



Civic Chatline

Be Aware! Be Alert! Be Informed!
Founded in March 1962, CCCA is the Cape's oldest civic organization



Volume X Issue IV

Happy Birthday Civic

April 2009

Last month at Civic Fire Chief Bill VanHelden

Civic continues to be on the leading edge when it comes to our monthly general meetings and speakers.

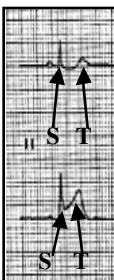
Last month was no exception when our Emergency Management Director and CC Fire Chief, Bill VanHelden was the keynote speaker. Chief VanHelden provided us with a host of information complete with overhead graphs and statistical information about the CCFD and ALS (Advanced Life Support) and emergency services. "The CCFD is the most diversified FD in the county", said VanHelden.

However VanHelden expressed his concerns about the department falling short of the desired standard 5 minute response 90% of the time. With the current city boundaries that would require 19 fire stations. Currently we have 9 fire stations and a house in Gator Circle. He cited statistics where in 2001 they could meet the response standard 61% of the time. Today it has fallen to a concerning 44% level. He also expressed his concern of the city's less than desirable three man engines instead of four man engines. The department is down 40 positions over the past two years.



With the increase in home foreclosures there has been an increase in the number of vacant building fires. Of the 17,000 calls last year approximately 70% (about 12,000 calls) were for medical emergencies.

Chief VanHelden also informed Civic that EMS will no longer transport STEMI or stroke patients to Cape Coral Hospital. Instead they will go directly to Gulf Coast or Health Park.



STEMI is S-T Elevation Myocardial Infarct (heart attack) as determined by a 12 lead ECG administered by paramedics. And while the American Heart Association standard for D2B (Door to Balloon time) for PTCA to open a clogged artery is 90 minutes or less. LMHS web page indicates they achieved this benchmark only 69% of the time from July 07 through June 08 while the state and national average is 78%. We wonder what the average is just for patients living west of the river. We get the feeling that it's probably worse.

Our fire department also has a "Code Red" capability where some 60,000 calls/hour can be made in case of an emergency for those signed on to the system. Calls can also be isolated to a specific geographical area. Code Red has been initiated in the past when a nursing home patient went missing.

This Month Cape Coral CM Terry Stewart Keynote Speaker at Civic April 28

This month Civic is pleased to announce that City Manager Terry Stewart will be the keynote speaker. Believe it or not it has been more than three years since Mr. Stewart has been at Civic. In Jan. 2006 when our scheduled speaker Mike Jackson, Economic Development Director became ill and had to cancel, we called Terry at the last minute, and he agreed to fill in. This is what we said about Mr. Stewart then; "Terry did a great job as our pinch hitter in providing a wealth of information on the state of our city and responding to impromptu questions from the audience on a variety of subjects."

Here we are more than three years later, Mike Jackson is no longer with the city and the CM is also wearing the Economic Development Manager's hat. We are sure that Terry will again provide abundant information on the state of the city including the proposed "alternative" taxing mechanisms such as Public Service Tax and Fire District Assessments that council has yet to vote on. Your Civic Board is opposed to the tax alternatives that have been suggested favoring ad valorem taxes in stead since they can be deducted from federal tax returns.

Earlier this month Mr. Stewart was given his yearly performance review. Six of the council members rated the CM satisfactory or better and by contract this provides for an automatic 2% salary increase. Stewart asked council to forego a pay increase in favor of contract extension as he did last year. Council on a 5-3 vote approved his contract extension to April 2011 which is an additional year on top of the additional year he received last August. Strangely, even though Council member Deile rated the CM as satisfactory, he then voted against the contract extension.

By the way, last April when the CM asked to forego his salary increase in favor of the contract extension council turned him down and made him accept the 2% increase by contract without the contract extension. A few months later council then voted to keep the CM for an additional year since council must notify the CM six months in advance if they choose not to renew his contract. Failure to do so provides for an automatic contract renewal.



Thank you Council member Donnell

Civic would like to express our thanks to Council member Dr. Derrick Donnell aka "Big D" for speaking at Civic last month. One thing that we can say about the council member is that he remains upbeat on city issues and tries to maintain civility and respect in dealing with the public and staff.





Politics in Paradise

A look at bureaucrats and elected officials

Cape Coral RO Bottled Water

During a recent Committee of the Whole on the discussion of the water and sewer rates and the bond issue for the North R.O. Plant, Council member Tim Day suggested an alternative funding source to help pay for the new North R.O. Plant. He suggested that perhaps the city should lease the new R.O. plant to help pay the construction cost. We thought that was a pretty original idea until we learned that Council member Tate had suggested bottling Cape's RO water sometime ago.



As part of the Cape's staying "hydrated for healthy living" we heard there will be a "name that water contest." Coral-Fina and Coral-Cristallo-Puro are currently competing for top honors. However, according to Mark Twain, "Whiskey is for drinking; water is for fighting over."

Seriously, with the UEP stoppage there has to be an alternative other than the existing rate payers to help pay for the North RO plant. Perhaps the CM can address this issue.

Yes Virginia, he really said it

During the same COW meeting discussion of the water and sewer rates and the bond issue for the North RO Plant, Council member Pete Brandt took another opportunity to publically make disparaging remarks about the CM and his staff. Brandt went so far as to accuse the CM of being in "collusion" with the CC Daily Breeze in the selection of their topics that are asked of the public in the Saturday edition.



Council member Deile who was absent from the meeting due to medical reasons asked that his memo be read into the record on the subject matter. Deile's comments also mixed in some less than complementary remarks toward the CM.

The CM was given an opportunity by the Mayor to respond and he did so. We learned that although Brandt and Deile vet many concerns publically, they very seldom ask the CM if their information is correct. One would think after 18 months on council, one would verify the information they are presenting to be completely factual, too often it's not.

Last Call for 2009 Dues Renewal

We still have several 2008 members who have not renewed their dues for the current year. Dues are due in January and we are finishing the 1st quarter of the year, yet some people are still delinquent. Quite frankly, it's a bit disappointing. Membership is only \$20. per family per year. We certainly do value your membership and hope that you value the 47 year tradition of Civic. If you have any doubt of your membership status please give Ralph LePera a call at 574-6112.

Happy 47th Birthday CC Civic Association

Following an organizational meeting held on March 1, 1962 on April 2, 1962 the CCCA elected its first President - Verne Shiegel, Edward Jay - Vice President, Lt. Col. Kathleen McQure - Executive Secretary and John McEwen - Treasurer. The Board of Directors included, Fred Hubbard, Col. W.N. Thomas, Donald Graff, Ed Quirk, Fred Leuffen and Madge York.



April President's message

Dear Members and Friends,

I think most of you will agree that last month we had another fantastic and informative meeting thanks to our keynote speaker Chief Bill VanHelden. We thank Chief VanHelden for his time and interest in coming to Civic. We also want to extend our thanks to Council member Donnell who gave us his "new" perspective on council now that he sits on the other side of the dais.

This month, I am certain that our meeting will be equally informative with the City Manager Terry Stewart as our keynote speaker. As I mentioned in my message last month I'm sure the Cape Coral City budget is at the top of everyone's list of concerns these days, as well as, my own. With an expected 30-35 million dollar shortfall as a result of the real estate down market, how does the city adjust to these revenue losses.

At the last board meeting a majority of your civic executive board present voted against any new forms of taxation. Civic, as in the past, is opposed to a public service tax since it's not all encompassing in that unimproved property owners pay nothing. The fire service assessment is a new proposal on which we need additional information. However, if it means that we pay for fire service through assessments that can't be deducted on our federal tax returns this presents a problem.

As we heard from Mark Mason last month one of the possibilities is the Public Service Tax, that his office and the City Manager are proposing. I don't know about you, but a tax that I can't deduct from my federal income tax at the end of the year is not popular with me, nor the rest of the Civic Executive Board. Therefore, I will be sending a letter to the Mayor and City Council opposing the Public Service Tax in the name of the members of the Civic Association.

As I mentioned last month we are also trying to get Dr. Steve Brown, LMHS Board Member as a possible speaker. Steve has brought Civic concerns as to the lack of providing cardiac emergency capabilities (see page 1 for additional info) at Cape Coral Hospital to administration. We have now confirmed that Lee Memorial Health Systems will be providing Civic with a presentation at our September 29 general meeting.

We continue to see letters to the editor about the "\$110M PSB". Perhaps it's time Civic reminded these people that the PSB 4 story 213,150 sq.ft. building was \$58M which is twice the size of the 3 story Police Headquarters being erected.

In addition there was a 200,000 sq. ft. elevated parking garage at \$7.9M, Design and Permitting at \$9.2M, Land at \$8.2M, Site Prep at \$8.0M, Contingency fee at \$11.9M and Equipment and Furnishings at \$7.4M.

The PSB project was voted down in 2007 (actually the bond issue was voted down, not the PSB). The ballot question was to approve a bond for the construction! Most importantly was that city council put the PSB issue in the hands of the voters to exercise the democratic process by referendum vote. Yet, some people still gripe about the PSB, go figure!

I look forward to hearing from you and seeing you at our next meeting!

Regards,

Treva Devers, President

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

Information from the Lee County Property Appraiser's Web Page

SENIOR EXEMPTION

In order to qualify for an additional homestead exemption of up to \$50,000 for all residents of Lee County age 65 years or older, the "household income" (cumulative "adjusted gross income") of all persons living in the home cannot exceed the yearly amount as determined by the Florida Department of Revenue. This exemption applies only to the property taxes levied by the taxing authority granting the exemption. Annual application is not required if you do not exceed the annual income limitation.

All residents of Lee County, 65 years of age or older as of Jan 1, whose annual adjusted gross household income does not exceed the mandated income limitation may qualify for this additional exemption. **Income limits are adjusted annually.**

Annual re-application is not required: If you have already applied for and received this exemption for the prior tax year and your 2007 or 2008 annually adjusted gross income does not exceed the income limitation you remain eligible for 2009 and do not need to re-apply. If your 2008 income exceeds this amount, you will need to verify the 2009 income limitation and notify the appraiser if you exceed the limitation. If you are applying for the senior exemption for the first time please take a minute to review the following information:

TAX EXEMPTION INFORMATION FOR LEE COUNTY SENIORS

Are you 65 years of age or older as of January 1, 2009? If you answered yes **Congratulations!** You may be entitled to an additional tax exemption just for Seniors.

If you are 65 years of age or older as of January 1, 2009 and you have never made application for the Senior exemption, you may be eligible to receive this benefit. If you did not receive this benefit last year - you must apply in order to qualify for tax year 2009. If your 2008 adjusted income does not exceed the 2009 annual gross adjusted household income limitation of approximately \$25,000 (* the 2009 limitation amount will be provided to the Appraiser's Office by the Department of Revenue no later than January 31, 2009). If your 2008 adjusted gross income does not exceed the 2007 limitation (24,916), you can file now by completing the Senior application and including a copy of your 2007 IRS return or Social Security Income Statement. If your 2008 adjusted gross income exceeds the 2007 limitation, please re-visit our website as of February 1, to obtain the 2009 income limitation.

Pursuant to Florida Statutes, the filing deadline is March 2, 2008. Final deadline for providing us all income related documentation is June 1, 2009. If you don't file within this statutory deadline, you may not be able to receive this tax savings benefit until next year. If you do not already receive this exemption and believe that you may qualify, please apply as soon as possible.

OTHER EXEMPTIONS

\$500 WIDOW/WIDOWER'S EXEMPTION - To file for Widow or Widower's Exemption you must be a widow or widower prior to JANUARY 1st of the tax year and provide proof of your spouse's death. Divorced persons do not qualify for this exemption.

VETERAN \$500 DISABILITY EXEMPTION – Veteran /Non Veteran – Florida residents who provide proof of total and permanent disability or proof of legal blindness may qualify. Certification from two professionally unrelated physicians and/or other official certification of disability is required. Income verification is not required. (Physician's Certification of Disability forms are available in our office or download form DR 416.

VETERAN – TOTAL AND PERMANENT DISABILITY EXEMPTION – An honorably discharged veteran *with total and permanent* service-connected disability may qualify for total exemption of ad-valorem taxes. (Provide documentation from VA stating service-connected total and permanent disability).

TOTAL EXEMPTION OF HOMESTEAD PROPERTY FROM AD VALOREM TAXATION - Section 196.101, F.S. provides that real estate owned by quadriplegic is exempt from taxation – **there is no income limitation for quadriplegics.** Paraplegic, hemiplegic, or other totally and permanently disabled persons, who must use a wheel chair for mobility, or are legally blind and produce certification of that fact shall be exempt from ad valorem taxation - Income limitation applies – proof of gross income is required and/or other official certification of disability is required. (Physician's Certification of Disability forms are available in our office or can be downloaded from our website).

<http://www.leepa.org/> (Please note: the information contained herein was copied from the leepa.org.)



Cape Coral Civic Association
P.O. Box 152171
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Next General Meeting: Tues. April 28 @ 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>

2009-10 CCCA Board of Directors

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President:	Treva Devers
Vice President:	Tony Farina
Secretary:	Kathy Burgess
Treasurer:	Rillie Hickey
Trustees:	Walter Fluegel
	Jane Longo
	Frank Perry
	Nick Tomacelli
	Art Vitale
Ex-officio	Ralph LePera

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Council Office Phone: 574-0437

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Cape Citizen's Action Center: 574-0425
City Web Page <http://www.capecoral.net>