

DISTRICT 1		DISTRICT 5			DISTRICT 3		<p>Meet the candidates vying for a seat August 30 on the Martin County Commission.</p> <p>See Election 2016 inside.</p>
							
Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch	Doug Smith	Ed Ciampi	John Haddox	Donna Melzer	Anne Scott	Harold Jenkins	

FREE

Martin County **CURRENTS**

Volume 6 Issue 3 • June/July 2016

We're on our own!
No federal help coming in algae crisis pg 6

Judge orders deposition
pg 23



~~U.S. ECO-GEN~~
No to Eco-Gen?
pg 22



Hobe Sound becoming a town!
pg 24

Proven Ability Proven Results Proven Leadership



PROVEN LEADERSHIP

- County Commissioner from 2008 to 2012, two years as Chairman
- Reduced the county's budget by \$65 million!
- Quality of life projects: Sailfish Splash Water Park, Veteran's Memorial Bridge, Citrus Grove Ballpark, Timer Powers Equestrian Ring, Library Idea Lab
- Witham Field Customs Facility

COMMITTED TO HIS COMMUNITY

- Three generations of the Ciampi family make Martin County their home
- Served on multiple nonprofit boards of directors
- Leadership roles with local school parent-teacher organizations
- Lector and religious instructor at Holy Redeemer Catholic Church

COMMITTED TO THE FUTURE

- Stop the Lake Okeechobee discharges by sending the water south
- Continue the Fight against All Aboard Florida
- Responsibly and effectively address our infrastructure backlog
- Support citizen input into our government through CRAs and NACs

ED CIAMPI for COMMISSIONER

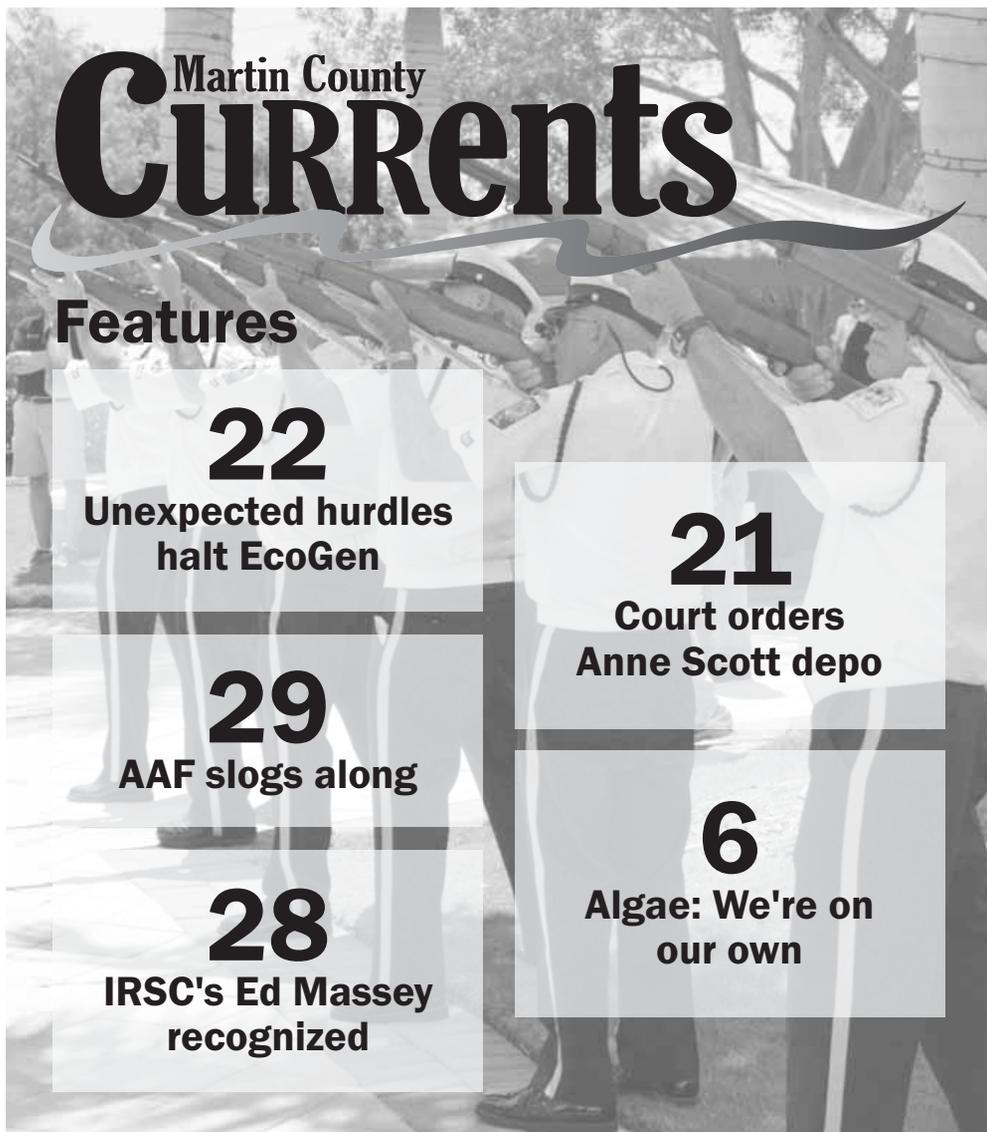


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Martin County CURRENTS

Features

22

Unexpected hurdles halt EcoGen

29

AAF slogs along

28

IRSC's Ed Massey recognized

21

Court orders Anne Scott depo

6

Algae: We're on our own

Columnists

Editorial	12	Art Kaleidoscope	27
Unfiltered	13	Maya Ellenson	
Barbara Clowdus		Pompano Reporter	30
		Rich Vidulich	

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Only Republicans may vote in two county commission races

The District 1 and District 3 races for County Commission are now closed to all voters except registered Republicans following the recent filing by two write-in candidates.

According to Vicki Davis, Martin County Supervisor of Elections, the write-in candidates are not qualified for the primary ballot on August 30, but will be qualified for the general election in November as write-in candidates. Their names, Stuart residents Chase Austin Lurgio and John F. Schierbaum, will not be listed on the ballot.

Write-in candidates pay no fee and are not required to collect petitions to qualify. Normally they have no intention of seeking office; rather, they are making a strategic move to close the voting to those who may not share their political philosophy.

Davis frequently cautions voters during her public appearances that Florida is a "closed primary" state.

"This means that in primary elections," she explains, "you are entitled to vote the official primary election ballot of the political party you are registered with and no other."

The exception to that rule applies when all the candidates are members of the same political party and no write-in candidate has qualified for the general election, as is the case now for the District 5 County Commission race among John Haddox, Donna Melzer and Ed

Ciampi, all Republicans vying for the seat that represents Palm City and parts of Indiantown.

Any registered voter will be able to vote in the District 5 race.

"Many voters will change their party affiliation prior to the primary (in order to vote in all commission races)," Davis adds, "but you must be registered with your party of choice 29 days before the primary election." This year, August 1 is the deadline.

Davis also encourages voters to check their voter registration for accuracy, even if they do not intend to switch political parties.

Three voting opportunities are available in Martin County -- voting by mail, early voting on August 20-27 at the elections office, and Election Day voting at assigned precincts. To request a ballot, go to www.MartinVotes.com, click on "Vote By Mail Request," call 772.288.5637, or visit the Elections Center at 135 SE Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, Stuart. Ballots are mailed 35 days before the election and continue to be mailed as requests are received.

Don't worry about lost mail. You will be able to track your ballot on the MartinVotes.com website. ■



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Election 2016 section to focus on county commission race

Another lost summer on the St. Lucie River and in the Indian River Lagoon shifted much of the local focus on county political candidates to the state and federal races – the elected officials who have the most direct impact on legislation and policy that addresses the health of Martin County waterways. Or do they?

The Martin County Commission controls local legislation regarding stormwater treatment and the county's conversion from septic tanks to sewers, also critical components to river restoration efforts. Considering that no water from Lake Okeechobee was discharged to the St. Lucie River throughout all of 2014, yet the river still suffered from algae blooms and spent several months at various points under the Health Department's warnings of high bacteria levels, Martin County residents know those issues must be resolved, too, in order to attain healthy waterways.

All the county commission candidates support the purchase of land south of Lake Okeechobee as part of the restoration efforts for the river and the lagoon, and all candidates oppose All Aboard Florida; therefore, Currents asked how each candidate stood on the issue of regulations and taxes, since those also are frequent topics of conversation among citizens and small businesses locally. They also are considered barriers to expanding the county's tax base to create much-needed revenue to accomplish water restoration, as well as meeting citizens' quality-of-life expectations.

District 1 County Commission – Republican incumbent Doug Smith and Republican challenger Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch; the winner will

face write-in candidate Chase Lurgio in the November election.

District 3 County Commission – Republican incumbent Anne Scott and Republican challenger Harold Jenkins; the winner of which will face write-in candidate John Schierbaum.

District 5 County Commission – Republican incumbent John Haddox and Republican challengers Ed Ciampi and Donna Melzer, whose race will be decided in the primary election August 30 and is open to all registered voters.

The last-minute filings as write-in candidates closed the primary election to all but registered Republican voters in the County Commission races for District 1 and District 3 seats.

Lurgio is an 18-year-old Jensen Beach high school senior, and Schierbaum is a former Republican candidate who opposed Ed Fielding in 2014. The names of the write-in candidates will not appear on either primary or general election ballots.

Martin County Currents asked County Commission candidates to write their own biography, supply their favorite picture, and to answer one question: **Do you favor the current county commission's direction of increasing regulations and raising taxes and to explain his or her answer.** None of the answers were edited, and all are presented in full.

Scott and Melzer refused to partici-

pate, and District 1 candidate Henry Copeland, who submitted his answers, withdrew from the race prior to the publication's print date. The special section begins on Page 6.

OTHER RACES

Several local races were decided at the end of the qualifying period at noon June 24 after no additional candidates filed to run against these incumbents, thus electing by default to additional four-year terms:

– **Circuit Court Clerk:** Carolyn Timmann

– **Property Appraiser:** Laurel Kelly

– **Elections Supervisor:** Vicki Davis

– **School Board, District 2:** Marsha Powers

– **Stuart City Commission, Group 3:** Troy McDonald (a two-year term)

– **Stuart City Commission, Group 5:** Eula Clarke (a two-year term)

Sewall's Point Town Commission: Three new commissioners were elected after Pam Busha withdrew from the race, including incumbent Vinny Barile, Frank Fender and incumbent Paul Luger.

STILL TO BE DECIDED

Stuart City Commission, Group 1 – Incumbent Commissioner Tom Campenni is being challenged by Patrick McGavock in a race for a two-year term that will be decided on August 30.

Martin County Sheriff – All the candidates in the primary election are registered Republicans, except for Sheriff. That race includes one Republican, an Independent and one candidate with no party affiliation. The current sheriff, William D. Snyder, the Republican in the race, faces Robert Leon Pryor Jr., the Independent, and Dennis Root, with no party affiliation, in the November general election.

Superintendent of Schools – In another last-minute filing, Palm City attorney Scott King will challenge the Superintendent of Schools incumbent Laurie Gaylord, whom many voters expected would run unopposed considering her success in moving the school system out of its multi-million-dollar deficit, smoothing tensions among school systems personnel, and

navigating three different sets of school standards and tests while maintaining its top-three state ranking.

School Board District 5 – Incumbent Michael DiTerlizzi, Republican, is being challenged by Republicans Josh Ferraro and Larry Green

Tax Collector – The incumbent, Ruth "Ski" Pietruszewski, Republican, faces Republican challengers Caroline Barca and Joe Sesta.

Public Defender District 19 – Voters here will choose between Republicans Diamond Litty and Thomas Burns.

State Senator District 25 – Republican incumbent Joe Negron will face Democrat Bruno Moore in the November election.

State Representative District 83 – Republican incumbent MaryLynn Magar is being challenged by Democrat Mary Higgins in the November election.

State Representative District 84 – Republican incumbent Gayle Harrell faces Democratic challenger Crystal Lucas in the November general election.

19th District Court Judge – Group 1 incumbent James McCann is being challenged by Beth Elaine Allen and Group 6 candidates include Michael McNicholas, Robert Meadows, Kiernan Patrick Moylan and Leonard Villafrance.

US Representative District 18 – Vying for the seat vacated by Democrat Patrick Murphy are six Republicans, three Democrats, one with no party affiliation, and one write-in candidate. The Republican and Democratic nominees will be decided during the August 30 primary among Republicans Carl Domino, Mark Freeman, Rick Kozell, Brian Mast, Rebecca Negron and Noelle Nikpour and Democrats Jonathan Chane, Randy Perkins, and John Xuna. Those nominees then will face Carla Spalding, a No Party Affiliation candidate, and Marilyn Holloman, the write-in candidate in the November general election.

US Senator – Challenging incumbent Republican Marco Rubio, who now has decided to defend his senatorial seat, in the August primary is Republican Carlos Beruff. The Democrats have five contenders in the primary, including Patrick Murphy. The Democrat and Republican nominees will face six other candidates in November.

For more information about candidates for the 2016 election, go to www.martinvotes.com. ■



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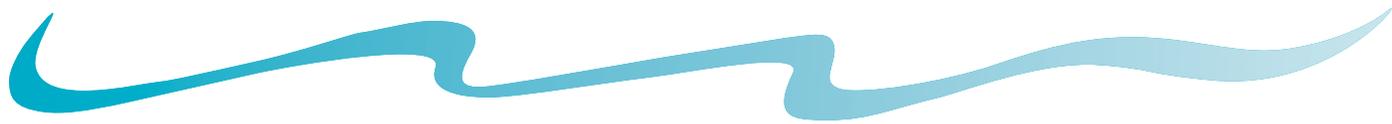


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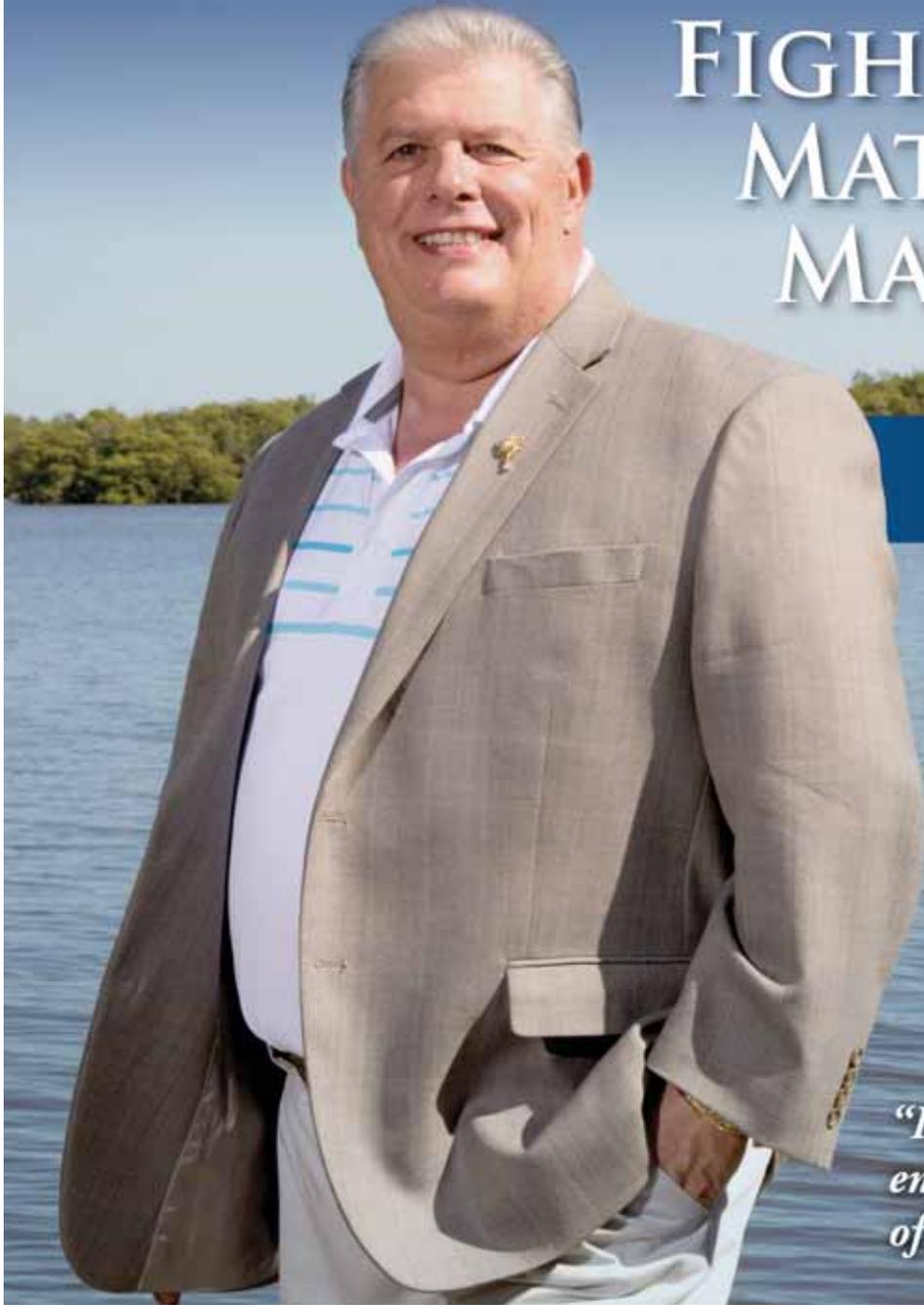
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- Leads county's fight against All Aboard Florida
- Advocates for small businesses
- 20 years in U.S. Navy
- 12 years heading Martin County Veterans Services

"I hope you'll continue entrusting me with the privilege of serving this amazing county."



"John's primary concern is South Florida's water resources and the constant attack upon them. We can count on him to protect us on our most critical issues."

— Nathaniel Reed, nationally acclaimed environmentalist



"Commissioner Haddox leads with conviction and principles. Thanks to his leadership, Martin County is well equipped to fight against All Aboard Florida. He has my full support."

— K.C. Ingram, founder of Florida NOT All Aboard

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Political advertisement approved and paid for by the campaign to re-elect John Haddox Republican candidate for Martin County Commission District 5.



County commissioners face hard reality - no help!

Martin County commissioners conceded at their July 18 meeting that federal intervention by FEMA and the CDC to help resolve the immediate impacts being experienced by residents due to the algal crisis will not happen.

"We're on our own," said Commissioner Doug Smith, who had asked the county's ecosystem manager, Deb Drum, following her update on water conditions, what more commissioners and residents can do to receive necessary resources to remove the hundreds of yards of highly toxic algae trapped in dead-end canal basins along the St. Lucie River.

A federal emergency declaration also would give the county access to FEMA funds to help families relocate temporarily and to assist businesses that had to close or layoff personnel as a result of the toxic conditions.

"We have businesses, like Central Marine in Rio, that is in dire straits," Smith added.

In addition, the CDC could conduct air and water tests and determine the ramifications to residents' health, assisting efforts by the state Department of Environmental Protection the extent of health threats, noted the commissioner.

"This is our All Aboard Florida," Smith said, as he looked down the line of commissioners at the dais, referring to the commitment of two years ago to set aside more than a million dollars to



The basin behind Outboards Only in Rio caked with toxic algae, and after five days of treatment by Ecosphere Technologies, the algae is gone. "Clean enough to swim in again," said Steve Leighton, and he did. The county is testing the water, though, just to be sure.



combat the passenger rail-service that threatens Martin County's quality of life.

He called for the commission to set aside "whatever is necessary" in emergency funds to conduct air and water testing, monitor residents' health effects, and clean up the remaining pockets of algae. No motion was necessary, as each commissioner on the dais was nodding his or her head in agreement.

Smith asked Drum to find out what the costs will be, and to bring her report back to the commission at its next meeting July 26.

Already, an outside contractor was commissioned after earlier board ap-

proval to conduct air and water quality tests to supplement those being conducted by the DEP. The initial reports show a much higher level of microcystic toxin – more than 1,000 times higher than those considered safe for human health by the World Health Organization – however, other toxins could be present, according to Drum.

Commissioners want the water tested for those, as well, including water in the basin behind Outboards Only in Rio, where Ecosphere Technologies cleared the area of algae and oxygenated the water.

"We need to know exactly what the health risks are," Smith said, "and we're not going to know without testing for all the toxins that could be present in blue-green algae."

Drum has been delivering water updates weekly to the commission at the request of Commissioner John Haddox, who expressed his disgust with the lack of federal response, even after the commissioners' recent visit to federal agency heads in Washington D.C. and participation in the Indian River Lagoon Day on Capitol Hill organized by legislative representatives.

"I cannot say enough good things about our River Warriors and our River Kidz who made that trip to D.C. and spoke up about the river conditions here," Haddox remarked, "but all we got in return was a bunch of finger-pointing and threats that funding for our Everglades projects might be cut off if we ask for too much."

Drum now calls the algae crisis "the perfect storm" of conditions: too much rain, too many nutrients in the water, and excessively hot summer temperatures – the perfect brew for algal blooms, which includes untreated water pouring into Lake Okeechobee from the north, filling the lake six times faster than it can be emptied.

The discharges from Lake Okeechobee increased, and the county's first state of emergency was declared in February. The state responded by encouraging businesses affected by the poor water quality to apply for low-interest loans.

Rain continued throughout the normally "dry" winter season, but summer temperatures kicked in and an algae bloom was spotted growing in Lake

Okeechobee. Tested by DEP, it was found to be two and half times more toxic than acceptable levels. The bloom flowed through the locks and instead of being dissipated, as has happened previously, it seemed to trigger other algae blooms throughout the estuary, increasing in toxicity level from no threat immediately east of the Port Mayaca lock to 7 times acceptable levels at the Roosevelt bridge and even greater at Sandsprit Park.

A state of emergency was declared in Martin County on June 29, followed shortly thereafter by the state's emergency declaration for Martin, St. Lucie, Lee and Palm Beach counties, which went on the President. Governor Rick Scott has appealed the President's decision to not allocate FEMA and federal resources, however, his request "neglected to identify needs or request specific assistance" and asked only for additional funding to expedite repairs to the Herbert Hoover Dike.

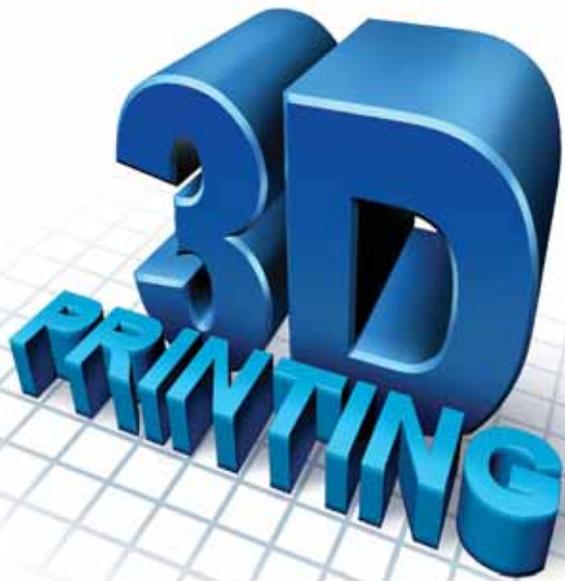
The Army Corps of Engineers and the SFWMD have worked in tandem since the emergency declaration to route less water through the estuary. Less rain and the Lake's high evaporation rate also has made an impact to lessen the amount of discharges.

Water dispersement projects have been accelerated at Caulkins water farm on Citrus Blvd., and on land purchased for a reservoir not yet built by the C-23 canal. FPL and the Ag-TEC project both volunteered their private properties for additional water storage, and the SFWMD is routing water to the Lake Worth Lagoon in Palm Beach County.

More water also is being held in the northern chain of lakes and the Corps continues to reduce discharges. They also adopted a "pulse" pattern, with high rates at the beginning of the week, reducing the amount of water so that two days a week are free of all discharges. The salinities in the St. Lucie estuary have increased, reducing the algae in the middle of the river.

"We had only two major rain events," Drum said, "but we still have too much water. The lake is two feet higher than it was at this time last year, and hurricane season is here. Things could get very ugly very fast." ■

--Barbara Clowdus



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DISTRICT 5 COUNTY COMMISSION CANDIDATE

John Haddox

A PROMISE FOR FAIR, HONEST, CLEAR LEADERSHIP

As the current county commission majority moves toward increased regulations and taxes—and away from citizen involvement and responsiveness—my votes frequently get overridden, but I make sure my voice is heard. I do not, and I will not ever, quietly acquiesce simply because I am in the minority.

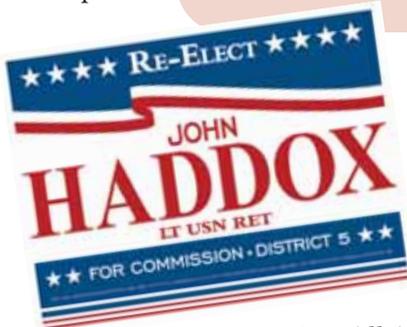
Martin County is home to some amazing, accomplished citizens who are eager to volunteer their time and talents to help our community. Certainly, I don't have all the answers, so I'm always willing to listen and learn from others. Our board could do a much better job welcoming help.

We live in a great county and enjoy an outstanding quality of life; however, that does not hold true, unfortunately, for everyone. We have distressed neighborhoods. Our subsidized school lunch program has risen to 52 percent. Our jobs are nearly 75 percent service and retail industry. We have nearly 20,000 employees coming into Martin County on a daily basis from neighboring counties because they cannot afford to live in Martin County. We have virtually no high-density vacant property to address the issue of affordable workforce housing.

We are threatened by increased rail traffic, both passenger and freight, that could negatively impact our quality of life. Our water quality is under constant duress with repeated discharges from Lake Okeechobee. We have a \$258 million infrastructure backlog.

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and all the supplemental research I do to make informed decisions, I don't get as much pleasure reading as I'd prefer. But the last book I really enjoyed was Grant's *Memoirs*, the writings of Ulysses S. Grant. Before becoming president, he was, of course, a military commander during the Civil War. He personally scouted out areas on the battlefield where his men would enjoy a superior advantage. He led from the front and by example, but in the spirit of putting others' needs before his own. This is the level of leadership that I aspire to.



Challenges, however, do not dissuade me. As your public servant, I've done my best to pursue solutions head-on. I've led the county's fight

against All Aboard Florida. I serve on a multi-county agency dedicated to protecting water quality. Rather than play politics and let the infrastructure backlog climb higher as our road conditions deteriorate, I supported the FPL franchise agreement, which everyone, not just property owners, contributes to.



ONE OF MY ALL-TIME FAVORITE PHOTOS was taken during the "Push Back Ceremony" for a new vehicle at the Palm City Fire Station, because it represents so much. First, I take pride in trying to ensure that our fire rescue team has the proper equipment to carry out their demanding jobs. Second, the ceremony is rooted in tradition and is very similar to many military traditions that embrace camaraderie and brotherhood.

While some seek to divide the county, I've treated everyone with fairness, honesty and respect, and built a broad support base in the process. My supporters include environmental leader Nathaniel Reed, K.C. Ingram of Florida Not All Aboard, former Jupiter Island mayor Harry Charlston, Stuart Commissioner Tom Campenni, the Realtor Association of Martin County, the Police Benevolent Association and prominent members of the marine and aviation industries.

Our economy is marine, aviation, tourism and real-estate based. All depend on our environment and, particularly, our water quality. Protecting our environmental heritage is essential to our future.

For our families and future generations, we must promote sensible growth

within our urban service districts, shoring up our tax base and providing accessible high-paying jobs. This includes encouraging a vibrant and diversified economy that promotes an atmosphere conducive to business development. This is the only way to hold the line on taxes and fees.

Most important of all is public safety, including our law enforcement, firefighters and paramedics. We must feel safe in our home and neighborhoods. We are fortunate to have the best law enforcement, fire rescue, and school system in the state.

Providing honest, fair and clear leadership that brings people together, is the only way to truly protect Martin County now and into the future. That's the leadership residents deserve, and that's the leadership I've strived to provide. ■

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH . . .



John Haddox
Republican Candidate
Martin County Commission
District 5

Born and raised in a small town in western Pennsylvania, I graduated from Monaca High School in June of 1967. After enrolling in Penn State University during the peak of the Vietnam War, I dropped out of college in March 1968, six weeks after my 18th birthday, to enlist in the US Navy. I enjoyed a successful naval career, rising through the enlisted ranks, and receiving my commission after my first 10 years of service.

I completed 20 years of active duty military service in 1988 and came to Hobe Sound to visit my parents. I, like many others, was immediately drawn to the small-town feel, beautiful environment, and the quality of life. My family and I decided to stay. My son and daughter, John and Jacqueline, attended South Fork High School.

I have held positions in the private security sector, independent contractor, small business owner, and as the Supervisor of the Martin County Veterans Service Office from 1999-2012, providing services to our county's 20,000 veterans and their families.

In 2012 I ran for the Martin County Commission District 5 seat and was elected. Currently, as your incumbent commissioner, I hold the following positions:

- Vice Chairman, Martin County Board of County Commissioners
- Board Member, Business Development Board
- Chairman, County Health Care Review Board
- Metropolitan Planning Organization
- Vice Chairman, Workforce Consortium
- Chairman, Southeast Florida Coastal Ocean Forum
- Board Member, Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council
- Military Officers Association Life Member
- Vietnam Veterans of America Life Member American Legion Post 399

Other positions I have held previously include:

- Chairman, St. Lucie Inlet Advisory Committee
- Vice Chairman, Southeast Florida Coastal Ocean Task Force
- Veterans Advisory Board for Congressmen Mark Foley, Tim Mahoney and Tom Rooney
- Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center West Palm Beach Management Advisory Board ~ 12 Years
- Martin County B.O.C.C. Local Coordinating Board for the Transportation Disadvantaged ~ 10 years
- State of Florida County Veterans Service Officers Association President ~ 2 years, Board of Directors ~ 8 Years
- Veterans Council of Martin County Government Liaison ~ 10 years

DISTRICT 5 COUNTY COMMISSION CANDIDATE

Edward Ciampi

TAP INTO THE COUNTY'S WEALTH OF TALENT AND EXPERTISE

I am not a believer in raising taxes and fees. I served my commission term during the recession beginning in 2008, and with property values steadily decreasing, this was a difficult time financially; however, Martin County residents still had expectations for services that needed to be met, and the business of government had to continue. In order to meet these expectations, we made smart decisions that enabled us to lower the budget by \$65 million. We also eliminated approximately 100 employee positions through a voluntary separation program, which treated people with respect. These decisions allowed for the maintenance of the quality of life and services residents expect.

I disagree with the increased regulations, fees, and taxes because the increases that the current commission has enacted most negatively impact the Martin County residents the commission is meant to serve. With in-



MY FAVORITE PHOTO IS A PICTURE OF the people I love the most. We were all together, which doesn't happen as much as I wish it could. My parents, my daughters Sarah & Emily, my mother-in-law, my son Nicholas and my wife Liz for Emily's and Nicholas's Confirmation at Holy Redeemer Catholic Church in Palm City on April 16, 2016.

creased property taxes, FPL bills, utility fees and impact fees the entire burden falls on residents, not tourists or people

coming into the county.

The current commission has relied too heavily on expensive consultants and studies, while voters elected them to make these decisions, not spend their

“ I'VE BEEN READING *THE 4-HOUR WORKWEEK* ...

by Tim Ferriss and would definitely recommend this book to others. It offers up a unique perspective on how to maximize your potential and work more efficiently, and these are skills that can be useful to anyone. While the book goes into detail about entrepreneurship and time management, I've most enjoyed the motivational aspect of it, because it causes you to think about how you can break routines and live your most fulfilling life.

tax dollars unnecessarily. Instead of hiring outside consultants to make these decisions, the commission should be tapping into the wealth of knowledge and experience from Martin County citizens who would gladly volunteer if asked. ■

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH . . .



Edward Ciampi
Republican Candidate for the
Martin County Commission
District 5 Seat.

I decided to run again this year because of serious concerns over the direction our county is heading. The current commission majority has made decisions that I feel are a detriment to Martin County residents. We are now paying higher property taxes, utility bills and impact fees, and even the District 5 incumbent voted to impose the FPL franchise fee on electric bills for the next 30 years.

If given the opportunity to serve you again, I will continue the fight against All Aboard Florida and the Lake Okechobee discharges, while working to end the many costly lawsuits and unnecessary studies, and use this money to address needed infrastructure projects.

I feel we are at a crossroads, and the outcome of this election will determine our quality of life for many years to come. With your support, I hope to once again serve as your representative.

Melzer's history revealed in public records

County Commission candidate for District 5, Donna Melzer, declined the invitation to write her own biography and answer one question for this special Election 2016 section in *Martin County Currents*; therefore, *Currents* relied on the public record.

Among Melzer's accomplishments listed in her campaign materials are her environmental efforts to bring "stricter septic tank rules" to Martin County, yet the county's new rules limit or ban only those septic tanks that would benefit businesses or farmers, miles from our waterways, excluding the thousands within a few dozen feet of our rivers that are feeding algal blooms.

The new septic rules restrict a landowner with a business on any size parcel of land to one 2,000-gallon tank, which now prevents a 25-year-old Martin County company, Wasterblasting Technologies Inc., from expanding its operations to its adjacent five acres. As a result of Melzer's and others' efforts, county residents lose the prospect of an additional 200 high-paying jobs, and county coffers lose additional revenue from taxes and impact fees that would help build a much-needed sewer system.

An earlier environmental crisis in 1998 also brought toxic algae blooms, leonized dolphins and dead fish to the St. Lucie River and Indian River Lagoon. The Stuart News wrote a story in 1998 about a reservoir proposed by a group called the St. Lucie River Initiative, which would be built on 22,000 acres in Allapatah Flats next to the C-44 canal. Melzer was reported then as saying she feared that the reservoir would be used to provide water for western development, instead of diverting Lake Okeechobee discharges as intended.

Melzer's rhetoric has remained the same since 1998, but the pollution is worse.

MELZER BIOGRAPHY

Melzer, who lives in Palm City, lists her J.D. degree from Chicago-Kent College of Law in 1976 as the first item in her biography on the Martin County Elections Office website, and next she lists her four years as Martin County Commissioner for District 5, 1996 to 2000.

Most Martin County residents, however, think of her first as the chair of the Martin County Conservation Alliance, which she joined in the mid-'90s. At the time, the organization was a consortium of business people, real estate brokers, and environmental engineers attempting to address the decline of water quality in the St. Lucie and Indian River Lagoon.

Melzer took over as president in 2003, remaining as president of the not-for-profit corporation until 2013, when

she became and remains chairman of the organization, now supported by membership fees. Contributions are not tax-deductible, because the organization never filed for tax-exempt status. As a result, its contributors, revenues and expenses are not open to public scrutiny.

The registered agent for the Alliance is attorney Virginia Sherlock, and familiar names as directors in-



clude Jackie Trancynger and Myra Galoci, who join Melzer and Sherlock at nearly every county commission meeting to make public comment.

Commissioner Ed Fielding was a director for five years prior to being elected commissioner. Although he, and commissioners Sarah Heard and Anne Scott, all touted their membership in the organization during their campaigns, none of

them recused themselves from a vote in 2013 that waived court-ordered sanctions against Melzer and the Conservation Alliance (as well as the 1,000 Friends of Florida) for appealing a case against Martin County to the Florida Supreme Court, which they had already lost at district and appellate levels.

Controversy has swirled around Melzer previously for other lawsuits filed against Martin County, according to court records, news reports, and among those who served with Melzer on the county

continued on PAGE 10

A LIFELONG LOVE of MARTIN COUNTY

"The Martin County we love deserves our protection and solutions that 'politics as usual' won't solve. I hope to earn your support, since I have deep connections to our community and bring the outside perspective of a business owner, which Martin County so desperately needs."

-- Harold Jenkins

A father, grandfather, business owner and lifetime resident of Martin County, Harold Jenkins understands the challenges facing working people, families and retirees. His judgment is not clouded by politics or personal agendas.

HAROLD WILL

- restore the bedrock of democracy, the people's voice;
- make smart use of tax dollars, instead of just raising taxes;
- embrace a countywide customer-service mindset;
- respect county staff and residents, even when disagreeing

HAROLD JENKINS WILL RESTORE PUBLIC TRUST

HAROLD WILL

- work with state and federal partners to fund projects that move Lake O water south;
- continue the fight against AAF;
- protect rural areas from urban sprawl;
- fight for our Community Redevelopment Areas and small businesses

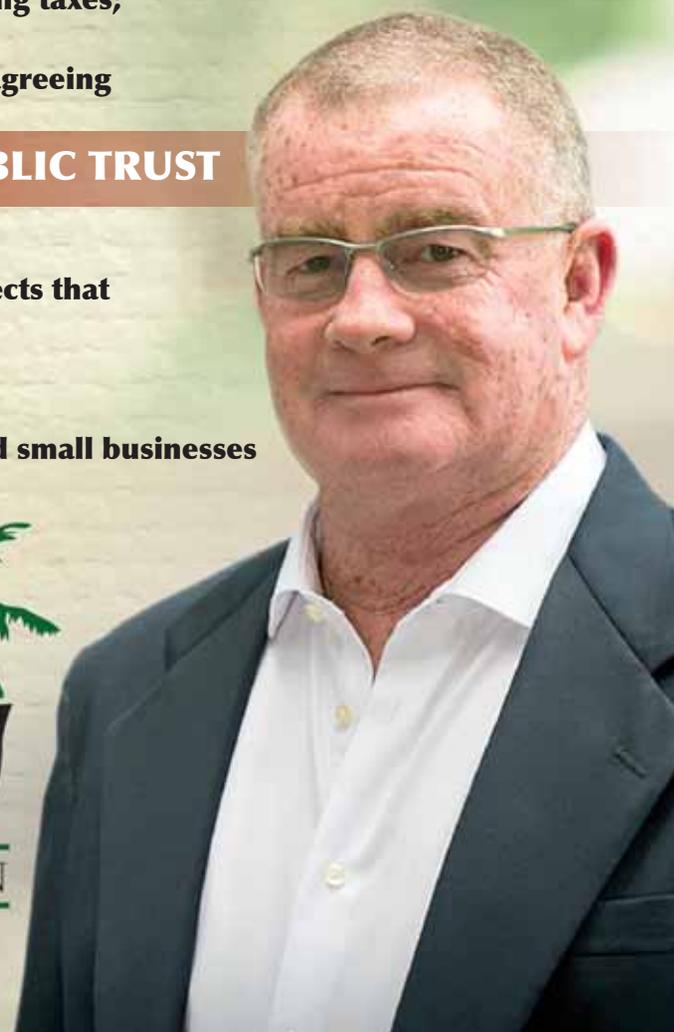
VOTE HAROLD 

Jenkins

for MARTIN COUNTY COMMISSION

DISTRICT 3

ON AUGUST 30



Donna Melzer

continued from PAGE 9

commission in the late '90s.

They remember her for chairing long commission meetings that lasted, at times, until midnight or later, as well as the lawsuits by disgruntled employees, lawsuits by owners of approved business projects that suddenly were shut down by the county, and grand jury probes for violations of open meetings laws, abuse of power, and other alleged misdeeds.

Melzer invoked her Fifth Amendment right seven times while under oath to protect herself from self-incrimination in possible criminal charges during a deposition for a lawsuit filed against the county by a contractor. Melzer was never charged with a crime.

"I can say that when I served (as commissioner), Donna Melzer was very, very controlling," says Elmira Gainey, former county commissioner from 1994-2002, who defeated Maggy Hurchalla for her District 4 commission seat. "She controlled not only the agenda and everything on it, but all the county staff, as well."

Among the unwanted news stories and lawsuits targeting Martin County during Melzer's tenure were these:

1997 – Reported by *The Palm Beach Post*, March 1997: The Martin County Commission agreed to pay *The Palm Beach Post* \$15,900 in legal fees to settle a lawsuit alleging violations of Florida's open meetings law by approving lawsuit settlements totaling \$4.1 million in private sessions without a public vote.

During the Grand Jury probe of the *Post's* charges that commissioners violated open meetings laws, Building and Zoning Director Mike Sinkey and County Commission secretary Beth Bobango both testified against the commissioners following the complaints of two employees that people "were seeking their (personnel) files to harass them," according to the University of Florida's May 1997 Brechner Report, a

monthly newsletter summarizing developments in Florida's open meetings and public records laws.

The county attorney, who resigned shortly thereafter, allegedly had advised commissioners that personnel files were subject to public records requests, thus no criminal charges were filed against any of the commissioners, according to the report.

A lawsuit was filed by one of the employees, but the case was settled out of court, according to Martin County court records.

1998 – In the *Palm Beach Post*, April 3, 1998, "Official helped pay for suit vs. Martin," Melzer confirms she made a cash payment of \$1,000 to a friend, Krista White. The article explains the reason was so White "could continue her fight against the county for approving a business competitor's venture before hers."

According to Martin County Court records, White filed suit against the county in March 1997, represented by Virginia Sherlock's partner, Howard Heims, in response to the county's ap-

proval of APS Environmental Associates' recycling project in Palm City.

Two months later, court records show that APS sued the county for canceling its approvals, and White for alleged interference with the APS contract. The suit was dropped after the approvals were restored.

News coverage in *The Stuart News* by reporter Kevin Osborne followed the APS case against the county, and the conflict of interest and abuse of power allegations against Melzer, from April through August 1998, publishing additional accounts of Melzer invoking her Fifth Amendment right during testimony under oath during a deposition.

An attorney herself, Melzer also claimed attorney-client privilege five times, thus refusing to answer questions on the advice of her attorney, according to *The Stuart News* coverage; however, no criminal charges ever were filed.

2000 – During Melzer's re-election campaign, *The Stuart News* broke a story in March 2000 regarding expenses allegedly charged against the

percent, as the deep Russia and doubts nese recovery jolted around the globe. In Russia, sto Wednesday's 14 p



Donna Melzer is featured in a front-page story in the Friday, August 28, 1998, edition of *The Stuart News*.

general fund, then repaid from District 5 discretionary funds, for the printing and mailing of a four-page brochure to 10,000 Palm City residents. Then-County Commissioner Elmira Gainey, interviewed by the reporter, questioned the propriety of the use of taxpayer funds for the brochure, which she claimed promoted Melzer's no-growth interests.

Melzer insisted the brochure focused on transportation issues, of concern to all Martin County residents, according to the news article. No ethics complaints were filed against Melzer.

LAWSUITS AGAINST MARTIN COUNTY

After Melzer was defeated in her 2000 re-election bid, she remained in the spotlight as the result of nearly a dozen

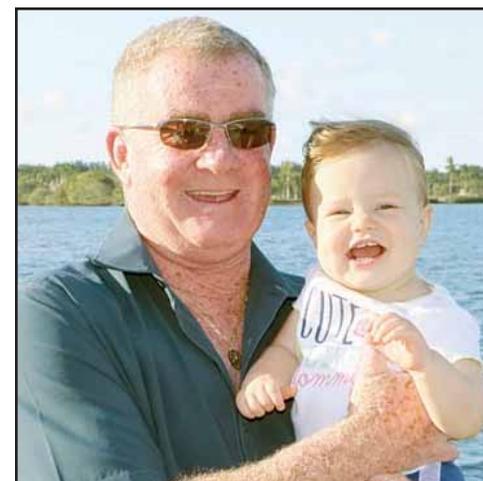
administrative challenges against Martin County's decisions, the state's Department of Community Affairs that approved those decisions, and at times the school board, filed by Melzer as a named plaintiff and/or the Martin County Conservation Alliance, including civil suits and appeals, from 2001 through 2013.

All the cases were lost except two, in which she had challenged five amendments to the county's Comprehensive Growth Management Plan. She lost the challenge that resulted in only partial modifications to two of the proposed amendments after the case was heard in appellate court, according to court records.

After spending the past 16 years off the Martin County Commission, Melzer now is challenging, incumbent County Commissioner John Haddox for the District 5 seat, as is Palm City resident and former County Commissioner Ed Ciampi. ■

DISTRICT 3 COUNTY COMMISSION CANDIDATE

Harold Jenkins



ONE OF MY FAVORITE PHOTOS was taken of me with my granddaughter, Katie. The river has been my backyard for most of my life, and I intend to protect it for Katie and for your children's children.

WE NEED CLEAR DIRECTION, CUSTOMER SERVICE, RESPECT FOR TAXPAYERS

Our county commission has been moving in the direction of more governmental control over the past four years with increases in regulations, fees and taxes. Does this fit your vision of Martin County?

No, it does not. We currently have some of the most unnecessarily rigid regulations in any county government. What we need is clarification of our vague and conflicting regulations. Clarity would remove the level of interpretation, and reinterpretation, required by county staff, commissioners, and the public. Clarity of the rules and increased transparency of the rule-making process would get the petty personal politics out of the process. That would lead to fewer lawsuits and better usage of our tax dollars.

Everyone who does business with the county—whether a homeowner seeking a small addition to their family home or a business that's replacing a structure or expanding—deserves a full understanding of all of the obligations required by the process.

Increasing fees and taxes to fund the

THE LAST BOOK I READ FOR PLEASURE ...

“Land into Water – Water into Land, A History of Water Management in Florida” on a friend's recommendation. We all have an understanding of the bad decisions made to straighten out the Kissimmee River, the digging of the St. Lucie Canal, back pumping of the sugar fields south of the lake and the leaching of fertilizer, pesticides and septic systems into the lake and lagoon. This book goes into great detail and the chronology of the pollution. It will bring you right up to speed with everything that occurred in detail from the 1820s to the early 1990s. For me, it will require another read, so I can take notes to retain all the facts. As far as recommending it, I would say if you want to know who made what decisions about Florida land and when, this is the book for you. If not, read “The Swamp,” another excellent book on Florida history.

It's ironic that almost from the beginning of the evolution of developing Florida, water and trains were the issues of the day back then just like they are now.

It reminds you of the old saying, “The more things change, the more they stay the same.” We know what we want to stay the same about our wonderful community: The safety and security, the small-town feel, growth rules that prevent overdevelopment, and beautiful beaches and parks you can enjoy without being nicked and dimed with parking fees.



defense of unnecessary lawsuits is the ultimate misuse of taxpayer money. Increasing impact fees on small, affordable housing, by more than double that of larger homes is wrong.

Bringing basic business principles to county governance is the key to bringing

our infrastructure deficit under control. We must do this before the Commission can even consider raising property taxes again or increasing sales tax.

Supporting our Community Rede-

velopment Areas will draw private investments to these communities, which will increase property values and increase the tax revenue to the county without having to directly raise taxes.

Right now, the controlling majority of the Martin County Commission is considering beach parking fees, and much more, to go on top of the property tax increases they've already passed.

These higher taxes, new fees and the unnecessary lawsuits could be avoided by changing to leadership that gives clear direction, values customer services and respects taxpayers' money. That is the leadership Martin County needs, and it's the leadership I plan to provide. ■

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH . . .



Harold Jenkins
Republican Candidate
Martin County Commission
District 3

My grandparents came to Florida during the late 1920s to farm in Palm Beach County during the winter months. They moved permanently to Jupiter in the mid-1930s and farmed west Jupiter until the beginning of World War II. My parents moved to Hobe Sound when I was 7. I still live in my childhood home today.

My connection to the community runs deep. From the people I've worked for and employed, to the friendships I have developed over my entire life. With 30-plus years of experience running a business that employs more than 100 people (most of whom are also Martin County residents), I can use that

knowledge to increase the level of efficiency, service, and satisfaction to fellow Martin County taxpayers.

For my entire career I have been involved with the Florida Nurseryman's Growers and Landscape Association (FNGLA). This trade organization represents an industry that contributes \$16 billion to Florida's economy. I was

chair of the Certification Division for 10 years and now sit on the FNGLA board.

As one of the founding principals of Preserve Martin County LLC, I've worked hard to inform Martin County residents on the dangers of western sprawl and what it would do to our communities. We reinforced the movement to keep our comprehensive plan intact, emphasizing how important our urban service boundaries are to our quality of living.

For at least the last four election cycles, District 3 has supported commission candidates who have had the right talking points; however, once elected, they forget or neglect their unique responsibility to advocate for the residents of Hobe Sound and Tequesta.

As our sitting commissioner is quick to point out, I'm not a lawyer, neither am I an academic of any kind. Like many Martin residents, I am a hard-working family and businessman, representative of our community, which is what we need.

We deserve a representative government that is elected by the people, for the people. I have no hidden agenda, neither am I beholden to any special interest group.

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Editorial: If she could move the primary, she would

Nothing speaks quite as loudly to the political divide in Martin County than the silence from County Commission Chair Anne Scott, who has not participated in forums or interviews organized by business interests since the Hobe Sound Chamber forum in April.

Scott was absent in May from the Economic Council/Palm City Chamber forum and interviews, and did not attend the Treasure Coast Builders Association forum or interview in June.

Perhaps most egregious is that Scott, even as commission chair, was absent from her community yet again as the toxic blue-green algae began to spread, even for the emergency commission meeting June 28 to hear residents' concerns over the toxic blanket covering Martin County waterways and beaches.

Scott's participation in the Election 2016 section of this issue is missing, as well. Could it be the result of its report regarding Anne Scott's "previously undisclosed private email account" and "undisclosed emails" that prompted a District Court judge to reopen the Lake Point public records trial? We think it's quite likely.

Lake Point attorney Ethan Loeb recently asked the court for a summary judgment – a verdict without a trial – to recover attorney fees and costs in a hearing scheduled July 13 in the Martin

County courthouse, which undermined Scott's attempt to push the public records issue past the primary election August 30. Then it was postponed.

Coincidentally – or not so coincidentally – Scott pushed other controversial issues off the county's agenda, too, until after the primary election, including the questions of charging fees for beach access and closing them after dark; of funding non-profits after the 2016 fiscal year; of continuing nominal leases for non-profits; the Martin County golf course renovation or sale; moving the fair grounds; rewriting rules – or eliminating – the Community Redevelopment Areas and Planned Unit Development zoning, both intended for economic revitalization.

She's been successful, she believes, in diffusing much of the anger and frustration among the members of the advisory committees of the CRAs by including all the CRA projects on the Capital Improvement Plan lists that the NACs had identified as priorities – even the ones she was instrumental in killing. Many remain unfunded and likely will disappear by the time of final budget approval – after the election.

Scott knows, however, that she's scrambling for votes and has been currying favor among voters in the far southern reaches of the county for the past six months. That's why after nearly

three years of no town hall meetings, she suddenly was scheduling town halls every other month. That's why the roads in south county got paved first.

It also most likely motivated her unsuccessful attempt to kill the growth management staff-approved Kenai cell tower project in south county, although to do so would likely result in yet one more unwinnable lawsuit against the county.

Over the past four years, she was instrumental in killing the Jensen Beach mooring field, the Jensen Beach sewer line extension, the fully funded U.S. Customs Facility, and the independent CRA, and now is on a path to dissolving the independent Business Development Board, highly regarded by local businesses, large and small.

Her votes were instrumental in bringing four lawsuits against the county – one was lost outright, two others were settled out of court after eight amendments to the Comp Plan were negotiated behind closed doors, and two others are in court now that potentially expose the county to millions in legal fees and costs.

She has lobbied almost incessantly since elected in 2012 to spend more than \$500,000 in "studies," most of which go unused or are ignored, and she wants to spend more—another \$500,000 for the CBRE commercial real estate firm,

based in Scott's hometown of Chicago, to figure out how to manage the county's assets.

By the way, the county now is obligated to name CBRE as its commissioned real estate agent should the county want a broker to sell its surplus properties. Perhaps that's why she refused to sit for a candidate interview by members of the Realtor's Association board.

What's become apparent over the last four years is that Anne Scott is disconnected from the majority of her constituents. She attempted once to relate to a crowd of residents in Indiantown charting the future of their CRA by telling them: "You want to be a Santa Fe, not an Albuquerque." She failed to see the room full of raised eyebrows or the hand-to-mouth clasps stifling chuckles from those who had no idea what she was talking about.

No, Commissioner Scott. Those Indiantown residents want the best, possible Indiantown – neither Santa Fe NOR Albuquerque – with the quality of life and range of opportunities that their children deserve, the same goals shared by the majority of middle class Martin County residents.

They want county government either to help them reach their goals, or to get out of the way – and that's a message, Commissioner Scott, you need to hear, before the primary election. ■

Letters:

Dear Editor:

I am writing to express my support along with that of many other Martin County residents for the re-election of Commissioner John Haddox. Those supporters include community leaders like Nathaniel Reed (renowned environmentalist) and KC Traylor Ingram (Florida NOT All Aboard founder), as well as prominent civic organizations including, The Police Benevolent Association and the Realtor Association of Martin County.

John Haddox has served his country with honor and is a retired US Naval Lieutenant; John served the veterans of Martin County as director of the county's Department of Veterans Affairs. Most important, though, John Haddox has served all the citizens of Martin County as District 5 Commissioner on the Board of County Commissioners.

John is often in the embattled minority of two as the Commission votes on issues that directly affect the oft-touted quality

of life we here in Martin enjoy. He recently stated during a commission meeting, "quality of life is for all the citizens of Martin County, not just those in gated communities or private islands."

He says that "no growth and slow growth should be tempered by a philosophy of INTELLIGENT growth," growth that fosters a successful economy without placing a heavy tax burden on the middle class; a successful economy that supports small business and a Commission that does not strangle business.

A clear example of John Haddox's support of small business can be seen right here in Hobe Sound, in Flash Beach Grille's long-fought, expensive battle against government overreach and an extremist agenda that threatened their business's survival. John was a clear and constant champion of the Grille, and he worked to avoid costly litigation. John was proven correct in his stance: Flash Beach Grille is alive and well and planning their first expansion, despite the efforts of others, both on

and behind the Commission majority.

John is known as the voice of reason, of fairness, and of compromise on the Commission. He listens to all sides.

When the commission majority decided to stop any growth in our agricultural areas by banning the large septic systems that take years to drain into the river – instead of targeting first the thousands of homeowners' leaky septic tanks that line our waterways and drain into the river within days – he stood up for our farmers who would be affected and supported their ideas for agri-tourism to help them diversify.

He tried to resolve the dilemma of the septic systems in a rural area in south county that line the Loxahatchee River and leak effluent into another precious resource, but once again the "puppet-masters" conspired to block any sewer lines into that area by rewriting our Comp Plan rules to serve themselves and to stop growth there, too, even if it hurt the Loxahatchee.

When the expected lawsuit came,

Martin County's outside attorney made separate arrangements to exempt the plaintiffs' properties, so they would drop their suit against the county, while allowing the septic tank leakage of effluent in south Martin to persist, unabated, even to this day.

Although John was outvoted on these issues, he did not settle for doing nothing about the great need in this county to bring together two of our most important and major interests – farmers and environmentalists. He formed the Agriculture and Natural Resources Advisory Committee, to tackle some of our thorniest issues, because working together, there's no problem we cannot solve.

I can only express my admiration for John Haddox, a true representative of the people who elect him. I ask that you see his wisdom, courage and leadership, and cast your all-important vote in his favor on August 30.

George Kleine
Hobe Sound

Commission's cell tower debate reveals much



Barbara Clowdus

Unfiltered

Up for re-election this August, Commissioner Doug Smith's voice and his actions, particularly now, are either overlooked or ignored by our daily paper. As a result, Smith's advocacy for Martin residents and their quality of life has become nearly invisible and largely unknown – unless you sit in commission chambers at every meeting to see it yourself.

For that reason, you likely are unaware that Smith is the commissioner who pushed Chair Anne Scott to declare a state of emergency last February. He also pushed for a resolution a few weeks ago to have the Army Corps of Engineers begin plans NOW, not five years from now, to review and adjust the Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule (LORS) to hold more water in light of their progress in dike rehabilitation.

When blue-green algae later became a threat to human health, to our estuary and to our economy, he also pushed staff to call an emergency meeting Jan. 28 to hear an expert analysis, to hear residents, and to declare the most recent state of emergency – sending the resolution not only to the governor, but to the President.

He already had begun working in Orlando, behind the scenes, to get every

county to sign a resolution in support of Martin County's emergency declaration – before even Martin commissioners had signed it – undoubtedly prompting the governor to move swiftly. Residents wondered why. Now they know.

A less pressing issue, but important on many levels, is one that few of us outside the North Passage, Little Club and Turtle Creek developments heard anything about – the recent Kenai cell tower debate and its public hearings before the Board of County Commissioners. Although the hearings consumed more than 15 hours of presentations, testimony, and commissioners' deliberations over two, separate commission meetings, the subject warranted no local news coverage.

That debate revealed much about our county commissioners, as well as the county's reliance on its relatively new flotilla of attorneys. (Three assistant county attorneys were present, in addition to County Attorney Michael Durham.)

The applicant, Kenai Properties, proposed that RG Towers lease slightly less than an acre of its property on Country Club Drive to construct a 120-foot tall monopole telecommunications facility, designed to mimic a pine tree, qualifying it as "stealth," meaning less noticeable to passersby than the aluminum-and-steel contraptions sprouting ubiquitously among our landscapes.

The plans met all the rules of the county's Comprehensive Growth Management Plan; however, the Growth Management planner said during the May 10 hearing that, in her opinion, the

monopole did not fully meet the criteria of being "stealth," and to earn her recommendation, Kenai would need to reduce the height of the pole to 80 feet, add more "branches" to hide better the arms of the tower, increase a noise buffer, and increase the quantity of plantings around the base to make the tower "more stealth."

Kenai agreed to that and more, thus the tower was significantly reduced in height and nearly doubled the plants at its base.

Residents from the southern end of the county filled chamber seats for the public hearings. They'd been clamoring for a cell tower for more than two years. The problem was, they didn't want THIS cell tower.

They already had a spot picked out, owned by Little Club, a site more "desirable" to them, but the application had "gotten hung up somehow" in the Growth Management review.

The catch was, pointed out Commissioner Ed Fielding, that money was the issue. If the Kenai tower was approved, Little Club would lose lease income from their proposed site. County rules would prohibit construction of a second tower.

After Commissioner Sarah Heard's failed attempt to kill the project, the hearing was continued to May 31, resulting in an additional five hours of contentious testimony in June that seemed like a clip from Ripley's "Believe it or Not."

The growth management staffer back-pedaled her previous recommendation; the county's legal staff inappro-

priately filed objections; and none of five subsequent motions either approved or denied the project.

A boat without a rudder, until Smith – tapping into his 15 years of experience – recalled that Federal Communication Commission regulations impose a time limit, confirmed by a consultant and county staff, and the review time had nearly expired. If the county remained at an impasse, FCC would rule that the original application, without modification, is automatically approved.

The residents of North Passage, Little Club and Turtle Creek would get the 120-foot tower soaring above the tree-line, whether they wanted it or not.

To deny the application, which around 1,000 residents desired and Sarah Heard and Anne Scott attempted, likely ensured favorable votes in the August primary for Scott, but it also likely violated Comp Plan rules and would subject the county to yet another lawsuit.

With the FCC hammer looming, Fielding moved to approve the 80-foot tower with conditions, but no commissioner moved to second his motion. Time ticked away. Without a second to Fielding's motion, the 120-foot tower with less stealth disguise and fewer plantings was a done deal.

Doug Smith shook his head slowly, saying almost under his breath, "I cannot do that to those people," and seconded the motion. He stuck his neck out in spite of the impending election. He did the right thing, as he so often does, and he will be vilified for it, as he so often is. ■

Let's all get on a path to actual results



Eric Draper

Guest Columnist

This year's tragic algae blooms and fish kills along the Treasure Coast demand action equal to the harm. State officials have shelved the most obvious solution for four years — shelved it in spite of a new law that promises Amendment 1 money to stop discharges to coastal estuaries.

That solution is storage south of Lake Okeechobee. South of Lake Okeechobee means somewhere along the canals that drain the lake through the Everglades Agricultural Area.

Following through with existing commitments to plan and build large reservoirs south of Lake Okeechobee will allow progress toward reducing massive discharges of polluted water to coastal estuaries. But state agencies have kicked even the planning process to the next decade.

To be fair, there are lots of ideas about dealing with water in Lake Okeechobee and lots of criticism of government agencies. Audubon Florida hopes we can put this most important and urgent solution on a path to actual results.

When estuary advocates ask legislators to appropriate funds for building water storage reservoirs, the response has been that there is no plan. By postponing the planning for storage, the agencies leading Everglades restoration have caused a frustrating Catch-22.

Let's move past the delay and get together on a plan for storage and a southern outlet.

The plan should be guided by two laws: The Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan and the Legacy Florida Act, which was championed by Sen. Joe Negron and Rep. Gayle Harrell, both R-Stuart, and recently signed by the governor. The CERP EAA Reservoir plan calls for 360,000-acre-feet of storage south of Lake Okeechobee, which alone could store up to eight inches of Lake Okeechobee water. The Legacy Florida Act requires that preference for Amendment 1 funds be given to projects that reduce discharges to the estuaries.

Opponents of building reservoirs to

store water that would otherwise be harmfully discharged to the estuaries are the landowners — primarily two large sugar producers. It is in their interest to preserve their advantages while doing nothing for the Everglades and estuaries other than minimal compliance with court-ordered water quality standards.

For years, advocates for coastal waters and Everglades restoration have urged agencies to prioritize planning and building water storage projects south of Lake Okeechobee. Instead, agencies postponed planning for a southern storage until 2020. Given the time it takes to plan and build projects, southern storage (and relief to the estuaries) is at least a decade away. I believe this is unacceptable.

What difference do four years make? A decade? Treasure Coast residents know. Four more years of water that we can't touch? Of algae blooms driving away tourists and lowering real estate values? Of dead fish and coastal wildlife?

If planning for and building water storage in the EAA continues to be delayed, the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee estuaries will remain the only outlets for massive Lake Okeechobee discharges. The delay is unacceptable because we

know by repeated experience the harm the discharges bring to the estuaries.

It is also cheaper, more efficient and beneficial to focus on southern storage now:

- **The plan can be conducted concurrently with planning for storage north and west of Lake Okeechobee.**
- **The plan can provide benefits for the Everglades in addition to the coastal estuaries by putting water south where it is needed rather than where it causes harm.**
- **Water storage south of the lake is the cheapest option for taxpayers.**
- **Land south of Lake Okeechobee is already degraded.**

Agency leaders give vague answers when asked why they are making Treasure Coast residents wait four years before putting the first pencil to paper to plan a southern outlet for Lake Okeechobee water. Audubon Florida hopes that we can all focus on this highest and most urgent priority and begin work on solutions to avoid another predictable disaster in our coastal waters. ■

Eric Draper is executive director of Audubon Florida.

DISTRICT 1 COUNTY COMMISSION CANDIDATE

Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch

GOVERNMENT SHOULD CONTROL WATER QUALITY, ENVIRONMENT

When it comes to water quality and the environment, I do believe in governmental control. However, as a sitting Town of Sewall's Point commissioner, and former real estate agent, I understand that too much government control, high taxes/fees, and overregulation stifles business, creativity, and will lead to the demise of our county. Martin County must find a balance. To achieve such, we must have a new vision and break the pattern of "pro-growth versus no-growth" commissions.

We must recognize the world is changing, that we are growing old, and it is our responsibility to leave a healthy environment and a livable, adaptable, community for the upcoming millennial generation and others that will follow. It is also important to implement a



JACQUI'S FAVORITE PHOTO IS OF HER FAMILY: Husband Dr. Ed Lippisch and their dogs, Luna, an 80-pound, German Sherman mix, rescue dog, and locally bred Cardigan Corgis, Bo and Baron. Photo: Cathy Baker, of Sunkissed Kennels in Palm City.



comprehensive countywide reinvestment and redevelopment program for older and distressed neighborhoods.

We must collaborate with the City of Stuart and other municipalities. In light of this, my vision is for business-friendly, environmentally-conscious, sustainable/sensible growth. We need to get the word out that we want to facilitate job growth creation and a vibrant profitable, clean, economy for Martin County within the guidance of our Comprehensive Plan avoiding unfettered developmental growth that threatens the rural and low population density setting we all cherish.

THE LAST BOOK I READ FOR PLEASURE ...

The last book I read, believe it or not, was "Stuart on the St Luice," by my historian mother, Sandra Henderson Thurlow. I have a blog called "Indian River Lagoon," and recently called her for information about the subject of the history of the St Lucie Canal—today's C-44 linked to Lake Okechobee. She paused and politely replied: "Jacqui, that is all in my Stuart book..." I was silent. I realized I had perused the book many times, but never really read it cover to cover. I then read it—cover to cover. A wonderful "pleasure" read that puts everything about Martin County in clear perspective. I highly recommend the book!

My vision also includes water-related projects that will improve the health of the St. Lucie River and Indian River Lagoon – because a healthy river leads to higher property values along the waterfront, the enjoyment of nature, and because "clean water is good business." ■

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH . . .



Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch
Republican Candidate for the
Martin County Commission
District 1 Seat.

Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch is running for County Commission Seat District 1. She is a sitting commissioner and former mayor of the Town of Sewall's Point. She serves as vice-chair of the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council and chaired the Florida League of Cities' Energy, Environmental and Natural Resources Legislative Committee.

She is a member of the Rivers Coalition Defense Fund's Board of Directors and has a long history of growth management understanding as she is a third generation Martin County resident. She is a statewide recognized advocate for the St Lucie River/Indian River Lagoon and was awarded the Everglades Coalition's prestigious "John V. Kabler" award in 2015 for her grassroots activism.

Jacqui's popular blog can be found at www.jacquithurlowlippisch.com and her campaign website is www.votejtl.com.

DISTRICT 1 COUNTY COMMISSION CANDIDATE

Doug Smith

TIME TO LISTEN TO AND VALUE THE VOICES OF OUR CITIZENS!

The question is, "Our county commission has been moving in the direction of more governmental control over the past four years with increases in regulations, fees and taxes. Does this fit your vision of Martin County?"

My answer: No! Martin County has always prided itself on resident/taxpayer participation. The Majority has, for the past four years, stripped public involvement every chance it had. The Business Development Board was picked apart, beaten down. The CRA program was gutted; its capital plan erased; its staff demoralized.

The majority chose to raise impact fees and refused to reinstate the impact fee committee that had reviewed and made recommendations. They appointed a Golf Course Advisory Board over a year ago to make recommendations about the future of the Martin County Golf Course. Amazing, talented research was presented to the commission for action. The Majority refused to commit to keep and not sell the golf course. Instead, they strategi-



MY FAVORITE PHOTO WAS TAKEN on the day of my marriage to Dr. Lisa Grassam on Sept. 28, 2015, during our wedding at the Capt. Sewall House – an incredibly beautiful day shared with family and dearest friends at an extraordinary place, Indian RiverSide Park.

cally chose to leave it in limbo until September, following August's Primary Election.

The Majority also chose to form an advisory board to determine the future of the Martin County Fairgrounds. This did not send a clear message of support that would allow the Fair to proceed

with their vision for the next 50 years.

Martin County's culture has forever been driven by people and non-profits that have a passion for what makes us special. The Majority has answered hope, dreams and passion with "No,

THE LAST BOOK I READ FOR PLEASURE ...

A Land Remembered by Patrick Smith, historical fiction about our beginnings here in south Florida. It's awesome and inspiring.

we are not interested."

Hundreds of people and organizations turned out to support the CRAs. The US Customs Facility had a packed Commission Chamber. The Golf Course and the Fairgrounds also filled the room. Our Martin County should be about how we can work together to make it happen; not "Let's raise taxes, impact fees, electric fees and make regulations so problematic that no small, medium or large business will be able to grow here."

It's time to put the dreams, passion and hope of our people first again, and I will continue to fight that battle as your commissioner. ■

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH . . .



Doug Smith
Republican Candidate
Martin County Commission
District 1

As a resident of Jensen Beach and during my nearly 16 years as a county commissioner, I've committed myself to the community's desire for limiting growth, reduced road congestion, superior public safety, outstanding utility systems and exceptional libraries and parks. I've championed the cause of public land acquisition that's provided the added bonus of limiting growth. The land now in public ownership totals more than 50,000 acres, much of which will assist in the CERP/IRL restoration I've fought for.

We recently celebrated the completion of the Kitching Creek water restoration project near Hobe Sound—a promise I made to Hobe Sound residents more than 13 years ago—to help restore critical water flow to the Loxahatchee River and create an incredible place for passive recreation.

I've supported our highly-rated sheriff's and fire/rescue departments, our award-winning libraries and parks and helped deliver an

efficient, conservation-minded utility system.

You should demand a commissioner who has been involved in the community at all levels. I've voluntarily given of my time over the years to work for civic and non-profit organizations including the boards of the Chamber of Commerce, the Education Foundation, Environmental Studies Council, Maritime Museum, Historical Society, FAU Treasure Coast Advisory Board and Hibiscus House Childrens Foundation.

I hope you'll cast your vote based on my record of support for our community values, and my consistent decision making. I hold steadfast to my commitments and haven't postured or waffled to curry votes. It's been an honor and a privilege to serve as your commissioner, and if you appreciate lower taxes, smaller government and limited growth, I'd appreciate your vote.

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QUESTION:

What have you done specifically to improve the health of our rivers over the past four years, and what is your three-month timeline for the next steps?

DOUG SMITH



Doug Smith
Republican Candidate
Martin County Commission
District 1

My record shows an unwavering advocacy for our waterways on the state and national levels, which has led to tangible results for the projects that the University of Florida's Water Institute Report says are critical steps for us to take. At the same time, I often take the lead at the local level to get things done.

At the end of June, I was in Orlando for the Florida Association of Counties Annual Conference; however, I continued to monitor evolving river conditions in Martin County. When it became apparent that algae blooms were going to reach unprecedented levels, I contacted the county administrator and asked for an emergency county commission meeting on July 1, in order to get our ecosystem manager's analysis of the situation and to give residents an opportunity to openly express their concerns.

The more than three hours of public comment during the emergency meeting and a chilling report from Ecosystem Manager Deb Drum confirmed we needed an emergency declaration. I called for that emergency declaration to go to the Governor and to the President, because we need to have FEMA and the CDC here responding to not only the damage to our rivers, reefs and to the short-term and long-term health impacts on residents, but also to the economic burden on our marine and fishing industries. I also called for at least a 10-day reprieve from Lake Okeechobee discharges.

I returned to Orlando, and as chair of the Federal Policy Committee that I founded as president of the Florida Association of Counties, I asked the committee to adopt a resolution asking the Governor to declare a state of emergency. It was adopted unanimously and sent to the governor, who shortly thereafter issued a state declaration of emergency.

The crisis we face is no less than the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, and that's what I said to national and local media at every opportunity to make sure our story was heard round the world. We will get results only if we continue to keep the pressure on the federal govern-

ment by keeping visibility high, and I intend to do just that!

My efforts to get more federal funding have been successful in the past. During the past four years I made multiple trips to Washington to meet with our congressional delegation and agencies to keep the Indian River Lagoon South project on the front burner. With my physical presence pleading our case, \$197 million was approved, and construction

underway for a storm water treatment area and reservoir that will clean whatever is coming from Lake Okeechobee and our C-44 Basin.

We also had to have the "buy-in" of all 16 counties that comprise the South Florida Water Management District to reap maximum potential funding; therefore, I founded the 16-County Coalition that represents 8 million people to prioritize and lobby for funding Everglades restoration projects.

The previous Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) bill supporting the C44 reservoir passed Congress within three months after I spearheaded its support as president of the Florida Association of Counties. My goal in the next six months is to pass the next WRDA bill in order to fund the critically needed Central Everglades Planning Project that uses government-owned lands to direct more water south to the central Everglades.

I have maintained throughout that all solutions to the immediate crisis are on the table, as are the long-term solutions to the river's recovery. I have repeatedly asked the federal government and Army Corps of Engineers to expedite full funding of the repairs for the Herbert Hoover Dike, and to accelerate the timeline for the thorough review of the LORS (Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule). I've supported septic-to-sewer conversion, an issue that has now garnered the governor's attention, and may provide the 50-50 funding he just proposed to Martin County.

Getting funds allocated in the amounts that are needed is not an easy task, but relationships I've built and the experience I bring to the table will stand us in good stead as I work to permanently make damaging discharges and algae a thing of the past. ■

JACQUI THURLOW-LIPPISH

I have known our river since my childhood, and as an adult I am helping lead a revolution of sorts to give our river a fighting chance in the face of total destruction. This has been accomplished through many outlets, most notably, four years of aerial documentation by my husband and me of the destructive releases from lake Okeechobee into our St Lucie River and Indian River Lagoon.

These recognizable photos have been shared through social media and other outlets locally, statewide, nationally, and around the world. Congressman Patrick Murphy even recently showed them to President Barack Obama when he was here golfing at the Floridian in Palm City.

I also interact closely with Senator Joe Negron, having worked together since 2011, and was chosen by him to represent Martin County on the senator's 2014 Senate Hearing for Lake Okeechobee and the Indian River Lagoon.

Kevin Powers, board member of the South Florida Water Management District, appointed me in 2012 to serve as a WRAC (Water Resources Advisory Committee) alternate for the South Florida Water Management District, and invited me to meet with Gov. Rick Scott, as well. We all know, the river is a non-partisan issue.

The specific things I have done include these:

- 1.) I speak before local, state, congressional, private and public stakeholders;
- 2.) hone relationships with local and state elected officials developed while chairing the regional Treasure Coast Council of Local Governments and the Florida League of Cities Environmental and Energy Legislative Committee;
- 3.) led Sewall's Point's groundbreaking 2010 strong-fertilizer ordinance and remain a resource for those throughout the state seeking help to do the same;
- 4.) promoted the conversion from septic to sewer as proposed in Sewall's Point's 1974 plan;
- 5.) spearheaded the River Kidz and development of thousands of workbooks in Martin County schools;
- 6.) writing a blog, "Indian River Lagoon" www.jacquithurlowlippisch.com, with more than 4,000 subscribers, which is read by everyday people, policy makers, agencies like the ACOE and

SFWMD, and some media outlets, and collaborating with experts like Dr. Gary Goforth, formerly of the SFWMD, and my brother, Todd Thurlow, a real estate/trust attorney and map expert on historical, legal, land use, and water issues; 7.) I "speak up" for Martin County as an alternate on the Water Resources Advisory Committee; 8.) as a board member and volunteer at Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute, I learned about the sick dolphins in the Indian River Lagoon, as documented by Dr Gregory Bossert, and participated in their health assessments and the rescue of marine mammals. These animals are "sentinels of human health," and I have shared their sad story. 9.) For many years I have been in contact with HBOI's Dr Brian LaPoint, nutrient pollution expert, whose ideas also play an important role in my advocacy; 10.) I have spoken before the Martin County Commission for years most recently warning of what indeed materialized. 11.) In



Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch
Republican Candidate
for the Martin County
Commission District 1 Seat.

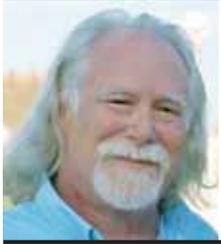
2015, the Everglades Coalition awarded me the John V Kabler award for grassroots activism. Yes, I am a recognized leader.

What is my time-table for the next steps? First, we must document the health issues that arise from the toxic algae situation over the next three months. People must be willing to come forth and share their stories as medical records are not public information. The documenting of sickness is what will lay the ground work legally and

on a policy level to re-plumb Lake Okeechobee. The ACOE releases into our St Lucie River is because a breach of the dike is a "health, safety and welfare issue" for those south of Lake Okeechobee. Now it is a health, safety and welfare issue here, too.

I believe that the water transfer laws of our nation and implementation by the state do not take into account the transfer of large toxic algae blooms downstream, as is the case this year from Lake Okeechobee. We are in unprecedented territory. I am knowledgeable, and connected enough on this subject, to push, advocate, and move the needle forward. As a 2016 UF trained Natural Resources Leadership Institute graduate, I will do all I can to continue our local revolution to send water south while getting along with others and seeking collaborative solutions. Please give me that chance. ■

Septic-sewer blooming algae? Dredge the Lake



Capt. Don Voss
One Florida Foundation

Some celebrated the recent article in The Stuart News by reporter Tyler Treadway that the current algae blooms came from Lake Okeechobee, not from the septic effluent in our lagoon. Wa hoo! Our human waste seeping into our lagoon isn't directly responsible for the algae blooms; however, isn't there septic effluent upriver and in Osceola County that sends their pollution into Lake Okeechobee?

Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) explode in excess fresh water when nutrient-rich material is churned up from the bottom of, for instance, Lake Okeechobee and mixes with pollution flowing into a Lake that's heating up from hot summer temperatures. These circumstances make the HABs a putrid-smelling reminder that excess nutrients are the issue – along with excess fresh water dumped on us by an active El Nino occurrence.

It has become obvious that hand in hand with stopping the discharges, we must also clean our water of pollutants from Shingle Creek all the way south. In 2013, One Florida Foundation presented the results of our conversations with hundreds of stakeholders in a report titled, "STOZE." Although not an acronym, the "T" section refers to Lake Okeechobee.

In explaining the components of STOZE, we covered diverse water storage, and we spent two months covering cleaning the water to address pollution throughout our watershed. Lake Okeechobee has many feet of muck lining the bottom of the Lake. For decades, this muck was considered some of the best soil in America, and people in the know used to come and get truckloads. Farmers around the Lake hoarded muck as their "special sauce" to make their garden grow best. But in the 1970s, fertilizer and herbicides became more insidious, increased productivity, and it seemed the trade-off was not an issue.

This is where the STOZE Report comes into play. Lake Okeechobee happens to be one of our biggest assets. We do not need to buy additional water

storage areas IF Lake Okeechobee is properly maintained and the levee walls are reinforced. Senator Nelson, Senator Rubio and State Senator Negron have all implied that after the reinforcement has been completed, we still are not to assume the ACOE will allow more water to be stored there. At 16 feet 6 inches elevation, the levee has a 1% chance of a breach. At 18 feet elevation, there is a 70% chance of a breach and the harm that follows. Senator Negron points out that when there are discharges, there is a 100% chance of estuary harm done.

If we cannot increase the elevation of the water level to accommodate more water storage without risk, the solution is then to remove the up to 3 feet of muck from the bottom of Lake Okeechobee and better manage the water elevation as the rainy season or uncharacteristic-but-anticipated event, such as this January's El Nino, occurs. The Lake works best at a 12'6" to 13'6" elevation. The Lake has two major constraints that need to be met: the Lake is to maintain sufficient water to provide farms if drought conditions occur, and to provide a 7' navigational channel for marine commerce. These chan-

nels are referred to in STOZE as the "T" channels.

Using suction dredging methods, nutrient rich and heavy metal laden muck can be extracted, and while it is determined whether it has a commercial use, it can be contained inside the Lake, cordoned off along the eastern bank. Last week the Lake was at an elevation of 13'8," and had a navigational channel depth of 6'2", well below the channel requirement. I have had several spirited conversations with our Riverkeeper, the Audubon Society and some SFWMD former employees over this topic. The Riverkeeper and Audubon are opposed to dredging the entire lake, and SFWMD does not believe dredging will accomplish the goals we are seeking.

But consider these facts: Every nine inches of elevation in Lake Okeechobee equals 400,000 acre-feet of water. In 2013, we had a 36-inch change in elevation or 1.6 million acre-feet. Currently, we have had 2.2 million acre-feet in discharges resulting from all the El Nino rainfall.

Managing the Lake properly, so the elevation remains between 12' and

continued on PAGE 18

*Darlene Fuggetta says,
Do not vote for me!*



If you want to save the county from four more years of higher taxation, wasteful spending and unnecessary litigation, vote for Harold Jenkins, Republican, for District 3 County Commission on August 30!

"After I saw that Harold Jenkins and I agree on how best to serve this county," Darlene says, "I decided to withdraw from the County Commission race to ensure that two like-minded candidates would not split the vote, thus allowing the incumbent to keep her District 3 seat."

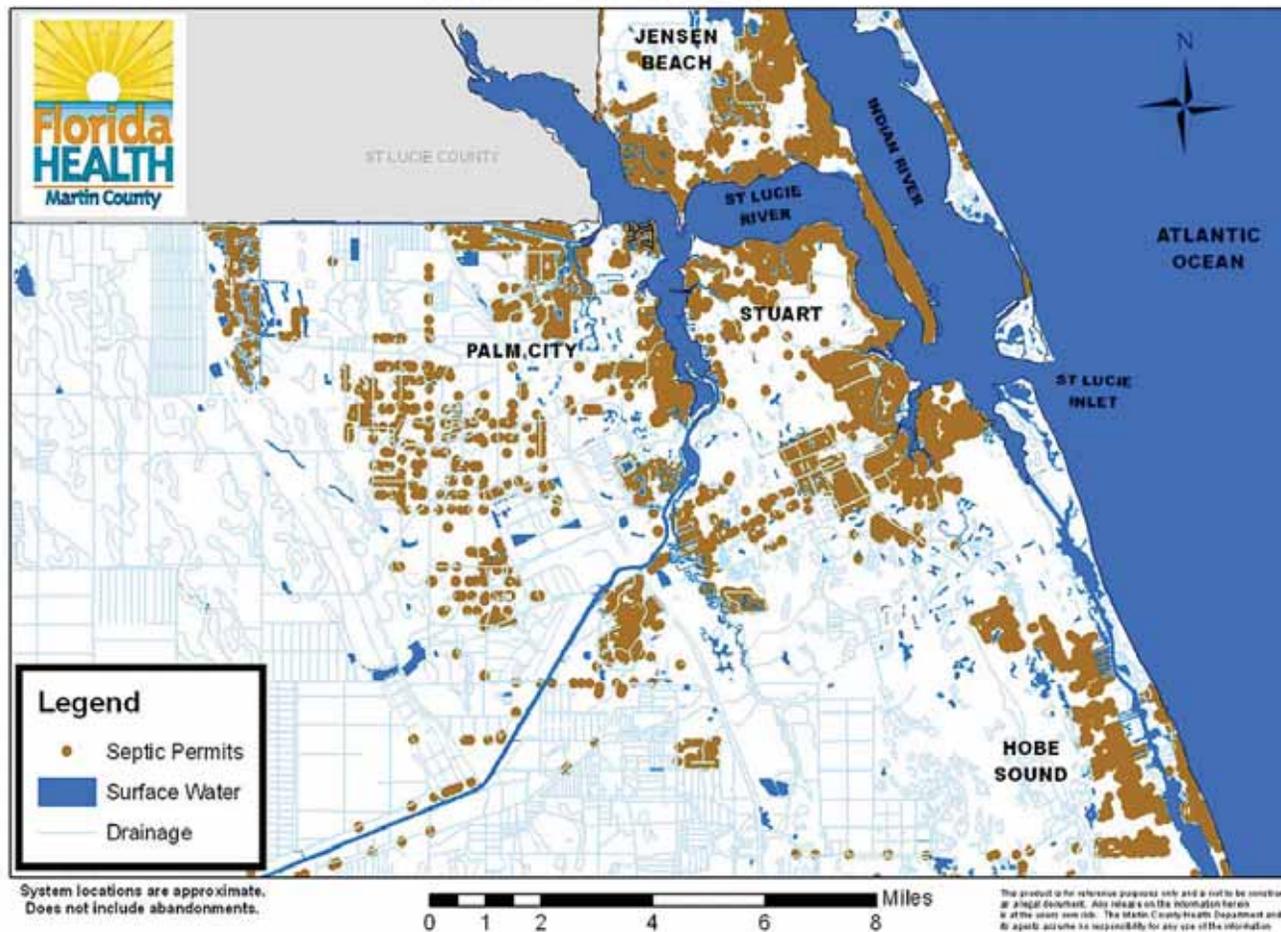
Votes cast for Darlene Fuggetta will not be counted, so be sure to cast your vote for Harold Jenkins!

I support Harold Jenkins because he is a man of integrity, a champion of the environment, and a successful businessman!

www.DarleneFuggetta.com
f DarleneFuggetta

MARTIN COUNTY, FLORIDA PERMITTED SEPTIC SYSTEMS

MARCH 1998 TO JULY 2013



The state Department of Health shows the intensity of septic tanks lining the St. Lucie River and the Indian River Lagoon.

Capt. Don Voss

continued from PAGE 17

12'6," would allow additional storage of 48 inches of water, roughly 2.13 million acre-feet. Combined with northern, eastern and western water storage, the channel could be maintained for navigation and provide the dry season water needs for farms.

Dredging Lake Okeechobee is an ACOE and federal project that only requires marine commerce to seek this action. Combined with other water storage, central Florida is better prepared to adjust to water needs. If the discharges are directed by the Federal agency ACOE, why not use their dollar to open up Lake Okeechobee for additional storage and better water management?

- Reduce the flow;
- Clean the water at the source and as it flows; and
- Send the proper amounts of clean water south.

Capt. Don Voss, nationally recognized for his environmental initiatives to improve the water quality of the Indian River Lagoon, will be a regular contributor to Martin County Currents. All advertising on these pages will benefit One Florida Foundation, dedicated to addressing water issues throughout the state.

The Indian River Lagoon's rich biodiversity depends on five species of seagrass, much of which has disappeared in the northern portion of the lagoon although not subject to Lake Okeechobee discharges. Non-point pollution sources affect water clarity, which in turn determines the light that reaches the seagrass and thus the health of the plants.

Dr. Edie Widder and her team at the Ocean Research and Conservation Association (ORCA) are analyzing the ecosystem stressors, particularly the pollutants collected in sediments on the lagoon floor, through its Fast Assessment of Sediment Toxicity (FAST) program, the cornerstone of which is the Microtox bioassay. The assay tests sediment toxicity using bioluminescent bacteria, which produce light via respiration; anything that blocks respiration reduces light output.

The maps show where the location of the most polluted areas of the northern lagoon; however, that is insufficient evidence to stop the pollution. Kilroys (and LOBOs

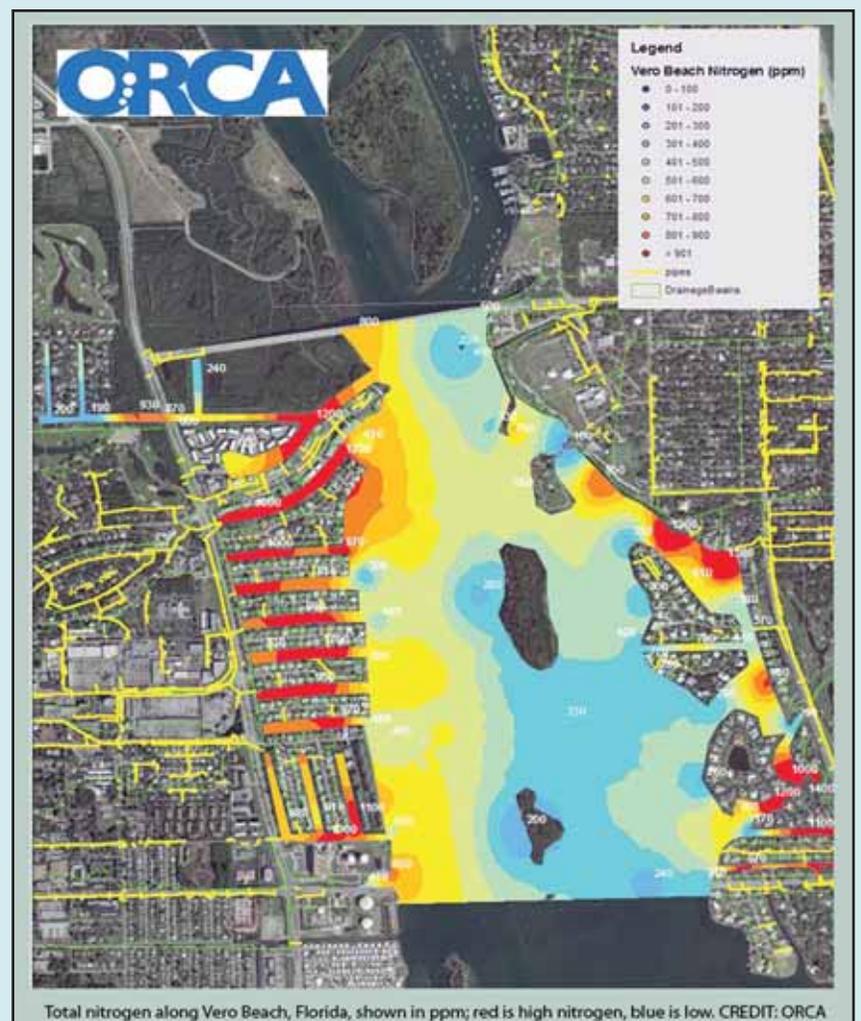
from Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute) monitor water flow patterns over time in order to pinpoint sources.

Developed by ORCA, the Kilroys are a real-time wireless underwater sensor, about the size of a football, that measures water flow speed, direction, turbidity, and biological properties, transmitting data to shore via the internet. The Kilroys also are coupled with a water sampler set, which will trigger when a turbidity current passes and determine whether the current carries stormwater sewage, diesel fuel, or other particulate.

Kilroys also are designed to call a cell phone each time a sample is taken, so an EPA-certified lab can be notified and the sample processed to meet Clean Water Act requirements.

Although 25 Kilroys are deployed, the Legislature failed until just recently to adequately fund their maintenance and continued monitoring. An emergency allocation of funds will keep them functioning in the water for another year.

ORCA's now-famous "heat" map that shows the most polluted areas of the northern Indian River Lagoon demonstrated not only the red "hot spots" of critical concern, but also that a golf course's Best Management Practices in applying fertilizer resulted in no impact to the lagoon, which was enough evidence for Vero Beach to enact its own fertilizer ordinance.



Meet our unwanted guests, blue-green algae



Nyla Pipes

One Florida Foundation



Recent cyanobacteria bloom in Lake Okeechobee.

Blue-green algae floated out of Lake Okeechobee, down the C-44 and into the St. Lucie River over recent weeks, inundating our lives with news headlines, social media posts and cautionary signs posted by health departments. Some reports say the stuff is toxic. Some is; some is not.

Whether it is or isn't, indignation abounds that the algae exists at all. Residents are not happy about the Lake Okeechobee discharges, but they are even less happy, as I am, that our waters are now Day-Glo green and potentially harmful to our health.

Unfortunately, the algal blooms are here, and this likely is not their last appearance due to a number of factors – rainfall, nutrient loads, and temperature, thus we should learn as much as we can about blue-green algae to understand what it is, what it does, and how to prevent it from getting out of control in the future.

A cursory study of blue-green algae takes you down a path of scientific names, acronyms, and studies from around the world. Although we already understand much about Harmful Algal Blooms (called HABs), much remains to be learned, even among scientists.

Intimidating headlines, such as "New Science Challenges Old Assumptions about Harmful Algal Blooms" on the

United States Geological Survey website (<https://www.usgs.gov/news/new-science-challenges-old-assumptions-about-harmful-algal-blooms>) carry the underlying message that we don't know yet all we need to understand in order to change it.

USGS scientists study the landscape of the United States, its natural resources, and the natural hazards that threaten it, which they've been doing since 1879. While it's reassuring to see they are still learning, it also is readily apparent that the issue exists on a national scale. At least, we are not alone.

For now, however, let's focus on what we do know about blue-green algae.

First, blue-green algae are actually not algae in the traditional eukaryotic sense, but rather prokaryotic bacteria called cyanobacteria. Prokaryotic organisms have no nucleus in their cellular makeup. (Eukaryotic organisms do.) Fossilized cyanobacteria dating back 3.5 billion years have been found, indicating that this may be the oldest species on earth!

Being able to tell the difference be-

tween various algal species and bacteria is important, because some are more beneficial in a water body than others. Some provide a source of food for zooplankton, and others create unhealthy blooms that block sunlight and deprive the ecosystem of oxygen as they perish.

Hearty cyanobacteria have been lumped with algae classifications, instead of bacteria, because they are capable of making their own food using chlorophyll and photosynthesis. The more food the cyanobacteria makes, the more it multiplies, forming a bloom.

Cyanobacterial blooms may be dominated by a single species or composed of a variety of toxic and non-toxic strains. This would explain the discrepancies among recent reports about whether the current blooms in the St. Lucie River are toxic or not. In fact, if you read the Florida Department of Environmental Protection report on Harmful Algal Blooms in Lake Okeechobee and the estuaries, you will find that at most testing sites, no predominant species was identified, and most were identified as non-toxic. Their report can be viewed at depnewsroom.wordpress.com.

Microcystins, which are nearly always toxic, are the most common type of cyanobacteria identified throughout the world. We have known for some time that exposure can affect the human liver, kidneys, and reproductive system. Additionally, some recent studies link microcystic cyanobacteria to neurological diseases such as ALS, Alzheimer's and Parkinson's.

These potential impacts to health are not to be taken lightly. If you observe an algal bloom in a water body, avoid contact, as it could contain toxins. You cannot tell by appearance alone.

On some scale, algae and bacteria are always present in our water bodies; a healthy balance is the goal for all ecosystems. The frequency, duration and intensity of algal blooms, however, increase with nutrient pollution.

Algae multiply quickly in waterways with an overabundance of nitrogen and phosphorus, particularly when water is warm and winds are calm, making the water stagnant. Blue-green algae may be discharged to us from Lake Okeechobee, but an overabundance of nutrients in the St. Lucie River continues to feed them. If the river was clean, the blooms would starve.

Citizens' tools to reduce the incidence of algal blooms include Basin Management Action Plans for impaired water bodies, Best Management Practices by landscapers, farmers and golf courses, septic-to-sewer conversions by cities and counties, and their fertilizer bans during the rainy season – plus the concerted efforts to end Lake Okeechobee discharges.

We can do more. As scientists study the increase in algal blooms and look for practical solutions, we must remain involved in the conversation, learning as much as we can, in order to understand and apply the solutions they will offer in the future. We can expect no less of ourselves as responsible citizens. ■

Nyla Pipes is a founder of One Florida Foundation, which addresses water issues throughout the state.

What do these 4 have in common?

James CAMPO
REPUBLICAN PARTY OF FLORIDA
FOR STATE COMMITTEEMAN
Paid by James Campo, Republican for State Committeeman

THE VITAL LINK WE NEED

Elect Stacey Hetherington
REPUBLICAN PARTY OF FLORIDA
State Committeewoman
Paid by Stacey Hetherington, Republican for State Committeewoman

Let's bring a unifying voice to the party in these times of evolution and change . . .

Buying the wrong land has far-reaching impacts



J.P. Sasser

*Former Mayor
City of Pahokee*

We can all agree that the toxic algae blooms plaguing the Treasure Coast are a tragedy that needs to be fixed. No one living in any community should have to experience the type of algae we have seen in recent weeks.

The relentless clamoring of environmental activists, however, who say the only solution lies in taking land more than 50 miles to the south, is guided by a

self-serving environmental concern that puts the interests of the people in coastal communities over those living in the rural areas between interstate highways.

Case in point: Do we really want to heed the activists' call and send this algae-laden water south to America's treasure, Everglades National Park? Such a move would reverse decades of progress there, where today 90 percent of the water is meeting stringent federal standards – a success story the activists never want to talk about.

Buying or taking productive farmland south of the lake to alleviate algae blooms and stop the discharges from Lake Okeechobee simply isn't backed up by real science – and yet the activists pushing it never have to answer for this.

It would cost tens of billions of dol-

lars, diverting precious financial resources away from a slate of projects that are making or will make a real difference. It also would not have prevented the algae crisis.

The blue-green algae that has plagued the Indian River Lagoon and beaches on the Treasure Coast is the result of several complex factors that scientists have thoroughly documented over the years:

- thousands of aging septic tanks on and around the lagoon that dump human waste into the water;
- local urban runoff;
- the effects of Lake discharges that have sent billions of gallons of nutrient-laden water, flowing from north of the lake, into the lagoon.

We should be focusing on real solu-

tions, instead of the bumper-sticker slogans repeated by activists that aren't backed up by science. We should accelerate current state and federal projects that allow for more storage and treatment of water north, east and west of the lake.

We should move as quickly as possible to get septic tank owners hooked up to municipal sewer systems, so that people can literally stop flushing their toilets into the lagoon. This is a regional problem, but residents on the Treasure Coast must acknowledge that they bear some responsibility for the algae crisis, too.

The scientific data from the South Florida Water Management District is crystal clear: more than 95 percent of the water and nutrients that are flowing into Lake Okeechobee, and are then being released in the discharges, come from the north, east and west – not the south.

If the goal is truly to clean water, restore the Everglades, and greatly reduce or stop the discharges when more cost-effective solutions are available in a timelier manner, why do those pushing the land grab refuse to have an intelligent conversation about it?

For some reason, it seems the focus is more about buying the land south of the lake than actually correcting the problems.

When the algae blooms began, why were environmental activists so quick to blame farmers and rural communities nowhere near the source of water or the pollution that was flowing into the lake?

Why is it that farmers and hard-working families living south of the lake are the ones pressured to give up the land that fuels their economy and jobs?

Why are they called upon to be 100-percent of the solution?

Also, why are these activists cherry-picking the algae blooms in South Florida and ignoring them in other parts of the state, including north Florida?

The answer is because there are no sugarcane farmers to blame in Panama City.

The truth is, some key environmental activists hate the existence of agriculture south of the lake and are hell-bent on putting farmers out of business. These activists could care less about the role that agriculture plays in creating good jobs, sparking economic prosperity in rural towns, and feeding Florida families and the country.

While Treasure Coast residents understandably want action to prevent future toxic algae blooms, this crisis is once again being co-opted as a rallying cry to buy land south of the lake by a small group of rich, coastal elites who do not care about the science or the well-being of the people living south of Lake Okeechobee.

We should be all in this together, rather than trying to pit one region against another. ■

Smart and sensible. That is what I want in an elected official and that is why I'll be voting for Harold Jenkins for Martin County Commission.

Between the constant campaigning, nasty attacks and write-in candidates closing down races and denying voters a chance to vote, it's easy to get lost in all the petty politics. It's refreshing to see a real person like Harold Jenkins in the race. He speaks from the heart and has all the qualities that Martin County voters look for. His professional career is impressive. He took over his father's landscaping company 30 years ago and has made it an even bigger success. He treats his customers and his employees well. County government could use someone in charge who has some business sense and knows how to treat others.

In 2011, Jenkins co-founded Preserve Martin County, which helped save rural Hobe Sound from being overrun with thousands of new houses and urban sprawl. Thanks to Harold and other local people behind PMC, our quality of life was protected.

As someone with a track record for successfully defeating bad development proposals and a good head for building a successful business, Harold Jenkins is the best candidate Hobe Sound has had in a long time. Let's make sure he gets elected.

J. Harry MacArthur
OWNER HARRY AND THE NATIVES

Anne Scott's priorities help raise county's costs

Republican candidate for District 3, Anne Scott, currently chair of the Martin County Commission, declined the Martin County Currents' invitation to submit her biography and answer the same question as other county commission candidates. Much information already exists, however, in the public record regarding Scott's history, philosophy of government and her decisions over the past four years, which is presented here.

Scott, married for 29 years to Stuart Scott, retired chairman and CEO of an international real estate services firm, often talks about their "Brady Bunch" blended family of seven children and nine grandchildren growing up primarily in Chicago, while also spending "a great deal of time on Jupiter Island," where the couple eventually bought a home.

An associate circuit court judge appointed by the Illinois Supreme Court for nine years, Scott also was appointed a lecturer on judicial ethics. After retiring and establishing full-time residency in Florida, she served as a commissioner for the Town of Jupiter Island from 2006 until 2012, when she resigned to run for the District 3 seat on the Martin County Commission.

Scott currently is embroiled in a scandal regarding her previously undisclosed private email account and undisclosed emails from Maggy Hurchalla, which had been requested in a public records request, that prompted Circuit Court Judge Shields McManus to overturn his previous ruling that Martin County had not violated public records laws. The public records trial has been postponed and will not be conducted until after the primary election.

The county's budget office this month requested and received approval to make a budget transfer of an additional \$165,000 for the lead counsel in the public records case and \$400,000 to cover the cost of four commissioners' individual legal counsel, including Scott's. As of April 5, 2016, the amount actually spent thus far was \$871,133 for outside attorneys in the Lake Point case alone (an insurance payment of around \$250,000 reduced it from \$1.1 million).

The case stems from the Lake Point lawsuit against Martin County and the South Florida Water Management District charging a breach of contract, and against Maggy Hurchalla for allegedly interfering with those contracts illegally. Lake Point was seeking emails three years ago that it claims is the evidence the company needs to hold Hurchalla responsible for her alleged misdeeds.

This is not the only case that wound up in litigation that stemmed from Scott's public actions or comments during county commission meetings toward landowners with either pending

or existing projects over the past three years. One of the cases, the former Seabran development, was settled out of court by "modifying" eight current Comprehensive Growth Management Plan rules, including the required buffer of wetlands, with no public hearing on the changes and no public vote in order to accommodate the commission majority's desired use for the property.

Yet another case will come before the court this fall. The cost of outside attorneys during Scott's tenure has exceeded \$4 million dollars, and four full-time attorneys have been added to the county payroll, exceeding the number of staff attorneys in the history of Martin County, according to public records; however, it pales in comparison to the cost of outside consultants, which according to Rich Campbell of The Stuart News, exceeds \$13 million over the past 33 months.

Scott has been the primary impetus in contracting many of those consultant studies, including an economic development analysis for \$60,000, which pointed out that the Community Redevelopment Areas offer the greatest, untapped potential for economic development within



the urban boundary; therefore, since Scott and the commission majority had just disbanded the independent CRA board, the study was discounted and ignored.

She also pushed for the fire department consolidation study for nearly \$100,000, the Fitch report, which remains largely unused, although she said recently that she favored gleaning it for possible fire department cost savings, and which the new fire chief as been applying to his department's practices.

She pushed for the CB Richard Ellis study of the county's surplus properties, a proposal that came in at \$660,000 to conduct; therefore, the county whittled it down to a study of the first 8 items on their list, plus the county-owned golf course and the fairgrounds property analysis, for \$115,000. The CBRE report advised selling the golf course and its top 10 waterfront properties to developers for a maximum return on investment.

The decision on the golf course will not become before the commission until after the primary election, and neither will use of the fairgrounds property. CBRE estimated the fairgrounds would bring at least \$1.5 million in revenue annually to the county if leased to light

manufacturing firms, a decision that Scott has openly opposed.

She also has said she wants more of the CBRE analysis conducted, and in Campbell's column, he asks Scott if the county conducts too many studies, quoting her as replying: "No, we don't have too many consultant studies," Scott said. "In fact, there are many more (studies) that I would like to see, including a municipal budget analysis."

While a Jupiter Island commissioner, Scott became widely known as the commissioner who spearheaded the Town's changes in its Comprehensive Growth Management Plan to ensure that parking for the Hobe Sound public beach could never be expanded beyond its current limits. Her home is adjacent to the Hobe Sound beach.

She also has been successful as a Martin County Commissioner in banning the tag-and-release shark tournaments off all Martin County beaches during the annual shark migration each February. She also sought to charge fees for beach parking, to close beaches after dark and to ban alcohol, however, she thus far has been less successful in those efforts.

Scott takes pride in leading the effort to abolish the county-funded Convention and Visitors Bureau, adding a full-time employee to the county staff whose lifetime benefits and salary will cost an estimated \$1 million, according to a county official, and admits that her current strategy is to do the same with the Business Development Board, to ensure government control of business development, in addition to tourist development.

Scott was among the commission majority that approved the recent changes to the county's Comprehensive Growth Management Plan, most becoming effective just this month, that severely limit business and industrial expansion, both inside and outside of the urban services districts.

She was quoted in a Stuart News article regarding passage of the septic tank rules limiting septic tanks to only one per parcel of land regardless of the size of the parcel, and banning sewer line extensions into rural areas, as the state's confirmation that stopping development is a legitimate way to control pollution.

One of Scott's proudest achievements, she has said publicly, is pushing the county staff to create an easier-to-follow County Improvement Plan system and worksheets, which have been lauded by many who have used the new system. It also has given heavy weight to the commission majority's goals, objectives and strategic plans, which were set two years ago in an untelevised workshop with no public input. ■

No influences? Look again

Both incumbent Commissioner Anne Scott and her challenger, Hobe Sound businessman Harold Jenkins, have contributors who probably accurately reflect their interests and their influence.

Scott's campaign literature says she does not receive contributions from special interests, yet of her 185 contributions over the past six months, only 21 persons are employed or own a business. The rest are retirees, a total of 164, which many would consider a significant "special interest" group.

One of the issues with the retirement "industry" is that it promulgates the formation of low-wage service and retail jobs within Martin County, according to economists, verified by Census Bureau statistics that show 41 percent of the jobs in Martin County are for \$25,000 or less. With the current county commission majority's emphasis on zero-growth policies, Martin County's elderly population continues to increase, and its under-18 age group continues to decline. Martin County had fewer children under the age of 18 in 2015 than it did in 2000, although the overall population has increased by an estimated 15.6 percent.

"That's one of the roles that I believe our CRAs can fulfill to improve quality of life here," Jenkins says. "They can bring revitalization and economic development within our urban services boundary, but at the same time, this also is a good strategy for our elderly. It puts more of the tax burden on businesses, instead of individuals, and by creating livable, walkable, bikeable communities, our older populations can age in place, and that's good for all of us." ■

EcoGen plan encounters unexpected hurdles

As deflated as a punctured tire, land planner Morris Crady, of Lucido & Associates, told the Local Planning Agency at its July 14 meeting that the developers of the proposed EcoGen bio-mass facility in Indiantown did not wish to proceed.

They also did not intend to withdraw their applications for Comprehensive Growth Management Plan and land use map amendments, however; they simply intended to slow down to figure out the direction they want to take.

"In the face of the staff's denial and some of the negative public comment," Crady said, "we thought we'd just take a step back and put the project on hold."

EcoGen principals, CEO Bill Quinn and VP Rick Melchiori, had pressed the county commission, and they agreed, to allow EcoGen to start the county's review process earlier than usual to meet contract deadlines. All development applications that require Comp Plan amendments normally start the review process in September.

The sudden change came after the county's Growth Management review staff encountered a hurdle in the county's Comp Plan rules that can be overcome only through a long, complicated review to craft new amendments addressing the issue of privately owned alternative energy plants.

Current regulations, drafted in 1990,

require that energy facilities to be located in Martin County must be regulated by the Public Service Commission, which in this case limits all energy generation in Martin County to FPL.

EcoGen does not qualify as a public utility, because it's privately owned, although it will be supplying the electricity being generated at its plant to FPL under a 30-year contract that's already been signed. The more appropriate zoning, according to staff, is industrial, which must fall within the urban services boundary, although the project is bordered by the Indiantown urban services district.

"I thought we had a simple approach," Crady added, after EcoGen had found the "perfect" parcel of property at the western end of Farm Road in Indiantown. They intended to "swap" 78 acres of the property under FPL's high-voltage transmission lines that are zoned Public Energy Transmission for 78 acres zoned for agriculture on the 536-acre parcel owned by Tesoro Groves, where they intended to grow cloned, non-invasive eucalyptus trees as fuel and as an alternative crop to the former citrus groves.

Melchiori and Quinn had already presented the EcoGen project at the March 22 commission meeting at the request of Commissioner John Haddox and with the support of Commissioners Ed Field-



A stand of 100-foot tall eucalyptus trees adjacent to I-95 in Hobe Sound is ready to be felled for the proposed US EcoGen biomass facility in Indiantown.

ing and Doug Smith. Fielding said he felt EcoGen was "an intriguing opportunity" that fell in line with the county's overall objectives of sustainability.

"Finding viable crops for our ag land, especially our citrus land is vital," Fielding added. "This has potential..." The project also has "complexities," he added, because the land use is designated agriculture only and would require a comprehensive plan amendment to change it. At the time, no one realized how complex getting an approval would become.

EcoGen would convert biomass from woody waste material, supplemented by new growth eucalyptus trees to ensure consistency, in a state-of-the-art, low-emission power plant, according to developers. Excess wood pellets produced by Eco-Gen would be sold to coal-fired plants, reducing those air emissions.

Melchiori, who had discussed alternative crops with Fielding for several years, said he was introduced to US EcoGen about six years ago, learning of their plans for a biomass power plant in Martin County and agreeing to a eucalyptus trial at the Becker Tree Farm near Hobe Sound, the success of which can be seen by motorists traveling on I-95 when they spot Becker's 100-foot tall grove.

"Obviously, there's a strong economic benefit to Martin County for this plant, including job growth, renewable energy, and it's a green project," Melchiori told commissioners during the March presentation, "but what was most important to us at the time was that these trials were going to find an alternative use of our lands, which had been decimated by canker and citrus greening ... finding alternative uses has been difficult."

After much deliberation, the LPA concluded that, although they supported

the idea of alternative energy facilities that the only alternative was to accept the staff's recommendation of denial. They also requested that the Growth Management staff, as part of their state-mandated, EAR process for the Comp Plan that begins in the fall, to include consideration of amendments for inclusion of alternative energy production.

"(EcoGen) just may need to wait until after the November election," said Jim Moir, chair of the LPA, "to see how the election turns out." A constitutional amendment is on the ballot that addresses solar energy and other alternative energy production in the state.

The Comp Plan restrictions are not the only hurdle, however, since nearly 200 pages of emails from Maggy Hurchalla, Ginny Sherlock, representing the Guardians of Martin County, Donna Melzer and members of the Martin County Conservation Alliance opposed the project.

"We've spent a lot of time embedding state-of-the-art technology to reduce water consumption from 1.5 million gallons of water a day (for the same size electrical generating plant) with a typical cooling tower to the dry cooling tower of EcoGen's," he said, "which reduced water consumption to less than 100,000 gallons a day." About the same as a car wash, and the non-invasive species of eucalyptus trees grow from their stumps and can be harvested in three- or four-year cycles, requiring little water and no fertilizer, according to Melchiori.

Indiantown residents are clamoring for the jobs that will result of the plant locating nearby, as well as the tax revenue that will be generated, second only to FPL. Now, however, farmers and residents can only hold their breath, cross their fingers, and wait to see what happens next. ■

--Barbara Clowdus



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Court orders Anne Scott to sit for deposition

Martin County attorneys failed in court this month to shield Martin County Commissioner Anne Scott from having to bring any further emails or other public records in her possession to a deposition by the Lake Point mining and water restoration facility.

Scott's undisclosed private email account and emails from Maggy Hurchalla, whom Lake Point is suing for interfering with their contracts with Martin County and the South Florida Management District, were grounds cited by District Court Judge Shields McManus in April to toss out his previous finding that Martin County, along with Commissioners Sarah Heard and Ed Fielding, had not violated public records laws.

On June 17, he ordered that a new public records trial be held prior to the end of this year.

Lake Point attorneys also will not be limited in their questioning of Scott, according to court records, about her previously undisclosed emails, or about her actions and comments during the January and February 2013 county commission meetings during which she called for "shutting down" the Lake Point operation.

Martin County attorneys also attempted to shield Commissioner John Haddox from a Lake Point deposition based on the grounds that he had not been named in Lake Point's amended complaint that targeted public records violations, and he was not the subject of a separate trial last summer; however, Lake Point attorney Ethan Loeb wrote in his response that Haddox might have information about the commission's actions regarding Lake Point, as well as Haddox's email correspondence with Hurchalla, that could prove to be evidence in the Hurchalla case.

LEGAL FEES MOUNT

As legal wrangling continues, the costs for outside attorneys continue to rise. A budget transfer from the general fund reserves to the Lake Point case budget was approved by the county commission in June for an additional \$165,000 to cover the anticipated costs of the lead outside counsel in the public records count and \$400,000 to cover the anticipated fees of the four commissioners' individual legal counsel.

As of April 5, 2016, the amount spent had been \$871,133 for outside attorneys in just the Lake Point case alone (an insurance payment of around \$250,000 reduced it from \$1.1 million), not considering the salaries of four additional attorneys added to the staff.

The public records trial date has not yet been set; however, the trial for the alleged breach of contract charges against Martin County and the SFWMD is set for Sept. 16.

IT IS NOT A SLAPP SUIT

Attorney Virginia Sherlock tried and failed this month for the fourth time to prove to a District Court judge that the lawsuit against Maggy Hurchalla filed by Lake Point in 2013 for tortious interference with their county and SFWMD contracts was what she calls a Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation (a SLAPP suit).

Sherlock, who moved to have the case



Maggy Hurchalla



Anne Scott



Ed Fielding



Sarah Heard

against Hurchalla dismissed three previous times before three previous judges, all of which were denied, argued in court this time for a final summary judgment. The judge, however, did not agree that the case could be decided solely from the

bench, thus the case will proceed to a jury trial on Sept. 16 at Lake Point's request.

District Court Judge Shields McManus also ruled in favor of the South Florida Water Management District's motion for a partial summary judgment

that the water management district's contract did not include Lake Point's water supply business, even though the project was in the "development stage."

Lake Point's request for a partial summary judgment in the public records case to recover attorney fees and costs expended to obtain commissioners' public records was postponed. McManus severed the public records claims from the breach of contract claims, however, Lake Point contends that commissioners may still have undisclosed emails that would be evidence in their case against Hurchalla.

Court-ordered mediation took place between Lake Point and Martin County attorneys on July 14; however, no settlement agreement was announced. ■

RE-ELECT

DOUG SMITH

MARTIN COUNTY COMMISSIONER

Tuesday, August 30

From cutting taxes to controlling growth...

He's making Martin County work for us!

Making Our Lives Better

Doug Smith has kept up the fight for "good growth" that keeps people employed, government under control and life here affordable for all. He has consistently *opposed* higher property taxes, was the lone Commission vote *against* a referendum to hike the sales tax, and voted *against* a beach parking fee.

Creating Jobs and Growing Our Economy... The Right Way

An active member of the County's five chambers of commerce, **Doug Smith** is a leading supporter of the CRA program and Business Development Board, a Jobs Tool Kit of incentives, a Small Business Bill of Rights, and dedicated funding for economic development. He also chairs our Tourist Development Council.

Protecting the Indian River Lagoon

Doug Smith has been a tireless advocate for more federal and state funding to protect our precious "lifeline." His efforts finally resulted in a fully funded C-44 project, growing support for comprehensive Everglades restoration, and a 16-county coalition that's prioritizing projects and raising awareness of our water-quality needs.

Fighting All Aboard Florida

Doug Smith understands that local leaders must be constantly on guard against profiteers and projects that are wrong for Martin County. That's why he has voted to fund legal action against All Aboard, which poses a potential public safety problem and financial risk to our communities.

DougSmithYes.com

Political advertisement paid for and approved by Doug Smith, Republican, for Martin County Commission, District 1.

Hobe Sound on its way to becoming a 'real' town

Hobe Sound resident and County Commission candidate Harold Jenkins made the first official announcement during the Hobe Sound Chamber forum in April.

"Hobe Sound is going to become a town," he said from his seat on the auditorium stage. "I've been a part of that, until I filed to run for county commission, but I don't think they were quite ready for me to say that yet. Well, oh well, I guess the cat's out of the bag now."

Few in the audience were surprised, however. Rumors had swirled in and around Hobe Sound for months that the hamlet at the southern end of the county intended to incorporate, but the same rumors had floated around for decades, according to Harry MacArthur, a Hobe Sound native, owner of the iconic Harry & the Natives restaurant at the corner of Bridge Road and U.S. 1, and another of the "founding fathers" of the new town.

"A lot of people thought Hobe Sound was already a town," he said, "including some who were born and raised here! But it never has been."

MacArthur told a Hobe Sound gathering in May that the plan for incorporation first was seeded after a developer wanted to create a "city" of several thousand homes at I-95 and Bridge Road called Hobe Sound Plantation. Several of the pioneer families formed an opposition group then to protect the Old Florida, small-town qualities that Hobe Sound represented to them – and still does.

The group reemerged with even more members just six years ago as "Preserve Martin County" in opposition to two major developments west of I-95 and the Turnpike off Bridge Road. They were successful in stirring opposition countywide, and the development applications expired.

NO ONE LISTENING

This time around, the threat does not come from major developments, MacArthur said, but from the county commission policies. "It's not just no-growth," he said. "It's no listen."

All of the organizers in addition to MacArthur and Jenkins, who has taken a back-stage role during his campaign – Pat Martin, of Zeus Park, whose parents



Commissioner John Haddox addresses a group of Hobe Sound residents, telling them he supports and understands their desire for self-determination by incorporating their town. "This is what happens when citizens do not feel they are being listened to," he said. From left: Gilbert Miller, Pat Martin, Mike Ennis, Haddox and Harry MacArthur.

were Hobe Sound pioneers, Gilbert Miller, a Banner Lake native, and Mike Ennis, a home-builder and Florida native, who has spent the past 30 years in Hobe Sound – emphasize that they realized the only way they could have a direct impact on Hobe Sound's future, protecting it both from developers and a disinterested county government, was to create their own government, "where the mayor is your next-door neighbor, and your council members stand in line next to you at the grocery store."

Ennis was chair of the Hobe Sound Neighborhood Advisory Committee when the county commission abolished the independent Community Redevelopment Agency in 2012, fired all the citizen volunteers comprising all seven NACs, and stopped their progress half way through a 30-year, redevelopment and revitalization plan for Hobe Sound.

"We're not in a tug of war with the county over Hobe Sound," Ennis said. "That is not the point. We just realized that no one was listening. It was 1776 all over again."

The group decided that they needed to stop talking about incorporation and start doing it, particularly since one vote could result in a 180-degree turn in county policy, thus Hobe Sound would be vulnerable every two years as commissioners came up for election.

Ennis talked about the Town of Davie, which had been faced with the same decision in the late '50s when eager developers began overtaking Broward County. To protect their equestrian, "western" heritage, the town formally incorporated



Mike Ennis, center, explains the proposed boundaries of the new Town of Hobe Sound following a recent Hobe Sound Chamber of Commerce meeting.

in 1963, and today residents still enjoy the western theme in downtown Davie, with horse trails that spider throughout the town, even though it's now also home to three universities.

"We're not talking about a land grab here, and we're not talking about doing this so we don't have to follow the county's (Comprehensive Growth Management Plan) rules," Ennis said. "We're doing this to protect Hobe Sound, so we can preserve what we all love about this place ... the little shops, the laid-back atmosphere ... we just want to be able to make it even better."

The group pledged among themselves "to do this right," and embarked around a year ago to find the consultant who had the experience and commitment to small towns that would be a good fit for Hobe Sound, traveling around the state to interview three possible firms. The one they chose, BJM Consulting of Cape Coral, embarked on a pre-feasibility study to see if Hobe Sound could meet the state's requirements for becoming a town, help draw the boundaries to fit those requirements, and to see if the area had sufficient financial resources to make it sustainable.

"We found out that Hobe Sound meets every requirement: It's compact, the areas are contiguous," Ennis said, "and the big surprise is that it's got \$2 billion (in taxable property values), which is about the same as Jupiter Island. That means it has the base to sustain itself .. it just takes 15,000 people in Hobe Sound to do it, instead of 600 or so on Jupiter Island."

Ennis also explained that they will adopt a "Government Lite" operating model, similar to Wellington or Weston, where all the services such as police, fire, and road maintenance will be contracted

with the county, thus residents' taxes will remain exactly the same as they would pay as a resident in unincorporated Martin County.

The group has spent \$20,000 of their own money thus far for their consultants, attorneys and surveyors, and they need a minimum of \$60,000 more to complete the five-year feasibility study required by the state. They have set up a non-profit (but contributions are not tax deductible), and all checks go to an accountant in another city.

GO TO WEBSITE

Donations also can be made online at www.townofhobe-sound.com, where a copy of the pre-feasibility study is posted; the financial data are available; and detailed maps of the boundaries are posted. The boundaries run from Osprey Street south to the Jonathan Dickinson State Park, from the Indian River Lagoon on the east to SW 138th Street to the west – the same boundary of the current

urban services district.

After the town achieves incorporation, then annexation is a simple process if another area wishes to be included – and many communities have already expressed interest in doing so.

The most immediate task, however, is to get 3,000 names of registered voters who live in Hobe Sound to sign a petition saying they are in favor of incorporation.

"We put a petition on line on Facebook just to test to see if there was sufficient interest to proceed," Ennis said, "and we got 250 signatures in the first hour. We knew then, without a doubt, we were on the right track."

The problem is that signatures came from beyond just Hobe Sound, so they're starting over with a petition of just Hobe Sound residents that will go to the Florida Legislature along with their five-year feasibility study and their proposed charter as part of the packet needed for approval. If they get the nod of the legislature, then it will go to a vote in November 2017.

"We need the public's comments and input," said Pat Martin. "We just cannot emphasize this enough. We need you to let us know what you think, what you want for Hobe Sound. This is the time to tell us."

Their website www.townofhobe-sound.com is a good place to go for comments, donations and to volunteer. After the charter is written, it will be presented in public meetings for more feedback.

The current push now is for signatures; therefore volunteers will be at shopping centers and knocking on doors throughout August – as the new Town of Hobe Sound strives to open its own door to new opportunities. ■

--Barbara Clowdus

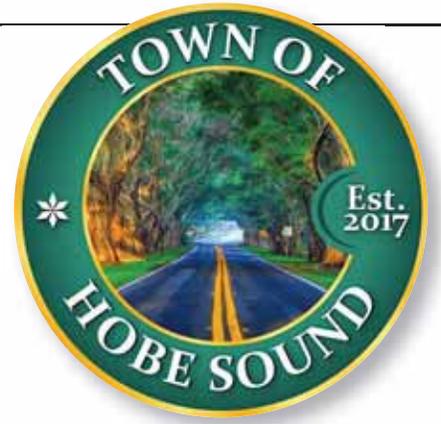
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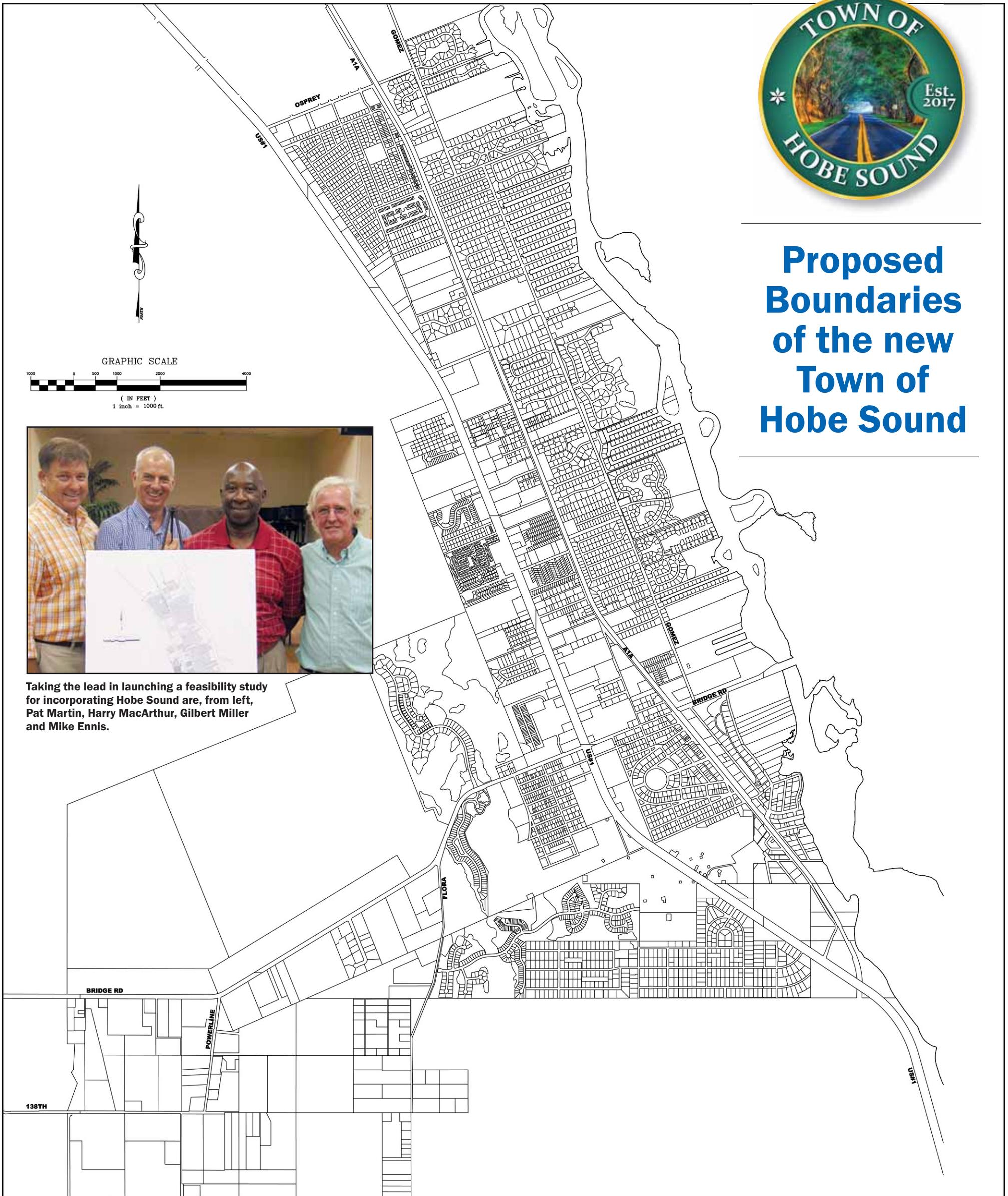
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Proposed Boundaries of the new Town of Hobe Sound



Taking the lead in launching a feasibility study for incorporating Hobe Sound are, from left, Pat Martin, Harry MacArthur, Gilbert Miller and Mike Ennis.

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Dona Omanoff: being one with your journey's road



Maya Ellenson
Art Kaleidoscope



Portrait in a Chicago rain.



Hammock trail through the federal Wildlife Refuge in Hobe Sound.

Dona Omanoff's name is well known to the Hobe Sound art community for the mesmerizing lyricism and depth of her photographs. A digital publisher, yogi, blogger, author and even a professional truck driver, she amazes others through a multiverse expression of her multiple talents.

Born in North Carolina and raised in New England, she admitted: "I always wanted to break out of my little hometown and see the world. I wanted to explore and experience. Once I went to college I never returned to Leominster."

That's when her odyssey began, what she defines as "The Hero's Journey."

I met Dona Omanoff a few years ago when she still owned Mars Gallery in Hobe Sound, turning it into a jewel of this village's historic downtown. The gallery showcased innovative artwork in diverse media. Mars Gallery was highly valued for hosting poetry readings and initiating the "Art Walk" in Hobe Sound. Local artists and just art lovers, including myself, liked to hang around the gallery as we all appreciated both its unique ambiance and Dona's vibrant artistic personality that let the energy swirl around us.

And then it was gone . . . leaving behind the empty space for the longest time. She drifted away, then reemerged in her digital gallery, donaomanoff.com, seeking new opportunities for growth.

After the tragic death of her husband in a car accident, Dona embarked on a commercial trucking career with the largest refrigerator company in the U.S., CR England. According to her, the long-haul lifestyle was a challenging experience.

"One mistake could you kill you or others," she said.

Not having access to fresh produce for days and weeks was not easy either, but at the same time, the experience was mind-opening, healing and a fulfilling time in her life, she added, as it allowed her the opportunity to capture with her smart phone the astounding beauty of the less-seen places of America.

She used to pull over her 80,000-pound truck to greet the dawns and sunsets, rolling hills and meadows of rural America, dipped in the purples of



Dona Omanoff



Pauline

the dusk. As a result, her lucid, all-encompassing and evocative photography takes us beyond the stereotypical beauty of the countryside into the unknown.

In Omanoff's world, beauty precedes the things as their inner energy, not the other way around; therefore, even a highway, captured at the dawn in Ohio, appears mystifying, like "a sled in the sky," as she poetically expressed it.

Trucking also inspired her digital journal, "The Yoga of Travel," an innovative genre, turning the real-time experience into the art of blogging. In Dona's blog, full of deep poetry, the words and photographs morph into each other, erasing the differences between the art forms. As she admitted, "I was forced to leave home in search of employment and have become a combination monk and American cowboy as a professional driver/nomad."

In the digital universe, Omanoff compares herself

to a fish in the ocean, exploring all its vastness and possibilities. Her ebook, "Island Voices," is specially designed for smart phones and tablets. A one-of-a-kind guide to Jamaican music and culture for tourists, the book features hundreds of songs, provides short bios of the singers and explains each song in terms of its cultural context.

The reader will discover various nuances of Reggae music with its wide array of metaphors and overtones, learn about Rastafarian beliefs and local colors. Publishing "Island Voices" entails

also a humanitarian objective, she said:

"My book, written with Fureus, the '2013 Guide to Reggae and New Jamaican Music' uses music and the voice of the composer and performer — rap, dance hall and reggae to convey ideas about Jamaica — central to the survival of their families, the release from oppression and poverty and the movement of their country to self-realization.

We want to help people move beyond survival and into contribution mode. Promoting and investing in people, creating 'intellectual capital' can create economic growth — moving beyond the scarcity model into sustainable and abundant societies."

In Sufi literature, a metaphor of moth and flame illustrates the alchemy of fusion with the divine essence as the moth throws itself onto the candle to become one with the flame. Just like that allegorical moth, Dona Omanoff becomes one with any road she takes to witness her own rebirth.

As a person, she emerges empowered from any drama she's been tested with, and as an artist, Omanoff does much more than that: She empowers everyone who discerns the aura of her "hero's journey" as if exemplifying the timeless lines by the Persian mystic, Rumi: "Rise up nimbly and go on your strange journey to the ocean of meanings . . . Leave and don't look away from the sun as you go, in whose light you're sometimes crescent, sometimes full." ■

Russian-American Maya Ellenson, who holds M.A. and PhD degrees in Russian language and literature from Moscow State University, has lived in Martin County for eight years. A free-lance writer, she has a particular interest in world culture and art.

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Ed Massey keeps an ear close to the ground



Nancy Smith
Guest
Columnist

Despite its overwhelming beauty and natural resources, Florida's Treasure Coast might have become a bust for business and entrepreneurship decades ago.

Look at where it sits. It's one of the few regions in the state more than 100 miles away from any major university, from any of the brain factories that supply and train high-caliber employees and serve to lure new business and foster job creation.

But Martin, St. Lucie, Indian River and Okeechobee counties have a saving grace. For as long as I've known the Treasure Coast, Indian River Community College, now Indian River State College, has been at its heart. The college goes a long way toward filling the gaps.

Massey has been at the college longer than 83 percent of Treasure Coast residents have lived there. He started as a biology instructor in 1973, before integration, when area beaches were largely deserted and agriculture dominated the economy. He was appointed president of the college 15 years later, in 1988.

"When I came in, the college already had tremendous business partnerships, but it took a reactive approach. If a company wanted training, they would come in and we'd provide it," he told me.

Under Massey's leadership, Indian River Community College jumped on the throttle, proactively went to the community to recruit training business and by doing that, significantly improved the area's economic stability.

"A lot of us started talking about what the future of the Treasure Coast is - city leaders, county leaders, state leaders, leaders in public education across the four counties, all willing to engage," Massey said. "Ken Pruitt had just been elected to the Florida House. He took up the challenge, and we knew we had a powerful voice in the Legislature."

Massey realized early what an important part of the area's economic engine the college was.

"We knew we had to think differently about economic development because

without a university headquartered nearby, we knew it would be hard to attract and keep quality organizations like Harbor Branch, the Smithsonian, and a satellite Florida Atlantic University campus," he said. "We made ourselves part of it when private business got together to form a kind of membership organization to keep good things happening."

Pruitt, now St. Lucie County property appraiser after 20 years in the Florida Legislature, two of them as Senate president, is one of Massey's and Indian River State College's biggest fans.

"If you ever want to get anything of real magnitude accomplished when it comes to workforce training, give it to Ed Massey, he'll get it done," says Pruitt. "Dr. Massey continues to set the standard on workforce training in Florida and the United States."

I remember Massey -- whom I hadn't seen at such close range since 2004 -- as being in on everything. Year after year, everybody's business was his business. That's how he stayed close to the community, understood its needs and prepared for the future.

The college suffered less than most in the Florida system during the 2008 recession. "We have the lowest overhead costs in the state, so we were braced to ride

out the bad times," he said.

I asked him what he considers his biggest challenge. He replied, "It's also my biggest reward -- making sure our curriculum stays aligned with what's happening in this changing workplace."

Pete Tesh, president of the Economic Development Council of St. Lucie County, calls Massey "one of the most dynamic community leaders I've ever met. ... His interface with academics and the business side, giving the community what it needs and providing corporate training ... well, he accommodates our total needs." Massey this year is chairman of the Economic Development Council Board.

One of IRSC's real show-off training programs takes place in a new facility that trains nuclear technicians. Florida Power & Light Co. built a complete, fully operational flow loop -- a cooling system for a power plant where prob-



Dr. Edwin Massey, president of Indian River State College

lems can be simulated and students can work to solve them.

"Staff come from FPL, mostly retired company employees, to teach the classes, Massey explained. "When the course is completed, these students have something like a \$60,000-a-year job waiting."

Students who enroll at IRSC are put in one of the college's eight areas, or "guided pathways." No more flailing around all alone, wondering which way to go in their careers. If students haven't made their minds up when they enter, they take core courses, then are given counselors to help them find their way as they go.

"It's something that works for every college," Massey said. "Students waste as little time and money as possible, going for quality every day they're in school."

One of the college's newest buildings is the Kight Center, entirely dedicated to technology. Two National Science Foundation-funded programs are built in two regional centers -- photonics and optics, which includes laser technology.

IRSC has 22 partner colleges and 120 different business partners. "We tried to be on the leading edge, not on the bleeding edge," Massey says.

Look at some of Massey's accomplishments since he was appointed Indian River's third president and CEO and you've probably got a legacy:

- Expanded the enrollment by 300 percent in more than 100 degree and certificate programs.
- Significantly expanded the col-

lege's five campuses (main campus in Fort Pierce) to include more than 700 acres and 1,500,000 square feet of state-of-the-art facilities.

- Led the transition from community college to state college, expanding its mission to become a baccalaureate degree-granting institution, and establishing 20 new bachelor's degree programs linked directly to regional workforce needs.

- Achieved national rankings for IRSC as the 10th best college in the Southern Region by U.S. News & World Report and 4th most affordable college by the U.S. Department of Education. It was a Top-10 National Finalist for the 2015 Aspen Prize and was selected as an "Achieving the Dream" college, dedicated to student success. In 2012 Massey represented higher education at a meeting of prominent educational and industry leaders at the White House.

- Increased Foundation assets

by more than 900 percent and raising funds to support student scholarship awards of \$3.3 million annually.

- Secured more than \$90 million in local, state, and national grant awards over the past 10 years for projects including the ones I mentioned earlier, ranging from the highly successful Regional Center for Nuclear Education and Training to the new Lasers and Fiber Optics Education Center.

- Supported high-quality instruction as evidenced by the fact that IRSC consistently ranks No. 1 among the 28 colleges in the Florida College System (FCS) in the percent of budget dedicated directly to instruction, and lowest among FCS institutions in administrative costs.

- Produced an exemplary fiscal audit history for over 25 years.

Perhaps the greatest tribute to Massey is a number: More than 90 percent of Indian River State College students who graduate in career-based fields are placed directly into jobs.

Ninety percent.

Call this column a post-script to the education summit I didn't want overlooked. In a region of all-small cities and no large university campus within an hour's commute, Massey's achievement measures tall. ■

Nancy Smith, executive editor at Sunshine State News, can be reached at nsmith@sunshinestatenews.com or at 228-282-2423.

"Dr. Massey continues to set the standard on workforce training in Florida and the United States."

— Ken Pruitt

CRAs to take the hit in proposed 2017 budget year

Since the county administrator had already predicted around a one-point rise in the millage rate, the announcement July 20 by Martin County Commissioner Anne Scott in Hobe Sound that the millage rate will remain flat came as a pleasant surprise.

"We just finished three days of budget hearings," Scott told Hobe Sound residents and members of the Hobe Sound Neighborhood Advisory Committee, "and with some careful planning and adjustments, I am very pleased to tell you that we held the millage rate to the same level as last year."

Scott failed to mention that the county commission cut the TIF funding for the Community Redevelopment Areas to its minimum funding by law – 50 percent, from 75 percent – in order to cut \$825,000 from the proposed budget, thus some CRA projects will not be funded during the 2016-17 budget year as promised, even though she was among NAC members when she announced no rise in millage rates and stayed for the NAC meeting.

This is the lowest percentage rate in the 15-year history of the CRA, which began with a 95 percent funding (which means 95 percent of the tax on the rise in property values are directed for use on projects within that CRA's boundaries) and dropped to 60 percent during the recession. The percentage had risen to 75 percent in 2011, where it has remained until this year.

Both Commissioners John Haddox and Doug Smith argued fiercely against cutting the percentage for The NACs were not notified, Haddox said, the public was not notified, and the commissioners were NOT sitting as the Community Redevelopment Agency.

"This was another low blow to the best tool we have to revitalize our historic communities," he said. "I hope the 400-plus citizens who showed up last July for the CRA workshop on this very topic find out what happened today."

Also cut were \$500,000 from the economic fund and \$425,000 from health care reserves. Taxes will increase in spite of these cuts, however, because property values have increased over the previous year, and the franchise fee on electric bills remains in place.

The budget will come before the County Commission again for its final approval in September – after the primary election – at which time the community will find out which CRA projects are not funded for 2017. ■

Babe Ruth Softball World Series coming to town

Babe Ruth Softball, a division of Babe Ruth League, Inc., will bring the World Series of Softball to Martin County in early August. Jensen Beach hosted the 16U World Series this past summer, and



Commissioner walks to make a difference

Commissioner Doug Smith, stopping on his walk across Martin County at many fire departments, normally spends nearly every morning in his Jensen Beach district walking five or so miles to stay fit. Then he was introduced to Operation 300, an adventure camp for children who have lost fathers to war established by the family and friends of Navy SEAL Aaron Vaughn. He decided to use his walks for the higher purpose of raising awareness of Operation 300 as he got a ground-floor view of Martin County at the same time. "This is an amazing organization," said Smith. "Please go to operation300.org, find out more about them and contribute to this incredibly worthy cause."

the response from parents, players and coaches was so positive that now Martin County will host five age groups at Pineapple Park in Jensen Beach, Sailfish Park in Stuart, and Halpatiokee Park off Kanner Highway.

"This will be a much-needed injection of visitors at a time that our hotels and motels are struggling to get through the summer months," said Jacques Lewis, president of the Martin County Hotel/Motel Association, during a Tourist Development Council meeting last fall. "We are ecstatic that a major event will be here in August."

The Babe Ruth Softball World Series will be played over two weeks. During the first week, the 14U and 16U age groups will compete. Teams will arrive in town on Tuesday, July 26, and depart for home on Wednesday, August 3. On Thursday, August 4, the 8U/10U/12U age groups will come to town and depart on Thursday, August 11.

"Jensen Beach and the volunteers of the Treasure Coast Athletic Association did a fantastic job in just their first year of hosting a large event," said Rob Connor, Babe Ruth League national commissioner. "The amount of volunteers and dedication they had made the World Series a special event for the local community and the teams that participated." ■

Pitchford's lands on district court docket again

When District Court Judge Shields McManus dismissed the suit by Reily Enterprises LLC (Pitchford's Landing) against Martin County on April 6, he left the door open for the suit to be amended and refiled.

Reily amended, refiled, and now a second hearing date of August 17 has been set.

Reily's complaint states that the county rules in place at the time the Master Site Plan was approved by the county (in 2007) should take precedence when considering the project's Final Site Plan due to a "special exceptions" clause in the agreement; however the Pitchford's PUD agreement, attached to the complaint as its own exhibit, states that the Final Site Plan must comply with the

county's "laws, ordinances and regulations" in place at the time of the final approval (in 2015).

The county's approval of the Pitchford's redevelopment of an 158-unit RV park on 17.7 acres in Jensen Beach, between Skyline Drive and Indian River Drive, into a mix of 83 units of Key West-styled single-family homes and two-story condominiums survived a court challenge in 2008 by residents of Jensen Beach, known as The Jensen Group, led by attorney Ginny Sherlock.

The redevelopment project was further delayed by other suits and counter-suits between Reily Enterprises and The Jensen Group, represented by Sherlock, that were settled during the height of

the economic recession, qualifying the project in 2009 for both state and county development timetable extensions.

When Reily Enterprises filed for their Final Site Plan approval in 2013, the former members of the Jensen Group and Sherlock re-launched their complaints during each county commission meeting and in emails to county commissioners on a regular basis, charging non-compliance with their agreements, failure to meet environmental standards, and alleged code violations until Commissioner Anne Scott called for the county attorney to investigate breach proceedings against Pitchford's Landing during the summer of 2014.

Six months later, Senior Assistant County Attorney Krista Storey reported to commissioners that Pitchford's Landing had not breached its agreements, and one minor code violation by a business leasing restaurant space from Reily Enterprises had been immediately rectified. She added, "The project is in full compliance."

Storey also reminded commissioners that applicants are entitled to due process when coming before the county commission for development approvals, thus commissioners are obligated by law to consider each application "with an open mind and without bias."

Reily Enterprises charges in their complaint that Scott directed Growth Management staff from the commission to find a reason that the project had to return "to square one," which allegedly led to the staff's decisions regarding applicability of county rules and the county's breach of contract. ■

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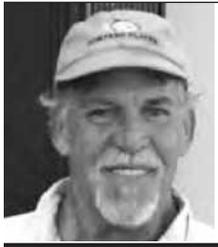
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Pompano reign even in the rains of late May



Rich Vidulich
Pompano Reporter

You will be able to see immediately that I'm ecstatic with this report. So glad that these silver streakers are so unpredictable!

Oddly enough, it's the algae blooms going on in southwest Florida that I'm going to have to thank for the spring pompano stimulus package. Didn't need the governor or the prez to save the poms! Astutely avoiding the toxic waters and surveilling for clear seas are the poms modus operandi.

Tourists may have caught a glimpse, but the western pompano made their presence in a striking pattern. Our locals who had not yet put up their rods for the next migratory season are striking it rich – richly rewarded. With June on the horizon the question remains: Will there be more?

The upcoming weather patterns are so erratic for south Florida that the answer is YES! How about a northeast front lasting four days in early June. How would this help? Water temps of 80 will set a level of comfort that these



Doug Bernhard played tug-of-war with a spinner shark over a gorgeous permit....and Doug won!

smaller, but gourmet, fat fish will enjoy.

One would think we are entering the end of the season, requiring that "I must measure each fish to check the legal length." But NO! Jake Harris of Jupiter disproved that premise on May 21 at 1 p.m. on the Juno Beach Pier. With Bermuda gin, clear waters, and a flat sea, he and his friend fooled 12 poms in the two-pound range!

All clear-water theories aside, Jake (totally a surf fisherman) mastered visual fishing, which entails studying the holes and bottom curvatures on both sides of the pier. Small groups of silver flashes were easily noticed migrating from the Loggerhead sandbars around the "T" of the pier to the northern pockets of deep water. These darker blue areas were situated outside the northern bar.

An excited Jake cast his pompano rig right in the area of these holes as the fish arrived. On half the occasions, one would scoot out and nail it! With a dead low tide, it was easy to see these areas. Armed with fluorocarbon and big buoyant jig floats (my rigs, naturally), they bailed some beautiful fish. Hold on to this trick and you may beat the odds.

Beach charters have been a mainstay of my business for several years. My habit of paying attention to scientific data lead to detailing each trip, including site location, tide, the solunar cycle and bait selections is important. I'm a preparation "nutcase" and spend up to one and a half hours getting ready for a two-to-three-hour charter. Sure, I'm a fanatic, but successful results increase each season.

I recently invited my Facebook friend to join me for an opportune occasion to fish. The surf rodeo evolved into a smashing adventure! Dim light paired with cool easterly winds and aqua-pow-



A delighted Capt. George LaBonte brings home enough pompano for a gourmet dinner!



Brendan Fisk (maybe he should change that last name to Fish!) and his son-in-law, Mark, had a memorable day.

dered waters fueled a silver surge equal to a fishing dream. (I have lots of those!) Doug Bernhard of Hobe Sound shifted into a professional beach master in a microsecond. After gently landing some awesome-sized spring fish, I shouted "north rod!" Thirteen feet of graphite doubled over with the sun still rising behind it is a magnificent sight!

Doug masterfully played this Florida game fish for 30 minutes. Recognizing it was a very large permit, I whispered some important advice to secure the slab. We both knew this would be a gentle release fish until...with 10 yards to reach the beach, two spinner sharks viciously attacked the fish! Ate 80 % of the tail off right in front of our faces. The picture tells the whole tale! What's left? A happy client and now a great amigo!

Having fished with Brendan Fisk and his friend, Steve Bernhardt of Vir-

ginia, has always been a joy. Recently, Steve was out of state and Brendan called and wanted to take his visiting son-in-law, Mark, for a nice fishing trip. We picked the conditions and felt very strongly we would have a potentially good bite. The "magic moment" arrived 20 minutes before sunrise: Four rods out with two bending with pompano perfection! The anglers dug in quickly as if it was a "fish on" event and a sailfish was tail walking!

Hefty two pounders for the next 45 minutes, which tightened the bonds of the duo and made me feel as if I was part of the family. The grins of accomplishment were genuine.

Sometimes when the ocean gets rough and a legendary captain calls you for a pompano dinner, you just say YES! ESPN fishing reporter (106.3 FM Saturdays, 7-8 a.m.) Captain George LaBonte did just that. George is the captain of "Edge Fishing," a 40-year veteran with a deluxe fishing machine docked in Jupiter. We had fished before and George always brought us luck. The plan worked. This time, Mrs. Labonte (Sunflower) had issued an urgent request. "SOS, I want pompano for dinner!" So, offshore meets inshore, which is not the same as King Kong vs. Godzilla. Fortunately for his spouse and my friendship, the poms hit the beach!

It was a most laid-back and well-appreciated reunion of two diverse anglers with the same mindset that morning. Thanks

go to Capt. Labonte, and I always look forward to working the radio show every Saturday while the poms stay with us!

First and foremost (sounds Lincolnish), I want to thank "The Pompano" and Barbara Clowdus for helping me be who I am. The need to commercial harvest is totally out of my system. I also want to apologize to "The Godzilla El Nino" for my probably less-than-amusing attacks over the past season. I think, at this point, all is well in "Pompano Land." ■

Rich Vidulich, a commercial pompano surf fisherman who traverses the beaches of Martin County and points north for his "golden nuggets," lives in Jupiter. Send comments or questions to Pompano@MartinCountyCurrents.com.

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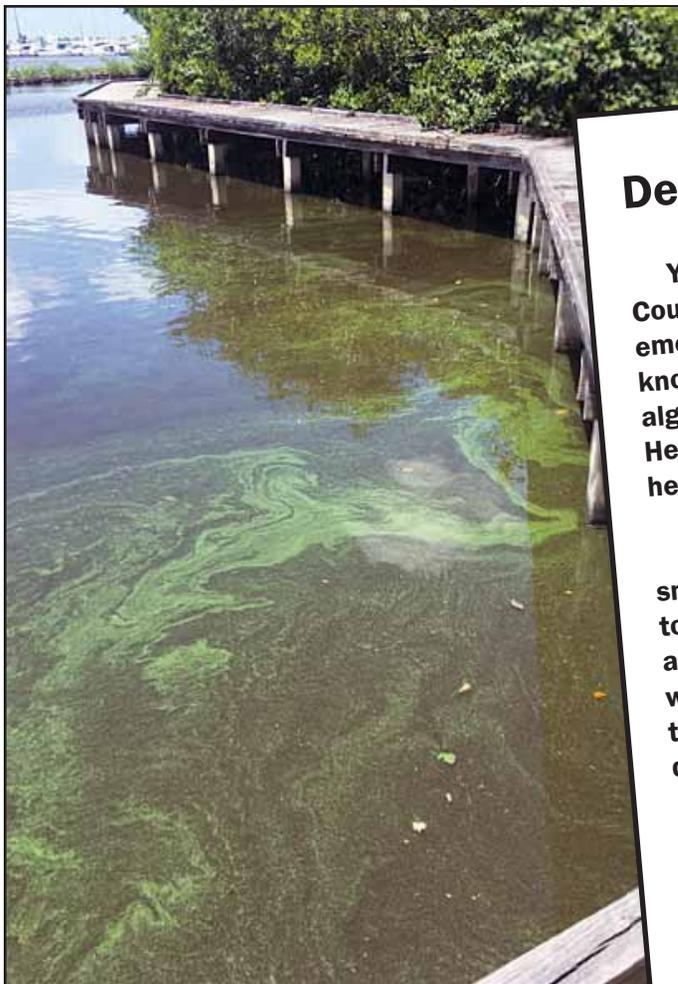
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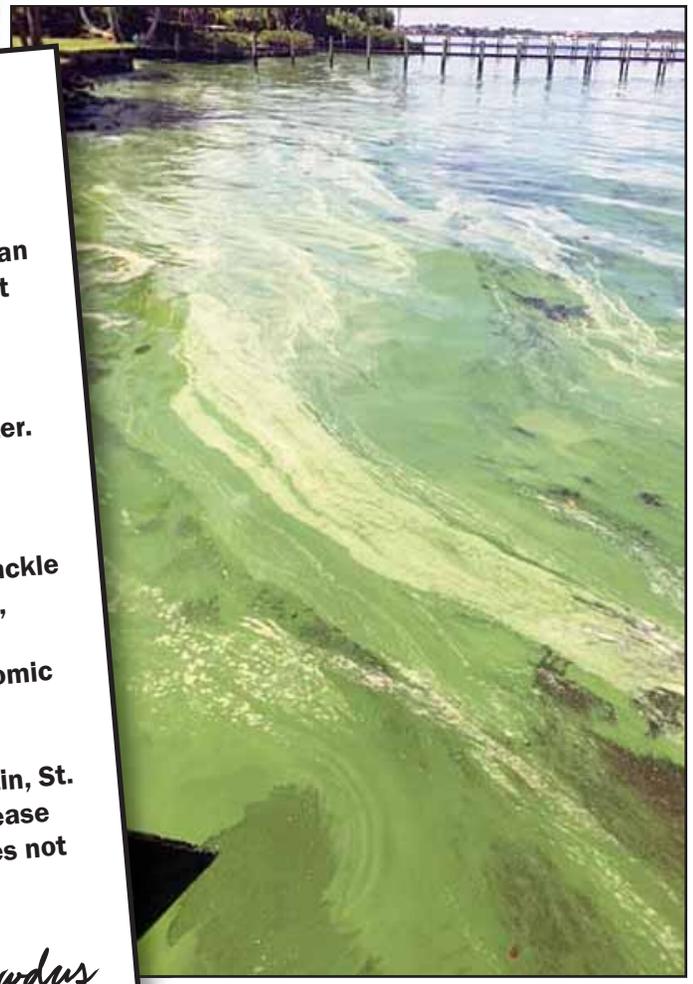
Dear President Obama:

You already know that we have a crisis in Martin County, Florida, because you have been asked to sign an emergency declaration for this area. What you may not know is that one toxin – just one – in the blue-green algae here tested at levels of 1,000 times the World Health Organization's recommended level for public health. We potentially have multiple toxins in our water.

Their presence is closing the doors of many of our small businesses and is driving away residents and tourists. It is too large for this small community to tackle alone. We need the resources of FEMA and the CDC, which only you can ensure, to address the very real threat to public health on a wide scale and of economic devastation to those affected directly.

Please sign the emergency declaration for Martin, St. Lucie, Palm Beach and Lee counties today, and please know that we are doing our part to ensure this does not happen here again.

Barbara Cloudus



Photos supplied from Facebook posts and angry emails by Martin County residents and visitors.

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