



Civic Chatline

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



Volume XI Issue I

Happy New Year

January 2010

Last Meeting at Civic November 2009 BOCC Ray Judah



At our last meeting our featured speaker was Lee County Commissioner Ray Judah. Civic asked Ray to give a presentation on the new \$70M Boston Red Sox spring training facility which has been dubbed, Fenway Park South complete with the famous "Green Monster" left field wall.

The 10,000-seat complex will be located on a 126 acre site on the north side of Daniels Pkwy, north of SWFL Regional airport and east of Gateway. The completion date is anticipated to have the Red Sox move in before spring training in 2012 which will coincide with the 100-year anniversary of Fenway Park in Boston.

To pay for the stadium, the BOCC approved a 1.5% loan from county undesignated reserves, to fund the project up front for a year, while they are looking to move the funding into the bond market. The bonds will be paid back using 20% percent of the *tourist tax dollars* commissioners agreed to set aside. That percentage generated about \$4.4 million this year. This means that ad valorem taxes will not be used to fund the project.

The stadium will be constructed by Kraft Construction a 40 year old company, from Naples who will act as the general contractor and will receive 4.5% of the total construction cost. We understand the contract is a "contract manager at risk" which means Kraft assumes all legal issues. This is similar to what Cape Coral contracted for with MWH for the utilities expansion. Kraft is also building the new VA Clinic.

What is also significant about building the Stadium complex is the local jobs that it will create as well as the surrounding economic development. The project could boost the economy by \$45M/year.

Judah also said the county would be interested in the *Swim Center* should the Cape fail to move forward with it. The Swim Center was originally slated to be part of the stadium complex but was rejected by the Red Sox. The City of Palms Park is a venue mentioned for the Swim Center.

Although not scheduled to speak, we appreciated newly elected council member Marty McClain's input and encouragement regarding the topic of the Swim Center. Marty has become the standard bearer for the Swim Center (depending on the feasibility study) now that Dolores Bertolini, who originally advocated the project, is no longer on council. At this time there appears to be concern on council as to the viability of the project.



This Month at Civic January, 26 Paul Sanborn, Historian & Doug Baker, LCEC



As we begin the New Year your Civic board thought it might be fun to review our history before incorporation in 1970. Yes, Cape Coral is about to reach middle age by turning 40 this year.

Paul Sanborn last spoke at Civic in 2007 as a guest speaker at Civic's 45th Anniversary Dinner. Before becoming a city and before there was a mayor & city council; Paul Sanborn, Cape Civic and the alligators were here. Cape Coral's government was across the river where county commissioners decided what was best for us. Back then, prior to city council, Civic played a pseudo role in government by bringing community issues to light with the commissioners, Gulf American Corporation and anyone who would hear the concerns of citizens. Since 1962 Civic meetings are held in the Yacht Club building.

Paul has a 30-40 minute presentation and will take questions. We also understand long time resident Elmer Tabor will accompany Paul. This should be a fun evening.

Also on tap is Doug Barker who has been with LCEC since March 1992 and is the Supervisor of the Energy Services Department. Doug been an Electrician for 37 years and Master Electrician for 6 yrs.



The Energy Services Department offers is the energy efficiency expertise for the organization. Its key objective is developing and delivering energy efficient programs and services to their internal and external customers in support of the overall LCEC mission.

LCEC's Energy Advisors conduct personalized energy surveys of individual homes and businesses. They connect with customers and take time to assist with specific energy challenges. They complete many hours of training and hands-on experience each year, and they work with customers toward reducing energy costs in their home.

2010 Civic Membership Dues, Due

For those who have not already paid their dues during the past three months, your 2010 dues are now due. This year marks Civic's 48th year in providing a public service to Cape Coral & Lee County. It is only through the generosity of our members past and present that this is possible.

Dues may be paid at the general meeting or **mailed to the return address listed on the mailing page of Chatline.** Please make your check payable to "CCCA" today.

Since the strength of any organization can be measured by its members, Civic would also appreciate your help in recruiting new members. Civic dues are **only \$20.00** per family, per year.

Thank you! We value your membership!





Politics in Paradise

A look at bureaucrats and elected officials

Single Member Districts?

Lee County is considering placing Single Member Districts on the ballot this year. Should this happen and should this receive voter approval, it would mean that voters would no longer be voting for all commissioners who set our county tax levies. Voters would only vote for one commissioner who represents their district. How say you on this issue? E-mail Civic with your thoughts. capecoralcivic@yahoo.com

Mayor Misspeaks

At the December 7, 09 city council workshop, during citizens input, the mayor indicated that he understood that Rumrunners Restaurant was having financial trouble. Not long after his comments Cape Harbour Developer Will Stout and Rumrunner's co owner Jeff Gantly appeared at council.

After Stout repeated asked where he got information the mayor said; *"It was a rumor I heard many times."*

Jeff Gantly stated; *"It's horribly disturbing to think you would put that out to the public without merit."*

Unfortunately putting out information to the public without merit is nothing new some on this council.

The Mayor's #1 Promise

"I Will Not support any New Taxes, Fees or Assessments."

In a Jan. 4, memo to council, the mayor clearly suggests a charge of \$300-\$400 per year for five years for "property owners who are not hooked into city utilities" to pay for the North R.O. Plant.

Here's what a Breeze editorial said: "Simply put, what Mayor Sullivan proposes is a precedent-setting new concept, **a new tax not for services provided**, but for services pending at some point in the future - maybe- ..."

Taxpayers Legal Defense Cost Continue to Rise

There has been an on going saga with the issue of the UEP methodology that triggered a law suit by the Watchdogs several years ago in which the city prevailed.

About three years another law suit was filed by Bill Deile. John Sullivan is a plaintiff in that suit, citing unfair methodology for over sized and irregular lots. All assessments use a methodology based on an equal rate charge per square foot.

The current cost to taxpayers is now over \$75,000 to defend against two plaintiffs who now sit on the city council. Some view this as a definite conflict of interest especially when voting on UEP issues. However, the real question is what happens if the plaintiffs are successful and other suits follow. The potential cost to taxpayers as a result could be staggering.

Cape Coral Losing Key Employees

Gone is City Manager Terry Stewart. Gone is Finance Director Mark Mason. The City will soon be losing attorneys Mark Lupe (land contracts) and Ron Dente who works in HR as the union negotiator for the city.

Also expected to retire this year are City Attorney Marilyn Miller and City Clerk Bonnie Potter.

No matter what anyone's opinion may be of these people, having this sort of turnover and instability in any organizations does not bode well especially when trying to attract enterprises to invest in the city and provide jobs.



President's message, November 2009

Dear Members & Friends –

Welcome to another good year in Cape Coral. I think a reminder of dues being due is appropriate, and appreciated. I hope everyone had a good holiday. Next year I am asking Santa for long johns, fleece lined underwear, and anything else that will keep me warm. I think there is global chillin' going on, which leads us into our guest speakers.

Doug Baker from Lee County Electric co-op will inform us about energy conservation, home and business energy surveys to reduce costs, and will also take questions after his presentations.

Also speaking will be Paul Sanborn representing the Cape Coral Historical Society. He will have about a 30 minute presentation of how the city started. A good understanding of how our city was founded and formed may give some insight as to how we got to today's problems.

I wish to give Ray Judah a hearty thank you for his always informative presentations and hope he enjoyed his visit. I know I did.

A surprise guest showed up, newly elected Marty McClain. He gave a very impressive, impromptu presentation, and was informative on a lot of problems and situations that are evolving in the Cape. He also presented very well thought out solutions for them. I hope the rest of the council who come to speak at our meetings are as knowledgeable and forthright

Our next meeting will be on Tuesday, Jan 26, 2010 at 7pm. As usual, if you know anyone who may be interested in the topics being presented, bring them along. They do not have to be a member to visit our meeting, and some people may want to join once they are exposed to what we offer.

Civic has a new secretary, Linda Prince. I hope I remember to introduce her to everyone, and now that I have put it in my message, remind me if I forget. Thank You and I hope to see everyone there. The board will provide refreshments.

Sincerely,

Anthony "Tony" Farina, President

"The Association is for the betterment of Cape Coral"

With Our Deepest Sympathy

It is with deep regret that we inform the membership of the recent passing of Civic member and long time city resident **Tommy Colletta**. For many years, Tom and the Sons of Italy organized and staged the Columbus Day parade that started at Four Freedoms Park back then.

As many of you know Cape Coral lost an icon recently in the passing of **Tony Rotino**, former multi-term (before term limits) Dist. 1 council member and Senior Citizen's advocate. Tony was also a member of Civic.

Also in December former Dist. 1 city council member **Harold Eaton** passed away. Hal and Gail Eaton moved from the city several years ago and relocated in St. Mary's, GA. They were also members of Civic.

Again Civic expresses our deepest sympathy to their families and may their souls rest in peace.

Limited Income, Additional Homestead Exemption for Seniors

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" referred to as AGI hereafter) 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 annually adjusted gross income does not exceed the annually adjusted income limitation you remain eligible for 2010 and do not need to re-apply. 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, 2010? 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, 2010 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 2010.

As the 2010 income limitation is NOT provided to our office until the end of January, you may apply prior to that time and qualify based on your 2008 or 2009 adjusted gross income (AGI). If using your 2008 AGI to qualify, that amount cannot exceed **\$25,973** (the 2009 income limitation). For persons who do not yet have documented proof of their 2009 AGI - (Social Security statement or IRS filing) you can provide us with proof of your 2008 AGI, (Social Security Income Statement, form SSA-1099, IRS Return Form 1040 and W-2. If the 2008 AGI amount does not exceed the 2009 limitation, we will process your 2010 application using those amounts. **HOWEVER, you are responsible for contacting the Appraiser's Office immediately upon determination that your actual 2009 adjusted gross income exceeds the 2010 income limitation as you would not qualify under the law. Please be advised that it is a violation of Florida law to provide false information for the purpose of claiming exemption and is punishable by fine and or imprisonment.**

Pursuant to Florida Statutes, the filing deadline is March 1, 2010, however applications may be late filed and will be approved in accordance with current Florida law. The final deadline for providing all income related documentation is June 1, 2010. Applications and information provided after these deadlines may not qualify for the current tax year.

IF YOU DO NOT ALREADY RECEIVE THIS EXEMPTION AND BELIEVE THAT YOU MAY QUALIFY - PLEASE APPLY AS SOON AS POSSIBLE <http://www.leepa.org/Exemption/DownloadSeniorExemptionForms.aspx> Tel: (239) 533-6100

Also note that the City of Cape Coral provides a similar exemption for low income seniors for Cape Coral property taxes. This exemption is provided through the city using the same AGI baseline. Contact City of Cape Coral, (239) 574-0401

In the News

As reported in the News-Press "Concerns arise over Cape Coral golf meeting." This article has to do with city council



member Chris Leetz meeting with City Golf Club employees on January 13th. At hand are questions / concerns with the employees who were in the meeting. One question was related to a possible charter violation, and another question was related to an alleged unfair labor practice

We understand that general employees union leader, Wally Ilczyszyn filed an unfair labor practice complaint with Carl Schwing. "From what I've heard he met with a group of city employees at the golf course and he may have asked them to consider an 11 percent pay cut," Ilczyszyn said. "That could be direct dealing, circumventing the negotiation process."

Perhaps the council member is unaware of the prohibitions in the City Charter that require him to go through the city manager when dealing with employees.

§ 4.10. Prohibitions. c) *Interference with administration. Except for the purpose of inquiries and investigations, the Council or its members shall deal with City officers and employees who are subject to the direction and supervision of the city manager solely through the city manager*

It remains to be seen whether or not this issue will be discussed at the January 25, City Council meeting. If it isn't, it should be. Council needs to be reminded of its boundaries.

Senior Bumper Stickers



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Cape Coral Civic Association

P.O. Box 152171

Cape Coral, FL 33915 - 2171



Next General Meeting: Tues. Jan 26 @ 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 CCA Board of Directors

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City Council member directory:

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Cape Citizen's Action Center: 574-0425

City Web Page <http://www.capecoral.net>