

DONNA'S TIDBITS

Donna Fiala, Collier County Commissioner, District 1

Be Careful out there! Goings On in Goodland, FDOT Projects, Town Hall & a Special Tour, Median Landscaping, Golden Gate Golf Course, Bayshore Drive Future, Kings Lake Shopping Center



Whew what a busy time of year this is! Traffic everywhere and everyone is in a hurry. There are so many things to do, so many places to go, and lots of fun and excitement along the way. So, please be careful on the roads, try to choose a different time to go to breakfast or lunch when it isn't as crowded, so the workforce can get to work and to their jobs. It seems everyone wants to go to breakfast at the same time as the workers are going to their jobs, and there are many traffic tie-ups. Be careful, watch where you turn, look in your rear-view and side-mirrors and make sure you check your blind spot as well. There have been some nasty accidents out there. Don't be one of them!

Our next and last Town-Hall Gathering (we held the one for all the Islands last month) will be held on Wednesday, March 27th at 6:00 PM at the South Regional Library. We will be discussing the new communication system 311, and also the new Alert Collier system. You will want to make sure you know about these new and important communication systems the County is initiating. You will also learn about the new lighting and road efforts being installed by the FDOT on U.S. 41E, and the FDOT will personally be on hand to present them to you. All residents in the area are invited, and anyone else who would like to

attend. We'll have county staff there to give presentations, and also to answer questions before and after the meeting.

One of the Sweetest, Dearest persons working for the Marco Island Historical Society, is Susan Pernini, and she just became engaged! I'm sure her fiancé is so happy he has her. She is always bright and happy, never has an unkind thing to say, and everyone loves her at the museum and on the board. The next time you go to the Marco Island Museum (I hope you've already been there to see the outstanding presentation of the Calusa Indians, the Calusa Cat on loan from the Smithsonian Institute, and the birth of Marco Island, plus their delightful gift shop) look for Susan. You'll be glad you made the effort. We are all so happy for her! Congratulations to your fiancé! He made the best choice!

Have you been to Goodland this year yet? Goodland is out of the days of old and brings you back to the way it was! They have lots of events during season, and by the looks of things recently, while they celebrated the 50th Anniversary of Stan's Idle Hour, there were more people there than ever before! By 11:30 am there were cars lined along the street from the Water Tower all the way to Stan's, then around the corner, across the street, down the side streets, and even more! At Margood Park, where

the villagers and the GCA Arts & Events Committee were holding an Arts & Crafts Show, with golf carts shuttling people to the event from their cars. They had music and food and lots of fun everywhere! Once you were finished looking through the booths, eating a little something while listening to gentle guitar music, you then took a trip to Stan's, and to the afternoon of fun, music, food and festivities. I'm sure many of you were there, because it seemed like all of Collier County emptied into Goodland! They honored me by asking to be a judge in the Stan Look-alike contest (Stan & I were friends and I admired him so much, as everyone else did!). And when the contest finished, who was playing the music? The fantastic Ben Allen Band! I couldn't believe my ears! I had to hand around a little longer just to hear the marvelous music! I had to have a Deputy weave me through the crowd and back to my car! Yes, it was that busy! If you knew Stan, you also knew he honored our flag and our country, and while playing the National Anthem at each performance, he made sure every person took their hat off in respect for our American Flag. He was so Patriotic, and it always showed. I was so proud of him and proud to call him Friend! His son Steve is the same kind of guy as his Dad! A good man all the way down to his soul! There are still many weeks left before Season comes to an end. Don't miss the opportunity to get down to Stan's a few more times.

The FDOT has said that they will be fixing the lights on the Jolley Bridge to Marco Island this month! Then beginning in May they plan on fixing the "washboard road" leading between Fiddler's Creek and Marco Island. We've been waiting a long time for that to happen – years as a matter of fact. They believe they will start at the end of May and finish before the end of

the year. That road has been especially challenging for the Ambulances racing off the Island and to a hospital. The FDOT couldn't fix it fast enough for those ambulance drivers and paramedics!



For those unable to attend my Town Hall Meeting on March 27th, one of the items we will be announcing is the addition of lighting along the new stretch of road on US 41E from 951 to Greenway Road. During the winter it is pitch black down there, and with so many senior mobile home parks and Habitat Villages in that area, it becomes very dangerous! I couldn't believe that the FDOT would install street lights other places in the county when they widened the road, but here, where seniors who have trouble seeing at night, and the Villages where people ride bikes, and where FDOT increases the speed limit to 60 MPH, yet they do not install street lights!!! We've been fighting for them ever since! What a shame that they didn't install them as they do in other parts of the county! But we'll be getting them now!

We are announcing our next tour of the season and one you have never seen before! It will be the Special Services Division of the Sheriff's Department! I went on it myself to check it out, and you'll LOVE it! It will be held on Wednesday, April 3rd at 10AM. You'll see the night surveillance equipment and helicopters, the SWAT team and training, Stun guns; well I don't want to spoil it, so just sign up with Mike in my office and you'll see for yourself. Email him at Michael.Brownlee@CollierCountyFL.gov if you would like to join us. This tour is not open to the public unless invited or arranged with the Sheriff's office. There are only 38 seats, and when they are filled, we must cut it off. It will take a few hours, and they will serve a little food while we sit and they give a presentation and explain many things, plus there will be some walking and viewing. It's an experience you won't want to miss and you'll never forget!

There are a couple issues out there that are looming big time, and I want to talk about them in this Tidbits. The first is that the County Manager said we have to stop installing any new landscaping because the maintenance fees have gotten so high we don't have the money to install new and maintain what we have with the money we receive. I hope to present a few suggestions to him at our next BCC meeting. I'm not sure how the other Commissioners will feel about my suggestions, but let's keep our fingers crossed.

Another issue is buying the Golden Gate Golf course and keeping it as a golf course for our future generations to use. It appears no one is building them now, and very few 18-hole golf courses remain outside of gated communities. Just think what would have happened if the city fathers of yesteryear had said no, don't reserve that land for a Central Park, we need more

housing! Once the land is gone, it is GONE! But instead, in their wisdom, New York has Central Park and Boston has The Commons! We could all name a few more places. At a community meeting that Kaydee Tuff held on March 11th, people came in droves (sorry the Naples Daily News didn't cover it - but maybe they don't like to write about local news), and all were in favor of it, but then again, we were hoping they would be. What surprised me was that I told them of a suggestion coming from the dais of the BCC saying we should keep 9 holes and build housing on the rest, and they all unanimously said NO! There are plenty of executive golf courses, but how many public 18-hole public golf courses are there left in Collier County? They are right. The commissioners work for the people of the community, the taxpayers. They need to hear them! I just hope they listen.

The last issue I want to mention is something that has come up on Bayshore Drive. As most of you know, Bayshore has been designated an Art District for many, many years. Recently FGCU asked the CRA to "gift" them the 17 acres which has been set aside for a Community Arts District area, but FGCU wants to build a research center on that acreage. The CAPA group had asked to rent or lease the land, or even gift it to them to build a Performance Hall, to hold performing and visual arts, but the CRA has been hesitant. Now FGCU wants to use the land and build student housing, visitors housing, a research lab, etc. The CRA board has cried loudly; NO MORE HOUSING! They need the arts, they need the entertainment, and they want cute little restaurants and boutiques, not more housing.

Speaking of restaurants, a darling little coffee shop has just opened on Bayshore in the building with huge hibiscus flowers painted on it, and more are being painted as we speak. I've heard patrons exclaim loudly how delightful that little coffee shop is. I'd better check it out! Today I spoke to Paul Arsenault (one of our most famous painters in Collier County) and he was sick inside to have heard that someone wants to change the theme of Bayshore. I told him we could use his help to keep it in the arts. I believe he is on board big time. Yes, the street is in flux now, and we must think everything through more carefully, as we will have to live with the results, so let's be thoughtful and caring, and think of the best interest of the people who live and work on Bayshore, and what will be best for that area! There are so many good things about to happen in East Naples and in that area, what with the existing world-renowned Naples Botanical Garden, the East Naples Community Park and the home of the U.S. Open Pickleball Championships, and now the emerging Bayshore Arts District. It's all there in front of us. Let's address it thoughtfully and carefully, and do the right thing, because it will be something we have to live with for many years to come.

For those of you shopping at King's Lake Shopping Center on Davis Boulevard, you'll notice a dramatic difference that isn't very pleasing looking at this time, but this is just the beginning of the changes about to take place which will be, according to the developer, much needed improvements. First, they are building a new sign for King's Lake Shopping Center and removing the scraggily oak trees along the buffer and replacing them with Live Oaks, Palms and Maples, placing a new sign at the other entrance, and tearing down the old sign, and

restoring the hedge line along the property line between buffer and the parking lot. It was nice of them to give us a heads-up so I can let you know. This shopping center is such a popular place and we wanted to make sure you all knew what is happening early, so you won't be concerned.

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