

COUNCIL UPDATE JANUARY 2016...from Jeff Hmara's Point of View

COMMUNITY MEETING HOSTED BY RACE TRAC AND WANTMAN GROUP

Community Meeting, will be held on Monday, January 4, 2016, 7-9pm, at RPB Cultural Center to provide an opportunity for members of the public to discuss the proposed Race Trac Convenience Store and Gas Station directly with Race Trac officials...this will be between Race Trac and interested members of the public, it is not a Village run meeting...the next Council Meeting on this matter will be another Special Meeting on January 14, 2016...the only agenda item will be the Council decision whether to approve, approve with conditions or deny the Race Trac application.

COUNTY INFRASTRUCTURE BACKLOG (Proposed County Sales Tax Increase)

At the PBC League of Cities Meeting, Wednesday, last week, County Administrator, Verdenia Baker updated the Board of Directors on the County's Infrastructure Backlog...she said the most recent estimates show that the County's cost of backlogged maintenance of roads, bridges, parks, buildings, etc. is between \$650M-\$750M...to get a more accurate estimate, the County is preparing a comprehensive list of all projects (specific roads, bridges, parks, and other infrastructure)...then the Board of County Commissioners will have to decide whether to put a referendum item on the November 2016 ballot to fund the backlogged infrastructure work as a bond, a property tax increase or sales tax increase...at present, the sales tax increase seems the most likely...whether the increase will be ½% or 1% will depend on the total cost of the projects on the comprehensive list...

Ms. Baker said that the use of the additional sales tax revenue would be limited to the specific infrastructure maintenance projects on the comprehensive list (no new capital projects) and the actual use of these funds would be monitored by an Oversight Committee to ensure they are spent only for those projects...the PBC School District and PBC Cultural Council may be part of this, since they have infrastructure backlogs, as well.. but, that has not been determined...if there is a sales tax increase, it will be for a limited, although fairly long, period of 10 years...at the end of that time the Sales Tax would return to the current 6%...

At this point, it appears that the Fire-Rescue proposal to change the way that service is paid for by relying on a Sales Tax Increase would probably not be part of the County's proposal, since it would require a permanent Sales Tax Increase, not one that would have a "sunset", as the others being considered...

Ms. Baker also said that cities would receive a portion of the revenue for their infrastructure needs...however, she mentioned that although the cities share would normally be 40% of the increase, she said a reduction in the municipalities % might be requested by the County... the comprehensive list of projects and costs was due to the

County Staff in December...with that information, the Board of County Commissioners will have to decide in January or February, whether a proposed Sales Tax Increase should be put on the ballot in November...the League of Cities Board of Directors supported the use of a Sales Tax Increase to fund the infrastructure maintenance...of course, most said they did not like the reduction of the municipal share % and they also indicated that they wanted to see the comprehensive list of projects, ASAP.

GL HOMES REQUESTS TO BUILD 4000 HOMES 2 MILES WEST OF ACREAGE

At December's Western Communities Council Meeting, 3 representatives from GL Homes presented an overview of their revised development plan (only slightly changed from initial)...GL Homes owns 4900 acres of former agricultural land about 2 miles west of the Acreage which is currently zoned for about 400 homes...GL reps answered questions from County Commissioner Melissa McKinley, who attended, and the other WCC members...the initial questions addressed a variety of infrastructure impacts (schools, fire, police), but our focus was primarily on traffic impacts ---I gave a brief summary of our concerns about the traffic problems we and our neighbors will experience with the increased density, which, of course, was the basis for our VRPB Council Resolution opposing GL's requested increase...

Our Village Manager did a really good job of boiling it down to a few simple facts: *MORE HOMES MEAN MORE PEOPLE, AND MORE PEOPLE MEAN MORE CARS ON AN ALREADY FAILING ROAD NETWORK, WITH NO VIABLE SOLUTIONS IDENTIFIED...he suggested that GL consider reducing the density requested to maybe 1000 or 2000 vs. the 4000 homes in their current application...that was dismissed quickly by GL reps...although, GL Homes did say they were willing to accept a set of phased conditions of approval that would require them to make the specific road improvements for which they are determined to be directly responsible and they said they would "sweeten the pot" with an additional \$5M...*

Even with those specific road improvements, the road network will still be overloaded and become a regular traffic nightmare for commuters...from my point of view, the WCC Meeting turned out to be another information briefing on GL Homes request combined with a "dose of reality" from our County Commissioner about likely legislation from Tallahassee which could make us worse off if we actively oppose the GL request...

At a December 10, 2015, *County Commissioner's Town Hall Meeting* in Loxahatchee Groves, it was announced that the County Staff has been directed to perform a *Comprehensive Traffic Study* of the combined traffic impacts of all proposed and approved developments here in the Western Communities Area, including: Highland Dunes, Minto West (Westlake), GL Homes, Iota Property, Avenir...this should provide a more complete picture of the combined traffic impacts and hopefully provide options to reduce the adverse traffic impact...this *Comprehensive Traffic Study* is the best news we've had in a while; at

least, we will see more than a piecemeal, first-come picture of what the collective impacts on our roads will be...with this information, the Board of County Commissioners will have a better understanding of what each development's impact will mean when taken together... we will have several significant opportunities to impact on the final decisions by County Commissioners on this matter: one is the County Planning Commission Meeting on Friday, January 2016, at the Vista Center and the other is the BCC Meeting on Tuesday, February 2016, downtown...I have asked to represent the Council and to present the VRPB Council's Resolution at both meetings, along with the Village Manager.

RPB EDUCATION ADVISORY BOARD MEETING SHOWCASES RPB ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

RPB Elementary School Principal, staff and about 30 students showed why they think they work and go to school at the "happiest place on earth"...their singing and dancing demonstrated the accomplishments of the new Spanish Club, which is just one of the new programs at RPB Elementary, this year...RPB Elementary also began a SECME program this year which means that all RPB Schools now have SECME or STEM programs, providing continuity of instruction from K-12 in this area...RPB Students no longer have to leave RPB Schools to get a complete STEM education.

Dr. Jackie Rodgers, Dean of Health Sciences at PBSC updated us on the new Lox Groves Campus, slated for operations in late Fall 2016, with classes to start soon after opening...she talked about how HS students who are dual enrolled (enrolled in PBSC while still in HS) can complete their AA Degrees free if they meet certain academic and other requirements...she also announced that she was just selected to become the first Director of the Lox Groves Campus, when it opens, next year...

Dr. Frank Rodriguez provided the "simulated school grades" for RPB schools...the final grades will be out soon, pending final reviews...grades based on last year's performance were: RPB HS—Grade B; Crestwood MS—Grade B (0.1pt from A); RPB El—Grade A; Cypress Trails—Grade B; HL Johnson—Grade A...final grades should be released early 2016.

Principal Jesus Armas reported that progress has been made toward establishing a JROTC Program at RPBHS...Dept. of Navy will consider the school for an interim version of JROTC, in Jan/Feb 2016.

Ms. Marcia Andrews reported that with the recent changes to the No Child Left Behind law, which resulted in so much additional testing in our schools, the determination of how much and what kind of testing will be done during the school year is up to the State to decide—she suggested we do what we can do make sure that the FL Legislature and the State Board of Education focuses on "teaching and learning" not critical rating as the primary objective.

REGIONAL PLANNING MEETING ADDRESSED RPB NEWLY ANNEXED PROPERTY AND LAND USE CHANGE

The December 18, 2015 Agenda for the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council Meeting included the approval of TCRPC Staff Report on 3 Comprehensive Plan Amendments submitted by VRPB for the property recently annexed south of Southern Blvd. across the C-51 Canal; they were passed without comment by Council...a substantial discussion took place about the future land use designation for a 37 acre parcel of the PBC Ag Reserve from agriculture & commercial to residential and commercial...there were two no”” votes, but the amendment passed...staff also provided an update on All Aboard Florida project--- current efforts to acquire the needed money to complete the project through a bond issue is not going well; alternative funding approaches are being considered.

PBC LEAGUE OF CITIES ANNUAL LEGISLATIVE DELEGATION ROUNDTABLE,

On December 16, 2015, the PBC LoC held its annual Legislative Roundtable at FAU Campus...the majority of the PBC Legislative Delegation participated in the League’s unique version of Q&A with LoC members...it’s like “speed dating”, where LoC members remain at their tables while individual State Senators and Representatives rotate on signal from table to table...this gives a better opportunity to talk in a nearly one-on-one setting...biggest topic was the Governor’s proposed \$1B tax cut...Republicans supported, Democrats said there were better uses than cutting business taxes, such as increasing funding to education...some talk about “open carry’ and “carry on campus” legislation...a lot of the discussion at my table focused on infrastructure and unfunded mandates...I brought up development in our area and the inadequacy of the road network to handle the additional traffic...I talked about Senate Bill 1244 and companion House Bill that was considered but not passed last year...these bills would essentially override PBC Comprehensive Plan process and BCC authority to deny GL Homes request to increase the number of homes permitted...some notes were taken and some follow-up action indicated...business growth, enterprise zones and other forms of economic development was a clear priority for the Republican members...it was suggested that an ROI needs to be demonstrated for major infrastructure work...Sen. Joe Abruso followed up with a meeting, December 21, where copies of the 2015 Senate and House Bills were provided...he promised to check into the current status of both.

“COMPLETE STREETS” TRANSPORTATION CONCEPT SHIFTS PRIORITY FROM MOVING CARS FASTER TO ENCOURAGING USE OF ALL TYPES OF TRANSPORTATION TO MOVE PEOPLE MOST EFFICIENTLY

Seminar was conducted downtown at WPB City Hall, on December 8th...good information on best practices for utilization of transportation Right-of-Way in cities...streets designed to create transportation environments that invite walking and biking as alternatives to riding in our cars...interesting concepts, but cultural changes are hard...mindsets change

reluctantly...VRPB has many of the features the CS Seminar suggested, but we can always improve...

HAPPY HOLIDAYS WISHES TO YOU AND YOUR FAMILY!

Jeff