

MINUTES
SOUTH GULF COVE ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SGCAC)
Wednesday, January 28, 2009
Growth Management Conference Rm. B-207 – 9:00 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Sandy Slater, *Chairperson*
Kendall Leach
April Chattinger
Yvonne Erimirio
Jim Benson

STAFF

John Elias, DPW
Jie Shao, Staff Liaison

MEMBERS EXCUSED

GUESTS

Karen Ireland
Karen Price
Jack Paine
John McGuire

I. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Chair Slater called the January 28, 2009 of the SGCAC to order at 8:58 a.m. in the Growth Management Conference Room B-207 and it was noted a quorum was present. She introduced Mr. John Elias of the Department of Public Works, who addressed the group on the issue of the Entranceway Signs.

Mr. Elias described the process to date, including the need to update the drawings that had been submitted by the Advisory Committee, because those drawings were not site-specific. He mentioned the activities of the Purchasing Department and also the need to deal with various permitting issues, such as the Special Exception; there was also the issue of an easement that still needs to be signed by the Fitzgerald Group. **Chair Slater** provided some additional details on the matter of the easement and assistance that she is getting from Jim Colosimo to move that part of the process along. **Mr. Elias** noted that the design firm has been selected and negotiations are in process; he promised a transparent process with Committee members being kept fully informed of progress. Further discussion ensued on the design process, including putting the project out for bid. **Chair Slater** emphasized that while the finished drawings may differ in details from the original, the finished product needs to closely reflect those original drawings, since that is the design that the community has accepted and approved.

Mr. Leach noted that the primary comments he hears from community residents is concern about the ongoing cost to maintain the landscaping that will surround the signs and the need to choose landscaping that will allow those costs to be minimized. **Mr. Elias** discussed other signs in the county that use some of the same features (e.g., planters constructed as part of the signs, for holding decorative shrubbery) and noted the maintenance effort that might be expected with such an approach. Further discussion ensued on the process; **Chair Slater** asked guest Jack Paine if he had any additional questions, which he did not. Mr. Elias reviewed some of the historical detail as to why a project already so far long in the planning aspect needed to go through this process; primarily, it arose out of changes mandated by County administration holding all County departments to the same standards required of private developers.

Guest John McGuire joined the meeting at 9:10 a.m.

Guest Karen Price asked that Mr. Elias keep the Committee Chair advised of the progress, so that information can be disseminated to the community members, which was agreed. **Chair Slater** reiterated that all management activity on the project is now the province of the County which will communicate to the project contractor; **Mr. Leach** confirmed that the public can attend the pre-bid meetings between the County and the contractors. **Mr. Elias** noted that he would communicate large issues to the Chair, but would not be issuing daily updates; he also stated that he thought the project would move quickly to completion. Mr. Elias then left the meeting.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

After review of the draft minutes, **Ms. Chattinger** moved that the minutes of the December 10, 2008 meeting be approved as amended, and **Ms. Ermirio** seconded the motion.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

Public Safety/Health, Pedestrian/Bikeways, FireWise Community, Cove Connector

Ms. Chattinger began with the subject of Public Safety, noting the plan to ask Chief Didio to speak to the Homeowners Association in March regarding the number of EMS and fire calls for the past year, as well as discussing FireWise; she inquired of Ms. Price whether the March HOA meeting would be appropriate for that item and it was tentatively agreed upon.

With regard to Cove Connector activities, **Ms. Chattinger** noted that a brunch is being planned, and she distributed a flyer for the event, indicating it would be a Valentine's brunch with Health Walk, Bike Ride and Pet Walk elements. It is set for February 8th from 10 am to 1 pm at the Pavilion. **Ms. Chattinger** also said that she spoke at the CCT's Arbor Day meeting; she anticipates having materials ready in March to launch the "Family Tree" program; there was some discussion about the need for community members to agree to provide the maintenance for such trees. Further discussion ensued, with reference to the minutes of the last meeting, as to where these trees were proposed to be located since, it was noted, there is no "median" for their placement. **Ms. Ermirio** clarified that "median" was a term adopted to describe the land that is between the access road and CR 771; it was noted that this was just one option for siting the trees. **Mr. Paine** offered another option, placing them near the bridges; suggestions were also offered for what types of trees would work best in that location. **Ms. Erimirio** reported on new information she had received regarding pests and diseases targeting certain palms such as Royal, foxtail; Pindo was suggested as a good alternative which is both disease-resistant and cold-tolerant. **Mr. Paine** also suggested that, if the County would grant permission, it might be good to relocate existing palms from the County rights-of-way; **Ms. Ermirio** stated that she had received a quote of about \$100 per palm to relocate them, and this is in contrast to the lower cost of just buying a new tree.

Ms. Chattinger also reported that she had received a copy of the Smugglers, Inc. grant proposal, which she is going to fill out; this would assist with the costs of event promotions, such as the April brunch which is what she will target. With regard to FireWise, **Ms. Chattinger** said they had received some statistics from the Department of Forestry on the clearing project: Fifteen acres were mowed, twelve structures were protected, and the value assigned to what was protected was estimated at \$3,000,000; the project cost was \$7,088.26. She also noted that a grant came through to be filled-out, for educational signs and other promotions, for a total award of \$10,000; she is hopeful this will be awarded to the community. **Guest John McGuire** noted that he had co-signed the grant application as the CCT president so that it would be submitted under the 501(3)(c) category.

Guest Karen Price added to the FireWise news, noting that the Division of Forestry has been running daily news items to alert the community of clearing activities, including controlled burns. **Ms. Price** talked to a Patrick Mahoney with the Forestry Division who told her that the location and type of activities are at the discretion of Forestry; some further discussion of the matter ensued.

Parks, Park Master Plan, Entranceways

On the subject of the Parks Master Plan, **Ms. Ermirio** reported that hard copies had finally been made available; she had a limited number to distribute, but it is available on disc for others who feel the need for their own copy. **Chair Slater** indicated that the material should shortly be available online, both the County's Advisory Committee web pages and also on the southgulfcove.org site.

Chair Slater also reported that she had communicated with David Milligan of the Parks Department, who said that the contractor's efforts at the South Gulf Cove Park at the south end of the community should be completed by the end of April; the County will also be installing park benches and playground equipment. She estimated that the park will be ready for use by this summer.

Ms. Ermirio continued with her report, with regard to the budget aspects of the parks; **Mr. Paine** raised questions about the total amount allocated for the design and permitting work, which Ms. Ermirio clarified (not all money budgeted will necessarily be spent as allocated.) Some discussion ensued on meetings that the members are scheduling with County personnel; **Chair Slater** said she anticipates a meeting with Kelly Shoemaker and Mike Koenig on Feb. 11th at which she will review the history of SGC projects and their funding. Further discussion ensued regarding budget matters.

With regard to monies as yet unspent, **Mr. Leach** pointed out that the Forestry Department would not clear the "median" (the area between the Access Road and CR 771) and suggested that it should be cleared by DPW; it was pointed out that the area is outside the boundaries of the MSBU and so there is technically an issue about using the funds in that way. This led to further discussion also. Comparisons were made with the clearing being done in the Rotonda Meadows community; it was noted that the Meadows has a mandatory homeowners association.

Chair Slater noted that she needed to reconcile the budget numbers.

With regard to the Learning Garden, **Ms. Ermirio** reported that they had their Arbor Day celebration on Saturday, Jan. 24th. They felt the turn-out was a bit less than they had expected, but it was otherwise very successful. She said that Doc Pickhardt would be doing some seminars in future; on Feb. 26th there will be an aqua-scaping seminar led by Mr. Bernhagen from the Environmental and Extension Service, at the Extension Service office which will include subjects such as plantings to prevent erosion.

Mr. Paine observed that one of Doc Pickhardt's suggestions was about planting mangroves which Mr. Paine felt was misguided since such plants, over time, tend to reduce the containment capacity of the water features they are planted near. **Ms. Ermirio** clarified this matter as it related to the Learning Garden and to mangroves in general, since they are a protected species; she also noted there were several species of mangrove, not all of which grow in the water. This led to a discussion of mangrove-trimming activities and lack of progress.

On the subject of signs directing people to the South Gulf Cove parks, **Ms. Erimirio** said she had not gotten a progress report so the subject was on her agenda for her meeting with David Milligan.

With regard to the dock at the Learning Garden, **Ms. Erimirio** said that Mr. Milligan had met with a subcommittee member at the park and was reported to have been very negative about the prospects, citing the County's strict attention to issues such as handicap access. The consensus of the group was to forge ahead despite the negativity.

Zoning and FLUM; Stormwater Report

Mr. Leach noted that the new attorney has put in considerable time on the issue of the deed restriction rewrite, but there is no draft document yet. **Mr. Leach** reiterated that one point of the rewrite was to make it automatic that the deed restrictions would track and incorporate changes to the County's Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance; **Ms. Price** emphasize that in the future, given that close relationship, community residents would want to stay informed about proposed changes to the Zoning Code and Comp Plan, to evaluate whether the changes would negatively impact the community.

On the subject of stormwater and the LakeWatch program, **Mr. Leach** said that Fritz Hausermann has volunteered to chair the LakeWatch program and has already had a meeting on the subject. The first collections are scheduled to begin shortly. **Mr. Paine** noted that the outfalls are being damaged by the mowing activity; he asked if there could be a water sample taken in a location where remediation is going to be tried out in order to measure effectiveness of the remediation efforts.

Mr. Leach asked that new matters be added to his list of responsibilities, specifically Quality Mine. He noted that their excavation permit was granted on December 19th for a new ten-year period, with 16 stipulations. He noted that the Committee's liaison at the County was Barbara Jefferies, Supervisor in the Land Development office; Ms. Jefferies went to the mine to determine how they were meeting the 16 stipulations and found a number that had not been complied with.

Mr. Leach also noted that there is a plan to build rest rooms and storage next to the Pavilion; this project will be put out for bids and he discussed some of the qualifications that would be required.

Chair Slater raised the question of erosion control and seawalls with Ms. Price; specifically, if any progress had been made on the issue. **Ms. Price** responded that the group was trying to work with Charlotte County and the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) regarding seawalls; she reported that the question has been raised whether it is even necessary or correct for DEP to be involved in the question.

Scenic Highway

Mr. Benson reported that business has been good and that he has been very busy recently; he felt that he could no longer commit the time to the committee that was needed. He hoped the group would be able to find someone to take his place; he volunteered to continue attending meetings for the purpose of making a quorum but said that his other time was severely limited. **Chair Slater** thanked him for his service thus far and noted that he would have to tender a formal resignation in order for his seat to be advertised as needing to be filled. Further discussion ensued on this impending change.

Land Acquisition, Funding Resources

On the subject of the Boat Ramp Park, **Chair Slater** noted it had been discussed earlier in the meeting. Real Estate Services is still working on the trade of the fourth lot at McAllister, as well as the three Fruitport lots and the lot at the Learning Garden.

The Chair mentioned that she had given a copy of the community plan budget to Tara Musselman in November, asking that it be a "placeholder"; she noted that it came to \$580,000, the majority of which is for park development. Further discussion ensued on budget matters.

Mr. John McGuire offered a point of clarification with regard to mangrove trimming; he felt that Doc Pickhardt's point concerned removing "undesirables" from amongst the mangroves.

Mr. Jack Paine noted that the MSBU income was about \$725,000 annually; \$225,000 is set aside for contingencies. Therefore the proposed budget of over \$500,000 takes the entire balance. He notes that in the near future there will be \$7.5 million worth of repaving to be done in South Gulf Cove, to be spent on phases 1 and 1A. He offered these comments to help people focus more closely on budget matters and to also have "the big picture" available. Further discussion ensued on both budget and paving matters.

Mr. Paine left the meeting at 10:55 am.

V. NEW BUSINESS

Chair Slater raised the issue of members stating what they hoped to accomplish in 2009, individually and as a group. She raised the issue of how the group can publicize its accomplishments which involved the various community-oriented websites as well as articles in "News and Views". She also discussed meetings she has had and plans to have with County Commissioners and administrative personnel, seeking to talk about the community and the difficulties encountered trying to get things done. **Chair Slater** said she had also received an invitation to be part of Commissioner Starr's "Kitchen Cabinet" and discussed some of the issues expected to be raised in that forum.

With regard to Entranceways, **Chair Slater** said her goal for the coming year was to have these completed. The Neighborhood Park at the Boat Ramp has additional work to be completed; continuing to push Real Estate Services about land acquisition. As for funding and resources, she stated that she hoped to find a better way to push projects through, with a lot of focus on MSBUs, particularly going back to the idea of having an MSBU for community beautification. **Ms. Price** asked whether there would be an advantage to going with a Taxing Unit rather than a Benefit Unit; **Chair Slater** said she was not fully informed about the difference between the two. Further discussion ensued on this subject. **The Chair** made a point of stating for the record that she found the MSBU process degrading, likening it to begging for money; she voiced many complaints about the process as it currently exists. **Ms. Price** urged Committee members to speak with their Commissioners on the subject of MSBU, noting she felt they would be revisiting the consolidation issue.

Mr. Leach felt that the things he usually addresses at each meeting will be what he is working on going forward, until each one is finalized. **Chair Slater** asked for more information about the LakeWatch program; she also asked for his input on her MSBU comments. **Mr. Leach** said that he did not believe that an MSTU would not be appropriate; an MSBU for the community plan might be a good idea. Lengthy discussion ensued over the options available; **Ms. Price** noted that transitioning to a mandatory HOA would be a

difficult proposition and so she has been investigating the alternatives. It was generally agreed that this year would be a difficult time to bring these financial issues to the community at large.

Ms. Ermirio cited finishing the Linear Park, getting the San Domingo Park going and clearing activities as being among her goals; this led to further discussion of the role of Doc Pickhardt.

Ms. Chattinger said that she would continue her monitoring of Fire and EMS calls to assist in projecting Fire/EMS facility needs in the community; with regard to Cove Connector, her goal is to get trees planted and to get the Family Tree program going. She also wants to continue investigating the availability of grants and move the beautification and FireWise programs along. **Ms. Ermirio** reported on her recent personal experiences with Fire/EMS service responding to her calls regarding a family emergency; she had praise for the response and the professionalism of the personnel. There was also a discussion of increased sheriff's deputy presence in the community in response to recent robberies.

Chair Slater handed out copies of the information sheet on the Park Master Plan and the Committee members and their projects. **Mr. Leach** spoke about the most effective ways to contact the Commissioners, noting that approaching them after a meeting is very effective because all five Commissioners are present as well as the County Attorney. There was some discussion about how the completion of the entranceway signs and the parks would encourage community members to contribute to future improvements, possibly through a Community Plan MSBU mechanism.

VI. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ms. Price commented about a new organization in the Cape Haze area called the Rotonda Community Foundation; she recommended that anyone approached by them do a little homework before committing to anything. **Mr. McGuire** commented that he had attended one of their meetings and they seem to be concerned with creating a community center for the Cape Haze area. He also mentioned having gone to a grant-writing course and one of the points of interest was that "collaborative grant applications have more strength." **Ms. Price** noted that the organization's official name is Rotonda West Foundation, and that they do not want any of their directors to be outside of Rotonda, but they are seeking funding from South Gulf Cove and other Cape Haze community members to help fund them. Further discussion ensued.

VIII. STAFF COMMENTS

None.

VIII. MEMBER COMMENTS

None.

IX. NEXT MEETING

The next regular meeting of the **South Gulf Cove Advisory Committee** is **Wednesday, February 25, 2009** from 9:00 a.m. until 12 noon in the **Growth Management Conference Room (B-207)**. The Chair requested all members provide bullet points for a 2009 Plan for the group.

At 11:44 a.m. **Chair Slater** stated: There being no further business to come before this committee, I declare the meeting adjourned.