



Civic Chatline



A publication of CC Civic Association intended for the education and enjoyment of its members

Volume IX Issue V

May 2006

Last Month at Civic

Civic would like to express our thanks to Mayor Feichthaler who spoke at Civic last month. We believe our meeting was informative and our open mike format provided the mayor with feed back on a variety of issues. Certainly the mayor was able to gauge some responses to questions with a straw poll show of hands.

On the issue of the Stadium the audience seemed to be evenly split. However, on the suggestion of the city needing a building moratorium due to the water shortage, there was pretty much a unanimous opinion that this might be needed.

We also want to make mention that we appreciate the mayor during his council report indicating that he spoke at Civic and said that he felt there were good questions from our audience.

In general, most speakers who come to Civic concur that that our Civic group does ask good questions and we are informed on the issues. With that being the case, then Civic is doing its job.



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Ordinance 47-06

Finally the Public Safety Impact Fee ordinance will be coming before city council. The question is will council approve it? For years the city has had a Fire Impact Fee in place on new construction but never a Police Impact Fee. Ord. 47-06 will do away with the Fire Impact Fee and replace it with a Public Safety Impact Fee to address Fire, Police and ALS. Civic strongly supports this ordinance as we have since it was first suggested by Council member LePera and rejected by council in 1999.

The city maintains that it needs a new public safety building. Some have estimated that cost well in excess of 50 to 70 million dollars that the city will have to go into debt to build. Had some on council back in 1999 had the best interest of the city in mind and enacted Police Impact Fees back then, just think of where we might be today toward having the available funding for the Public Safety building. Unfortunately with many of our politicians then and today it has been politics over planning.

City Road Transportation & "Fair Tax" Issue at Civic this month May 23, 7 PM

City Transportation Director Steve Neff will discuss the city roadway improvement initiative. Steve will be addressing recently completed projects, those just starting, and those starting in the near future as sort of a quick citywide look at transportation projects.

According to the city web page the City of Cape Coral has begun an aggressive program to improve several major roadways throughout the city and to make other improvements such as new turn lanes, traffic signals, lighting, sidewalks, and medians at several locations with 2010 as the expected completion date on these projects.

This initiative, aimed at improving the flow of traffic throughout the city and easing congestion, includes median improvements to Nicholas Parkway, widening of Santa Barbara Blvd. and the widening of Del Prado Blvd N.

One of the biggest questions relating to Cape Coral roads is where will we put all this traffic at build out? During season Del Prado Blvd. already appears to be at gridlock.

Godfrey Santini will discuss the The FairTax issue HR 25.

There as been much discussion over the years about the IRS and ways to abolish the dreaded April 15 tax due day. "The Fair Tax replaces the income tax and all other federal taxes with a national consumption tax. The Fair Tax is levied only once, at the point of purchase on new goods and services." "The simplicity of the Fair Tax frees Americans from our current overwhelming tax code and unshackles the U.S. economy." The Fair Tax bill is sponsored by **Rep. John Linder of GA with 52 co-sponsors.**

The Title of the bill reads as follows: "To promote freedom, fairness, and economic opportunity by repealing the income tax and other taxes, abolishing the Internal Revenue Service, and enacting a national sales tax to be administered primarily by the States."

Proponents claim the FAIR TAX:

- * Abolishes the IRS
- * Closes all tax loopholes and brings fairness to taxation
- * Maintains our current Social Security and Medicare benefits
- * Brings transparency and accountability to tax policy
- * Allows American products to compete fairly
- * Reimburses the tax on purchases of basic necessities
- * Enables retirees to keep their entire pension
- * Enables workers to keep their entire paycheck



Politics in Paradise

A look at bureaucrats and elected officials

At the city council meeting on May 8, City Manager Terry Stewart received a 4% salary increase and a 2 year contract extension.



Stewart's pay will increase \$6,060 to \$157,567 from \$151,570 and he received a two-year contract extension. Stewart's evaluation should have been done in the Feb.-Mar. time frame, however this wasn't done since some on council believe they shouldn't be held to the same standards as everyone else. Stewart's evaluations weren't done.

Council member Day blatantly said he had no intension of providing a written evaluation, his was the last to be turned in. Council would have discussed the CM's contract the previous week however some council members, including Day, didn't show up for the meeting and there wasn't quorum. We believe Day's attitude regarding written evaluations sends out the wrong message to the public especially when everyone else is doing what is expected of them regarding written evaluations.

"Charter school board to tackle nepotism issue." This was the headline in the N-P recently. It appears the city charter school board authority has created some controversy of its own since Joanne Mark applied for a job with the city charter schools. As a result the school board authority (at the suggestion of school board member Terry Stewart) requested the board's attorney seek an opinion from the Florida Ethics Commission on the matter of nepotism. Apparently the issue surfaced when Mary Margaret Embroli, chairwoman of the Cape Coral Charter School Governing Board was contacted by Lee Bush, the principle for the new City of Cape Coral Charter Elementary School North. Bush received Mrs. Mark's employment application. Lee Bush works for School Administrator Patrick Mark, Mrs. Mark's husband.



After reading the article in the N-P on May 2 relative to the City Charter Schools; "However, only about half the expected workers showed up to work on the City of Cape Coral's Charter Elementary School North near Burnt Store Road and Ceitus Parkway. The one-day slowdown won't delay the August opening of the city's second charter school." "We should be able to handle a day or even a week," said Tim Coons, project superintendent for Haskell, the Tampa-based contractor. "As long as they don't stay away forever, we will adapt and overcome to meet our goal."

Relative to the article Civic sent the Mayor and Council and e-mail asking; Is the City of Cape Coral contributing to violations of Federal Laws, either directly or indirectly, by hiring contractors who may be employing illegal aliens?

There has been no response, so the question still remains.



Civic understands that City Council member Jim Jeffers is out of the hospital and is currently in rehab. We understand that Jim plans to be back at council for the June 22 council meeting and we are happy to hear that he is doing well.



President's Message May 2006

Dear Members and Friends,

Our upcoming May 23, meeting will be our last meeting until Aug. 22. Civic closes for two months during the summer and typically it is in July in Aug. However, since this year is an election year, we will go dark in June and July so that we may bring you a candidates' forum for our Aug. meeting.

On Sept. 5, there will be county elections for Lee County School Board and Lee County Commissioners. This year three school board seats are up for election in Districts; 1 (Chilmonik), 4 (Tuebber) and 5 (Scricca). All of these seats will have opposition and since school board elections are non-partisan, all registered voters will be able to vote for school board candidates.

For the Lee County Commission Dist. 4 race, Andy Coy is opposing the incumbent Tammy Hall for the position. Should this race stay as it is currently, this election will be determined in the Sept. 5, primary election. If no other candidates enter this race this election will be determined in an "open primary" election, meaning that all registered voters will be able to vote. County Commission Dist. 2, currently occupied by Doug St. Cerny, and Dist. 5 John Albion's seat are also up for election this fall. More on the elections in our next Chatline.

I want to thank and welcome our new Civic board members who have stepped up to the plate as Trustees to help with some of the duties within the organization. They include Jane Longo, Frank Miletta and Shawn Seliger.

Civic will be losing a couple of good friends and long time members this summer. Past Civic President, Ed Steinberg and past board member Grail Marisi are in the process of moving to Starke, FL. I understand that our upcoming meeting will be their last meeting, and so I hope you will all join with me in wishing Eddie and Grail the very best of luck and success. Civic has a lot to thank them both for in their contributions to the organization. Indeed, in my opinion the city can also thank Eddie Steinberg for his contributions in helping to save Eco Park from becoming a juvenile booth camp back in the late 90s.

See you all at Civic....and bring along a friend or two.

My Best Regards for a safe summer.

Ralph LePera
"The Association is for the betterment of Cape Coral."

Reminder

**Civic will not be meeting in June and July
Have a Safe and Happy Summer**

Oh Great, Another Million Dollar Study

In case you haven't heard, the SOH Portability issue will not come to the voters this year. Instead our state legislators will spend another million dollars studying the issue. Two of our county commissions, Janes and Judah responded to be in support of SOH and SOH portability. The other commissioners have not yet responded to our e-mail.

This is the e-mail Civic sent to the Commissioners:

Dear County Commissioner,

Do you favor the concept of the property tax benefits of Save Our Homes?

Do you favor the concept of SOH Portability?

Do you believe the voters should have been allowed to vote on a Constitutional Amendment that would have provided for SOH portability?

If your answer to all of the above is yes, please explain why Lee County tax dollars were used in opposition to the issue of SOH portability.

If you are not in favor of SOH and SOH portability, please explain why.

Sincerely,

Ralph LePera, President

CCCA

This is the County Administration's position on SOH.

Several of you have asked about a question from a Cape Coral Civic Association survey asking: "Why Lee County tax dollars were used in opposition to the issue of Save Our Homes portability?"

While this was not a Lee County legislative priority per se, it was one of the 2006 Legislative Priorities of the Southwest Florida Legislative Consortium, which is made up of the cities and counties in Collier, Lee, Hendry, Charlotte, and Sarasota.

Those priorities were adopted in November 2005. At that time portability proposals were rather broad and there was a concern about the impact of shifting more and more of the tax burden to a smaller and smaller subset of taxpayers, particularly small businesses.

The Southwest Florida Legislative Consortium basically adopted the Florida Association of Counties' position on this matter, which was to request that no major legislation be passed and that the issue be deferred to the Budget & Taxation Revenue Commission in 2007.

As session progressed, the portability proposals became more refined in scope, with proposed limitations to the number of times it could be exercised and the age of the applicant.

The county did not spend any additional money on this proposal other than what it spends on its lobbyist to promote the county's entire legislative package, which admittedly this year had a number of higher priorities. The Consortium basically followed the same evolution of this stance that the Florida Association of Counties also promulgated.

Notwithstanding, there remain concerns about the scope of portability, not only because of its revenue implications, but also its implications on fairness and the impact it has on the business community.

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Looking for some Rain

Next General Meeting: Tues. May 23 @ 7 p.m. CC Yacht Club

Chatline is a publication of the CC Civic Assn. and intended for the enjoyment of its members

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

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