

March 4, 2008 GPICA General Meeting Minutes

President Hendrickson opened the meeting at 7:08 pm. The Pledge of Allegiance was given. President Hendrickson then asked whether there were any additions or corrections. Hearing none, she asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the February general meeting which had been placed at the tables. Motion made, seconded and approved unanimously.

Bill Mantis gave the Treasurer's report (attached). Motion made and seconded, approved unanimously.

Brian Griffin then introduced the speakers. The first speaker was attorney Kami Corbett from Treeco. She passed out site plans and briefly explained the proposal for farm worker housing, announcing that it was scaled back to 64 units at this time and that they were in the submittal stage of the process and that, once the application was accepted, a hearing would be scheduled for the special exception. After her presentation, she asked for questions.

The first question was about the site plan she had passed out and a reference to "future development" on that plan. In her answer she stated that "we're not looking for approval for that second phase now....". This elicited comment from many in the audience repeating the word "now?" apparently believing that that a second phase would follow. President Hendrickson asked the audience to be quiet and speak one at a time when called on. Corbett stated that they limited the application to what the market was for tenants now and that they would have to go through the process again if a second phase was pursued.

A question was then asked why the heavy line boundary on the site plan was drawn well to the south of the buildings. Corbett answered that the county (the Director of Community Development) had wanted that drawn that way because of the wetland area (presumably Willow Lake).

Another questioner brought up the fact that the same developer had built a farm worker housing complex in Bonita Springs seven or eight years ago, that the first phase had been 80 to 100 units, and that, on February 4, 2004, at a Bonita Springs City Council Meeting, the developer requested approval for 50 additional units for "affordable housing" and then, as the next agenda item, the developer asked that the requirement that tenants be farm workers in the first phase be reduced to forty units, only about a third of the entire complex. Corbett claimed that this could not happen on Pine Island because of the Lee Plan.

Another questioner inquired about the need for housing for farm workers, asking where they lived now. Comments from the audience pointed out the fact that much of Pink Citrus was empty and that there did not seem to be any shortage of housing for farm workers on Pine Island. Corbett claimed that a market study had been done purporting to show a need.

Another questioner wondered how many individuals would be occupying this complex. Corbett claimed there would be less than 300 people and that a traffic study had been done.

Several members of the audience seemed to debate the issue rather than ask questions. President Hendrickson again reminded people to be respectful and let Corbett answer questions.

A questioner asked how many parking places were provided in the plan. Corbett stated the number was based on the county requirement.

Another questioner wondered why the "market survey" stated that Pink Citrus was full when the owners claim they have a large vacancy rate. Another stated that Pink Citrus stated they were 50% empty. This person questioned how

Treeco could initially claim in their first application that there was a need for their project “due to the pending closure of Pink Citrus” and then simply remove that reference in the revised application.

Brian Griffin stated that at a meeting the previous week of the Lee memorial Hospital advisory board on which he serves, that they announced their admissions were down 9.9% from the previous year and that, of that amount, 90% of that was Spanish speaking clients because many had moved to Louisiana and Alabama to work on hurricane rebuilding projects. Corbett commented that the project would not be limited to Spanish speaking residents.

More questions followed about how many people might occupy each bedroom. Corbett stated that there was no certain way of answering that.

Corbett summarized that the purpose of the meeting was informational only and that specific questions would be answered by email if people chose to send her questions.

President Hendrickson then thanked Corbett and then asked for a show of hands of those in favor, opposed and undecided about the proposed project. The counts were: 3 in favor, 6 undecided and 53 opposed to the project.

After a short break, Brian Griffin announced the winner of the 50-50 drawing. Mark Strom was the winner.

The next speakers, Richard Anderson and Bill Cox of the Little Pine Island Mitigation Bank then explained the mission of the mitigation bank and how successful it has been in removing invasives and restoring the wetland for native plants and wildlife. They showed photographs of many of the birds which have returned to Little Pine Island in recent years. They explained that a trust fund of over one and a half million dollars will be left after they are through with the project, the interest of which will be used to continue maintenance of Little Pine Island. Recovery to natural state is helped by sunlight and water.

After their presentation President Hendrickson and the audience thanked them warmly.

Phil Buchanan then made a couple of announcements. First, the lawsuit against the Pine Island Plan has been dismissed and will be signed soon. Ed Dean filed a Bert Harris claim as well and that is expected to eventually go to trial.

Phil announced that a huge development toward the south end of Pine Island which had been proposed back in the 1984. Only one building was ever actually built and that Lee County ordinances state that development orders must proceed in good faith. The county has now decided that the development order has actually expired due to lack of progress in good faith. There will now be a hearing to determine whether in fact they will have to begin the development order application from the beginning.

Dave Lukasek announced the addition of a new forum to the web site and invited everyone to visit the forum and to sign up in order to post to it. It can be used to discuss various issues on the island.

He also brought up the quirk in the Lee County Land Development Code which allows weekly rentals in Single Family Residential zoning districts and asked the membership to consider whether we want to address this issue.

Bill Mantis announced that the speaker for April will be Senior Planner Tony Palermo of Lee County.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:17 pm.

Submitted by Dave Lukasek, Secretary