



# Civic Chatline

Cape Coral Civic Association founded March 1962



Volume X Issue IV

**Hello April, we need some showers**

April 2007

**Lee County Commissioner Ray Judah,  
this month at Civic, April 24**

**PSB GO Bond funding defeated.  
Now What?**

As many of us know Commissioner Ray Judah has long been an environmental advocate for issues effecting our area. For the past two years there have been serious issues with nitrogen rich fresh water releases from Lake Okeechobee into the Caloosahatchee River. Two years ago the lake stood at record high levels of almost 19 feet resulting in massive discharges of water from the lake into the river. As a result we can recall the thick coating of duck weed in our canals. Civic has asked Ray to address the issues we are facing with this ongoing problem.



In Oct. 2005 Civic expressed our concerns relative to the negative effect this created on the river and our canals in a letter sent to the county commissioners at that time. This is part of what we said; *"The Caloosahatchee River is Cape Coral's eastern border. More than half of Cape Coral's 100 miles of salt water canals are influenced physiologically, environmentally and economically by the health of the Caloosahatchee River. Cape Coral's canals are the life blood of our city. Cape's canals are a vital part of the city's growth, flood control, transportation and parks and recreation systems. In addition river front and canal front property owners are assessed higher property taxes. ."*

We are currently in the third driest season on record. The lake has dropped to a near record low of about 10 feet and the good news is there have been no discharges from the lake. Currently there appears to be a rare window of opportunity for the South Florida Water Management District to take hold of some of the issues while the lake is low. Environmentally, this window of opportunity could produce one of the best outcomes ever.

According to a recent article in the News-Press the following comments are offered; "Fertilizer runoff from farmland, stretching north of the lake to Orlando, degraded water quality and created other problems." "Nutrient-rich muck from years of fertilizer runoff is one of the lake's biggest problems." "Now, with huge fields of lake bottom exposed, lake lovers are frustrated bureaucracies such as the South Florida Water Management District and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers are not removing muck by the truckloads." "We need land trucks on this lake and start removing the sludge that is all dried out," Martin said. "They are not doing enough, and they are not doing it fast enough. It's absolutely frustrating. I lose faith in what elected officials are doing."

Hopefully Ray will shed some light on these issues at our meeting.

At Civic last month Chiefs Petrovich and Van Helden made last ditch efforts to pitch the PSB funding before the vote the following week. When the audience was asked how they might be voting, the response was 19 against and 11 for, of those who participated in the vote. As it turns out the actual percentage



was 78% of those who voted (approximately 13,000 votes) voted against the PSB GO Bond funding which would have allowed the city to go forward with the building.

The arguments we have heard against the PSB were cost, size and the funding mechanism. While it is true the GO Bond would have provided the lowest interest on the money borrowed, it is also true that property with higher assessed value would be paying more per year than others to pay for the bond. Some have suggested a city sales tax as being a fairer funding mechanism.

The current Police and Fire building is approximately 45,000 sf. The proposed new PSB would have been almost 5 times the existing building size. Our current population is about 165,000 people, 5 times the current population is 825,000 people.

This brings us to the cost. While many people including the mayor have stressed the \$110M was a guaranteed maximum cost many people believe the maximum amount would have been borrowed. People including the mayor are now talking about cost for an alternative solution that may be less than half of the \$110M. We believe this may be acceptable to the public.

Most people seem to believe that something needs to be done about the existing building. Seemingly there have been some systemic problems that over time have resulted in major deterioration to this public asset. The biggest problem that we have heard over the years has been the on going problem with a leaky roof.

Civic will be offering some suggestions as to where we go next in order to have a more suitable facility for the Police and Fire Administration. One suggestion is to preserve and renovate the 45,000 sf office space that presently exists on city owned land. Using conservative building costs of \$250/sf to build new that would equate to an asset of \$11,250,000 without factoring in the value of the land. One way to preserve this asset might be to encapsulate the existing single story building within a new structure that would be built around the outside perimeter and vertically from the existing building. This is the way many buildings in NYC, Chicago and elsewhere have evolved when expanded. The question is can it be done in Cape Coral? If not, why not?

## Congratulations Chief Tomich

Chief Tom Tomich Celebrates 30 Years of Service with Cape Coral Fire Department. At age 18, he became a Volunteer Firefighter with the Cape Coral Fire Department and served as Secretary of the Cape Coral Volunteer Fireman's Benevolent Association for four years.



In April 1977, he was hired as a full-time firefighter with the City of Cape Coral by the City's first Fire Chief, Tim Herrick. In 1980, Tom was promoted to Engineer by Fire Chief Steve Smith. In 1982, Tom was promoted to Lieutenant by Fire Chief Jim Hunt during an opening ceremony for Fire Station 3. Tom was promoted to Captain on C-Shift in 1998 by Fire Chief Charlie Johnson and was promoted to Division Chief of Operations in 2003 by Fire Chief William Van Helden. He was assigned to the Division of Support Services in 2005.

## SOH Portability

Lee County Property Appraiser Ken Wilkinson is in the process of mailing out petitions in hopes of getting the necessary signatures to place the issue of SOH Portability on the 2008 state wide election. A copy of the petition is enclosed as part of this Chatline. Please copy the petition for a family member or friend. We have also been able to confirm that Ken will be at the May Civic meeting to briefly discuss the issue of SOH Portability.



## Open Heart Program at Cape Coral Hospital?

Lee Memorial Health Systems announced the open heart program formerly at SWFL Regional Hospital will be moved to Gulf Coast Hospital. The proximity of GCH to Health Park, where Lee Memorial also has open heart capabilities is only a few miles away.

At the April 16 council meeting, Council member LePera asked that council request LMHS to consider establishing the open heart program at our Cape Coral Hospital instead GCH. Cape Coral Hospital has had Heart Catheterization program since 1989. Although diagnostics at CCHS are permitted they can't perform any interventions such as balloon angioplasty since there is no open heart back up. This means if you are diagnosed with blocked arteries at CCHS you'll have to be transported to another facility for corrective action.

## Wrong Information from council?

During the Committee of the Whole meeting on April 16 was wrong information allowed to go out on Cape TV? A city council member twice mentioned that the "city annual budget was now \$500,000."

<http://www.capecoral.net/citydept/fiserve/Budget/BudgetBrochure%202007.pdf>

General Fund	\$ 161,469,301
Special Revenue Funds	59,388,116
Debt Service Fund	6,430,404
Capital Projects Fund	92,556,479
Enterprise Funds	596,567,172
Internal Service Funds	11,591,796
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 928,003,268</b>

## A Questionable Idea?

In trying to find alternative solutions to the PSB facilities, one city council member thought a parking garage in the CRA to house the city mobile emergency response assets might be a solution for needed protected parking. To our knowledge the CRA is located in a floodplain making this a questionable solution.

## April President's Message



Dear Friends and Members:

The 45th Anniversary Celebration is now past, but what happened at this event and as a result of this event will no doubt lead the Cape Coral Civic Association into our next 45 years.

We had the honor and privilege of welcoming Florida's Lt. Gov. Jeff Kottkamp as keynote speaker. Longtime Cape Coral Councilwoman and active Civic member, Alex LePera introduced the Lt. Governor

Mayor Eric Feichthaler read his proclamation naming March 31, 2007, Cape Coral Civic Association Day as well as recognizing our organization for its important role in incorporating the City of Cape Coral.

Ralph LePera, our Ex Officio presented an award to Valarie Haring, Executive Editor of the Daily Breeze for the Breeze's assistance in recording Civic history over the past four and a half decades.

Guests were invited to "Memory Lane" to see the display of Civic memorabilia, pictorial history and awards.

Among the list of dignitaries in attendance were Terry Stewart, City Manager; Ray Judah, Lee County Commissioner; former Mayor Arnold Kempe, Bob Chilmonik, Lee County School Board; Larry Murphy, former Cape Coral Council member and former Civic President; Sal Grosso, former Civic Vice President; Lyndia Bradley, former Civic President and many others.

I would like to thank the Daily Breeze and News Press for their post-event coverage. Special thanks go to 45<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration Chairman, Evan Bush, for expertly coordinating details, large and small, to make this event such an enormous success. Fran Hannan, president of the Italian American Club was immeasurably helpful in coordinating volunteers, catering and other details. When you see members of our Board of Directors, please be sure to thank them for their time and assistance. Remember to patronize our sponsors, who helped defray the cost of the celebration.

At this month's Civic General Meeting, we welcome Lee County Commissioner from District 3, Ray Judah, who will be joining us to talk about local water quality issues.

"During the current 2007 session, the state Legislature will be working on an amendment to the Lake Okeechobee Protection Act that would establish the framework to reduce pollution flowing ... into the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie River estuaries," reported Ray Judah. "The plan's effectiveness is contingent upon mandatory best-management practices."

Make sure you attend and also invite your neighbors and friends to our meeting this month, on April 24<sup>th</sup> at the Yacht Club Main Ballroom. A question and answer period will follow the commissioner's presentation. As always, refreshments will be served after the meeting.

As a final note, be sure to read the Cape Coral Daily Breeze for a new article series, recapping Civic's monthly meeting and events by yours truly.

**Leelo Bush**, President  
Cape Coral Civic Association

*"The Association is for the betterment of Cape Coral."*

## Emergency Watering Restrictions

Remember to reset your lawn sprinkler systems. Watering is now only permitted between the hours of 4 A.M. to 8 A.M. On your assigned odd-even permitted two days per week.

# CC Civic Association Celebrating 45 Years

March 31, 2007



## Civic celebrates 45 years in Cape; Lt. Gov. Jeff Kottkamp attends event recognizing oldest organization in city

LILIANE PARBOT-JOHNSON, [lparbotjohnson@breezenewspapers.com](mailto:lparbotjohnson@breezenewspapers.com)

Judging by the number of handshakes and hugs he received at the 45th anniversary celebration of the Cape Coral Civic Association, Lt. Gov. Jeff Kottkamp left many friends behind when his new job took him to Tallahassee.

The former state representative acknowledged this at the podium: "I could not have made it without your help," he said. "Thank you all so much for helping me to get elected to the House of Representatives. You made me a better representative. Being lieutenant governor goes beyond my wildest dream. I am deeply humbled." Kottkamp said Gov. Charlie Crist has done a remarkable job of "turning Tallahassee on its head ... he is fatigued with the politics. He says no matter what you are, Republican, Democrat, we need to focus on the people." The latter advice, to focus on the people, Kottkamp said it reminded him of what he had heard years before at civic. "Tom Clark used to say, 'It does not matter if you are Republican, Democrat or Independent, we are going to do what is right for the people.'"

City Councilmember Alex LePera, who introduced the lieutenant governor, said Kottkamp has been a member of the association for quite some time, no matter how busy he is. Kottkamp said the civic association always has pointed questions for government officials and they insist on getting answers to these questions. "Thank you from the bottom of my heart to be the voice of the city," he said, emphasizing the importance "to keep in touch with our roots ... we must maintain contact with our past to know where we have been."

Later Saturday evening when leaving the Cape Coral Italian American Club, where the event took place, Kottkamp said: "It is always good to be home. I have so many friends. These are real people who have been with me since the beginning. They are very special. They have a special place in my heart." Kottkamp also said whether it was when he was at the state House of Representatives or today as lieutenant governor, "the focus is on lowering insurance rates and lowering property tax."

"Civic," as the Cape Coral Civic Association is often called, is the oldest organization in the city of Cape Coral. In fact, the small group of people who created civic in 1962 was most instrumental in getting Cape Coral incorporated as a city. The goal was realized eight years later in 1970. The president of the association, Leelo Bush, welcomed the celebrants filling to capacity the huge ballroom of the Italian American Club. She said in recalling the history of the association: "No one can deny that we have stood for the right of Cape Coral people ... encouraging dialog between residents and officials. I am proud to be associated with civic, and I look forward to see many more accomplishments."

Going to the podium, ex-Officio Ralph LePera said the civic association was an offshoot of the Taxpayers Association. A group of 25 to 30 people held an organizational meeting March 1, 1962 and a month later on April 2 the first board of directors was elected. "At the time, 1,600 people lived in Cape Coral and 40 (400) of them were children," LePera said. "Today, 166,000 people live in Cape Coral and 25,000 of them are children."

Mayor Eric Feichthaler said he often hears people saying, "Cape Coral does not have a history," but it is not so. "This civic association is the history of Cape Coral," he said. "Government is just one facet. The city is blessed to have people like you ... " Then, turning towards Bush standing near the podium, he added in a serious tone, "And President Bush." This brought much laughter among his audience. Then Feichthaler read a proclamation passed by the city council naming Saturday, March 31, "Cape Coral Civic Association Day."

Kottkamp was praised for "being so gracious" to the Cape Coral delegation in Tallahassee the previous week. Lee County Commissioner Ray Judah was among those complimenting the lieutenant governor, and Judah thanked him for coming to the celebration despite being "a very busy individual."

Also among the speakers was Lyndia Bradley, a former civic association president. She said: "It is a privilege and honor to be part of civic's history. The organization works very closely with governmental bodies. We may disagree, but we respect each others."

When Paul Sanborn, the city historian, went to the microphone, he asked: "How many people were here when we started?" Only one hand went up. "You know, Betty and I were the only ones." Sanborn was referring to Betty Graf, who came to Cape Coral even before Sanborn on May 2, 1961.

"There were less than 1,000 people," she said later. "I came here by chance. We were vacationing in Lehigh Acres because we owned property there at the time. We were leaving to go back to Wisconsin when we saw all those signs about Cape Coral. We came down Del Prado for seven miles. There was not one gas station, and the gas tank was almost empty. We ended up buying gas from (developers) Gulf America Corp." They only bought gasoline during the 1960 visit, but the next year they bought property. "We came back in 1961 and bought the outdoor laundromat," Graf added. "It is still here, behind Wendy's, but it is in a building now. The first year here was difficult, but I made it. There was nothing here." Her late husband, Donald Graf, was mayor of Cape Coral from 1975 to 1977, she said.

According to Sanborn, from 1962 to 1971, the civic association was the sole representative of the residents of Cape Coral. "It was very important because we did not have a city," he said. "The civic association got things done. The leaders of the community were the driving force of what we have now — the city of Cape Coral." Sanborn mentioned a 1969 picture found in the program. It showed Clarence Sprott passing the gavel to Millard Bowen Jr. "We had difficulties with the county commission, and Millard was the first one who went before the commission and said: 'We want you to have meetings in Cape Coral.' From that, we had communication from our citizens to the county commission. From that time, the county understood what our problems were." This was one of many things civic accomplished in 45 years, Sanborn said. Throughout the years, what civic has accomplished has been reported in the Cape Coral Breeze, which was a weekly publication early on. Recently, the Cape Coral Daily Breeze helped put together a CD recording of a historical scrapbook relating to civic.

A widow of one of the organization's early members lent the newspaper the scrapbook which contained photographs and clipped articles, many straight from the pages of the Breeze. The entire content of the scrapbook was documented and placed onto CD. The original scrapbook is to be given to the Cape Coral Historical Society, Sanborn said. The CD recording is available for viewing by whomever is interested. At the anniversary celebration Ralph LePera presented a plaque to the Cape Coral Daily Breeze. It reads: "In appreciation for the documentation of the History of Cape Coral Civic Association beginning in 1962 to the present. "Civic expresses our sincere thank you to Publisher Jack Glarrow, Executive Editor Valarie Haring, Photographer Michael Pistella, for their contributions in preserving that History on compact disc. "March 31, 2007."

Kottkamp said there have been three constants in the city: the Cape Coral Civic Association, Sanborn and the Cape Coral Daily Breeze.

# CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT PETITION FORM

Under Florida law, it is a first degree misdemeanor to knowingly sign more than once a petition or petitions for a candidate, a minor political party, or an issue. Such offense is punishable as provided in s. 775.082 or s. 775.083. (Section 104.185, Florida Statutes)

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_  
Please Print Name as it Appears on Voter Information Card

Residential Street Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ County \_\_\_\_\_

I am a registered voter of Florida and hereby petition the Secretary of State to place the following amendment to the Florida Constitution on the ballot in the general election.

## ARTICLE VII - Finance and Taxation, SECTION 4 - Taxation; assessments, (c)

### BALLOT TITLE: PORTABILITY OF SAVE OUR HOMES ASSESSMENT CAP

**BALLOT SUMMARY:** Providing for the transfer of a portion of the difference between the current market value of a homestead property and its current assessed value to a newly acquired homestead property. The effective date to be the first January 1st after passage in a general election.

#### Full text of the proposed amendment: (c)

(c) All persons entitled to a homestead exemption under Section 6 of this Article shall have their homestead assessed at just value as of January 1 of the year following the effective date of this amendment. This assessment shall change only as provided herein.

- (1) No Change.
- (2) No Change.
- (3) Except as provided in subsection (8), after any change of ownership, as provided by general law, homestead property shall be assessed at just value as of January 1 of the following year. Thereafter, the homestead shall be assessed as provided herein.
- (4) No Change.
- (5) No Change.
- (6) No Change.
- (7) No Change.
- (8) After a change in ownership or abandonment of a homestead exemption, if the new owner of the property establishes their right to a homestead exemption on the property, and if the new owner sold homestead property or abandoned their homestead exemption in Florida within the 2 years immediately preceding their establishment of a new homestead property and continuously maintained a permanent residence in Florida from the sale of the prior homestead property to the purchase of the new homestead property, the new homestead property shall be assessed as follows:
  - a. On January 1 of the year immediately following the change of ownership, the assessed value of the new homestead property shall be the difference between the just value of the new homestead property and the cap differential, as defined herein.
  - b. The cap differential shall be the difference between the just value and the assessed value of the former homestead property as of January 1 of the year in which the homestead property was sold or the homestead exemption was abandoned by the new owner, but shall not exceed \$400,000.00 adjusted annually by the lesser of 3% or the CPI. If more than one new owner of the new homestead property is qualified to transfer their cap differential to the new homestead property, the highest cap differential shall be used. If the just value of the new homestead property is less than the just value of the former homestead property, the cap differential shall not exceed 50% of the just value of the new homestead property.
  - c. By general law, the legislature shall prescribe regulations by which two or more persons entitled to a homestead exemption on one property shall be permitted to transfer a portion of the property's cap differential to two or more separate new homestead properties, provided that the total amount transferred by all owners does not exceed the property's cap differential. Thereafter the new homestead property shall be assessed as provided herein.

X

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE OF SIGNATURE

\_\_\_\_\_  
SIGNATURE OF REGISTERED VOTER

Pd. Pol. Adv.  
Save Our Homes Portability, Inc. P.O. Box 490, Fort Myers, FL 33902

Serial Number: 06-03

Date Approved: 12/6/06



**Cape Coral Civic Association**

P.O. Box 101606

Cape Coral, FL 33910-1606



**Next General Meeting: Tues. April 24 @ 7 p.m. CC Yacht Club**

*Chatline* is a publication of the Civic Assn. and intended solely for the education and enjoyment of its members

Civic Web Page: <http://www.capecoralcivicassociation.org> Visit On-Line forum <http://civicchatline.blogspot.com>

**CCA Board of Directors**

Phone: (239) 540-3340

e-mail: Cape Civic 1@aol.com

<b>President:</b>	<b>Leelo Bush</b>
<b>Vice President:</b>	(vacant)
<b>Ex-officio</b>	<b>Ralph LePera</b>
<b>Secretary:</b>	<b>Frank Perry</b>
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<b>Membership:</b>	<b>Ricky Pistone</b>
<b>Trustees:</b>	<b>Lyndia Bradley</b>
	<b>Evan Bush</b>
	<b>Bill Fekety</b>
	<b>Jane Longo</b>
	<b>Art Vitale</b>

**City Council member directory:**

Mayor:	Eric Feichthaler	898-8524
Dist: 1	Tom Hair	547-0437
Dist: 2	Dick Stevens	542-1457
Dist: 3	A.J. Boyd	945-6665
Dist: 4	Dolores Bertolini	542-4038
Dist: 5	Alex LePera	574-6112
Dist: 6	Tim Day	772-4196
Dist: 7	Chris Berardi	574-0437

**Council email: [council@capecoral.net](mailto:council@capecoral.net)**  
**Cape Citizen's Action Center: 574-0425**  
**Council Office Phone: 574-0437**  
**City Web Page <http://www.capecoral.net>**