

**Little Gasparilla Island Advisory Board Meeting
March 3, 2008
Placida Beach Complex**

In Attendance

Bob Hill
Carolyn Dupree
Ken Bonds
Phyllis Nesmith
Jie Shao – Growth Management

Absent

Rande Ridenour
Bill Dallas
Barry Hurt

Guest

Tara Musselman – Charlotte County MSBU Specialist

Meeting was called to order.

Bob Hill recognized that there was a quorum. Minutes from the February 8th meeting were not printed as of today. Will have available for approval next meeting.

Bob Hill recognized the large number of LGI residents attending this meeting.

Bob indicated that this meeting was set to discuss the change in wording of the existing MSBU from paying for channel markers to identify current issues from the Community Plan.

Bob had met with Tara Musselman, Charlotte County Municipal Service District Representative as suggested by Don Gallagher, County Attorney. Ms. Musselman indicated in that meeting that we would need to state how the MSUB funds would be spent and get the budget in before the public hearing in July. Ms. Musselman would be the liaison for a Little Gasparilla Island MSBU.

Bob Hill introduced Ms. Musselman and Ms. Shao indicating that Ms. Shao will be assisting with the zoning changes.

Bob Hill again indicated that the purpose of this meeting was to decide the change in wording of the existing MSBU and the amount to be assessed.

There was discussion from the audience that indicated they did not want a MSBU and did not have enough information to decide at this point.

Bob stated that the Board had worked on the Community Plan for two years prior to its approval last year. The Board meetings have always been open to the residents of Little Gasparilla Island. Also, LGI residents can view the minutes of the meetings on the Charlotte County Web Site.

Bob indicated that the major issues in the Community Plan were:

1. Zoning
2. Establish N/S access by obtaining easements (either purchased or donated)
3. Rid the island of exotic species (nuisance/fire hazard)

4. Obtain property on the mainland for use by LGI residents for boat/car parking. (In the event the current marina's close)

In order to go forward with the Community Plan, funding is a necessity. The MSBU is one way to raise funds. Bob indicated that a CRA (Community Redevelopment Association) is still a possibility and another source of funding. A CRA would cap the assessment that would go to the County and anything over the cap would go to the CRA. The CRA would not involve additional taxes.

LGI meets the definition of "blighted" as used in the development of a CRA.

One of the guest indicated that he did not like the word blighted and he was afraid it gives the government too much power.

Bob Hill explained that LGI does meet the blighted criteria as defined for a CRA, as it has no paved roads, no street lights and, no public sewers. The government would have no say in the monies collected via the CRA. The CRA Board would designate the projects to be completed. The CRA Board is separate from the LGI Advisory Board.

However, a CRA is an involved process and would take a great deal of time to create. Using the existing MSBU by changing the wording would get funding sooner for use on the various projects. An MSBU could add additional taxes.

Tara Musselman spoke on the establishment of an MSBU and the benefits. She indicated that the LGI Advisory Board needs to provide a budget (explanation of how the monies from the MSBU will be spent). This budget needs to be submitted by March 15.

Ms. Mussleman indicated that the existing MSBU was created by the county but was never used for its initial purpose. This MSBU would need to be amended to what the community wants. Once the MSBU is amended there will be 1 public hearing. Then another hearing in July to set the rate followed by 2 budget hearings in September. This gives residents 4 different times to voice their opinions.

One resident asked how much the county would receive of monies collected if the county collected \$20 from each landowner. Ms. Mussleman indicated that approximately \$3600 of \$15,860 would go to the county. The County would manage the money and contract work done.

There was concern from the residents about the amount kept by the county.

Bob Hill asked the group if there were any commercial activities that they wished to have on the island. The residents indicated they liked things just the way they were. They do not want things to change.

Bob Hill indicated that the Community Plan had to address commercial activities as the existing golf shop was operating illegally. The county could have issued a cease and desist. However, the county held off so that commercial activity could be incorporated into the Community Plan. This is a zoning problem

Bob Hill asked if there was anything anyone wanted to add for the good of the order. A resident indicated that Gene Surdam, the current Fireman on LGI was leaving. He could not survive without a salary and had to move on to other employment.

One resident asked if LGI could fund a fire department with MSBU monies.

Ms. Mussleman explained that the MSBU could not be used to fund a fire department. She indicated that a MSTU (Municipal Services Tax Unit) could be used. This would involve taxing the property owners on LGI at a determined millage rate.

Gene Surdam spoke on the possibility of having LGI designated as an Independent Fire Control District. He said that Lee County has done this with several of their barrier islands. This would provide opportunities for funding and grants that are not available as long as we are part of Charlotte County.

There was discussion of the lack of quality response from the County on 911 calls. One such call resulted in the County EMT's responding 1 ½ hour after the call was made. The residents indicated that this was unacceptable. They indicated that Gene was an asset to the islanders, as his response to this same 911 call was quick and possibly saved a life.

Ms. Dorothy Verney wanted it on the public record that she had had a positive outcome from an illness due to Gene Surdam. Another resident, Carol Locasio, indicated the same.

The residents wanted to vote on their priorities via a show of hands. They wanted to put the MSBU/CRA issue behind the current problem with Gene leaving his position on the island.

Bob Hill stated that he would check into the process for having LGI designated as an Independent Fire Control Unit but that was a separate issue from the MSBU/CRA.

In response to request from the audience for a motion, Phyllis Nesmith indicated that there really should not be a motion made at this time as there was not enough information available.

Bob Hill indicated that our next meeting was Friday, March 14 and the residents were invited to attend. The meeting would be held at 1:00 at Cedar Point. He would present information about the Independent Fire Control Unit at that meeting.

One resident wanted to know why the meetings could not be held on the island. Bob indicated that we needed a place big enough for a crowd and that was a problem on the island. Ken Bonds indicated that the Placida Bay Club House would not be available as it is undergoing improvements.

Another resident volunteered her home as a location for the meetings.

Bob Hill again invited everyone to the March 14th meeting.

Meeting adjourned.