not? Remember Tom Van Lent's comment about real estate. Also remember, Washington used our tax dollars to bail out Wall Street and these financial gurus. Who's buying who here? Now they have an issue that sugar is subsidized?

CONNECTING THE DOTS

Let's factor in Florida East Coast Industries and All Aboard Florida. They have made donations to the Everglades Foundation under several companies. Their management teams are made up of a mixture of Wall Street bankers (Goldman Sachs)—a real class act there—global investment firms heavily invested in commercial and industrial real estate. Add to the mix, former Disney and St. Joe people whose forte is developing planned communities. One of their guys is connected to a company that specializes in developing projects on difficult building sights. There is definitely overlap between these groups.

One of the largest and most potentially harmful projects to affect the Treasure Coast's way of life is AAF, and neither the Everglades Foundation or the Sierra Club is denouncing it. Why? Donations supporting fellow real estate developers and private equity firms?

I am sure everyone is up to speed on the rehab of the Kissimmee River. But did you know that Disney is buying up River Ranch? Yep, some of the Kissim-

mee River flood plain now belongs to the mouse house. Again maybe another reason no one wants to talk about storing and cleaning water north and west of the lake. It messes up their development plans.

While we all agree more water needs to flow south as part of the solution, people with no hidden agendas understand and accept it is not THE solution, but the Everglades Foundation group is fixated on only buying the land south of the lake.

I am just saying that if you truly are wanting to be a part of the solution that will possibly require hundreds of thousands of acres for water storage and filtering, why do you either ignore or in some cases outright deny the need for purchasing land north, east and west of Lake Okeechobee? Plus, they accuse anyone or any group that proposes a broader approach as puppets of agriculture.

DON'T FORGET ENERGY'S ROLE

Now there's the energy companies. If you remember decades ago they drilled for oil and gas in the Everglades and Big Cypress? Those wells are still there just waiting to be used. The State of Florida also has the mineral rights to the US Sugar land they have under contract. So far we have held off fracking. But for how long?

One of the billionaire environmentalist's minions is BullSugar.org. If you take a closer look at them, you will see one was employed at one time by Semptra Energy. This is the California gas company that poisoned the air by spewing tons of gas out of a leaking well. The other one's family is in the oil and gas business that proudly supplies agriculture. Bullsugar is unable and/or unwilling to substantiate any of its claims about agriculture poisoning the water or anything for that matter.

If you get the chance, look at the February 2015 issue of National Geographic. It looks at climate change and particularly what we are facing here in south Florida. According to the article, there will be no Everglades in 35 years due to rising sea levels. A large part of the Keys and our coastal areas will be affected as well.

We are facing life or death issues here. We cannot and must not allow ourselves to continue to be manipulated by hypocritical billionaires running multi-billion dollar companies hiding behind the cloak of environmental activism that at the end of the day could care less about you and me, restoring the Everglades, stopping Lake Okeechobee discharges, converting septic tanks to sewer, or about 32 trains a day thundering through our cities. That's how they got rich to begin with—development or investing in development.

Knowing Tallahassee like we all do and what they did with the Amendment One money, how much of any land purchased for Everglades restoration would actually wind up being used for that purpose or anything environmental? Exactly. ■

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Success pushes S.P.A.M. team's 'pit' to the limit

It may be that Stuart engineer Susan O'Rourke, a mentor and volunteer for Martin County's high school robotics team, S.P.A.M., was unaware that the county commission majority no longer looks favorably on allowing worthwhile non-profits to use the county's empty buildings without charge.

Then again, perhaps O'Rourke was aware of the impending change of county direction, but hoped to appeal to more moderate commissioners. Whatever the case, the S.P.A.M. Robotics Team, FRC #180, which now occupies an 18' x 100' modular building behind South Fork High School, aptly nicknamed "The Pit," is busting at the seams.

"These kids work hard and are outstanding representatives of Martin County," O'Rourke told commissioners. "They deserve our support."

Another volunteer pleading the team's case for a county building somewhere—or warehouse space from a private company—that would allow the team to gain desperately needed space is volunteer Nancy Leavy.

"The success of this program attracts new students every year," Leavy says, "and it will continue to grow." Currently, the team comprises 68 high school students from every county high school, the Clark Advanced Learning Center and home schools. The time spent on robotics is as intense as any varsity sport.

As a matter of fact, its founder, inventor Dean Kamen, calls his national science and technology program, FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology), and bases it on the appeal of competition, as in varsity sports, only this is a varsity sport for the mind—and it works.

Since its inception, more than double the number of FIRST students major in math or engineering, with 41 percent of FIRST students going into engineering and 33 percent of FIRST women choosing engineering majors, according to a March 2016 FIRST report.

The competition works like this: Teams of students have six weeks to build a robot from scratch, under the watchful eye of mentors. The robots must then complete



The team coach, Kurt Durjan, a former S.P.A.M. member from 1999-02, owns his own company in Port St. Lucie, Treasure Coast Makerspace, and gives back to the program.



Dedicated mentors arrive daily to teach. In the summer, they teach programming free of charge at the county libraries' "Idea Labs."

various tasks, working in teams. In this year's challenge, they had to get through their opponents' fortifications and take over territory in a space set up to look like a medieval battlefield with castles and towers.

"What many people don't realize is that students must actually build two robots," Leavy said, "because after the regionals, the robot goes on to St. Louis, so for students to practice, to make refinements, a second robot must be built."

They also must have space to practice, which right now is the drama room of South Fork High School, in which they build a replica of the obstacles they will encounter in St. Louis at their national competition. They probably need at least double the space they now have at The Pit, but the building also must have 440 electrical capabilities in order to run the equipment to machine their own parts.

"Students build everything from scratch," Leavy says, "which means we don't throw anything away, and we've got to have space to store parts—lots of parts."

They also are computer programmers, and one wall in their programming room is a giant dry-erase board.

"Students tell me, 'We hear the math, we hear the math, we hear the math,'" she said, "'then we come here, and we DO the math.'"

As the team was readying for the trip to St. Louis, Leavy sees a crisis around the corner.

"Some schools limit how many students can join," she says, "but that's not what we should be doing."

Those on the S.P.A.M. team mentor both elementary and middle school students, who have formed their own Lego robotics



The S.P.A.M. Robotics Team headquarters, "The Pit" behind South Fork High School.

teams in every elementary school and middle school in the county. "It's a natural progression that they're going to want to join the S.P.A.M. team when they get to high school," Leavy added, squinting a little as she visualizes the future needs.

For the past 19 years, this S.P.A.M. (for Sikorsky, Pratt & Whitney, and Martin County Schools who founded the program here) team has racked up impressive wins, including the world championships for the first time in 2012, and the prestigious Chairman's Award this year in regionals. (The team was

competing at the national championships in St. Louis when Currents went to press.)

"But it's not the awards and the trophies that are so important," Leavy adds, "although that's their reward for working so hard. It's everything else that they get out of this program that's really what's important."

For any company with extra space for the county's aspiring engineers, scientists and mathematicians, or for county commissioners who want to help, Leavy may be reached by emailing: frcteam180@gmail.com. ■

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Renda Writer: planting seeds beyond the walls

Every artist has his or her own way of achieving what Edgar Allan Poe defined as the "Unity of Effect." In what way does a piece of art or poetry affect us? What kind of ripples do they generate in a reader's heart and mind? That's basically the Unity of Effect. When we explore artist Renda Writer's handwritten wall painting, we realize immediately that it's not a traditional mural. Brief, concise and poetic—a floating discourse, transcending both the wall it happens to be scribbled on and the limits of static art—it generates the unity that outlasts both the wall and the white paint in which it's written.

I met Renda Writer when he was about to start his catch phrase "ever evolving" on muralist Nadia Utto's latest Hobe Sound mural, "Creating Yourself," on the south wall of a non-profit learning center in Hobe Sound. The center, Amazing Things, directed by Anne Leavitt, engages local children in art, science and music to help them fulfill their creative potential.

Utto's mural weaves vibrant colors and rich symbolism in a highly uplifting narrative of life, which starts with the nurturing and loving hands of Mother Earth. As we grow and learn literature, art and science, the mural depicts our



Maya Ellenson
Art Kaleidoscope

reach for the rainbow of self-fulfillment to send it back to our Mother, turning our planet into a better place for all.

Renda's handwritten phrase, "Ever Evolving," magnifies the message, widening its dimension and engaging the public into a personal dialogue. Handsome, intelligent and witty, Renda Writer communicates his inner wisdom in simple and inspirational speech.

"Everything is everything," he says, with a gentle smile while scribbling on the wall.

"The Law of Attraction I believe in, is all about tapping into potentials, hidden in everything and everywhere. The more we open up to everything, without judging it, the more we give and receive. Life is a miracle!"

Writer's hand-written art has been



Muralist Nadia Utto, of Hobe Sound, working on Mural #20 in the Landmark Arts Murals Project with poet, artist, performer Renda Writer, of Miami.



The finished mural on the south side of the Amazing Things building on Federal Highway in Hobe Sound.

featured nationally in both art and news portals, including "The Huffington Post." "Black lives matter," created as a commissioned piece in moral support of the movement with the same name in 2012, is handwritten 1,000 times on the wall behind N'Namdi Center for Contemporary Arts in Detroit. By repeating "Black Lives Matter" over and over, the artist creates a powerful rhythmic discourse that rises above the limits of visual art.

His imperative becomes fluid, moving like waves, in all directions, compelling us to move through the rigid walls of separation into the unifying space of love.

Originally from New York, Renda Writer now lives and works in Miami. Being a poet, performer, artist and inspirational promoter of the Law of Attraction, Renda creates a handwritten mural wherever art and poetry merge.

"I will become successful in making my handwriting into a valuable commodity through art," he explained; however, what he creates is much more than just art object. He creates a unifying field where the art and public become genuine companions. His inner meditations, expressed in poetically charged slogans and mantras resemble butterflies landing gently on a flower, or the soaring clouds that never stop following us once they show up in the sky.

His personal mantra, "Love is a risk. Do it anyway," handwritten 500,000 times across a wall in Miami's Wynwood Arts District, and completed just in time for Art Basil, became a thought-provoking hit of the show. Renda's various hand-written murals, already enriching the

local colors of Miami, are about to expand nationwide as a growing number of clients become appreciative of the positive vibes of his art.

In a way, Renda's words penetrate the solid matter to justify their value of everything, or what in Buddhist philosophy is called "suchness." Renda's art includes also handwritten body art, handwritten jewelry, word ware, and innovative poetry, such as this:

All the flowers
Of all the tomorrows
Are in the seeds of today
Who's a poet?
Anyone who wants to be
Who's a poet?
Anyone who wants to be
Who's a poet?
Me
And that's all I ever want to be
All I wanna do is plant some seeds...

The verbal language, the most universal and immaterial of all artistic mediums, in a way hijacks everything it touches. Even if all the walls got painted over and disappear, the words once written on them will live forever in a floating vessel that is both impalpable and timeless, because we read them. Renda Writer encourages us to transform our reality by planting our own creative seeds, exemplifying the transformative power of public arts. If for Edgar Allan Poe the unity of effect signified totality inside his poem, or a story, for Renda Writer, it's totality beyond the walls. ■

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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HERDING DUCKS EASIER THAN HERDING CATS!

The only noise missing from a huge flock of ducks splashing into water was the raucous quacking you might expect had you been standing on a riverbank. Instead, these ducks tumbled into a swimming pool at Martin County's Sailfish Splash Water Park on March 25 as part of the 2nd Annual Rotary Duck Derby.

Organized by the Hobe Sound-Port Salerno Rotary Club, with help from the Rotary Club of Stuart, more than 600 rubber ducks tumbled down the 40-foot slide and into the lazy river as part of Rotary's commitment to prevent drowning.

"The park had a good turn out for a rather dubious start in the morning," said Karen DeLorenzo, of the Hobe Sound-Port Salerno Rotary Club, "and many last-minute tickets were sold as youngsters got to see the prizes."



First prize, awarded to the sponsor of a duck that had floated around the lazy river and crossed the finish line first, was a Segaway "Gold" hoverboard, won by a father who'd been looking for birthday gift for his daughter.

Second and third prizes for the second and third duck to cross the finish line were a 55-inch

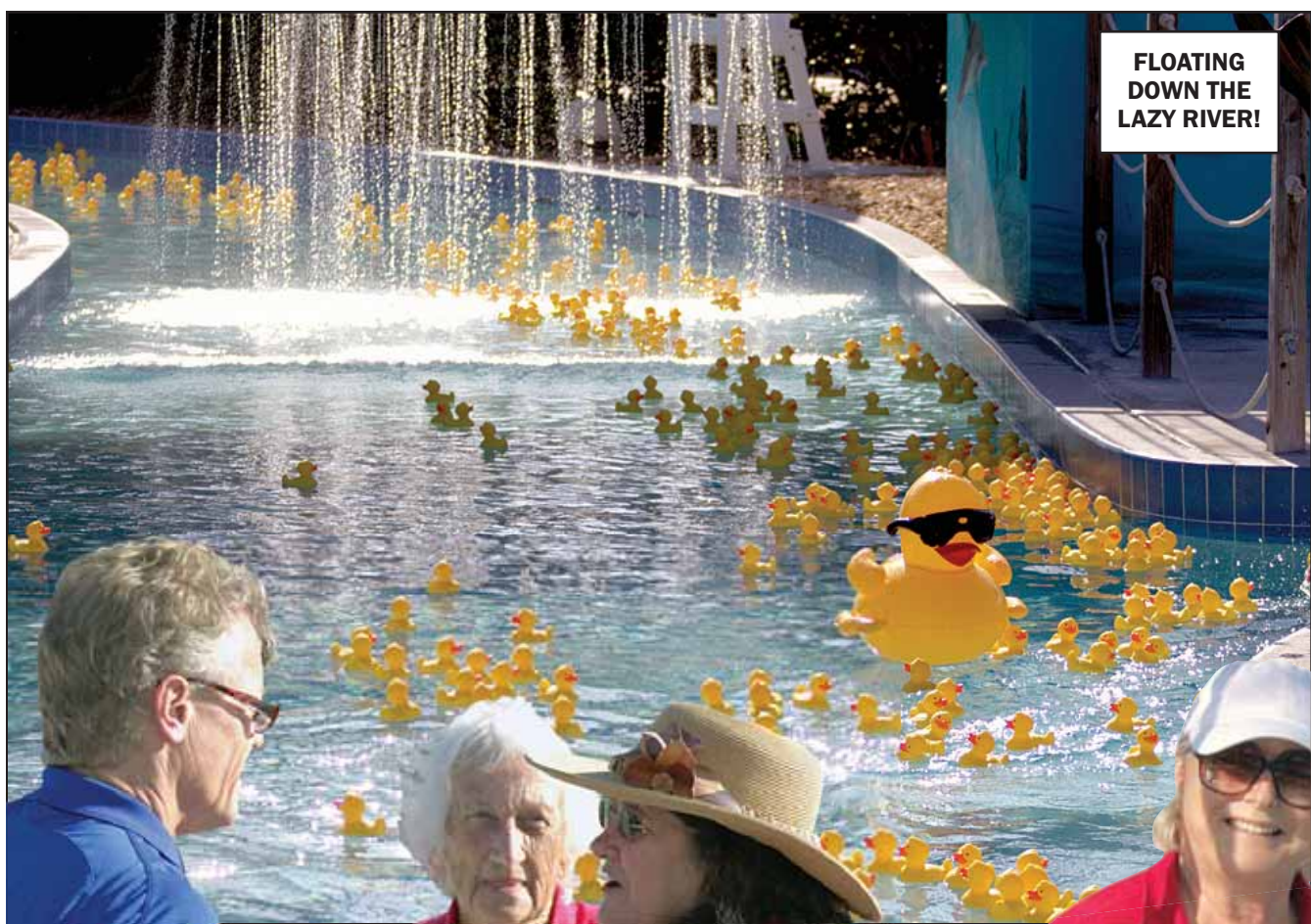


SPLASHING INTO THE POOL!

"smart" TV and season passes for four to Sailfish Splash Water Park, who partnered with Rotary to host the event. The park will share in the proceeds for its swimming/lifeguard classes for area youngsters. Each duck "sponsorship" was \$10.

Craig Anderson, Martin County Parks and Recreation Department's marketing coordinator, emceed the event, and Rotarian Robert Lumppp, of Hobe Sound, was event chairman.

"We are looking forward to another fun and successful derby in the future," DeLorenzo added. Watch for your chance to win some great prizes in the Rotary Duck Derby each spring, before the summer swim season begins. ■



FLOATING DOWN THE LAZY RIVER!



THE FINISH LINE LOOMS!



Spring pompano run explodes in south Florida



**Rich
Vidulich**
*Pompano
Reporter*

Historically, spring is the best pompano run of every season. This year, our warm winter temps were not been favorable to the northern migratories. In fact, most of the northern fish still are north of St. Augustine. The new moon, though, provided a terrific solunar bite in the Hobe Sound region during the first week of April.

Hunters and fisherman have utilized solunar charts for years. The charts provide times in correlation with the monthly moon rises and settings that depict the best eating times for fishing and for hunting. The accuracy is especially good when the wind, barometer and seas are in tune. The best bite is during the major cycle and slowest eating cycle is during the minor. Some majors include a two-and-one-half hour time slot of when the fish will bite.

April 8 was the first new moon phase. On this day all the cards were in



A former student, Pompano Bob of New Jersey, shows off a pair of three-pound pompano he caught off Juno Beach, proving he's a now an accomplished recreational angler.



Start 'em off young, start 'em right! Young Christian McGregor tags a pomp off the Lake Worth fishing pier.



Another youngster at the age of 82, Don LeMaster, has no intentions of slowing down, on the beach fishing for those silver bullets every day.

line for a full house! The poms bit all day! As the new moon grows, the bite activity times change. It's really an intelligent idea to purchase these charts. My chart I use is found at www.prime-times2.com, and they will provide a chart for every day of the year with complete graphs to study and learn wildlife eating habits. Get in tune with the universe, and you can most certainly increase your catch!

A short, spring moon seminar: There are two names for this moon. The Farmer's Almanac offers free meanings to both names. First, this moon is called "The Pink Moon" for the flowering aspects of spring. The one that describes our fishing is called, "The Full Fishing Moon." I love the Indians. They got it right hundreds of years ago. The coastal tribes named the F.F. Moon when the shad swam upstream to spawn. Who fished better than the people with feathered headdresses?

So now that it is spring-slash-winter, what's going on? It's April 16 and we are experiencing a 20 to 35 mph nor'easter. The seas are 6 to 9 feet. Shoreline! Yikes are there any alternatives? You bet. Tell your Broward County anglers to get on the Dania Pier and/or the beaches of Port Everglades, and witness—and catch—a lot of pompano. Same goes for Anglin Pier in Ft. Lauderdale and Deerfield Beach Pier.

Apparently a huge green algae bloom on the southwest coast of Florida has driven several massive schools of poms up from the Keys. Ah, "The Magical Mystery Tour" commences!

Today on the Lake Worth Pier I'm catching nice poms with Christian Mc-

gregor. Lake Worth is prospering from the aqua haze ocean color provided by northern winds and newly re-nourished beaches, a departure from their typically crystal clear waters that the poms always seem to pass, barely making an appearance. But the Lake Worth bite now is 5 weeks in endurance! Great stuff!

My column this month features a now-accomplished recreational angler, alongside a 30-year pompano veteran. The first is Pompano Bob from Ocean City, N.J. After a short tutorial, Bob mastered catching big pompano on our local beaches. Having enjoyed the surf fishing here, he and his wife, Judy, have purchased a home locally to spend more time in the winter catching these delicious fish.

The veteran fisherman is Don Lemaster from Michigan. Pompano Don has been commercially fishing the beaches for his targeted fish for three decades. Everyone on Hutchinson Island and surrounding barrier islands has met and enjoyed the company of Don! He still casts like a banshee and has the heart of a warrior! At 82 he doesn't miss a day fishing during the fall/winter migration of people, as well as fish. Both Bob and Don navigate the coast and catch the elusive pompano. More power and health



With everybody else catching poms left and right, Rich Vidulich had to prove his mettle, too, on the Lake Worth Pier in April.

to both of my friends!

What is the future, you ask of "ye old, goateed wizard"? Well, there is a late-April northern front and a 50-percent probability of an early May front. With the right conditions and wise traveling choices, we should all enjoy a phenomenal spring run! The next biting patterns will be different on the bait choices from the winter. Clams are coming on strong, hooked with fluoro and white/pink floats. Fish very early

and especially the last two hours before the sun sets.

Mid-April is critical. Starting April 17 the "The Full Fish Moon" will rise around 5 p.m. From the beginning of the rise till dark will be the optimal time to catch pompano. Add half an hour to each day, and you will have started a more scientific approach. If you know all this, then you are an established angler and welcome to the club. Very tight lines everybody! ■

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.

POMPANO FISHING MADE EASY!



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COYOTES continued from PAGE 4

reach where they were in the first place. It's better to learn how to live with them."

An apparent influx of coyotes was first brought to the attention of county officials by the residents of the Rio community, which lies north of the St. Lucie River between Jensen Beach and the City of Stuart. Then came reports from Hobe Sound and Sewall's Point.

Scotten said they are highly intelligent creatures who mate for life, and both parents raise their young.

"When people report 'packs of coyotes' in a neighborhood," she added, "they are much more likely to be families, and if you see them, they're most likely looking for food."

They generally are not dangerous, and not likely to attack—only 3.5 attacks per year with two deaths reported over the past 46 years nationally, as compared to 1,000 emergency room visits per day from dog bites, with 176 deaths nationally over four years, 2010-2014.

Coyotes will eat anything, including bird seed, fruit, palmetto bugs, rats, mice, candy bars, fast food, and yes, small dogs and cats. To keep them out of your yard, garbage can lids need to be tight, pet food should be brought indoors, spilled bird or squirrel food should not be left in the grass, and fallen fruit from trees should be picked up out of the yard. Cats should be kept inside, and small dogs on a short leash.

Coyotes moved into Florida, and throughout every state in the union, because of the demise of wolf populations, their principal predator. They range widely, particularly through agricultural areas, but since their denning areas do not overlap those of the bobcat, the two species are compatible.

Although the height of a medium-sized dog, a coyote's body mass is slight, weighing generally around 25-30 pounds.

Their value comes in helping to control rodent populations of rats, mice, possum and raccoons. Their intelligence helps them find "comfortable" places to live with an abundance of food, so the key is to make their visits to your yard "uncomfortable" by always hazing them—yelling, standing tall, throwing sticks, shaking a soda can with pebbles, blasting an air horn or anything that's loud, until they leave.

"But don't run from them," Scotten said. "That brings out the predator instinct. Just look and sound fierce."

The 40-minute coyote presentation was videotaped by MCTV and is on the county website at: www.martin.fl.us, click on Open Government, then go to MCTV video archive for the April 21 County Commission meeting.

"In my 15 years as a commissioner," said Doug Smith, at the Rio NAC meeting April 22, "it is by far the best presentation I've ever seen. It's well worth the 40 minutes, and I encourage everyone to watch it." ■

County commission splits over new impact fees added to new homes

The debate over impact fees during the March 22 county commission meeting illuminated the philosophical divide that exists among sitting county commissioners.

The 3-2 vote put Commissioners Ed Fielding, Sarah Heard and Anne Scott voting for passage with no further study on one side, and Commissioners John Haddox and Doug Smith dissenting on the basis that the Local Planning Agency unanimously recommended a review first by stakeholders, which would require reconstituting a citizen impact fee review committee.

Commissioner Anne Scott called a committee to review the consultant's recommendation "just another layer" between the commission and the citizens it represents. "Anyone who wants to address this," she added, "is welcome to come forward and speak in favor or against this measure."

Approved will be a new conservation impact fee to purchase more conservation lands; combine separate library building and materials impact fees into one fee for materials only; and to broaden the consultant's study to include ways to introduce a broadband/fiber optics impact fee in the future.

"Sending a message to the LPA that we're not interested in their recommendation," Smith said, "is a bad trail to go down."

Cindy Hall, a member of the Local Planning Agency for Martin County, told commissioners during public comment that Martin County's less-than-robust building industry would not be able to absorb the new impact fees, thus they'd be passed on to the buyers of homes and condos, often financed over 30 years, and compounding the impact on homeowners significantly.

She also questioned why the impact fee for library buildings was not dropped, rather than combining that fee for buildings, which is no longer

needed, to the impact fee for library materials.

Haddox also questioned the impact of the new fees on affordable housing in the county, already in short supply, particularly since the smaller units have the greatest percentage increase in the consultant's study, and the calculations show a larger number of occupants per square foot for smaller homes.

Heard disagreed with Haddox that affordable housing units would be affected. "If we want to provide incentives for our lower economic sector," she said, "that the best things we can do is to provide better libraries with better materials. That's a beautiful thing."

The fees approved to be applied to new construction—for homes of 800 sq. ft. or less, the conservation fee is \$540 and \$439 for library materials; for 801 sq. ft. to 1,100, the conservation fee is \$570 and \$471 for libraries; for 1,101-2,300 sq. ft. the conservation fee is \$661 and \$537 for libraries; for more than 2,301 sq. ft. or more, the conservation fee is \$755 and \$614 for libraries.

The library materials impact fee for either nursing homes or adult living facilities will be \$266 per room. The combined annual revenue for the library and conservation land impact fees will be \$933,151 based on population projections for the next 10 years, more than \$500,000 is the new conservation lands impact fee.

The county commission approved in December 2013 the addition of an impact fee for conservation lands among its amendments to the Comprehensive Growth Management Plan; however, the fees are regulated in Article 6 of the Land Development Regulations, and requires a public hearing prior to adoption, fulfilled by the March 22 meeting.

Smith questioned consultant Clancy Mullen of Duncan Associates in

Austin, Texas, regarding his methodology, which resulted in greater occupancy and higher impact fee increases for the smaller housing units. Mullen explained that the numbers are not based on household occupancy rates, but on the county's calculations for capacity, which include vacant houses in the inventory, divided by the number of people living full time in the same type of housing.

"So, if you're an individual living in a smaller unit, because that's the category you're in, the idea of moving up to a 2500-square foot house probably isn't attainable," Smith said. "Then if your goal is to accommodate a better lifestyle for people at a more affordable rate, this doesn't get you there."

Smith also asked Mullen to justify the addition of a conservation impact fee, particularly since the county cannot currently maintain the 50,000-plus acres of conservation land it currently owns.

"Is there a reason we're doing this? Presumably, you've determined that we don't have enough conservation space, so we need more," Smith added, "but do we need more? Is there a need, and then, why?"

Mullen responded that he did not do an analysis of the demand, instead the study showed what would be required to continue the county's current level of service for open space; however, Fielding said that the basis for adding additional conservation land was for the water to percolate into the aquifer on that land, helping to clean the water and prevent salt-water intrusion.

"We are a large small town; we like it that way," Scott concluded. "We provide services and it's expensive to do so, especially since we don't have the mammoth development in other counties generating all sorts of fees and all sorts of problems. This just is part of what it takes to live in Martin County." ■

FIRE DEPARTMENT continued from PAGE 6

county, which reached an impasse after 18 months, using Fitch as the professional negotiator. They have yet to reach an agreement.

"Even with the expired contract, the county's labor costs are more expensive than Stuart's," wrote City Commissioner Tom Campenni on his internet blog. "The city and their employees have just renegotiated their contract and

both parties compromised, resulting in a good, professional and economic deal for both sides."

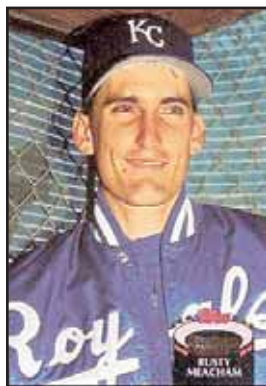
The major incentive for the merger is cost savings—estimated to be more than \$5 million annually, requiring cutting stations, personnel and equipment. To achieve that, however, the county and its municipalities also would need to create an independent fire district that is self-governing and sets its own

rates. It must first also be approved by the state legislature.

When an independent fire district was first suggested as an alternative to the county absorbing the city's services more than a year ago, Commissioner Sarah Heard said that it was "absolutely out of the question." In a recent Stuart News story, however, about the possible merger, Heard reversed her previous opinion of independent fire districts. ■

Saturday, May 14 Sports Fun Day in iTown

A day of fun for the whole family to play sports and to meet professional Major League Baseball pitcher Rusty



Meacham, who will be handing out free autographed baseballs as long as the supply lasts. You'll also be treated to free food and refreshments at the Boys & Girls Club of

Indiantown, 17375 SW Palm Beach Road. Sponsored by the iTown Youth Sports Club.

Friday, May 20 Oyster Shell Bagging

For all ages who want to help the our estuaries bounce back from Lake O discharges, volunteer with the staff of the Florida Oceanographic Society's to bag oyster shells on Friday, May 20, from 9 a.m. until noon at the FOS Coastal Center on Hutchinson Island. The bags will be deployed into the Indian River Lagoon on another day. Wear closed-toe shoes and appropriate clothing, and bring a reusable water bottle. You must RSVP at www.floridaocean.org, or contact Josh Mills at 772.225.0505 ext. 120 for more information.



Now until July 31 History of Surfing in Florida at the Elliott

A History of Surfing in Florida, an exhibit from the Palm Beach County Surfing History Project, will help usher summer into the Treasure Coast from now through July 31 at the Elliott Museum on Hutchinson Island. The exhibit includes historic photos (maybe of you?), surfboards, and other memorabilia, which includes legendary Floridian surfers by noted surfing photographer M.E. Gruber of Palm Beach County and a collection of iconic boards, included one made by Hobie. Regular Museum admission rates apply. The Elliott Museum is located at 825 N.E. Ocean Blvd. in Stuart and is open seven days a week from 10 a.m.-5 p.m. For information, visit www.elliottmuseum.org or call 772-335-1961.

Friday, May 20 Hobe Sound's 2016 Golf Tournament

Just a few slots are left for the ever-popular Hobe Sound Chamber 2016 Golf 4-Play Scramble Tournament at the exclusive Hobe Sound Golf Club. Registration is at noon with a shotgun start at 1 p.m. Come for the golf and spirit of friendship and community—stay for the door prizes, course contests and fabulous BBQ dinner, drinks and Awards Program. Foursomes, twosomes and individual players welcome! Presented by Metz Construction Company. For information call: 772.546.4724.

Friday, May 20 Treasure Coast Business Summit

The 8th Annual Treasure Coast Business Summit presented by Seacoast Bank will be Friday, May 20, at the Port St. Lucie Civic Center on US 1. This is the county's top business networking event of the year with 130 business exhibits and great speakers. Call the Hobe Sound Chamber for tickets at 772.546.4724. A great place to meet other local business leaders and professionals, learn about current opportunities and establish relationships that will enable future growth.

Saturday, May 21 Early Bird Gets the Worm Yard Sale

The St. Luke's Episcopal Church Thrift Shop will hold an Early Bird yard sale of clothes, household items, books, children's articles and more on Saturday, May 21, from 8 a.m. (we told you it was for "Early Birds") until noon. The church is at the corner of Cove Road and Dixie Highway (A1A) in Port Salerno. For more info, call 772.286.5455.

Saturday, May 21 LagoonFest 2016 in Palm Bay

The Marine Resources Council's annual LagoonFest 2016, an all-day music charity event, will begin at 11 a.m. on Saturday, May 21, at the Ted Moorhead Lagoon House, 3275 Dixie Highway NE, in Palm Bay. The LagoonFest intends to generate awareness and funds to produce the First State of the Indian River Lagoon Report Card to update the community on the current health of the lagoon and the corrective action to reverse its negative impacts. The report card is projected to be distributed to the 2.2 million residents of the lagoon in 2017. Early bird tickets (purchased online) are \$22 for the day with no charge for children under 10. Eight bands will keep you jiving as you visit an array of booths and special activities that include: Science Tent, Inflatable Kiddy Land, Mermaid Encounter, Food Town, SweetWater Experience, Bar Land, Artist Market, Non-profit Road, Lagoon House Disco & Silent Auction, After Party, & more! Bands include four-time Grammy Award winner Trae Pierce and the T-Stone Band, Thomas Wynn & The Believers, Beebs & Her MoneyMakers, Zack Deputy and George Clinton & Parliament Funkadelic, and more! For tickets and more info, go to www.MRCLagoonFest.com.



Wednesday, May 25 Senior Exercise Expo at the Kane Center

In celebration of National Senior Health & Fitness Day, the Kane Center will hold a free Senior Exercise Expo on Wednesday, May 25, from 10 a.m. to Noon, demonstrating Zumba Gold, Total Body Workout and Line Dancing classes. Attendees may participate in any of the 30-minute class demos, or simply observe. There will also be blood pressure screenings and other health tips and checkups in the Kane's Town Center. Complimentary samples of Kane Cuisine, created in the Kane kitchen, will be available for tasting. The free event is open to all seniors and no reservations are required, but a donation of toiletries for seniors in need is appreciated. The day's schedule and more information are available online. The Senior Exercise Expo is sponsored by Arati Hammond, Seniors Real Estate Specialist with RE/MAX of Stuart.

June 1 DEADLINE Nominations for 2016 mARTies Awards

Nominations are being accepted through June 1 for the 2016 mARTies Awards, presented by the Arts Council of Martin County. Awards will be presented October 25. Nominations are accepted in five categories: Performing Artist, Visual Artist, Student (anyone due to begin his or her senior year of high school in August 2016) Performing Artist, Student Visual Artist, and Volunteer in the Arts (all ages). Nominees must be Martin County residents. Download the nomination form at MartinArts.org or contact the Arts Council (772-287-6676). Nominating is easy and requires only basic contact information and a 150-word paragraph about your nominee. Student recipients of the mARTies Award also receive a \$500 scholarship.

Saturday, June 11 3rd Annual KDW Fishing Tournament benefits ARC of Martin

It's fishing tournament time on the Treasure Coast, and the ARC of Martin County presents one of the most popular. The 3rd Annual KDW Tournament to benefit the non-profit will be Saturday, June 11, with more than \$5,000 in cash and prizes for kingfish, dolphin and wahoo, at your choice of three locations from which to embark. The Captain's Meeting takes place at 6 p.m. on Thursday, June 9, at the Twisted Tuna, 4290 S.E. Salerno Road, Stuart. The tournament itself kicks off with a Gentleman's Start at 7 a.m. from the St. Lucie Inlet, Jupiter Inlet or Palm Beach Inlet.

Weigh-in takes place between 2-4 p.m. at the Twisted Tuna, followed at 5 p.m. with an Awards Dinner at the same location. Entry is \$250 per boat before May 27 and \$300 thereafter. Register online at www.arcmc.org. For information, call Tracy Howse at 772-283-2525.



Saturday, June 25 3rd annual iTown Bridge Walk/Run

It's not too early to register for the iTown Bridge Walk/Run on Saturday, June 25, at Timer Powers Park in Indiantown. The walk/run starts at 7 a.m. and will take you over the Big John Mollahan Bridge on Warfield Avenue. Early registrants will get T-shirts and a free beverage after the race. To register, go to run@runsignup.com. Fees are \$35 per adult; \$20 with student ID; \$10 for kids under 14. For more information, call the iTown Chamber at 772.597.2184.

Saturday, April 30 A Night at the Apollo

A signature event of the Apollo School Foundation, which restored the only surviving two-room schoolhouse in Martin County: "A Night at the Apollo" at the Apollo School (1924) in Hobe Sound on Saturday, April 30, at 6:30 p.m. will feature an auction of unique works of art by local artists on the windows of the old school. The fundraiser includes wine and live music. Tickets are \$35 each. The school is at 9141 SE Apollo Street, Hobe Sound. 772-546-5272 or visit www.apolloschool.org

Every Thursday, Friday & Saturday in May Tours of the Historic Seminole Inn**

2015 Historic Preservationists of the Year, Jonnie Wall Flewelling and Iris Wall, Indiantown icon and rancher, again offer free tours of the unique Seminole Inn in Indiantown, built in 1926 by S. Davies Warfield and lovingly restored by the Wall family, every Thursday, Friday, and Saturday in May at 1pm. Seminole Inn, 15885 SW Warfield Blvd., Indiantown. Contact: 772-597-3777

Monday, May 2 Historic Preservation Month 2016 KICK-OFF

The kick-off for Historic Preservation Month 2016 will be behind the Stuart Heritage Museum (at the historic Stuart Feed Store built in 1901) on Monday, May 2, from 5-6 p.m. The gathering will include a few speakers (who are not running for office) will note the significance and value in preserving our heritage. The Stuart Feed Store, 161 SW Flagler Avenue in Stuart. A complete listing of the month's activities will be provided. Public is invited, FREE.

Wednesdays, May 4, May 18 Free Tours of the Historic Mansion at Tuckahoe

The building that many call the jewel on the hill at Indian RiverSide Park, the Tuckahoe Mansion, 1707 NE Indian River Drive, Jensen Beach, is the historic home of Coca-Cola heiress Anne Bates Leach, built in 1938. Free tours, which include fascinating glimpses of Leach's life in the mansion, will be at 10 a.m. and 11 a.m. Reservations not required.

Wednesdays, May 4, May 11, May 18, May 25 Learn the Story of the Captain Henry Sewall House*

Just a short walk from the Tuckahoe Mansion, is the Captain Sewall House, (circa 1889), so after you tour the mansion on Wednesday, May 4, join the Lord Baltimore Chapter of the Colonial Dames XXVII Century at 12 p.m. noon to dedicate a historic marker at the restored home of Capt. Sewall, in Indian RiverSide Park, 1707 NE Indian River Drive in Jensen Beach. Linger a bit to Learn the Story of Captain Henry Sewall's home from Sandra Thurlow, local historian. Bruce and Barbara Osborn will portray Captain and Mrs. Sewall in period costume. Free and no reservations are required. The story will be told again by Ms. Thurlow on May 11, May 18 and May 25 from noon to 2 p.m. at no charge to the public.

Thursday, May 5 The St. Lucie River Crisis in Historical Perspective

The Geoffrey C. Smith Gallery in Port Salerno, 4545 SE Dixie Highway, will be the elegant venue for a presentation by local author Nathaniel Osborn, *The St. Lucie River Crisis In Historical Perspective*, at 7 p.m. The audience also will enjoy the bronze wildlife sculptures created by international artist Geoffrey C. Smith. Free and no reservations required.

Monday, May 9 Fishing Heritage of Port Salerno

An avid collector of old photographs and memorabilia of the Port Salerno fishing heydays, John Hennessee will present an historical perspective on the "Fishing Heritage of Port Salerno" on Monday, May 9, at 7 p.m. The presentation will be at the Fish House Art Center, a building that Hennessee converted from an old fish house and marina into an upbeat art gallery and gathering place on the Manatee Pocket of the Indian River Lagoon. 4745 SE DeSoto Ave, Port Salerno, at the physical eastern end of Salerno Road. Free with no reservations required.

Tuesday, May 10 House of Refuge Open House & Native Plants of Historical Significance

The public will be treated to a rare open house and free tours from 10 a.m.- 3:30 p.m. at the House of Refuge** (1876), Martin County's oldest building, 301 SE MacArthur Blvd on Hutchinson Island. A 10 a.m. lecture will be presented by Master Gardner Ann McCormick, "Native Plants of Historical Significance." (Due to space restrictions, reservations ARE required for the lecture.) The event is free. Contact: 772-225-1875.

Thursday, May 12 Pioneer Life and Places in Early Jensen and Stuart

The historic Jensen Beach Christian Church*, built in 1912, is a fitting backdrop for a presentation by local historian Alice Luckhardt on "Pioneer Life and Places in Early Jensen and Stuart," at 5:30 p.m., Thursday, May 12. No reservations required. The church is at 1980 NE Church St., Jensen Beach.

Saturday, May 14 Open House & Screening at Salerno Colored School

If your goal is to attend every event as part of Historic Preservation Month, you can hurry to the next one on the agenda, this time in Port Salerno. An Open House at the Salerno Colored School* (circa 1930), the one-room schoolhouse built during the era of segregation will be open Saturday, May 14, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. for tours. At noon, a screening of the MCTV documentary, "Mrs. Williams School," which features former students of esteemed educator Costella Williams, will share their memories. 4455 SE Murray Street (across from the Murray Middle School). Free, no reservations required.



Saturday, May 14 Archaeological Tour of Mount Elizabeth

A fascinating, free tour of a prehistoric archaeological site called Mount Elizabeth will be conducted by Will Ghioto, president of the Southeast Florida Archaeological Society at 10 a.m., Saturday, May 14. Gather first at the pavilion adjacent to the Tuckahoe Mansion in Indian RiverSide Park in Jensen Beach.



Saturday, May 21 Historic Plaque Dedication at the Seminole Inn and Preservationist of the Year Awards Luncheon

The public is invited to a free unveiling ceremony of a bronze plaque commemorating the placement of the historic Seminole Inn** (1926) on the Martin County Register of Historic Places on Saturday, May 21, at 11 a.m. 15885 SW Warfield Blvd. in Indiantown. After the plaque dedication, the "Preservationist of the Year," Harold Markey, will be honored as part of the Historic Preservation Board Awards Luncheon at the Seminole Inn beginning at 11:30 a.m. The 15885 SW Warfield Blvd. in Indiantown. Reservations ARE required for the luncheon, as well as advance payment of the \$15 fee. Call the Inn at 772-597-3777 by May 19th.

Monday, May 30 Memorial Day Parade & Plaque Dedication

Following the Memorial Day parade, Stuart officials will recognize Stuart native Larry Brown, a US military soldier killed in Vietnam, by dedicating a plaque in his honor around noon Monday, May 30.

* Denotes Structure on the Martin County Register of Historic Landmarks

** Denotes Structure on the National Register of Historic Places and the Martin County Register of Historic Landmarks

This is an INCOMPLETE list of events. For more information, go to www.martin.fl.us and do a search for Historic Preservation Month. A complete listing also will be provided at the Historic Preservation Month KICK-OFF on May 2, or call 772-221-1329.



JAMES BROWN

Daddy's home from Afghanistan!

Delighted squeals, happy smiles and pure joy celebrated the surprise return of US Navy Chief Petty Officer Pranash (Pete) Prahad to his daughters Illiana, 8, a student at Hobe Sound Elementary, Amelia, 5, and Lillian, 3, students at the Hobe Sound Learning Center, which organized the surprise reunion at their Hobe Sound campus with the help of some Martin County firefighters. During the school year, Amelia's teacher, Terry Lafferty, collected supplies and gifts from parents, teachers and staff to send "care" packages to Prahad and his fellow soldiers.

