

Sarah Heard



Anne Scott



Maggy Hurchalla



**County refuses to continue defense**

**Lake Point's public records trial was canceled after the county commission voted not to continue litigation. pg 7**

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Volume 7 Issue 1  
March 2017

**Trading Places**

**New commissioners give power to people pg 10**




**Report slams Eula Clarke pg 3**



**2 new cities face hurdles pg 16**

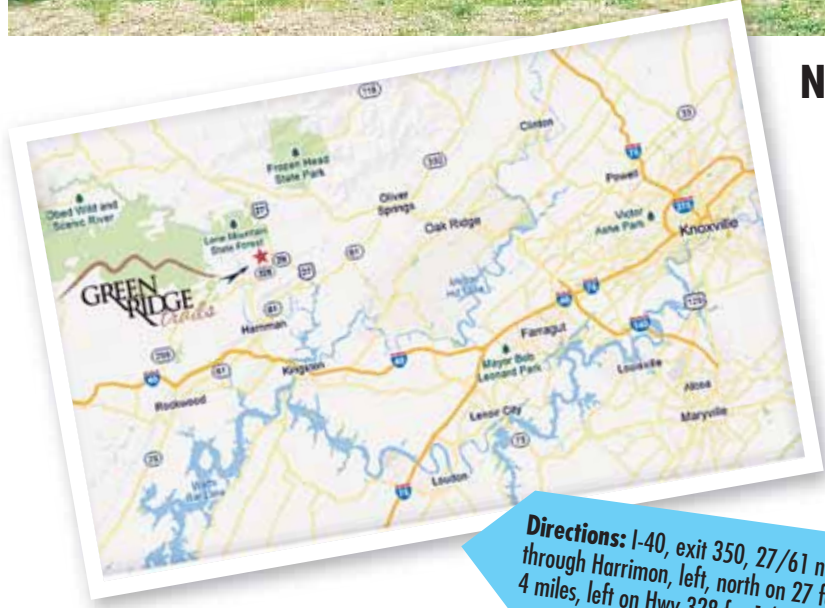
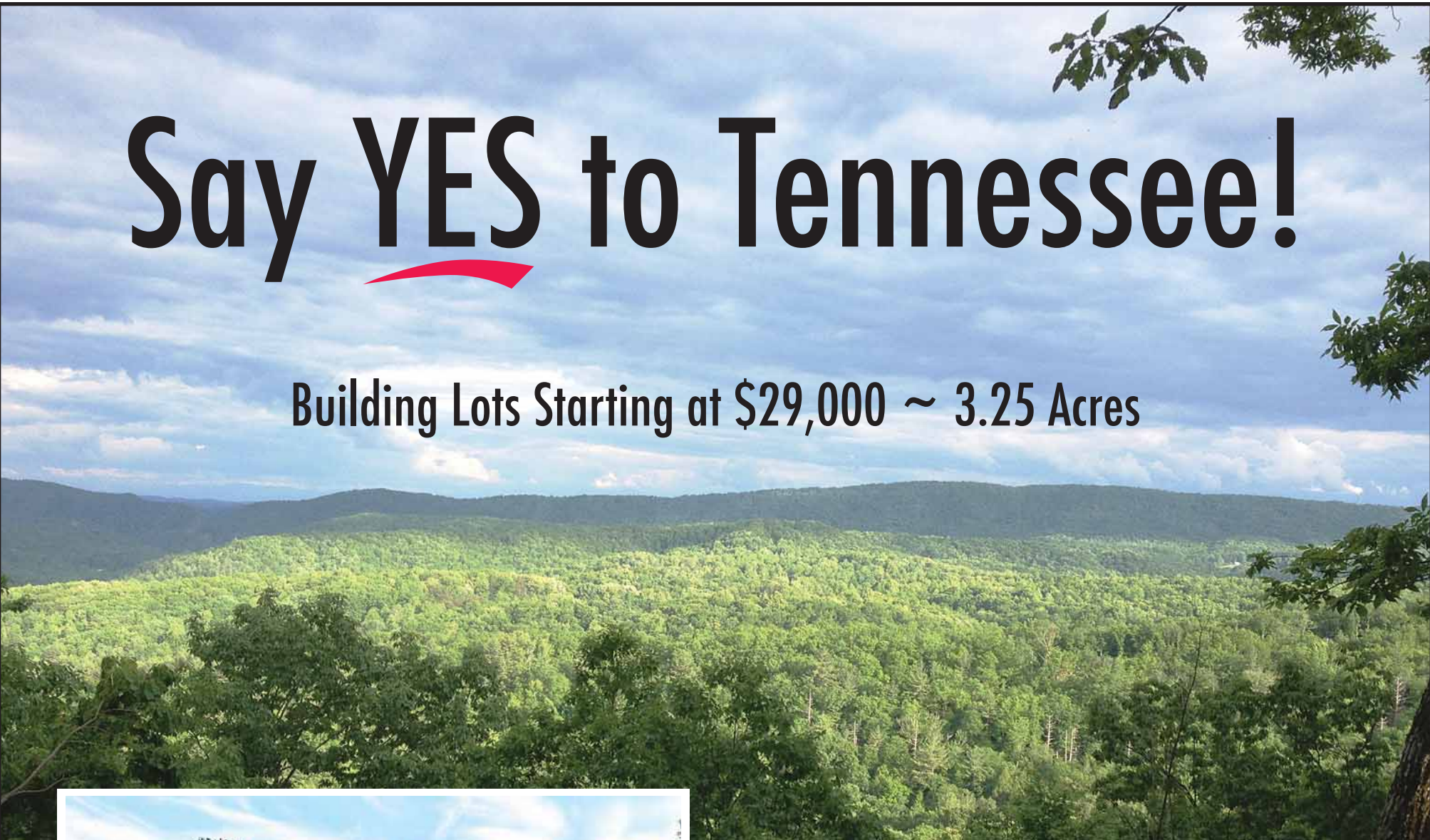


**Brian Mast talks taxes pg 14**

Commission Chair Doug Smith trades places with citizens for a meeting of the independent Community Redevelopment Agency.

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# Words tearing at the heart of Stuart residents

Television camera crews arrived at the Feb. 27 city commission meeting expecting the same angry outcry displayed at the Feb. 1 special meeting, where Commissioner Eula Clarke resigned as mayor. The public's initial angry response to just eight words, "I didn't know we were serving pig tonight," prompted the commission to order an investigative report released last week, which declared Clarke had not violated the city's harassment policy – only because city commissioners are exempt from city policy.

City Manager Paul Nicoletti reported during the city's Feb. 1 special meeting that city officials had received nearly 700 angry emails, most of which called for Clarke's resignation – not only as Stuart's mayor, but as city commissioner, as well. The city's Facebook page had so much "offensive" language in the angry postings, he added, that officials stopped allowing public posts.

The comments erupted over the internet after the Palm Beach County Police Benevolent Association, the local union that represents the Stuart Police Department, and the International Union of Police Associations/AFL-CIO issued press releases on Friday, Jan. 27, calling for an investigation of Clarke's comments made Jan. 11 in Taylor's Mar-



Flanked on the left by new Stuart Mayor Tom Campenni and on the right by newly elected Vice Mayor Troy McDonald, Commissioner Eula Clarke hangs her head during accolades by the public; however, when being criticized, she sat up straight without averting her gaze.

ket in the presence of Stuart Police Officer Ed Fitzgerald, whose work in the East Stuart community has often been publicly lauded by Clarke.

Clarke admitted saying: "I didn't know we were serving pig tonight."

She apologized in person to Officer Fitzgerald, wrote a letter of apology to the police union, and apologized to the county commission at its regularly scheduled meeting on Monday, Jan. 30. When questioned, she attempted to explain that she had been referring to "meat products," did not intend to offend anyone, and it was "time to move on." Her apology was rejected by her fellow commissioners, all of whom called for her resignation.

None of the city's regular business – including a discussion about relocating/building a new City Hall – was addressed; instead, the commissioners agreed to call a special reorganization meeting Feb. 1.

## SPECIAL MEETING FILLS CHAMBER, HALLWAYS

The diversity was unmistakable: Black and white, the young and the elderly, Republicans and Democrats, new residents and those who had lived their entire lives in Martin

County came to the City of Stuart's special meeting Feb. 1 to speak for more than two hours, most in support of Clarke.

Some speakers, however, demanded her resignation, including former Stuart Mayor Mary Hutchins and the president of the Palm Beach County Police Benevolent Association, the union that represents Stuart police officers.

Both charged that Clarke has lost the trust of both the police and the community she serves. Clarke resigned as mayor, but refused to give up her seat as commissioner.

Clarke extended an emotional apology at the Feb. 1 meeting, reading in part a prepared statement – her voice

faltering near the end – in which she took responsibility for her actions, promised it would never happen again, pledged to apologize personally to every Stuart police officer, as had been demanded by the union president and resigned as mayor. (Her apology accompanies this story in full.)

"I wish you had done that at the last meeting," said Stuart Commissioner Troy McDonald, who had called her first public apology "insincere." He seemed momentarily conflicted as to whether or not he was going to support the motion by Commissioner Kelli Glass-Leighton for the city to hire an independent investigator to determine if Clarke's actions violated the city's personnel policy regarding harassment, and whether her comment is part of a pattern or an isolated incident.

A majority of the 130 or so attendees gave Clarke a standing ovation following her apology, but tensions among residents grew evident after new Mayor Tom Campenni assigned all commissioners to respective committees, excluding Clarke – even from the Metropolitan Planning Organization, where she has distinguished herself and the city with awards for her work from the Florida Department of Transportation.

When she said, "Can I keep my spot?", Campenni responded with a curt "No."

After all committee assignments had

*continued on PAGE 4*

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## Former Mayor Eula Clarke apologizes

My dear fellow commissioners:

It has and always will be my greatest honor to be your Mayor of the City of Stuart. I am truly grateful for this opportunity. Unfortunately, I made a mistake. We all make mistakes, and I am truly and humbly sorry. I have apologized to Officer Fitzgerald for the words that I have said. I sent a letter to the president of the Palm Beach Police Benevolent Association to express my heartfelt apology to our local police union members, and I accept his offer to apologize to each officer personally as soon as possible.

I apologize to the family members of these fine officers. I extend my apology to all local and surrounding law enforcement officers, as well as those retired or serving our nation. These officers, the men in blue, they put their lives on the line each and every day. I respect and appreciate the job that they do.

I apologize to our city employees, City Commissioners, and other elected officials who have been offended by these comments and words. To my constituents, whom I'm so proud to serve, I am also very sorry. I have served as a commissioner for six years, but I have served in this community for many decades. I have worked very hard to build up my reputation as someone whom residents can turn to for help and advice. I have worked hard to ensure that our residents' voices are heard and key issues are addressed. I believe we can, and we should, use

this unfortunate situation as an opportunity for growth, and for further reunification and unification in our community.

Together our commission, our police department and our citizens have forged the Unity in the Community Campaign. I remember when I put a tile in at the corner of Martin Luther King Boulevard and the courthouse (Colorado Avenue). Unity in the community.

This campaign was an effort to bridge the gap between the community, law enforcement and to strengthen positive diversity. We have seen so much success in the past few years, and we must not stop now.

It is with great sadness that I step down as Mayor of Stuart because of my actions. Continuing as your city commissioner, I give you my word that, number one, this will never happen (again), and I will do my best with all our police officers to continue the unification work we have started to make the City of Stuart the very best place it can be. And it truly is.

All of you here, you are showing your interest, your love for your community in whatever way you can. I want to match that with you. I want to continue to serve as your commissioner, to grow and to learn from each of you, and especially from our police department.

Thank you, fellow commissioners, for this opportunity to share my apology with this entire community, with those who are watching. Please. ... This is a new day for me. I move on, trusting. Please accept my apology. ■



A prayer vigil led by former County Commissioner Elmira Gainey, a Republican, on the City Hall steps in support of City Commissioner Eula Clarke, a Democrat, took place immediately prior to the Feb. 1 special City Commission meeting.

continued from PAGE 3

been made, Clarke added, "I have not been included in any of these spots, as if I am not a commissioner on the board." She voted against confirmation, which included Campenni's replacement of Clarke on the MPO.

"I oppose," Clarke said. "I'm still a sitting, voting member of the City Commission of Stuart."

### TENSIONS, VERBAL SPARRING RISE

After numerous comments by residents demanding that Clarke remain as a commissioner, some public comments strayed from the motion to criticize the other

city commissioners, as well as City Attorney Michael Mortell.

Campenni invited Mortell to respond to a citizen's personal comment, thus Mortell explained that the motion was not to remove Clarke, but to investigate allegations of employee harassment to ensure that the employees of the City of Stuart are working in a hostile-free environment. The sitting commissioners could not vote to remove Clarke, he said, which requires a special recall election by Stuart residents initiated by a petition of 10 percent of Stuart's registered voters.

"This investigation is not limited to Mrs. Clarke," Mortell added, assuring the audience that he and all commissioners will also be investigated, although the motion named only Clarke. When his explanation did not quell the audience's murmurs, Clarke asked permission to speak, which Campenni denied.

"This is not good," Clarke said. "This is not good."

Speakers voices raised to match their frustration and anger.

Some, however, remained calm and admitted that they had been "shocked and disappointed" by Clarke's choice of words; however, they urged compassion and recognition of her work within the community.

Many speakers insisted that supporting both the police department and Eula Clarke is not a mutually exclusive exercise, and they suggested that the money for an investigator might be better spent to address issues such as domestic violence that threatens police officer safety, or even sensitivity training for commissioners, since the com-

munity is multi-cultural, often leading to misunderstandings.

Several residents from East Stuart, some of whom are of Jamaican descent, as is Clarke, reminded the commissioners that pork in Jamaica is called pig, not pork, and although Clarke did not comment, she shook her head in agreement.

No current members of the Stuart Police Department spoke.

### MORE SPEAKERS SOUND OFF

Among those speaking in support of Clarke were Stuart pioneer Mabel Witham, Rio community activist Julie Preast, retired Martin High School teacher Ginger Shannon, and former Se-wall's Point Mayor Jacqui Thurlow-Lip-pisch, as well as dozens of others, including some retired police officers.

"I'm an ex-police officer," said George Fuller of Stuart, "and I took (Clarke's comment) as a personal insult. I'm here to stand up for my brothers in blue, and it's a struggle for me, because I have known Eula for 20 years."

Fuller was the first at the conclusion of the meeting to bound up the steps to the dais, where he and Clarke embraced for a few moments, then shared a private conversation.

Several residents, including Peter Greenwald of Palm City, insisted that an investigation of Clarke was unnecessary based on her many years of activism in the East Stuart community attempting to instill trust in the police department. An investigation, he added, will result in additional cyber-bullying and hateful speech.

"We have too much of that in this country now," he said, warning the commission that if they go forward, "it will be all over the news."

Stuart attorney Virginia Sherlock, whose late husband had been a police officer and came from a family of police officers, also called for no further action or investigation.

"I am concerned that your motion serves no useful purpose except to keep this going," she said. "Eula is a unifier, which is evident right here ... There are people coming to the microphone tonight who have not agreed on anything for years, yet they agree on (support of) Eula."

The independent investigation revealed a number of inappropriate comments Clarke allegedly made to city employees, and to Police Chief David Dyess, whose family includes adopted African-American children. Clarke submitted a written response to the report, which has not yet been made public. ■

--Barbara Cloudus

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# New commission majority goals hampered by rising legal costs

The new county commission majority made a U-turn on many of the projects and policies put in place by the previous county commission, fulfilling campaign promises as they added approximately \$13 million to the capital improvement budget. Many of the projects killed over the previous four years had been fully funded at the time; however, that's no longer the case. Grant money already received was returned and tax funds identified went to other projects. Funding additional projects now is a major issue.

“We'll find the money, and we'll start by cutting our legal costs,” said Commissioner Ed Ciampi, when asked during the commission's November meeting how those projects, including the previously grant-funded Jensen Beach Mooring Field, sewer line extensions in Jensen Beach, and the U.S. Customs Facility at Witham Field, will now be financed.

Cutting legal costs may be easier said than done, however. The most significant cost, which has surpassed that of the county's fight against the All Aboard Florida passenger train, will come from the Lake Point mining operation's two active lawsuits against the county, one for violations of the state's public records laws that goes to trial Feb. 21, and one for breach of contract, for which no trial date has yet been set. ■

## COUNTY'S LAKE POINT COSTS NEARING \$3 MILLION

Whether or not the arbitrator in Lake Point's public records lawsuit against Martin County intended that the attorney fees and costs incurred by Lake Point applies only through Dec. 31, 2016, or if the county also must pay attorney fees until a final settlement agreement is reached remains unsettled at press time. The tentative agreement, reached Feb. 17, is that Martin County will pay \$371,000 in legal fees to Lake Point.

A major portion of the county's Lake Point litigation expense is the cost of outside attorneys, which include the fees paid to the personal attorneys for the commissioners named in the public records suit. The county also has assumed some of the shared costs of Maggy Hurchalla's defense against Lake Point's suit that claims she interfered with its contracts. The county pays her share of the cost of a special magistrate at \$250 an hour. The fee for the court-ordered arbitrator was set at \$400 an hour, which also is being paid by the county.

The county's legal team, which has contracted with outside attorney Edward de la Parte of Tampa, also has as-

sisted Hurchalla's personal attorneys, Virginia Sherlock and Howard Heims, during courtroom hearings on motions specific to Hurchalla. Heims told county commissioners in 2015 that those fees are “recoverable” (assuming that Hurchalla will prevail and Lake Point is ordered to pay her legal fees and expenses).

According to county records, the cost of outside attorneys over the past four years in the Lake Point case exceeds \$2.4 million. Former County Attorney Michael Durham told commissioners previously those expenses would be covered by the county's TRICO insurance policy, which has paid less than a third (\$756,000) as of Jan. 24, 2017.

Should the county prevail in Lake Point's claims, then these costs likely will be ordered paid by Lake Point. Should they not, however, then the county likely will be liable for Lake Point's attorney costs and other expenses, as well as damages, which are estimated in the range of \$20 to \$63 million, according to court records. (For more on the Lake Point case, go to Page 7.) ■

## PITCHFORD'S LAWSUIT SETTLED

A legal challenge to a decision made by the previous county commission that was in appellate court was the first case to get resolved under the new commission majority.

Pitchford's Landing, a 17.7-acre redevelopment project of a currently operating RV park in Jensen Beach approved in 2008, will reduce the current number of units from 158 to 83 and remove dozens of decades-old septic tanks along the Indian River Lagoon at no cost to the county. It also will build a lift-station large enough to extend sewer service to neighboring properties and will build a retaining wall “to keep Indian River Drive from sliding into the (Indian River) Lagoon,” said County Engineer Don Donaldson at a January commission meeting. The property owners also will replace a storm-damaged public fishing pier, adding eight public parking spaces at the north end of their property



line near Conchy Joe's restaurant.

The previous commission majority had rejected Pitchford's Final Site Plan last summer based on the Growth Management staff's assertion that the plan did not meet the new requirements of the Comprehensive Growth Management Plan; however, a closer examination of the plans showed that the new Comp Plan requirements had been met, including the open-space and disclosure requirements, according to the

county staff report.

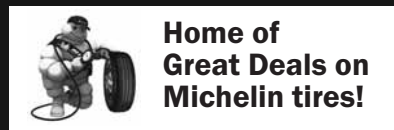
The new commission majority agreed to waive an increased setback requirement in the Land Development Regulations for railroad rights-of-way, which is not required if it forces a loss of units on an already existing master site plan, and a landscaping plan that reduces the normally re-

quired number of roadway plantings along Indian River Drive, the same landscape plan as submitted in 2013, to prevent impeding residents' lagoon view.

The settlement agreement between Martin County and Reily Enterprises Inc. stipulated that no attorney fees, costs or damages would be sought or awarded by either party. According to county records, more than \$20,000 had already been spent on outside counsel by the county prior to settlement. ■



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# Settle one lawsuit, then another pops up

**Most of the 60 or so lawsuits involving Martin County are considered slip-and-fall cases, rather than lawsuits that challenge a county commission decision or policy direction. The most recent challenge to a commission decision, however, is the result of one of the last decisions made by the previous county commission majority.**

The legal fight is over the development applications for two wireless telecommunication facilities, commonly called cell towers, both approved by the previous county commission. The facilities and towers are within a half mile of each other at the far southern reaches of Martin County, which conflicts with county code.

Both property owners are challenging the board's actions in 2016 with a similar demand – enforce the county's Land Development Regulations and its Comprehensive Growth Management Plan by revoking approval for the other cell tower.

How did the conflict arise? After nearly 15 hours of public hearings last May, an 80-foot monopole cell tower – disguised as a pine tree – was approved by the previous commission majority to be constructed on less than an acre of land owned by Kenai Properties LLC on Country Club Drive near the Tanah Keeta Boy Scout camp, which lies within District 3.

Intervenors in the May 10 public hearing included the Little Club Condo-

minium Association, also on Country Club Drive, which owns six acres on which another cell tower was planned. Their application was submitted to the Growth Management Department in the fall of 2015 prior to the Kenai application, they said, but it had not yet made it through the county's review process to the commissioners.

They asserted that since their application had been first, it should be heard first, although still incomplete when Kenai's application was finalized.

The Growth Management department staff reported to commissioners that the Kenai tower application complied with all the Comprehensive Growth Management Plan's requirements and county codes; however, to be more "stealth," the planner, Catherine Riiska, suggested reducing its height from 120 feet to 80 feet, adding more tree "branches" to disguise it further, and adding more landscaping plants at the base to better hide the machinery.

Kenai agreed to all conditions sug-



**A cell tower monopole disguised as a pine tree, on the right in this illustrative photo, is not required to match surrounding trees exactly. To qualify as "stealth," Martin County code says "the average person is unaware of its presence;" however, the determination of stealth is made by the county commissioners, not by the Growth Management Department staff.**

gested by staff; however, the hearing was postponed without final approval to the May 31 commission meeting, which introduced a federally imposed FCC deadline. If the county continued to delay approval, the applicants would be granted the right to build the tower as it was originally proposed at 120 feet without additional disguise or landscaping, verified by the county's consultant on wireless telecommunications.

The hearing was attended by several members of both Little Club and North Passage communities, representing around 1,000 residents living within Dis-

trict 3, objecting to the Kenai tower approval. Commissioner Ed Fielding observed that "money is involved here," since whomever owns the property receives lease revenue from wireless providers using any cell tower constructed on that property. He suggested perhaps the Land Development Regulations be amended in order to allow construction of both towers.

Growth Management Director Nicki van Vonno responded that the regulations were designed to prevent proliferation of cell towers. A new tower cannot be constructed within three-quarters of a mile of another tower, she explained, without an engineering study that demonstrates a provider's co-location on an existing tower is not feasible.

## DO NOT CHANGE LDRs

"Changing the LDRs is not something you want to do," she told commissioners.

Fielding made the motion to approve the Kenai application, since he felt it met all requirements, and votes from Commissioners John Haddox and Doug Smith agreed with Fielding. Commissioners Sarah Heard and then District-3 Commissioner Anne Scott voted no, saying the tower was not stealth.

Little Club Homeowners returned to the commission in July for a public hearing on their 120-foot tower application, to be constructed by RG Towers. They presented the required engineer's report declaring that co-location on the Kenai tower was not feasible, but the expert who wrote the study was unavailable for questioning. The hearing was postponed until the following month with specific directions by Fielding that the engineering expert was to be available for questioning; however, the expert author of the study did not appear.

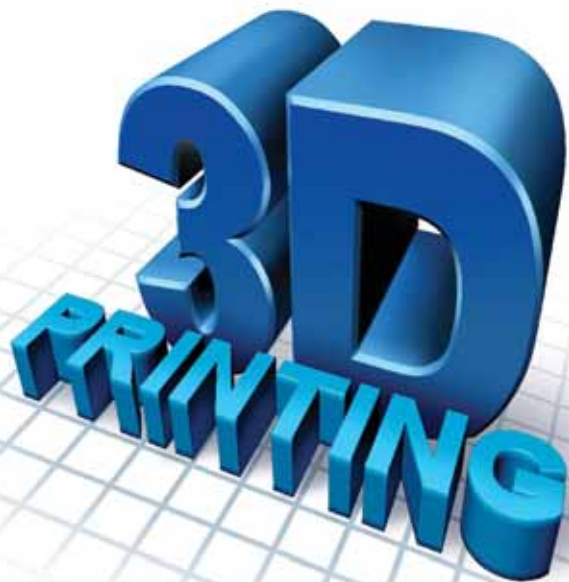
Over the objections of attorney Bob Raynes representing the Kenai property owners, the 120-foot tower application was finally approved in September by Fielding, who joined the affirmative votes of Heard and Scott, although again the author of the engineering study did not testify and was unavailable for questions regarding his conclusions.

Prior to approval of the Little Club cell tower, attorney Tim Wright filed Little Club's initial claim in circuit court in August charging that Martin County did not follow its own county code when it approved the Kenai tower.

Martin County retained former Assistant County Attorney Amy Petrick, now with Lewis, Longman & Walker of West Palm Beach, as its outside counsel. Raynes filed a writ of certiorari in December on behalf of Kenai Properties, petitioning the court to review the county commission's decision for compliance with county codes.

A mediation among parties, required by state statute, was scheduled to take place Feb. 22. The results are unknown at presstime. ■

--Barbara Clowdus



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# With one vote, county commissioners said, Stop!

**They voted – Commissioner Sarah Heard the only dissenter – to stop defending the county and some of its commissioners against allegations of breaking public records laws. Commissioners emerged from a 25-minute executive session with the county attorney Feb. 17 to take a public vote not to go to trial, as had been scheduled.**

The county likely will no longer pay commissioners' private attorney fees for their defense in the public records case, although it must pay a minimum of \$371,000 to Lake Point for its attorney fees through Dec. 31, 2016, according to non-binding court-ordered arbitration; however, the arbitrator did not specify the as-yet-unbilled fees of the past two months as Lake Point prepared for trial, which could push the final bill to near \$500,000.

The unbilled costs include fees for Lake Point's forensic digital analysis expert, John Jorgenson, a former National Security Agency employee with one the country's highest security clearances, retained by Lake Point after the court ordered a forensic examination of Heard's personal computer and "hacked" Yahoo account.

Lake Point contends that the commissioners' emails are evidence in a separate case against Martin County and the South Florida Water Management District for breach of contracts with the rock mining and water restoration project near Indiantown, and against former commissioner Maggy Hurchalla for tortious interference in those contracts.

## FIRST PUBLIC RECORDS TRIAL

When Lake Point asked Heard for her email correspondence with Hurchalla, according to Heard's testimony in the first public records trial in August 2015, she testified that eight years of her private Yahoo emails, including public records, and all contacts had been deleted from her personal computer. She denied Lake Point's initial request in 2013 to retrieve the public records from Yahoo.

Heard told the court that she had gone to the Yahoo website to attempt to retrieve her own emails. When that failed, she took her computer to a local computer repair shop, which also failed; however, she did not take her computer to the county's IT department. Heard blamed her executive aide at the time for not immediately contacting and requesting the lost records from Yahoo, according to trial testimony.

After three days of trial testimony at the Martin County Courthouse, the court ruled that the county had not violated state public records laws, that failures to comply with Lake Point requests

had been inadvertent, and their requests had been fulfilled within a "reasonable" amount of time.

In his ruling, however, Circuit Court Judge Shields McManus noted that he was "troubled" by Heard's hacked personal computer, which "remained unexplained."

The county's outside counsel at that time, John Fumero, and then-County Attorney Michael Durham had sworn repeatedly to McManus that all public records had been turned over to Lake Point, and no additional emails existed on any commissioners' private email accounts or on personal computers.

Fumero told McManus he "personally sat down with each commissioner" to ensure they had searched their private email accounts and their personal computers for relevant emails from Hurchalla regarding Lake Point. County Administrator Taryn Kryzda also had submitted a signed affidavit, according to court records, which listed all commissioners' public and private email accounts as reported to her by commissioners.

As a result of Fumero's testimony, the court denied Lake Point's request to depose either Scott or Heard, and Lake Point was barred from conducting a forensics examination of their personal computers or email accounts.

The court did allow, however, a forensics exam of Commissioner Ed Fielding's personal computer, because Fielding had produced an email from former county commissioner Maggy Hurchalla, signed "Deep Rockpit," eight months after Lake Point filed its public records request.

In the email, Hurchalla had provided precise instructions to Fielding as to the steps for terminating the Lake Point contract, according to court records.

It was not until after Lake Point added public records violations to its complaint against the county Feb. 14, 2014, however, that the county provided the Deep Rockpit email in its native format to Lake Point.

## RULING OVERTURNED

After the ruling in the first public records trial was overturned in April 2016, McManus allowed forensic examinations of both Scott's and Heard's computers and private email accounts, and allowed the



Maggy Hurchalla



Anne Scott



Sarah Heard

additional depositions of Scott, Heard and Commissioner John Haddox.

Neither the county's digital forensics expert nor Lake Point's forensics expert found evidence of a third-party breach, according to court records, that would account for a loss of data in Heard's personal computer. Lake Point's expert questioned, however, if the computer provided actually was Heard's, because it was registered to her husband, Jeff Heard, a pilot, and contained flight simulation software, stored many flight patterns and only "snippets" of Heard's private emails.

Hundreds of Hurchalla/Lake Point emails were recovered from Scott's

newly disclosed Gmail account, according to court testimony; however, only four emails met the court's search protocols that limited the time frame of late 2012 to February 2013, when Lake Point made its first public records request.

To retrieve Heard's lost emails, the court's attention turned back to her Yahoo account; however, Heard could no longer remember her password, thwarting a forensic examination by the county's outside expert, according to court records.

Circuit Court Judge William Roby, who took over the case Jan. 1 after McManus retired, issued a subpoena to Yahoo on Feb. 9 for whatever emails could still be retrieved from Heard's private email account, including those that had been deleted, plus activity logs and passwords from November 2012 through February 2017, which would go only to Roby.

*continued on PAGE 20*



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# Editorial: 'Alternative facts' dominate internet

**W**e bet Stuart Commissioner Eula Clarke no longer feels as warm and fuzzy about Facebook as she did last Thanksgiving. That's when she thanked Mark Zuckerberg for creating the social media platform that reconnected her with old friends.

And she did it with a Facebook post, of course.

Little did she know that two months later, dozens of friends – and many, many strangers – would react with indignant rage to her recent interaction with a Stuart police officer, a story that dominated the blogosphere dozens of times and was posted and reposted on Facebook, of course.

The words she had spoken were largely quoted correctly, but the circumstances, the tone, the intent were changed to align with the senders' agendas. Photos that had shown up in our daily newspaper were copied and their captions rewritten to “describe” events that did not happen.

Angry, we passed along those “alternative facts,” believing they were true, without questioning their accuracy, the perspective of those posting, or researching the actualities. With one click on “share” and another on “post,” we added our collective voices to the outrage.

Critical thinking has been swallowed by social media posts.

The City of Stuart was deluged with

more 600 angry emails. City officials turned off public postings to their Facebook page because of offensive language. In the aftermath, mistrust now breeds on both sides of the blue line, creating an even deeper divide after real progress – much of it due to Clarke's own work – had happened in East Stuart.

A similar deluge of alternative facts lies at the heart of our current, insistent push to buy more land now south of Lake Okeechobee. We are posting what we believe to be true, because we are primed now, more than ever, to want a silver bullet to fix our water. A southern reservoir is not the silver bullet.

Yes, a southern reservoir is an element of the Central Everglades Restoration Plan; however, the University of Florida Water Institute Study never said to make it THE priority above all other CERP projects. In fact, it says we MUST complete the 68 CERP projects currently planned. Completing the repairs to the Lake Okeechobee dike also are critical. We should ALSO consider adding deep-injection wells around the Lake to stop discharges to the St. Lucie River and consider building a reservoir south of the lake for Everglades restoration. So why not build the southern reservoir first? Here's why:

– The cost ranges from two to four billion dollars and would take 20 or so years to construct the reservoir, or longer if we exercise our option to purchase US

Sugar-owned land. The discharges will continue during that time, and without the other projects, a southern reservoir will not stop lake discharges alone.

– Not ONE of the 68 projects already authorized by the federal government 17 years ago for the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan is complete, because federal funding only trickled into the state. That's why state Sen. Joe Negron proposes that the state pay for the land and construction up front, with the federal government refunding the state its 50 percent share later. Not a sound plan.

A fellow senator suggested to Negron that the state partner with the US Army Corps of Engineers – as we're doing now to speed construction of the C-44 reservoir project – to complete the repairs to the Herbert Hoover Dike expeditiously, so that Lake Okeechobee can hold from 500,000 to nearly one million MORE acre-feet of water without threatening the ecology, or residents living around the lake, which can be done in three to five years.

The repairs would very nearly match or even exceed the 600,000 acre-feet of additional water storage proposed by a southern reservoir at a fraction of the cost and of the time to get it done. Besides, of the 700 dams and dikes in the U.S., the Herbert Hoover Dike is rated second most in danger of failing in a storm. We should be clamoring to protect our residents, as well as our estuaries.

If we don't blow billions on a land buy, we'll even have the funding to add the deep injection wells around the lake to stop the discharges permanently.

Negron rejected the state/federal partnership, because the dike is federally owned, federally managed, and is a federal responsibility to fund. That's the same argument that Martin County Commissioner Sarah Heard used in 2010 when federal money for dredging the St. Lucie River inlet dried up. “Let it fill up (with sand),” she said then. “It's the feds' responsibility, not ours.”

Instead, we used county funds to keep the federal inlet open to the Atlantic Ocean. Thank goodness.

The reservoir issue is not new. We stood at this same juncture a decade ago. We were building a southern reservoir – spent more than \$250 million to do it -- then Gov. Charlie Crist made the deal to purchase all of U.S. Sugar's land in the Everglades Agricultural Area. We abandoned the reservoir we started. We got sidetracked by a shiny new plan.

We are about to do it again. We are about to abandon the natural reservoir we have under repair now to go chase a brand new one – gobbling up all our Amendment 1 funds at the same time. In large part, we can thank the “alternative facts” posted on Facebook for that, which herald a silver bullet that does not exist. ■

# Guest Editorial: Thanks for filing the Rail Safety Act

By Nancy Smith

**M**aybe my colleague Ed Dean wasn't trying to disparage the Treasure Coast opponents of All Aboard Florida/Brightline in his story, “Will More Taxpayer-Funded Lawsuits Derail All Aboard Florida in 2017?” -- but he certainly wasn't encouraging them either. I think they're heroes.

Now let me ask this: How many people realize Florida has no law or regulation governing high speed rail safety? In a state that prides itself on “safety first” - nothing.

How can anybody not be a fan of the fight these folks are putting up on behalf of quality of life in their communities? Florida NOT All Aboard, Citizens Against Rail Expansion in Florida (CARE FL), whole counties voting to pay for legal fees -- they're all that stand between sanity/safety and All Aboard Florida's many-tentacled railroad hell.

What we know is, All Aboard Florida's plans are to send as many as 32 high-speed passenger trains a day through the heart of what basically are small communities. Think about how much of life this is going to negatively affect -- thousands of school children, first responders, pedestrians and residents.

These trains aren't stopping to pick up a single passenger. No passenger service in Martin, St. Lucie, Indian River or Brevard counties. No benefit for residents. No jobs, no rides.

It gets worse. As if the passenger trains aren't enough, the railroad is adding even more freight trains, some of which may carry hazardous materials along the Miami-Orlando and all-points-north route, increasing the risk of something going hideously wrong.

The cherry on the top is AAF's nonchalance about the cost of making the route safe. We have an octopus of a company here taking zero responsibility for the safety of hundreds of thousands of people along its rail line.

AAF wants Treasure Coast communities to pay for maintaining the upgrades necessary to protect themselves from these dangerous trains. Think about that for a moment.

I've been remiss in not congratulating and thanking Debbie Mayfield, R-Melbourne in the Florida Senate and MaryLynn Magar, R-Hobe Sound, Gayle Harrell, R-Stuart and Erin Grall, R-Vero Beach in the House who filed legislation Jan. 17 to create the Florida High-Speed Passenger Rail Safety Act.

If Ed Dean were right, these legisla-

tors wouldn't have jumped in as a team to do something positive for their AAF-affected constituents.

Have a look at Senate Bill 386 and call up the bill text.

This legislation will hold AAF's feet to the fire, making it solely responsible for the cost of upgrading and installing the appropriate safety measures desperately needed at high-speed rail crossings, protecting citizens' safety and pocketbooks.

“I find it quite astounding that Florida does not have any measures in place to address high-speed rail when there is a statewide project under way that will crisscross through my community, many others between Miami and Orlando, and potentially up Florida's entire east coast,” said Mayfield.

Said Magar, “This legislation not only protects Floridians from the potential dangers of high-speed trains by ensuring the appropriate safety technology is in place, but also protects their tax dollars by ensuring the appropriate entity pays for those upgrades,” said Magar. “Local governments should not have to absorb the costs of protecting their citizens from a private project. This good bill puts a stop to so-called private

railroad companies financing their business ventures on the backs of hard-working taxpayers.”

The Florida High-Speed Passenger Rail Safety Act does these things and more:

- Provides the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) with the authority to regulate railroad companies in Florida;
- Establishes minimum safety standards for high-speed passenger rail;
- Requires FDOT to identify pedestrian traffic generators;
- Stipulates that a railroad company operating high-speed passenger rail is solely responsible for all rail corridor improvements or upgrades; and
- Outlines state reporting requirements for railroad companies regarding accidents, injuries, and fatalities.

This is an important bill for a great many Floridians now and in the future. This is how we protect our people. It deserves all legislators' support. ■

*Nancy Smith is the executive editor of Sunshine State News and a former editor of The Stuart News. Reach her at nsmith@sunshinestatenews.com or at 228-282-2423. Twitter: @NancyLBSmith*



# To those who work to save a stranger's life



**Barbara Clowdus**

*Unfiltered*

**A** bear of a man, Casey Cass of Stuart normally wears construction boots and a hard hat as he oversees his company's construction jobs throughout the Treasure Coast and central Florida. He's of the age and temperament that you likely would not expect to see him wearing pink. Ever.

Yet in October, he slipped on a pink T-shirt for the first time. He avoided looking in the mirror, he admitted in a Facebook post, but he had been tapped by a friend to volunteer in the American Cancer Society fundraiser, "Real Men Wear Pink," for Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Although he could hear those future, male-initiated jibes echoing in his ears, he had made a commitment, and he's not one to renege on a promise. He donned his pink shirt and jacket and walked into the kick-off event, where he learned – and was stunned by – the breadth of cancer's impact on individuals and their families. Awareness was the theme of the event, and it began with his own awakening.

He had reached his late 40s unscathed by cancer. No one he loved had felt cancer's ravages. A coincidental call the next day from his dearest childhood friend changed that. Her mother had just been diagnosed with breast cancer, bringing the lesson from the previous night into sharp focus. Each person in that room was just "one degree away" from cancer, he had been told then, and now he was experiencing it.

Cass doubled his pledge and dedicated his fund-raising efforts to his friend's mother, Anne.

His story on the American Cancer Society webpage, which he posted on Facebook, touched me. His self-deprecating humor and honesty was part of it, but I had been struck also that he'd apparently been insulated,



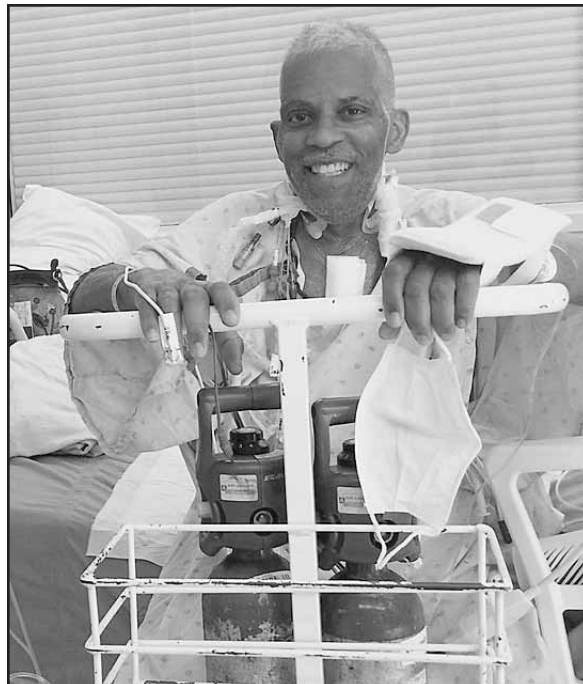
**Grant, 10, reunites with his dad two weeks after Chuck was taken to Boston for treatment. The visit was short, because his dad was flown within days to Los Angeles.**



**The three youngest Hood children: Reagan, 7, Morgan, who turns 3 in two weeks, and Grant, 10.**



**Christina and Chuck Hood before he was diagnosed with the blood cancer that destroyed his heart.**



**After an October hospitalization in Miami, an air ambulance flight to Boston, then another air ambulance flight to Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles and a total mechanical heart transplant, Chuck received a heart on March 1, because a 28-year-old man had signed a donor card. This simple act saved Chuck's life. The photo was taken March 2, less than 24 hours after Chuck's surgery.**

until now, from cancer's obliterating effect on lives, including the family. Especially the family.

My younger brother Art, a commercial pompano fisherman from Port

Salerno, died just a few years ago from multiple myeloma, a type of blood cancer that leaves holes in your bones. Our mother had died of breast cancer in 1951 when Art was not quite three. My brother had no memory of her, he said, yet when he heard a recording of a Norwegian opera singer, he sobbed – deep, guttural sobs that came from some subconscious place.

Cancer leaves holes in lives.

Now my daughter's husband – no relation to my brother – was diagnosed in October with the same type of blood cancer, multiple myeloma. Instead of destroying his bones, however, this cancer destroyed my son-in-law's heart.

Chuck Hood was misdiagnosed for four years as his health declined. (His full story is at [YouCaring.com/Christina-Clowdus](http://YouCaring.com/Christina-Clowdus).) Four blood clots in his lungs forced his first hospitalization in October, and he's been hospitalized ever since. After a month in Miami, he was flown by air ambulance first to a Boston hospital, then to Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles because his heart was no longer strong enough to withstand the treatment for blood cancer. There, he had a total mechanical heart transplant in early December, where he remains hospitalized. He turned 54 in January.

My daughter and their children, having exhausted their savings in the months leading to his hospitalization when he could not work, depend primarily on the contributions of family, friends and strangers, many of whom live in Martin County, as well as in Miami, where she home-schools all four children and works part time as a soccer coach.

Two weeks ago, Chuck was taken into surgery after a donor heart was found. He is listed number-one on the heart registry for the western U.S. After



**Casey Cass of Stuart at the American Cancer Society's "Real Men Wear Pink" event last October.**

he awoke in the Los Angeles hospital's recovery room, no one told him that the surgeon rejected the new heart. For nearly 24 hours, he, my daughter, and their four children all believed a miracle had happened. The elation did not last.

Chuck remains tethered to a machine that pumps his blood through tubes in his abdomen. He has a deep faith in God and love for Jesus, causing him to exude an unparalleled joy for life even when enduring unimaginable trials, including the pain of separation from his wife and children. Fortunately, his life of service to others, especially to young people, has drawn many to his bedside to thank him personally for his mentorship, even 25 years later and even though he's 2,000 miles away.

He has a 70 percent chance of surviving long enough for another surgery to receive a donor heart. The wait time is the major hurdle. More than 122,000 people are on the wait list now, according to the Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network, and one name is added to the list every 10 minutes. Although nearly 30,000 organs are transplanted annually in the U.S., 30 patients a day die while waiting.

Martin County is populated with people like Casey Cass, who donate their time and money although they have not been personally touched by tragedy. He still posts his donation page. And by the scores of good people who contributed to help my daughter during her unexpected and crushing need, although they had never met her.

So, good people, take one more step. Go to [DonateLifeFlorida.org](http://DonateLifeFlorida.org) and put your name on the organ donor list, post your status as an organ donor on social media and tell your family. You could be saving the lives of eight people as much in need of an organ as Chuck Hood. Help make a miracle happen. ■

# Campaign promise fulfilled

## – giving power back to the people

**Campaign speeches from the 2016 county commission candidates Ed Ciampi, Harold Jenkins and Doug Smith often resonated with a similar message: Get the decision-making power back to the people, where it belongs. They have done just that.**

The former candidates, and now the new county commission majority, were reacting to public complaints that the county had started ignoring the county's working-class residents, and even ignored their own appointed boards.

"What is the point of having an LPA (Local Planning Agency), if you're going to ignore their recommendations," LPA member Cindy Hall told commissioners at a public hearing in 2015 for a new impact fee to be levied on new-home construction, creating funds to purchase additional conservation land.

The county currently owns 46,000 acres of conservation land, according to county officials.

When the LPA, whose members are particularly protective of the county's Comprehensive Growth Management Plan, deliberated the conservation impact fee last spring, they recommended that the commissioners re-institute the Citizen's Tax Advisory Committee, which had sunset in 2012, to study the implications of the proposal.

The commission ignored the LPA's recommendation.

Changing citizen decision-making committees to advisory only, ignoring LPA recommendations, and dismantling the independent Community Redevelopment Agency became some of the hallmarks for campaign claims that the county commission majority of Anne Scott, Sarah Heard and Ed Fielding were steering the county in the "wrong direction."

"These people know exactly what their neighborhoods, their own community, needs most," said Commissioner Ed Ciampi, during his campaign. "These are exactly the people that the county commission needs to be listening to."

The new commission majority voted in their first meeting to re-establish an independent Community Redevelopment Agency with Neighborhood Advisory Committee chairs as its appointed members, which has now met twice.

The commissioners added to the CRA's responsibilities by having them

select sites for public art installations, which had been changed by the previous commission from a decision-making committee to advisory only.

One of the CRA's first tasks is to bring CRA program into compliance with state statutes that govern community redevelopment, which has not been accomplished in its 17-year history under five or more directors, according to community activist Julie Preast, of Rio, who addressed the group Feb. 27.

She urged the CRA also to structure the CRA within the county's code in a way that will ensure its continuity and prevent the CRA "from being nothing more than a punching bag" by changes in county leadership.

"Community redevelopment should have its own department," she added, "with the same respect, the same kind of staffing as engineering, or any other county department."

The Community Redevelopment Agency comprise the chairs of each of the county's CRAs, including Richard Zurich of Rio, chair; Saadia Tsafarides, of Golden Gate, vice chair; Craig Bauzenberger, of Indiantown; Michael Banas, of Hobe Sound; Catherine Winters, of Port Salerno; Cynthia Hall, of Jensen Beach; and Mark Palazzo, of Old Palm City.

The agency meets on the last Monday of each month at 3 p.m. in the commission chambers.

### – CLEAN WATER

In addition to reviving the previously funded Indian River Drive sewer-line extension project, the new commission majority directed Utilities Director John Polley to redouble his efforts to take more septic tanks offline in a shorter period of time – from one area each year over the next 25 years to two or three areas each year over the next 10 to 15 years, which likely will attract more state grants.

Field tests of surficial wells in the Old Palm City area conducted by Brian LaPointe, of Harbor Branch Oceanographic, show that ground water also has been contaminated by septic tank leakage, as well as contaminating the St. Lucie River.



**One of the county's seven Neighborhood Advisory Committees, the Port Salerno NAC, receives a report from Dominica Labbate, of the county development staff. All NACs are now permitted to have nine members, which the previous commission majority had attempted unsuccessfully to cut each to five members only. For an application, or for more information about the NACs, contact [dgordon@martin.fl.us](mailto:dgordon@martin.fl.us).**

The commission also asked Growth Management Director Nicki van Vonno to include the new ban on sewer line extensions into the secondary urban services areas – which became part of the county's rules in July 2016 – in the state-mandated review of the county's Comprehensive Growth Management Plan.

"In order to move the fairgrounds to Indiantown," said Commission Chair Doug Smith, "they will need to have access to sewer and water. It only makes sense to extend that to the proposed site, which is 100 acres that were a gift to the county from the state, is zoned recreation and is adjacent to the Indiantown Urban Services Boundary."

The previous commission majority amended the Comprehensive Growth Management Plan to ban sewer line extensions outside of the Urban Services District; therefore, to change the rule, another amendment to the Comp Plan would be required.

### – MOORING FIELDS

Not one, but two mooring fields are on the record as priorities in the new majority's desire to protect the Indian River Lagoon, not only from untreated effluent being dumped overboard, but to protect the lagoon's fragile seagrass from the effects of dragging boat anchors.

The previous commission majority returned around \$2 million in grants for the Jensen Beach Mooring Field, according to Coastal Engineer Kathy Fitzpatrick, who assured commissioners during a December meeting that the plans are still in place, and she anticipates that the project can get grants for 2018.

A mooring field for the Manatee

Pocket in Port Salerno, however, would need to start from scratch and studied, Fitzpatrick said, because the bottom of the lagoon there is soft and offers particular challenges. She said it would take "couple of years" to conduct a study, create a plan and seek funding, which the commission directed her to begin.

### – COMP PLAN REVIEW

The new commission majority also asked van Vonno to review the old commission majority's new rules limiting the size of septic tanks in areas that cannot be served by sewer lines, as well as its new limit to

only one tank per parcel of land, regardless of the size of the parcel. The rule threatens to drive businesses out of the county because they are unable to expand, and it severely limits opportunities for agri-tourism, which could result in farmers selling their agricultural lands to developers.

"I believe we need just to start using some common sense here," said Jenkins, who has distinguished himself as the founder of a movement to stop planned cities in the county's western agricultural lands. "We don't need septic tanks as big as the state says we can have – just because the state says we can have 'em – but we certainly don't want to drive our established businesses out of the county, either."

### – GOLF COURSE COMMITTEE

A public meeting will be March 27 on the second floor of the Frances Langford Pavilion at Indian Riverside Park in Jensen Beach to gather input from

the wider community regarding plans to renovate the Martin County Public Golf Course.

The committee was reactivated by the new commission majority, which had dissolved last summer after the county commission took no action on their recommendation to shrink the size of the course to 27 holes and to build a new clubhouse in a different location.

When the newly elected commissioners considered whether to add the construction of a clubhouse to the Capital Improvement Plan, much discussion ensued among commissioners as to the overall golf course plan.

Jenkins suggested that the commission reconstitute the committee and reconsider its decision to have a smaller course, the recommendation by the National Golf Foundation.

"I'm not a golfer," he said, "but after my tour, I can tell you this: The turf out there is in terrible shape and needs to be replaced. As a matter of fact, lots of stuff out there needs to be replaced, which is expensive in itself."

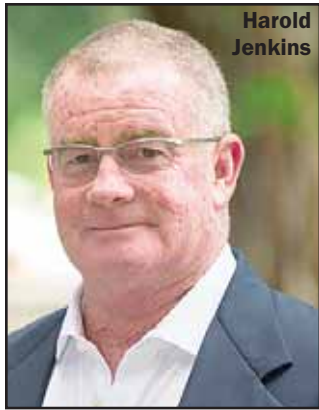
Consequently, Jenkins said he was in favor "of a more moderate approach" by replacing the turf and providing a "good, manufactured building," instead of opting for a multi-million-dollar facility.

The members of the reconstituted Golf Course Advisory Committee include Jim Applegate, Douglas Banks, Cabot Lord, David Gille, Wally Kalinoski and Jackie Williams. The meeting March 27 will gather input from the public prior to formulating a plan for the commission to consider.

#### - US CUSTOMS FACILITY

After the previous county commission majority returned \$1 million in grants to the state that would have enabled construction of a U.S. Customs Facility for both international aviation and marine traffic, the customs facility quickly rose to the top of the list of election campaign promises.

A new state grant, plus additional funds from the airport's own enterprise fund, breathed life back into the project after the newly elected commissioners took office. The building will be constructed at Witham Field, a general avia-



Harold Jenkins



Edward Ciampi



Doug Smith

The new county commission majority now shapes the future of Martin County and its residents.

tion airport in Stuart east of Dixie Highway and south of Monterey Road.

Operational costs are estimated to be around \$250,000 annually, according to county records, and will come only from the airport enterprise fund comprising airport fees, leases and fuel taxes.

The project enjoyed wide community support, not only from those who travel internationally, but by those who own restaurants and other businesses that cater to travelers, as well as airport operations. Currently, travelers to Martin County must first clear customs in Ft. Pierce or in Riviera Beach first, prior to coming to Stuart.

"It's an arduous process," said Jenkins, "... and our residents deserve to have this facility."

Most of the opposition was based on fear that the presence of a customs facility would lead eventually to an expansion of the airport to allow commercial airlines to begin operating, or that the customs facility would not pay for itself and would need to be subsidized by taxpayers.

Neither supposition is accurate, according to George Stokus, airport general manager. The airport is land-locked, therefore, its runways cannot be extended to accommodate the needs of commercial jets, and if the airport - which requires no taxpayer funds to operate - cannot support the customs facility through fees and fuel tax, then the facility simply will be closed with no penalty, Stokus reported to commissioners. The airport will have the right to lease the building to another aeronautical business.

Currently, the airport's enterprise

fund is getting a boost from increased air traffic every time President Donald Trump is in Palm Beach. It lies just outside the restricted air traffic zone that shuts down the Lantana Airport.

"We're not complaining," said Pat Spaulding, Stokus's executive aide, during a recent airport tour. "That's 10 cents for every gallon of fuel that goes directly into our enterprise fund."

#### -RECOMMITTED TO AAF FIGHT

One initiative that has not slowed down with the election of a new county commission majority is the county's legal fight to stop All Aboard Florida's plan to add passenger rail service through Martin County on the FEC rail line.

A Japanese company, SoftBank, a multinational telecommunications and Internet corporation, recently acquired

Fortress Investments, the parent company of All Aboard Florida, which recently announced that it would reduce its pursuit of taxpayer-subsidized bond allocations to \$600 million to finance only the Miami-to-West Palm Beach phase of the project.

Martin County continues to claim in its legal fight that AAF violated rules regarding the federally required environmental impact statement, in part due to the fact that a third route that would bypass Martin County had not been not considered.

The county's legal team continues to work closely with the U.S. Coast Guard on its rulemaking process for the 80-year-old St. Lucie River railroad bridge that would be closed to marine traffic for nine hours a day to accommodate the addition of 32 passenger rail trips to Orlando daily.

The Treasure Coast's legislative delegation also introduced a bill in January to be considered in this session of the state legislature to address the unfunded mandate of providing safety equipment upgrades and perpetual maintenance costs at railroad crossings.

Martin County's costs for its 26 rail crossings, which the county currently is required to maintain, could reach \$13.5 million by 2030 and exceed \$31 million by 2040, according to rail consultant estimates. ■

- Barbara Clowdus

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# Picayune Strand restoration: A CERP success



**Capt.  
Don Voss**

*One Florida  
Foundation*

The Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP), enacted by the US Congress in 2000, was intended to restore the Everglades ecosystem in southern Florida at an estimated cost of \$8.2 billion for 68 projects, taking approximately 30 years to complete. The lack of federal funding has slowed the progress.

One of those CERP projects is the Picayune Strand Restoration project. As the Naples Daily News stated in 2014, "We have been waiting to throw the switch for 30 years."

Proponents of the 55,000-acre Picayune Strand project, formerly called the Southern Golden Gate Estates, have been buying land, drawing up plans and lobbying for money for more than 30 years now. Recently I joined a tour organized by the Florida Wildlife Commission to see the entire site by swamp buggy. The Picayune project is a part of the larger CERP restoration plan.

The project calls for the plugging of 48 miles of canals, tearing out 260 miles



**This is one component of the biggest single habitat restoration project in the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan. Picayune Strand restoration, when completed in 2018, will restore about 75,000 acres of wetland and habitat between Alligator Alley and the Tamiami Trail in the southwestern corner of the state.**

of roads and building three pumping stations that would spread out across the landscape and mimic the way water used to flow on its way to the Ten Thousand Islands in the Everglades.

CERP's framework and guide for restoring, protecting and preserving the water resources of central and southern Florida, including the Everglades, covers 16 counties over 18,000 square miles.



**A former housing development launched in the 1950s, it is surrounded by the Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge, Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park, Everglades National Park, Big Cypress National Preserve, Ten Thousand Islands National Wildlife Refuge, Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve and Collier-Seminole State Park. Picayune Strand will restore the ecosystem connectivity of the entire region. Land acquisition began in the 1980s, with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection spending roughly \$250 million on land purchases.**

The majority of the water will be devoted to environmental restoration to revive a dying ecosystem. The remaining water will benefit cities and farmers by enhancing water supplies for the south Florida economy.

That one highlighted sentence – "the majority of the water will be devoted to environmental restoration" – causes local dislike and condemnation for CERP among some environmental activists, because they want ALL the water dedicated to environmental restoration; however, they should go out into the CERP projects themselves before they offer opinions based on that one sentence.

As we toured the acreage, we encountered thousands of cranes and beautiful, pink roseate spoonbills. There were deer and panther tracks, visible alligators and signs of black bears. Of course there were a number of Brazilian pepper trees, too, which brings up the issues of pollution, pesticides and controlled burns to control exotics. The U.S. Forestry Department and the FWC work in a most cooperative way to balance this active state park and still achieve restoration goals.

I did see small patches of algae on our swamp buggy ride. Considering the huge space we toured, it was a very small amount. We also were told we were very lucky, as usually the mosquitoes are very thick.

Three pumping stations are the key to this project's success. The Merritt Pumping station, the smallest of the three, cost \$66 million. The second and largest station, on the Faka Union Canal, cost \$81 million and was finished in 2015. The Miller Canal pump station will be completed next year and will cost about \$75 million by the time it's completed. Our guide pointed out that no project this large is without critics, stubborn advocates and issues to resolve, including the use of pumps and calling it restored. (There were no pumps in its original natural state.)

Other issues include a community called the Tomato Ranch on the west

side that will be flooded out when pump #3 comes online. The project will move a canal one mile west to divert water around this site. There also is an issue regarding manatee mitigation, and there is a concern about an 800-acre parcel of Miccosukee land that was taken, which remains unresolved.

Overall, though, the stakeholders have worked long and hard to protect this section of land from many profiteers hoping to gain control of this section for drilling and other forms of exploitation. This is an important message to those of us upstream. You must stay the course, address the obstacles and continue to proceed always seeking the funds needed to complete your plan.

The stakeholders had to first agree to a direction and a plan. They were smart enough to understand that there are many pieces to such a large puzzle. They categorized the different projects and found the ones they could agree upon. Using a majority rule concept, they chipped away at their long list of problems.

"We all agreed to figure out what things we agreed upon and worked to resolve them," according to one source. "As trust built between the groups and momentum began to move things, amazingly the project progressed."

Restoration takes lots of time and can have many issues to overcome. It requires patience, dedication and the time and money to do it correctly. A trip to the Picayune Strand shows the positive actions that can help correct, not return, but correct the disaster created by bad science and those swamp-land sales frauds. Continued progress falls to us. Are we up to the challenge? ■

*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.*

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# Lake Okeechobee Watershed Project holds hope



**Nyla Pipes**

*One Florida Foundation*

The debate continues: Should Floridians support northern water storage or southern storage to restore the ecosystem, significantly reduce Lake Okeechobee discharges and send more water south to Florida Bay? The reality is, both are needed, yet each has its pluses and minuses.

No where has this debate been more heated than in last year's stakeholder meetings to develop the Integrated Delivery Schedule, which sets the timeline for completing water projects statewide.

The result – after careful consideration of the interdependence of all the Everglades restoration projects – is the Lake Okeechobee Watershed project, an area that encompasses about 950,000 acres that includes the Fisheating Creek, Taylor Creek/Nubbins Slough, S-65D, S-65-E, and Indian Prairie sub-basins. The goal is to increase storage capacity in Lake Okeechobee's northern watershed, so that excess water doesn't wind up in the lake itself.

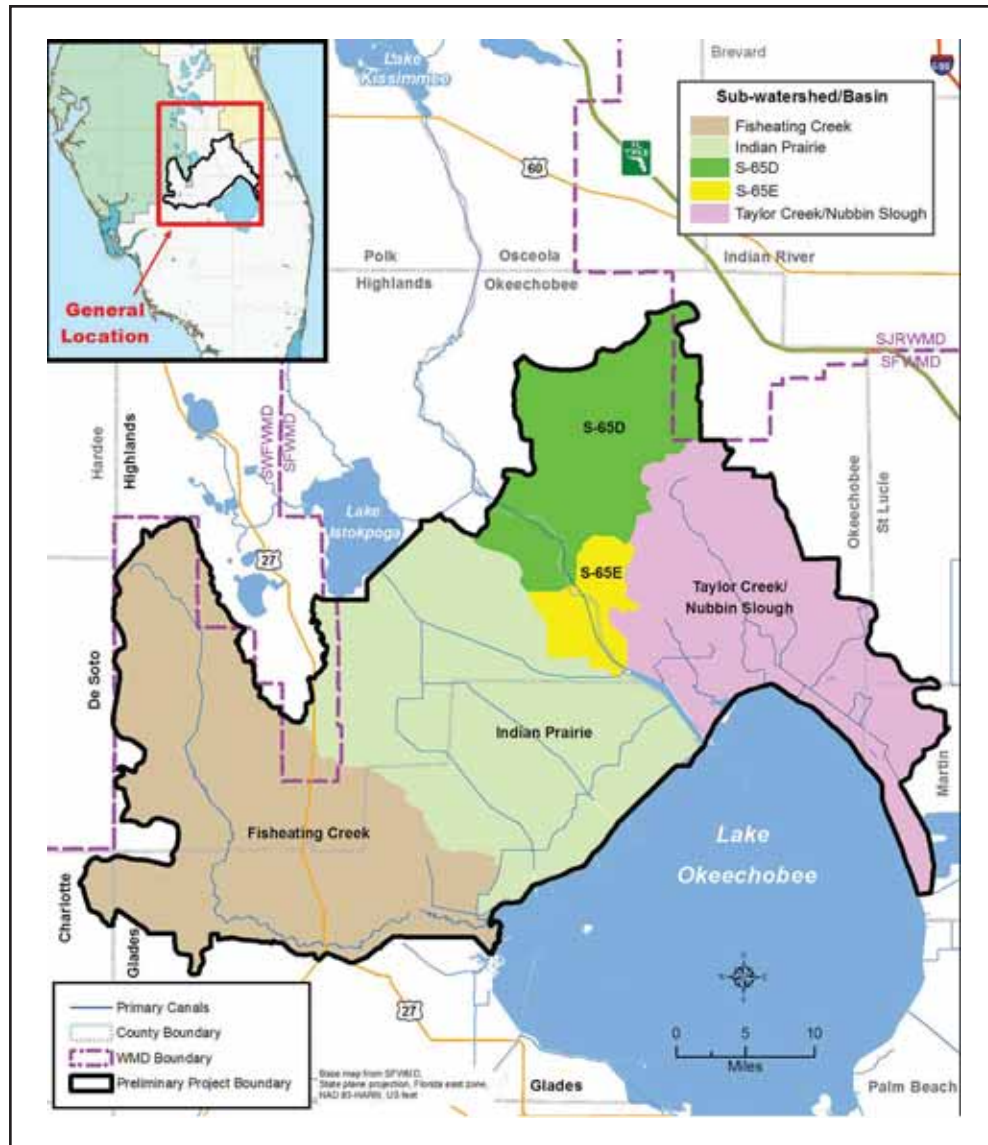
Additionally, the project will restore wetlands and provide habitat for wildlife and native plant species. Historically, this area was primarily wetlands, which slowed water flow into the lake. Currently, the land is a mix of natural lands, agriculture, and urban uses.

Although it seems to us there's no roadmap to restoration, the reality is that the Army Corps of Engineers must adhere to the National Environmental Policy Act process and strict planning guidelines. The Lake Okeechobee Watershed Project began with scoping, holding several meetings to come up with various alternative plans, called arrays, that may accomplish the goals of the project.

Basically, this is when all stakeholders put their ideas on paper, draw circles on maps, and provide any information they can within the watershed's project area.

From there, the Project Delivery Team, comprising members of the Army Corps, the South Florida Water Management District, the Department of the Interior, US Fish and Wildlife and other agencies, takes that information and designs several different arrays.

Not all ideas presented make it into the arrays being considered. For instance, Martin County's Ecosystem Restoration Manager Deb Drum proposed creating a littoral marsh on the eastern side of Lake Okeechobee, which would scrub impurities from the water around Port Mayaca and



Lake Okeechobee Watershed Map courtesy of US Army Corps of Engineers

improve water quality before it was discharged downstream to the St. Lucie River.

The western side of the lake has this feature naturally, which helps the Caloosahatchee; however, upon reviewing the proposal, the Project Delivery Team found that the eastern side of the lake is too deep, thus too much fill material would have to be

hauled in to create such a marsh, making the idea cost prohibitive.

At the end of the scoping period, the Project Delivery team presented their arrays to the Vertical Team, which serves a supervisory role, for further evaluation and approval of a Tentatively Selected Plan, or TSP.

From this point forward, the plan's feasibility, legality, cost, etc., is deter-

mined, and a Draft Environmental Impact Statement will be filed with the EPA for public comment. Changes will be made along the way over the course of the next year, and public input is vital.

Currently, the Lake Okeechobee Watershed Project is expected to include a mix of above-ground reservoir storage, aquifer storage and recovery (ASR) wells, and deep injection wells.

The static above-ground reservoirs could hold anywhere from 150,000 acre-feet to 350,000 acre-feet of water. Recent studies of ASR wells show that up to 80 of them can be used north of the lake to store around 335,000 to 450,000 acre-feet of water per year for future use.

Finally, deep well injection could account for an additional 500,000 to 2.5 million acre-feet per year of storage below the boulder zone, but it results in net loss of that water. With a water supply for future needs also a concern, this option will be used only as a last resort to avoid discharges to the estuaries.

An acre-foot of water is how much water one acre of land will hold at a depth of one foot. We need an estimated 1.5 to 3 million acre-feet of water stored throughout the entire system to eliminate the discharges. Depending upon the number of wells and the size of reservoirs built, great potential exists for storing water north of Lake Okeechobee.

Community involvement in the process is very important. Please visit [www.evergladesrestoration.gov](http://www.evergladesrestoration.gov) to learn more about this planning process and review our progress with other Everglades Restoration projects. The next Lake Okeechobee Watershed Project meeting will be listed there as soon as it is scheduled. ■

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

## One Florida works to help clean our waterways

One Florida Foundation volunteers spent Saturday, Feb. 11, removing 60 cubic yards of water lettuce on Moore's Creek, which empties into the Indian River Lagoon at the Manatee Observation and Education Center in downtown Fort Pierce. The exotic plant, which floats on the water, comes originally from Africa and looks like Bibb lettuce. When it dies, it sinks, releasing nitrogen and phosphorous, which could trigger an algae bloom. While volunteers in kayaks were shoveling lettuce, other volunteers removed 600 pounds of trash, according to Don Voss, of One Florida.



## Greater awareness, more support needed for Alzheimer's research



**Alzheimer's activist Doris Sanders, of Stuart who was recently recognized by the Alzheimer's Association as a "Fearless Care-giver," reacted with praise coupled with alarm regarding recent news reports**

**that national rates of all types of dementia have recently been declining.**

"That does not mean that the number of people with Alzheimer's disease is declining," she says.

According to the Alzheimer's Association, currently one American develops the disease every 66 seconds, and a cure or even an effective treatment is yet to be found.

"So continued research is vital," Sanders adds. "Fortunately, some progress has been made recently with the decision by the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services to pay for cognitive impairment assessment and care services that began in January for people with Alzheimer's and other cognitive impairment."

Sanders also encourages the public to support passage of the federal "21st

Century Cures Act" to bolster medical research to accelerate treatment and cures for Alzheimer's and other diseases, as well as for critical support of brain research.

"It is imperative that we continue to ask Congress for bipartisan support in defeating this horrific disease," Sanders adds, "and for funds to increase research." ■

## Lots of constitutional amendments may be on 2018 ballot

**Three Martin County residents have been appointed by the Florida governor to the Florida Constitution Revision Commission: Sherry Plymale, past chair of the State Board of Community Colleges and former chief of the Florida Department of Education; Carolyn Timmann, Circuit Court Clerk and Comptroller for Martin County; and former Se-wall's Point Mayor Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch of Stuart.**

Initially formed in 1977, the commission, which meets every 20 years, will conduct listening tours throughout the state over the next year, then will propose changes to the state constitution that would go on the ballot.

To go into effect, 60 percent of Florida voters would have to approve the changes.

The commission meets every 20 years. It met in 1977-78 after its creation,

and then again in 1997-98. The first commission proposed eight amendments to the Constitution, while the next proposed nine.

Some of the amendments that may be considered this year include:

- changing how Florida draws its

legislative districts;

- expanding (or limiting) school choice;
- making it easier for felons to regain voting rights;
- purchasing land in the Everglades agricultural area. ■

## Brian Mast energizes taxpayers at annual meeting of the MCTA

**Much of what Congressman Brian Mast said was exactly what members of the Martin County Taxpayers Association wanted to hear at its annual meeting Feb. 21 at Lost Lake Golf and Country Club.**

Tax laws will be rewritten, he told the audience of more than 100, and regulations on business will decrease. Mast's immediate forecast:

- Taxes will decrease across three brackets;
- Tax on income from dividends and investments will be cut in half;
- The standard deduction will be doubled for lower income brackets;
- Income tax returns will be filed on one sheet of paper;
- Corporation dollars housed overseas will be repatriated at a zero-percent rate.

"We've got to get the federal government out of the way of business and allow our entrepreneurs to create American jobs," he said. "It's one of the most exciting things we're working on."

But it's not the only thing, added Mast, whose district includes northern Palm Beach, Martin and St. Lucie counties.

He worked shoulder-to-shoulder last summer with other residents of Martin County as Ecosphere Technologies helped clean the algae-choked waters of the St. Lucie River, which shaped his determination to be named to the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, an assignment he felt would hold the greatest potential for representing his constituents' most pressing concerns, he said.

Because of his passion for water resources, he was assigned to two of Transportation's subcommittees: the Coast Guard and Maritime subcommittee, which regulates the nation's bridges, including the FEC bridge over the St. Lucie River, as well as vice chair of the Water Resources & Environment subcommittee, working on the next Water Resources funding bill.

"We're making sure that we get the funding for the projects we need," he said. "... I don't feel the federal government can do damage to a community and not be held accountable for it; we're working on it, day after day."

In answer to audience questions,

Mast said that "repealing the Affordable Care Act is already happening," explaining further that it's a process, not "a button you push."

Mast did not restrict his comments just to impending legislation, however. He also talked about the "bad" part of being in Congress, which is seeing the difference in fellow legislators when on camera, speaking emotionally and passionately on an issue,

as compared to when they are off, seemingly then to no longer hold that viewpoint.

"It tells you there's not a lot of truth that's out there," he says. "We're stirring people up in ways, with the emotions, that they don't even feel themselves."

He suggested that more veterans need to become legislators, because members of the military have "one commitment, one sense of duty," he said, "and that's to America."

Although Mast was the highlight of the annual dinner meeting, its president, Tom Kenny of Hobe Sound, also addressed the membership with a "State of the Martin County Taxpayers Association" address.

"I hate reading this stuff," he said, "I'd rather just talk to you."

He read it anyway, just to get the points across. The address also is available on the association's website: [www.mctaxpayers.org](http://www.mctaxpayers.org).

He said that one of the greatest misconceptions residents hold of the MCTA is that it's an organization that opposes taxation of any kind.

"We don't hate all taxes," he said. "We understand that you've got to tax people to provide our infrastructure, etcetera, but we just want to make sure that those taxes are being spent wisely."

The organization has adopted a more robust structure in order to accomplish that goal, Kenny added, recruiting dozens of local residents to serve on various committees to "monitor and review all fiscal and tax matters" affecting Martin County.

"You can imagine," he said, "to do this the right way, we need hundreds of people to join us, to take part in this effort."

The organization is non-political and is a non-profit organization. For more information, or to volunteer, call 772.215.1094, or [admin@mctaxpayers.org](mailto:admin@mctaxpayers.org). ■



JAMES BROWN

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# Creating fine portraits of furry family members

**C**apt. Dick Reed, an artist and a commercial fisherman, is one of those lucky few people in this world who never had to work at something he didn't love to do.

"In other words, I never had a 'real' job," he says with a chuckle.

Hailing from Pennsylvania's Pennsylvania Dutch countryside, where he made a living using his artistic skills to paint richly detailed folk art designs on furniture and decor, he discovered Martin County when a friend bought a home here decades ago.

"I would come visit and we'd go fishing," Reed said. "The fishing was so good, just unbelievable. There were just so many fish here."

He had grown up in Pennsylvania fishing with his grandfather, starting when he was around six years old, he explains.

"Every time my grandfather went fishing, (my family) made me go with him," Reed says. "I guess they didn't want him to go fishing alone, but it worked out pretty good for me. He taught me how to fish."

His love of fishing kept bringing him back here to visit – and to fish – until he realized that this is where he wanted to live. He moved to Hobe Sound in 1991. The choice seemed obvious.

"I always liked painting; I always liked fishing," he says, "and I always hated the cold."



**Capt. Dick Reed as he paints a fine portrait of someone's beloved pet.**

He gave up just folk art, and instead began following the artists circuit of shows around the country, painting whatever subject he wished, displaying and selling his art in cities and towns that hosted art festivals and events.

He also studied for and received a license as a charter boat captain, "to pick up an extra buck now and then" doing what he loves to do. He "retired" from the art-show circuit around eight years ago.

"I just got too old to lug all that stuff around, put up a tent by myself and all that," he says, but after he stopped traveling the art circuit, he discovered he



missed the painting. Joining a

class in watercolors changed all that and set him on an entirely new course.

"I was very pleased with the results," he says. "I never paint in oils anymore. I just love the feel of watercolors now, the softness of them."

Do not be misled, however, because his paintings – which he limits just to commissioned paintings of dogs – are not wimpy, ethereal images. The strokes of color are deliberate, intense and pointed, and they must reflect accurately the personality and physical traits of a beloved pet as only the owner can identify.

"If the eyes are three-eighths of an inch off, then it's a different dog," he says. "It's not their dog anymore."

What began with a request from a neighbor to paint a portrait of his dog has morphed into a nearly full-time vocation.

"I kept getting more and more re-

quests to paint someone's dog," he said, "and I thought, 'What the heck, I've always liked dogs. Dogs are pretty special, so why not?' Now, that's all I paint."

The most challenging breeds are those with short hair,

Reed says. The long-haired breeds do not take nearly as long and are not nearly as difficult, he adds, because the long fur always has distinctive coloring and character that he can match with brush strokes.

Since a dog does not usually hold still for very long, he paints from a photograph of the pet.

"I start by drawing (the dog's portrait) first," he says. "If I get the drawing right, then everything else comes out fine – as long as I follow the drawing. If I don't, then I've got another sample to show, that's all."

Even if you cannot see the broad grin on this happy man's face, you can hear the grin in his voice. To commission a dog's portrait, stop by or call the Hobe Sound Art Gallery – coincidentally next door to a veterinarian's office – on Dixie Highway in Hobe Sound. Call 772-546-7227. ■

– Barbara Cloudus

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# Hope for two new towns lives or dies with state

**The next step in fulfilling the hopes for self-governance by residents of Hobe Sound and Indiantown lies with the state legislature. Although the legislative delegation approved both local bills for incorporation, it's up to the legislature as to whether to continue—or to kill—incorporation ideas.**

If approved, local residents within only the incorporating areas will vote in November as to whether they desire to incorporate—or not.

In a county with only one major municipality, the City of Stuart with a population of around 17,000, the idea of two new towns was greeted with anticipation among city officials, who are eager to have allies in their dealings with county officials.

City Commissioner Troy McDonald suggested to City Manager Paul Nicoletti last fall that he meet with the towns' organizers "as soon as possible" perhaps to increase the city's leverage with the county.

"I can see this being a very positive thing in helping us serve the best interests of our citizens," he said, "because there's strength in numbers. It won't be so easy anymore for the county to ignore us."

## LOSING CONTROL

Former County Commissioner Anne Scott of Jupiter Island made no secret about her opposition to the proposed incorporations, attending one Hobe Sound incorporation meeting in Banner Lake last fall to challenge the intent of organizers. Residents who also attended said they were not surprised at Scott's efforts, "since the county would not have as much power as it has now."

County Commissioner Sarah Heard also has expressed her concerns at the idea of creating two new towns in Martin County.

"The county needs to be at these (incorporation) meetings to provide objectivity," said Commissioner Sarah Heard at the Jan. 10 county commission meeting, directing County Administrator Taryn Kryzda to attend incorporation meetings, not to give a presentation, but to ensure "accuracy in the data" being presented.

"Residents are not hearing the other side of the story," Heard added. "They need to know what the impacts will be, and there will be impacts."

Commissioner Ed Ciampi, who also has attended incorporation meetings, has been particularly outspoken in his support of Hobe Sound and Indiantown, even during county commission meetings.

"I believe very strongly that the best government is local government," Ciampi said. "Instead of having one rep-

resentative and four strangers from out of town making decisions for them, (Hobe Sound and Indiantown) will each elect five of their own residents, who live within their respective areas, to make the decisions that directly affect their own residents."

The one-year and five-year feasibility studies, posted on the new towns' websites, outline the financial picture. The proposed town charters also are posted.

"We welcome anyone to come to our meetings," said Town of Hobe Sound organizer Mike Ennis. "We want residents to question us. The more questions that are asked, the more opportunities we have to explain exactly what is happening and why we're doing it."

According to the feasibility studies, both completed by BJM Consultants of Fort Myers, the impact to the county's general fund will be minor in the case of Hobe Sound. Nearly all the county taxes that will be redirected to a new town will be returned to the county, since Hobe Sound intends to contract their police, fire, roads and park services with Martin County.

"Nearly every dime will go back to the county," Ennis said, when questioned by Sen. Joe Negron and Representatives Gayle Harrell and MaryLynn Magar at the Legislative Delegation meeting in Stuart on Jan. 5.

"This (incorporation) has nothing to do with anything that the county (commission) did or did not do," Ennis added. "This is about zoning; we're all about small shops and keeping our small-town character."

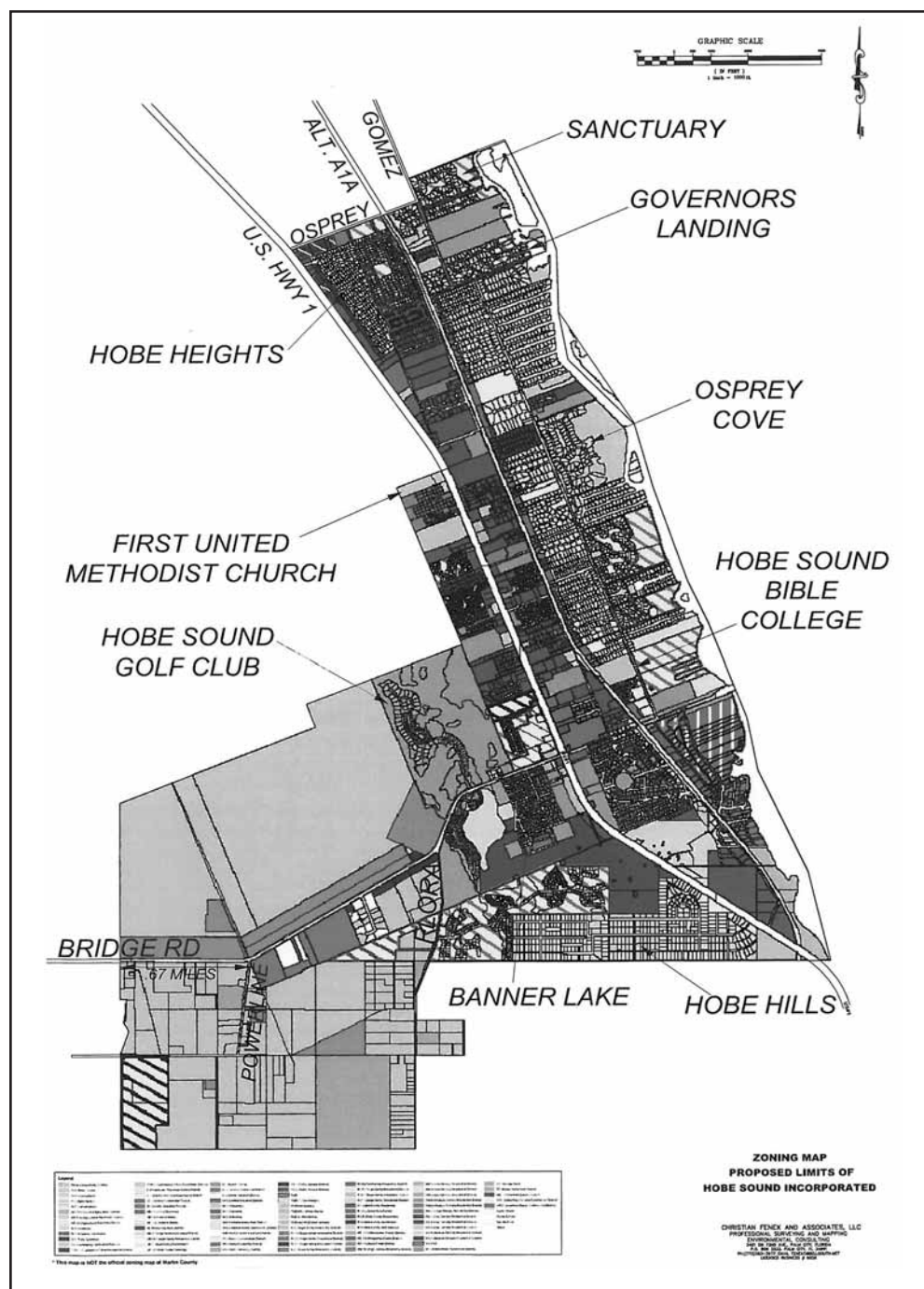
The downtown and the U.S 1 corridor have never been fully developed in Hobe Sound, according to Ennis, and organizers feel the best way to protect Hobe Sound's character is to control its development.

The financial studies also show that both new towns will be self-supporting without additional taxes and without losing services.

"We'll even have a small surplus at the end of the first year," Ennis told the legislative delegation.

In addition to Ennis, the Hobe Sound organizers include Harry MacArthur of Harry & the Natives, Alfred Miller of Banner Lake, and Pat Martin of Diamond Transfer Company.

County Commissioner Harold Jenkins also had been one of the original organizers, but resigned after he became a



county commission candidate last March. Jenkins also had been one of the founders of Preserve Martin County, organized to stop the development of Martin County's western lands.

The proposed boundaries for the Town of Hobe Sound are the same as the current urban services district, running from Osprey Street at the north to the Jonathan Dickinson Park boundary, from the Intracoastal Waterway on the east to 138th street west.

Ennis emphasized to Negron that the boundaries selected denotes an area that meets all the state's criteria, including that it be compact with a minimum density of 1.5 units per acre. The minimum population is 5,000, and Hobe Sound has more than three times that amount with taxable property values that exceed \$2 billion.

"After incorporation," Ennis said, "it's much easier to accommodate an area that wishes to be part of the town... All they have to do is to ask their new

town council, and we have a lot of areas that have already expressed their desire to be included."

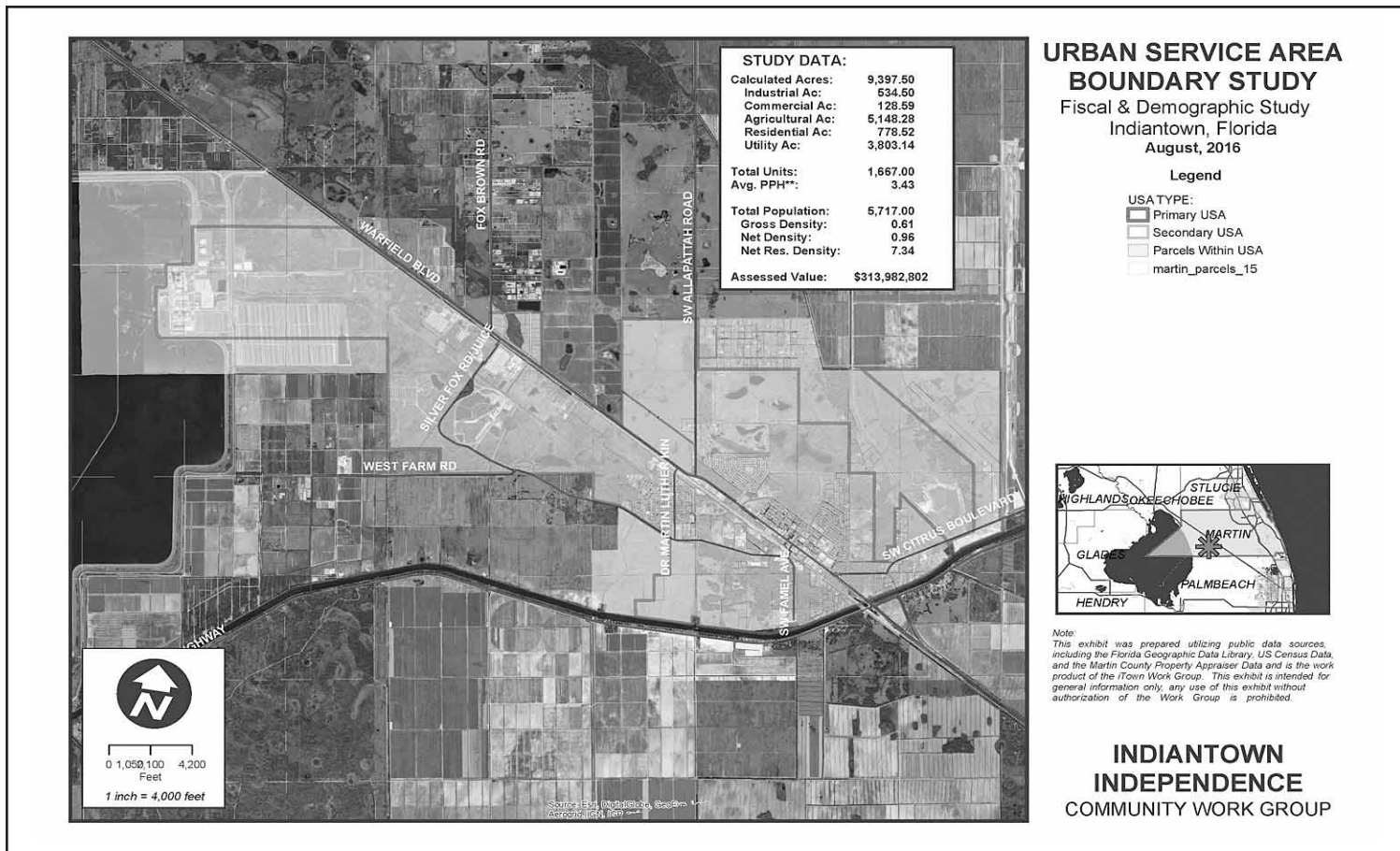
## A DIFFERENT PHILOSOPHY

While residents of Hobe Sound have expressed their desire "to protect" Hobe Sound and keep it largely as it is now "only better," the organizers of the Indiantown incorporation want to go back to the way Indiantown was in the past.

"We used to be a community where we worked where we lived," said Brian Powers said, "but now 75 percent of our residents must leave every day to go work some place else."

The rural community of around 5,700 residents has been hit hard over the past decade by the loss of agricultural jobs and the closing of manufacturing plants. The county's icy response last spring to a proposed biomass facility in Indiantown that promised not only new jobs but a new crop for Indiantown's fal-





tion meeting last spring that attracted a standing-room only crowd. The support for incorporation was nearly unanimous at that meeting, and it took organizers only two days to gather the first 1,000 signatures on their petition.

The feasibility study shows that at the end of five years, the new Town of Indiantown, whose proposed charter is based on the City of Stuart's, would have a nearly \$15 million surplus, Powers told the legislative delegation.

"We had one area that did not want to be included," Powers said in response to Negron's questioning, "so we just took them out of the boundaries. We don't want to force anyone to do this who doesn't want it."

Indiantown proposes also to contract with Martin County for police and fire protection; however, it likely will have its own building department as a convenience for residents who live more than 20 miles from Stuart.

Both Indiantown and Hobe Sound will adopt the current Comprehensive Growth Management Plan as their starting point, and neither of the new towns plans to increase taxes.

"I'm not saying that there will never be new taxes," Ennis told Negron, "but it will be up to the residents. If they want to have a new park or something else, they'll make the decision." ■

--Barbara Cloudus

low orange groves prompted residents to investigate incorporation once again in order to control their own destiny.

Decades earlier, a group founded by Powers' father, Timer Powers, found that incorporation of Indiantown would

be costly and not offer real benefits. "But times have changed," his son said at Indiantown's first public incorpora-

## Town organizers encourage local voices be heard in Tallahassee

Two more informational meetings are planned to inform Hobe Sound residents about both the positive aspects of incorporation, as well as to answer any questions. The first is Wednesday, March 22, at the Hobe Sound Civic Center at 6:30, followed by another meeting April 26 at the Hobe Sound Library, which will total 17 meetings organizers have held over the past year in Hobe Sound.

Some residents feel, however, that even more needs to be done to move incorporation forward, since the two local bills filed by Representative MaryLynn Magar to incorporate the Town of Hobe Sound and the Village of Indiantown must first be approved by the state.

Their vote does not ensure that the towns will become a reality. Only a vote of the affected residents can make that happen; however, approval by the state legislature ensures that the decision will go to the residents who live within the proposed town boundaries for a vote in November.

Residents could be denied that opportunity to vote if the bills do not proceed past committee review.

Currently, both bills – HB 259 to incorporate the Village of Indiantown and HB 261 the Town of Hobe Sound – remain under review by the first committee, the Local, Federal & Veterans Affairs Subcommittee.

The bills still must be reviewed by two additional committees before they can make it to the House floor for a vote, the Ways and Means and the Govern-

ment Accountability committees.

The slow progress through the first committee review makes organizers question the delay.

Sandra Magrue, a volunteer from Hobe Sound, suggests that residents contact their representative, as well as the committee members, and ask them to complete their review in order to move the bills along in a timely manner, as well as to counter any negative comments they may have received.

"That is why it is critical that each one of us take part in a positive email campaign," she said in an email to volunteers, "and email each of the committee members currently reviewing our bill to let them know we support the action to incorporate and desire to allow the area residents to make the final decision through their vote."

The government legislators to contact: – District 82 Representative MaryLynn Magar  
marylynn.magar@myfloridahouse.gov

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# Silver bells, silver bells ... it's pompano time ...



**Rich Vidulich**  
Pompano  
Reporter

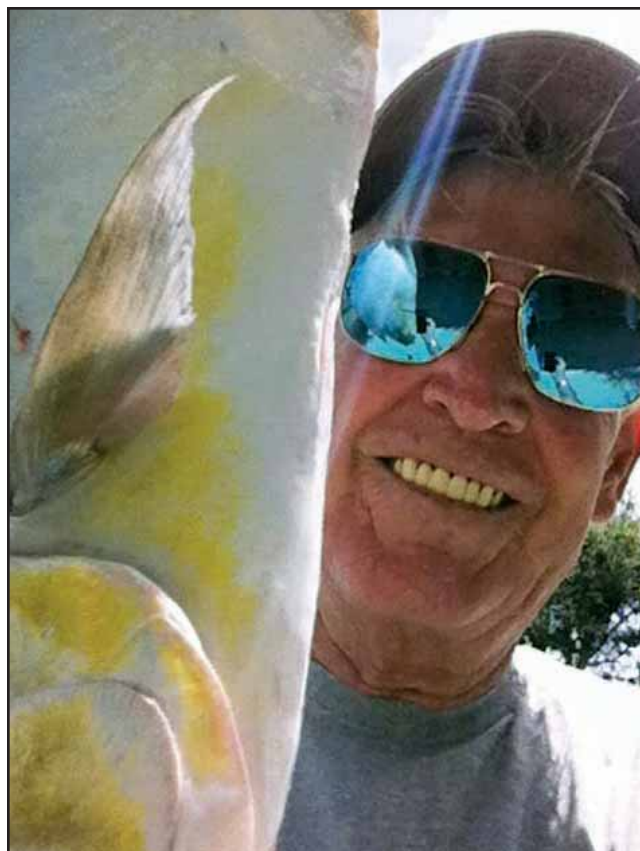
All I hear these days is: Too rough! Too windy! Too dirty! Gee, I wish the El Nino was back! Take heart, fellow pomp-chasers. The early polls were NOT wrong! La Nina is working FOR us.

Personally, I worship the cooler weather. Less rain and humidity so low I can breath again. Ahh, sooo nice! We Floridians were spared the old-fashioned Canadian jet stream holiday tour. We are thankful for the "Poseidon and/or Neptune" influence that provided much-needed restorative measures to our sea and rivers – a drought and those high cirrus clouds!

The water is vintage, and the UV is sparking some healthy habitat. The fishing is improving. Oh, let it snow, let it snow (up north)! Local motels, tackle shops, marinas and all recreational businesses will prosper. Respect this window, and remember we didn't win the war we are trying to win! The Farmer's Almanac says the potentially short-lived La Nina may be displaced by another rainy, destructive El Nino!

The caption on my business card reads: "Ocean Too Rough for Offshore? Awesome for On The Beach." Recently, it's been too rough for the beach, too, so where did I go? I left the beach and drove to the Jensen Beach Causeway. Slow down and park just before the relief bridge – provided you are leaving the beach and going west. If there's a bunch of guys twitching ultra light jiggling rods, then the action is on! Take a walk and study the jiggling twitch and the types of lures and colors they are using to catch pompano, jacks, and ladyfish.

Attempting a conversation is worthwhile if your approach is not overbearing, so consider this option. If you're not on vacation or you're retired and you appear like you fit in, you could derive



Hobe Sound's Jim Lehrer hoists a three-pound pompano!

some valuable info. Half the time, when fishing in January/February, the surf will be too rough! You could visit the pros at Snook Nook on Indian River Drive in Jensen Beach, or at Stuart Angler on Old Dixie Highway in Port Salerno, and tell them you want catch pompano by jiggling. They'll lead you in the right direction.

The beauty of a 1/4- to 1-ounce rated jiggling rod is the diversity of fish you will enjoy catching. The line could be mono or braid. The pros will explain



Aaron McPherson of Juno Beach showing off his Floridian attire and a shiny pompano!



Pro Angler David Hartwell displaying sweet nugget with a Pompano Catcher Rig.



New Jersey visitor Ray Oriente catches a 6.2 pound permit at Jupiter Beach.

Pass the end of the leader through the jig eyelet, then thread the leader through a pompano lead jig and the quill. My pro experience says that when passing the leader through the jig, the jig hook should face up.

Next take that same leader and pass it through the eyelet of the quill. Again, the quill hook should be facing up! Close the loop and finish the knot. This should provide a space for the quill to rise up and down the loop. Ninety percent of the pompano that fiercely attack this rig will hit the quill, whether you are on a boat, bridge, jetty or pier. They will out-perform bait on so many occasions that it is worthwhile to buy a set up for the season.

(Incidentally, if you would like to buy a pre-tied darting quill on a loop knot with fluoro leader ready to go then try my own Pompano Catcher Rig, sold at most tackle shops. Extremely effective on all piers.) Temps are the coldest they've been in 10 years, bringing us the big warriors (two-to-6 pound pompano) that will invade south Florida throughout February. Our resident south Florida pomps are enjoying the warmer temps they follow, settling now in the Keys.

Every year I write this column praying for more pompano, and it barely happens. Well, put down your remotes and start scouting these beaches. Figure out if the sport of jiggling will entertain you. I bet it will. Ho, ho, ho! Tight lines, Pompano Warriors! ■

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.

the the advantages of these important choices.

My favorite jig size is 3/8 oz. and on windy days I would support using a 1/2 oz. These are pompano jigs. The best brands are Doc Goofy jigs, Gulfstream lures, T&A lures, and my own "Pompano Catcher" rigs, unless you're lucky enough to own some of the late, legendary Artie Alspach's hand-crafted, ultra-artistic pompano jigs!

Tying your jig lure is the most important point. You can purchase the jig with a split ring, which holds a feathery quill adjacent to the lead and is chip resistant powder coated. Tie your jig eyelet to some 15 to 20 lb. fluorocarbon leader. About 30 inches long. This is the easy way to grab-and-go fishing, but not the most prolific. There are inshore charter guides who will agree with me on what is the best terminal tackle strategy. Google the words "Loop Knot" and practice, practice, practice.

Take 30 inches of 20 lb. pink fluoro – my preference – tie your overhand loop, leaving 8 inches of leader to close the loop.

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# An artist paints Mother Nature's puzzling book



**Maya Ellenson**  
*Art Kaleidoscope*



Artist Nanette Carton in her Hobe Sound studio.



One of Carton's most popular paintings is now a jigsaw puzzle.

animals in nature's book of life. By assembling it with both hands and eyes, we start seeing the wholeness through its tiny fragments. "The Gathering" opens for us a gateway to our planet's loving and nurturing heart, compelling us to open up ours in return, awed by its immense splendor.

Everything about Nanette Carton is enchanting: her radiant smile, her beautiful house enclosed by lush gardens, two gorgeous cats – a calico, Luna, and a black Siamese, Ninja – and her fabulous paintings.

Although square in shape, the inner composition of her paintings is always spherical, imparting to some extent a mandala effect. Just like mandalas, they encapsulate totality, one not simply observed, but profoundly connected. Open them like portals to nature's magic, they unfold in bright and opulent colors, and once you enter, you become bewitched.

Carton's main muse has always been nature. Inspired as an artist by Josephine Wall and somewhat by Pre-Raphaelites, Carton reveals nature's mysterious realms along with its glowing external beauty. In most of her paintings, the subject is not man-made objects. Symbolic and poetic, her works reveal the deepest archetypes inside each of us in relation to Mother Earth, creating powerful discourse.

Her painting, "The Wishing Tree," with its dreamlike scenery, illustrates the power of trust we put in our planet as 71 wildlife critters make their wish in unison, synchronized in a circle around the tree whose roots are shaped like a heart. The painting exemplifies the heart-to-heart togetherness in the moonlit fairy-like landscape. All these beautiful creatures tap into Earth's air, breathing happily and grateful. When there is no separation, all wishes come true.

The novelty of Carton's pictorial style emerges from a striking confluence of realistic and stylized approaches in developing her subject matter. Her intense brushwork fine tunes the smaller object and emphasizes the vastness.

"I prefer acrylic medium as it allows me to create a smooth iconic texture and highlight the details," she explains, then adds with a smile, "but it also can be tricky because the soft acrylics I use dry real fast, so my brush should keep pace with it."

A self-taught artist, Nanette is deeply grounded in nature, honing her artistic technique day by day. She passionately loves gardening. A Florida native, she lives in Hobe Sound and is very fond of its scenery. In her piece "Hobe Mountain



A favorite painting of critics, "Rainbow's End," is also a favorite of columnist Maya Ellenson.

Tower," Jonathan Dickinson Park is infused with a penetrative lyricism, shrouded with a purple-blue aura. The painting allows us to appreciate its one-of-a-kind atmosphere and mesmerizing charm with a new perspective.

A history buff who studies various cultures rich in mysticism and spirituality, she reveals her interests in her paintings. "Rainbow's End"

won second place at the All Florida Juried Art Show last year. Her "Mother Nature" series giclee prints have already become best-sellers among the art lovers nationwide.

"With my art I try to raise awareness of how important it is to feel connected with the environment we inhabit," she says. "If we're consciously grounded in it, we'll always treat it with love and respect."

She also enjoys depicting the sacred temples, like Stonehenge and Machu Picchu, accentuating the spiritual synergy between these timeless structures and their sacred ground. These paintings stir the viewer's sense of amazement. We're awed not just by the architectural immensity of these ageless monuments, but the mystical connection they continue to carry throughout the centuries with the earth and the cosmos.

In Nanette Carton's landscapes, imbued with mystique, we are allowed to imagine nature's delicate totality. In this wholeness, every piece is exceptional. Every little bit matters. If we harm one, the whole system may crumble.

Her magnificent painting from her "Mother Nature" series, "The Gathering," became a 300-art piece jigsaw puzzle, published by Pomegranate Company. The painting-puzzle contains fairy-tale trees, butterflies, flowers, foliage, brook, rainbow and 64 various wildlife creatures, executed with stunning artistry. The puzzle opens our panoramic vision

as we tune into its magical rhythm.

"I cannot stress enough how important it is to nurture an interactive communication with nature," she explains. "When you put it together, you're no longer a passive observer but a participant, even a co-creator, and more importantly you start perceiving the wholeness through its wondrous parts. That's my puzzle philosophy."

Nanette's website, [www.nanettesfineart.com](http://www.nanettesfineart.com), allows visitors to magnify 12 detailed images of the puzzle. When we enlarge them, we can fully appreciate the presence of an owl, a fox and other wild

Carton's bewitching paintings transcend every definition of the visual art, for each piece is a portal to something much bigger than ourselves, although in Carton's universe the notion of big or small doesn't apply. Every component is equally precious. ■

*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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continued from PAGE 7

## LAKE POINT ASKS JUDGE TO ENFORCE ARBITRATOR'S ORDER

The court set aside three days for a new public records trial Feb. 21-23; however, Roby ordered non-binding arbitration in the case that concluded Feb. 9 before Stuart attorney Howard Googe, a certified mediator with specialized training in civil trial practice.

Googe, who reviewed court records, case law and questioned four commissioners, found that Heard's testimony regarding the loss of her emails to be "suspicious, bizarre and less than credible."

In addition to the county's requirement to pay Lake Point's attorney fees and costs, Googe also ordered that whatever materials were recovered from Yahoo as a result of the subpoena must also be turned over to Lake Point, along with all other relevant public records.

Lake Point attorney Ethan Loeb objected to the county's proposed settlement agreement. In addition to the fact that Lake Point's unbilled attorney fees and costs over the past two months were excluded, the county's proposal struck the arbitrator's requirement that the county establish a public records policy for commissioners, according to court records.

Also stricken from the county's draft proposal, according to Loeb's motion, were all of the arbitrators' references to the county's and some commissioners' "pattern and practice" of violating public records laws.

Lake Point motion asserts that the county's proposed draft also lacks detail in what Loeb described as "a thinly veiled attempt to hide the truth from the public."

On Feb. 22, Roby ordered both sides back to arbitration to settle the dispute over the enforcing document. A hearing in circuit court, which has not yet been set, will decide if the case will go back to arbitration, or if Roby will issue the final order in circuit court to confirm the arbitrator's order.

## FIRST PUBLIC RECORDS CASE REOPENED

McManus overturned his original trial ruling in April 2016 after the county revealed a previously undisclosed private email account and additional Hurchalla emails on then-Commissioner Anne Scott's personal computer, which McManus described as "unlawful."

No one, except perhaps Lake Point attorney Ethan Loeb, knows what prompted him to ask Martin County in February 2016 to check – just one more time – for any public records pertaining to Lake Point on Commissioners Anne Scott's and John Haddox's private computers and email accounts.

That request, which assistant county attorney Amy Petrick told Loeb was redundant and unnecessary because all public records had been provided previously, shredded the

# Lake Point project designed to move clean water south

It's not enough to move water south into the Everglades, the water must be cleaned to meet stringent state standards. Lake Point's project, a 1008-acre limestone rock mining operation, was on track to do just that, according to Lake Point attorney Ethan Loeb.

The 1,008-acre Lake Point parcel is the "missing link" between the C-44 Canal north of Lake Point that collects and conveys polluted stormwater discharges to the St. Lucie River and into the Atlantic Ocean and the L-8 canal at Lake Point's southern boundary, which provides drinking water for West Palm Beach directly from Lake Okeechobee, continuing on to other canals for transporting water farther south.

In court testimony, Loeb argued that Lake Point's contract with the South Florida Water Management District, included "water supply" as well as "water restoration"; therefore, Lake Point should be awarded damages from a thwarted project being developed jointly among the SFWMD, Lake Point and American Water, the country's largest water utility, to supply clean water to drought-stricken cities, or to channel farther south, under the control of the SFWMD.

Circuit Court Judge Shields McManus ruled in 2016 that Lake Point's contract lacked the specificity and details in its deal with SFWMD to claim additional damages for loss of revenue from American Water; however, that ruling may be revisited when the contract case goes to court, likely in early summer.

The case includes the 2008 agreement with Martin County to revoke Lake Point's former housing development order and unity of title with an adjacent 1,000-acre parcel after the mining company received water and mining permits from the Department of Environmental Protection and SFWMD.

As a state-permitted mining and water restoration project, Lake Point would be exempt from Martin

county's stand when Petrick found Scott's secret email account.

Instead of just Anne Scott, however, the reopening of the case brought four commissioners under scrutiny with particular attention focused on Heard's "hacked" computer. Heard's attorney argued in court that the new attention was unwarranted and unfair since no public records violations had been found previously and Heard was not the reason the case had been reopened.

Both McManus and Roby continued to rule in favor of Lake Point's argu-

County's development rules.

The county refused to revoke the development order as agreed, alleges Lake Point in their lawsuit against Martin County filed in February 2013. The complaint also alleges that Martin County levied code enforcement violations against the project under its original housing development rules.

As a water restoration project, Lake Point agreed to deed the rock mine to the state for eventual conversion to stormwater treatment areas, in return for Lake Point's right to mine the property for another 20 years.

The SFWMD filed a counterclaim against Lake Point in 2016 for failing to transfer ownership of Lake Point's property, which Lake Point contends was impossible under the circumstances created by the "new direction" of commissioners elected in 2012, according to court documents.

Part of their case against Martin County includes Lake Point's allegations that former commissioner Maggy Hurchalla interfered in their contracts by conducting a public smear campaign of the project. Through secret meetings and correspondence with officials and county commissioners, in which she claimed that 60 acres of wetlands would be destroyed, Lake Point alleges that Hurchalla directed commissioners to cancel Lake Point contracts.

Hurchalla's private attorney, Virginia Sherlock, filed four separate motions in court before three different judges claiming that Hurchalla was "merely exercising her right to free speech under the US Constitution" and asked that the case against Hurchalla be dismissed, calling the lawsuit a Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation (SLAPP).

All four motions for dismissal were denied by three different judges, and a recent motion asking for a separate trial for Hurchalla also was denied for the third time, according to court records. ■

ments to examine Heard's computer.

The arbitrator's order found – in part because Petrick found new Hurchalla emails so easily – that the delay by all commissioners, not just Scott, in producing public records from their private email accounts "unjustifiable."

A copy-and-pasted version of Fielding's "Deep Rockpit" email was provided to Lake Point eight months after Lake Point's first public records request; however, the original email in its native format and none of the emails from other commissioners were provided

until after Lake Point added the public records violations to its complaint in February 2014.

The arbitrator's order noted that Scott blamed the county for her failure to turn over Hurchalla emails, because she did not receive the public records request. She explained that her executive aide received, acknowledged and responded to Lake Point's request without informing Scott, according to court records.

Googe also considered three mysterious emails sent from Heard to County Administrator Taryn Kryzda in December 2012 within seconds of each other with "water" in the subject line with questions to staff about Lake Point. The questions were nearly identical to an email from Hurchalla in September 2012; however, Heard insisted she was the author and sender, although "FW:" was in the subject line indicating the emails had been forwarded.

Heard told the arbitrator she could not explain why she hit the "forward" key, according to the arbitrator's order, and Lake Point was not yet been provided the originating email in its native format.

Googe also reviewed two emails allegedly sent by Hurchalla to Commissioner John Haddox that were not initially turned over to Lake Point; instead they were produced to the county by Hurchalla's private attorney in March 2014. The county included the Hurchalla/Haddox emails, dated December 2012, among other public records provided to Lake Point in May 2016.

According to court records, Haddox told Lake Point attorneys during his deposition in August 2016 that he did not remember either receiving or deleting the two Hurchalla emails.

"You've got them; I'm looking at them," Haddox said, according to court records, "so I must have received them." He also said in his deposition, he must have been the one to delete those emails, although he did not know the date, "because I'm the only one who has access to my personal computer."

Googe noted that Haddox had not been named in Lake Point's public records complaint; however, he cited the event as an example of commissioners' and the county's "pattern of violating" public records laws.

"Based upon the totality of the evidence, testimony and case law presented," Googe wrote in his order of Feb. 15, "I find that it is unfortunate that these claims have resulted in years of litigation and hundreds of thousands of dollars in attorney's fees and costs to both parties."

No further action is expected in the public records case beyond the county's settlement agreement with Lake Point, unless the State Attorney's Office determines that the violations warrant a criminal investigation. ■

– Barbara Clowdus

# Exceptional music lifts your spirits to the rafters



**Suzanne Briley**

*Hopscotch*

**H**obe sound is filled with musical talent, as well as its highly touted artistic talent. A recent example was the beautiful concert at Hobe Sound Community Presbyterian Church on Jan. 23, one in a music series offered in the church this season. We have more to look forward to!

The church itself, built in 1926, is a wonderful setting for a enchanted musi-

cal evening. Florida wild flowers, and Israel herbs painted by hand, decorate the ceiling. The sanctuary holds only 100 people; so come early for a seat!

Lorrianna Colozzo, vocalist, and Brandon Glick, church music director, organist and pianist, performed to a packed audience. The music soared as the melodies of Andrew Lloyd Webber, Rogers And Hammerstein and Puccini filled the ears and hearts of those of us that were fortunate to be there. A marvelous concert not to be forgotten with a well-deserved, long standing ovation.

Mr. Glick wants the concerts to be free of charge for families, students and members of the local community, offering quality music to all residents with a message of heart. A blessing!



**Brandon Glick**  
HSCPC Music Director



**Hobe Sound Community Presbyterian Church**

The next musical event at the Hobe Sound Community Presbyterian Church, 11933 SE Juno Crescent across from Zeus Park, is Friday, Feb. 17, at 7 p.m. with Dixieland & JAZZ in the Courtyard. Bring your lawn chairs and enjoy listening to "The Rowdy Roosters."

On Tuesday, March 7, at 7 p.m. a classical concert at the Presbyterian church featuring Brandon Glick, piano soloist, and Rowdy Carlton, classical guitarist, will play the works of Claude Bolling, jazz composer.

March 31 and April 1 will find Brandon Glick directing and playing in the great "Music Extravaganza" at the Hobe Sound Bible College as part of the concert series there. Imagine the sound of six pianos and 12 pianists in perform-

ance! An outstanding presentation by our local talent.

Mr. Glick, originally from Pennsylvania, has lived in our area for the past 10 years. He holds a degree in music, is a piano teacher, a collaborative pianist, the music director at the

Hobe Sound Community Presbyterian Church and the organist at Holy Redeemer Catholic Church in Palm City.

He also plays in various clubs and at private parties, such as house concerts, and is an accompanist for Lorianna and Terry Barber, tenor.

He is well loved as an accomplished musician and is a delightful person. We are blessed, indeed, for the opportunity he is giving us to escape into the world of music! He may be reached at [jblickpianist@gmail.com](mailto:jblickpianist@gmail.com). ■

*Suzanne Briley, who lives in Hobe Sound, is an artist, author, entrepreneur, environmentalist and world traveler. She may be contacted at [hopscotch@hscurrents.com](mailto:hopscotch@hscurrents.com).*

# Lecture series gives life to historical subjects

**T**he Apollo School Foundation 2017 Lecture Series is underway at the restored two-room schoolhouse in Hobe Sound with offerings this season that include presentations about Andrew Jackson, the Ashley Gang and a historical perspective on the life of Martin County waters.

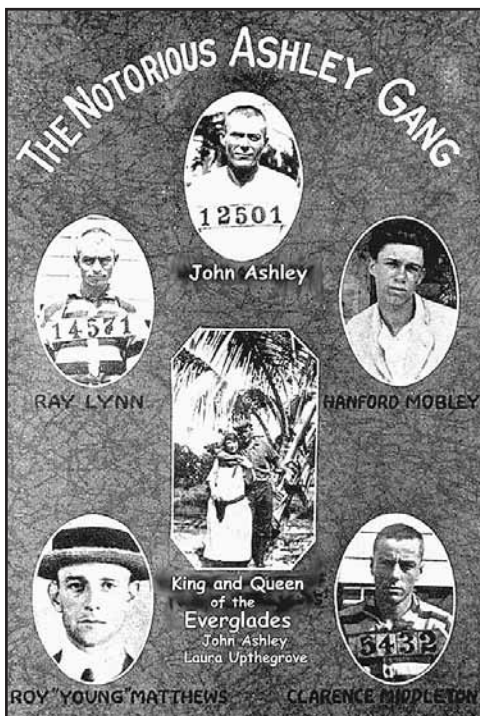
**Thursday, February 16 – Guy Bachmann**

*Andrew Jackson and the History of the Loxahatchee Battlefield*

Guy Bachmann, president of the Loxahatchee Battlefield Preservationists, will be in the character and costume of Andrew Jackson, when he speaks on the Loxahatchee battle. Bachmann, also an avocational archaeologist with Southeast Florida Archaeological Society, has worked on many digs over the years and offers a unique perspective.

**Thursday, March 16 – Alice and Greg Luckhardt**

*John Ashley and the Ashley Gang*  
John Ashley, a south Florida outlaw, bank robber, bootlegger and occasional pirate during the 1910s and 1920s, robbed the same Stuart bank twice, lived at one time in Gomez, and is buried in a small cemetery in south Stuart. The story of the gang and its leader will be shared via video and discussion by well-known local historians and Florida natives Alice



**The Hobe Sound Community Presbyterian Church on Juno Crescent in Hobe Sound.**

and Greg Luckhardt, who were named Martin County Historic Preservationists for 2013-14.

**Thursday, April 20, 2017 – Mark Perry**

*Growing up in and around Martin County waters*

Mark Perry has lived in Martin County for nearly 60 years, and for 38 of those years has been the executive director of the Florida Oceanographic Society. He also is vice chair and board member of the Rivers Coalition, and has testified before the U.S. Senate Committee

on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry. Perry grew up fishing, swimming and boating in local waters and will share his expertise and knowledge on the changes to local waterways by natural and man-made forces.

The presentations, which are subject to change without advance notice, will be from 7-8 p.m. at the Apollo School, 9141 S.E. Apollo Street, Hobe Sound, with doors opening at 6:30 p.m. Admission is \$10; however, since seating is limited, attendees are advised to purchase their tickets in advance at [www.apolloschool.org](http://www.apolloschool.org). ■



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**NOW!****Audubon's Top 12 Photos at the Elliott**

A special exhibit at the Elliott Museum features the Top-12 Award-Winning Photographs of the National Audubon Society as part of regular museum admission. The exhibit will show through March 22, daily from 10 am – 5 p.m. The Elliott is at 825 NE Ocean Blvd in Stuart.

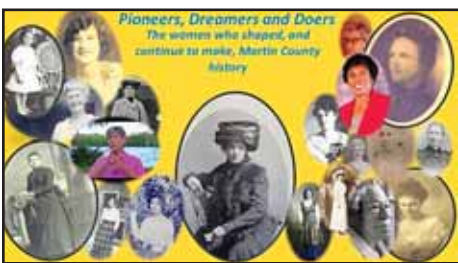
**NOW!****50 Greatest Photographs of National Geographic**

The Elliott Museum also hosts the traveling exhibition, "50 Greatest Photographs of National Geographic,"



showcasing some of National Geographic's most compelling photographs.

The exhibition through June 4 is included with regular admission to the Elliott Museum, open daily from 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

**Thursdays in March Pioneers, Dreamers, Doers**

A special series by the Martin County Library System, "Pioneers, Dreamers, Doers – The Women who Shaped and Continue to Make History in Martin County," will be each Thursday in March at the Blake Library, from 6 to 7 p.m. The 2017 series will focus on Women in Politics, with Jackie Williams as moderator. She will talk about Florida Kitching Speirs Rembert, the first woman to gain political office in Martin County, and most likely the first woman city clerk in Florida history. Joining Jackie to talk about their experiences as pioneering women of this generation are Joan Jefferson, activist and former mayor of Stuart, and Maggy Hurchalla, environmental activist and a former Martin County commissioner.

**Weekend, March 2-4****TrawlerFest on Hutchinson Island**

TrawlerFest, PassageMaker's stand-alone series of boat shows designed for cruising enthusiasts, is March 2-4, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day. General admission tickets are \$15 in advance, \$18 onsite at the Hutchinson Island Marriott Beach Resort & Marina, 555 NE Ocean Blvd, in Stuart.

**Weekend, March 3-5****Treasure Coast Marathon Music Fest & Race**

More than 1,500 runners are expected this year for the 26.2 mile course that begins and ends at Memorial Park in Stuart on Sunday, March 5. The race



highlights the Marathon Rock & Run Music Festival that begins Friday, March 3, at Terra Fermata at 6 p.m., 26 SE 6th Street, Stuart; Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Marriott Hutchinson Island Resort; and Saturday, March 4, at Terra Fermata at 6 pm. The music fest, organized by Ron Hart of Terra Fermata, will continue on Sunday, March 5, at 10 a.m. at Memorial Park; then again 4 p.m. to 10 p.m. at Terra Fermata. For a complete list of race activities and registration forms, go to [treasurecoastmarathon.com](http://treasurecoastmarathon.com). A community-wide benefit of the Marathon is the Run for Charity, which includes 12 Treasure Coast charities.

**Saturday, March 4****BookMania!**

The most prestigious literary event on the Treasure Coast will return for its 23rd year on Saturday, March 4, from 9 am to 3 pm at Jensen Beach High School, 2875 NW Goldenrod Road. Authors will participate in multiple panel discussions. The Library Foundation of Martin County received a \$10,500 grant from the Florida Division of Cultural Affairs to fund the young adult panel, a student workshop with author Paul Griffin, and copies of his book *Burning Blue* for students. For more information, go to [www.library.martin.fl.us](http://www.library.martin.fl.us) for BookMania, or call 772.288.5702.

**Saturday, March 4****Polo Classic to Benefit Molly's House**

Get your ticket for the Molly's House 2017 Polo Classic on Saturday, March 4, at [mollyshouse.org](http://mollyshouse.org), which are \$50 per carload or \$100 per person for the VIP experience! The annual fundraiser features international polo players, a dressage presentation, VIP party, a car show and the traditional halftime champagne divot stomp. All proceeds support the mission of Molly's House to keep families together by providing short-term, affordable accommodations for the families of hospitalized loved ones and outpatients in Martin County.

**Sunday, March 5****Music at the Mansion**

Martin County's monthly music series begins its family-friendly "Sunday Funday" at The Mansion at Tuckahoe on Sunday, March 5, from 4-7 pm. at the amphitheater in Indian RiverSide Park in Jensen Beach. Catch a live band, food & beverages, kids activities and more. Admission is FREE. Bring your lawn chairs or blanket. For info, go to the Music at the Mansion Facebook page.

**Indianatown Veterans Association****Annual Spaghetti Dinner**

March 13th, 2017

5-7 PM

\$7.00 ticket Dine In

\$5.00 Take Out

Indianatown Civic Center  
15675 SW Osceola St

**Mondays, March 6, March 20, March 27****The Environmental Lecture Series**

FREE and open to the public at 6:30 p.m. on Mondays, the Environmental Lecture Series will present Laura Engleby, chief of the Marine Mammal Branch of the NOAA Fisheries Southeast Region, on March 6 discussing dolphins and the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico; Beau Yeiser, biological scientist, on March 20, discussing the status and research of Florida's Smalltooth Sawfish; and Irene Arpayoglou, M.S., on March 27 discussing the Indian River Lagoon Aquatic Preserve. The popular lecture series, presented by the Tobacco Free Partnership of Martin County, will be at the Environmental Studies Center auditorium, 2900 NE Indian River Drive in Jensen Beach. For more information, visit [escmc.org](http://escmc.org) or call 772.334.4643.

**Thursday, March 9****Mr. StudFinder Charity Auction**

Among the items up for bid this year are a once-in-a-lifetime British Open Golf experience; a staycation at a local resort paired with a charter fishing boat cruise; salsa dancing lessons; becoming a firefighter or sheriff for a day; lunch and a round of golf with pro-golfer Chi Chi Rodriguez; private chef-prepared dinners and more at the Mr. StudFinder Charity Auction to benefit Habitat's 2017 Women Build Program on Thursday, March 9, at 6 p.m. at the Frances Langford Dockside Pavilion, 1707 NE Indian River Drive in Jensen Beach. Proceeds will help build a home for the McKnight Family in Carter Park at Indiantown. The philanthropic "studs" of the Treasure Coast, nominated by their peers and selected to present a valuable item or package for bid, include photographer Mitch Kloofain, Chef's Table owner and renowned chef Adam Fatigate, Dr. Brian Moriarty, Capt. Michael Murray from Matanza Charters, Realtor and dance instructor Eddie Arguelles, Treasured Lands Foundation Director Chuck Barrowclough, Harvest Table owner and well-respected local chef Jimmy Cunningham, Chi Chi Rodriguez, Martin County Commissioner Harold Jenkins, Stephen Leighton from the Martin County Sheriff's Department, and Conner Pecci from the Martin County Fire Department. Auctioneer Elliott Paul will serve as master of ceremonies. Among the silent auction items is a private airplane tour of Martin County. Tickets are \$50 per person and include admission to the auction, cocktail reception and heavy hors d'oeuvres. To purchase tickets, visit [Habitat-Martin.org](http://Habitat-Martin.org) or call 772-223-9940.

**Thursday, March 9****Riverbend Park Night Hike**

Usually closed after dark, this is an opportunity to explore Riverbend Park at Night with Palm Beach County Parks naturalist John Walsh. Venture out on the trail in search of nocturnal animals and other phenomenon of the night. Reservations are required and a \$5 donation will be collected. Carpools are available. For more information and reservations, contact the Hobe Sound Nature Center at 772.546.2067.

## Thursday, March 9 Luxury Sports Cars at the Elliott

The Elliott Museum, as part of its Curators and Cocktails series, will present "An American Sportsman from West Palm Beach: Briggs Cunningham and His Luxury Sports Cars" on Thursday, March 9, from 5:30-7:30 p.m. The lecture by Associate Car Curator John Giltinan, includes signature cocktail, wine, beer, sodas and hors d'oeuvres at \$30 per person. Elliott Museum, 825 N.E. Ocean Blvd. For reservations, call Amie Smith, 772.226.1961, or go to [ElliottMuseum.org](http://ElliottMuseum.org).

## Thursday, March 9 Cultural Conversations at Cultural Center

Fine jewelry expert Tracy Sherman will present "Famous Jewelry Collections at Auction and the Stories Behind Them, Including Jackie O and Liz Taylor," at the Court House Cultural Center, 80 SE Ocean Boulevard on Thursday, March 9, from 5:30-7 p.m. Sherman is a 35-year veteran of the jewelry industry. Adult beverages. Admission is \$15 per person; reservations required. Go to [MartinArts.org](http://MartinArts.org), or call 772-287-6676, ext. 4, or email [nturrell@martinarts.org](mailto:nturrell@martinarts.org).

## Friday, March 10 Nighttime Stargazing at National Wildlife Refuge

Following a brief classroom orientation, Kim Mohlenhoff will lead a group outside along the nature trail to look at the nighttime sky through telescopes on Friday, March 10, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Learn about wildlife at night and how artificial lighting impacts some plants and animals at night and how artificial lighting impacts some plant and animal species. If weather conditions are not conducive to viewing planets, stars, and constellations, the program will be limited to classroom activities only. Reservations are required to attend, there is no charge, and all ages are welcomed. Contact the nature center at 772.546.2067 or via the website, [www.hobesoundnaturecenter.com](http://www.hobesoundnaturecenter.com).

## Friday, March 10 Coffee with the Conductor at the Arts Council

Come have Coffee with the Conductor, featuring Atlantic Classical Orchestra conductor David Amado, on Friday, March 10, at 10 a.m. Amado will tell the story behind the music in a relaxed, comfortable setting. Free admission. Arts Council of Martin County is at 80 S.E. Ocean Blvd. Limited seating, so reserve at 772.287.6676.

## Sunday, March 12 Good Times Of Our Lives

Enjoy a Sunday afternoon of good music by the Stuart Community Band performing "Good Times of Our Lives" at the Kane Center at 2 p.m. To hear a recording, or for more info, go to [stuartcommunityconcertband.org](http://stuartcommunityconcertband.org).



## Sunday, March 12 St. Patrick's Day Parade in Jensen Beach

Come to historic, downtown Jensen Beach on Sunday, March 12, for the best-ever, most-fun, most-hilarious St. Patrick's Day Parade and Celebration in the county beginning at 3 p.m. You'll be posting selfies all over social media having a green-colored blast! A FREE Jensen Beach Chamber of Commerce event.

## March 14 Sunset Concerts at the Gallery

With support from Marie Jureit-Beamish, sunset concerts at the gallery features Martin County's most talented musicians in a unique and intimate setting that combines the fine arts and performing arts in one space. The Stuart School of Music will perform a free concert at the gallery at 5:30 p.m. at the Court House Cultural Center, 80 SE Ocean Boulevard in Stuart.

## Friday, March 17 Shamrock Fest at Gazebo Park

The 4th Annual Shamrock Fest will be Friday, March 17, in Gazebo Park on Ocean Blvd. in Stuart from 4-10 p.m. featuring live Irish music, Irish step dancers, bagpipers, cold green beer, an Irish whiskey bar and Irish fare by chef Holly Reith Pratt. The best-dressed will earn the title of King and Queen of the Green, and will take home a \$100 cash prize from Orange Theory Fitness in Jensen Beach. Admission is \$6 in advance and \$10 at the door. Tickets can be purchased at [KaleidoMinds.com](http://KaleidoMinds.com). For more information, visit [KaleidoMinds.com](http://KaleidoMinds.com) or call 772.284.3007.

## Saturday, March 18 Gourmet Saturdays in Hobe Sound

An assortment of gourmet food trucks offering uncommon dishes – from Argentinian grill to irresistible desserts – will gather in historic downtown Hobe Sound from 4:30 to 7 p.m. on Saturday, March 18. Pets are welcome. Visit boutiques, Hobe Sound Art Gallery, jewelry stores and other businesses for special sales, drawings and more. Begin at Taste Casual Dining for cocktails & entertainment. Hobe Sound Veterinarian Clinic will have surprises for furry friends. For GPS Directions, use Juno Shoe Girls' address, 11766 SE Dixie Highway. For info, call 772.546.4724.

## Saturday, March 18 Family Fun Day

Grab the entire family and head to Martin County's own public golf course Saturday, March 18, for a day of fun from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. for all ages promoting youth golf. Everyone is welcome for golf games, lessons, golf inflatables, track man demo, putting contest, food vendors, face painting, a DJ, and much more. No golf experience required, and this event is FREE to the public at the Martin County Golf Course at 2000 SE St Lucie Blvd, Stuart. For more info, call 772.320.4653.

## Saturday, March 18 The World's Greatest Flea Market

The Rio Civic Club will sponsor its "world famous" Indoor Flea Market and Bake Sale between 8 a.m. and noon on March 18 at the Rio Civic Center, 1255 NE Dixie Highway, in historic Rio. You will find jewelry, antiques, collectibles, household items, baby clothes and more. Breakfast and lunch, as well as homemade baked goods, will be available. For information or to reserve a table (\$15) to sell your own items, call 772.232.2182. Proceeds support area student scholarships and community projects.

## Saturday, March 18 Lakeside Ranch STA Birding & Photo Tour

Take a guided tour of the 2,600-acre Lakeside Ranch Storm Water Treatment Area (STA) on Saturday, March 18, from 7-11 a.m. to see dozens of species of birds in an environment unique to this area. Managed by the South Florida Water Management District, public access is managed by Audubon of Martin County. For directions and more info, go to [audubonmartin.org](http://audubonmartin.org) or call 772.288.2637.

## Saturday, March 25 Storybook Festival returns to Stuart

In Celebration of Children's Week, the Early Learning Coalition of Martin, Okeechobee and Indian River Counties presents the Storybook Forest Festival, a free event for the family, on Saturday, March 25, from 10 am to 1 pm at Flagler Park in Stuart. Activities include crafts, games, entertainment, give-aways, and meet and greet "Pete the Cat."

## Tuesday, March 28 Blue Lives Matter

City of Stuart Police Chief David Dyess is the guest speaker at the March 28 meeting of the Republican Club of Martin County. The public is invited to hear Chief Dyess talk about "Blue Lives Matter" and the challenges facing law enforcement today upstairs at the Twisted Tuna in Port Salerno. The club's business meeting starts at 5:30, followed by the social and guest speaker at 6 p.m. Free admission, free valet parking.



## Saturday, April 1 Touch-a-Truck Day in Martin County

Touch-a-Truck gives kids of all ages an opportunity to climb on, learn about and discover their favorite big trucks and vehicles including police cars, cement trucks, tow trucks and fire-trucks on Saturday, April 1, from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Admission is \$5 to benefit the Early Learning Coalition of Indian River, Martin and Okeechobee counties and its programs. Trucks currently confirmed to be on site include stripe hogs from Waterblasting Technologies; a bulldozer and front end loader from Mancils; a fire truck and police car; the Truly Nolan mouse car; a dump truck and low boy from Ranger Construction; military vehicles; a garbage truck from Waste management; a tug and a fuel truck from Stuart Jet Center; and more! Touch-a-Truck will be at the Martin County Fairgrounds, Dixie Highway, Stuart. Food trucks also will be there, of course! For more info, call 772.631.6611 or [lisa@teamholland.info](mailto:lisa@teamholland.info).

