

August 13, 2008

## Economic Development

- Primary interest is jobs. He needs land for jobs and is focused on jobs that pay above average wage jobs in Charlotte County. Goal is to create 10,000 jobs in ten years (1,000 per year). Working on putting the tools in place to achieve the goal. The over all goal is to create a diverse economy in Charlotte County and make the County immune from the economic cycles. Concentrate on knowledge based jobs and manufacturing jobs. Recognizes that warehouse distribution jobs pay above the retail and tourist jobs in Charlotte County, they are not his pursuit.
- Not too familiar with the US 17 corridor. Impression of the area was similar to the business owners interviewed, saying it looks bad. Interested in the rail line that passes through the area. Parcels on rail are very important. It is recognized that many of the parcels along the rail are small.
- The County, through the Economic Development Department, is working with the developer of the 19.76± acre site located north of US 17 at I-75, south of Riverside Drive, and west of Regent Road (Peter Reppucci site), which was approved for PD zoning to allow for a mixed commercial development including a railroad siding and creating a truck rail facility. Foresees that trucks from the Walmart distribution center in Desoto County will travel to the truck facility and load their trailers there for distribution. Foresees this is a way that Publix will return to develop the site they own in ECAP.
- In quest to create jobs, he needs sites that are properly zoned allowing development to start in three months versus 18 months if a plan amendment or rezoning is required.
- Noted that the IDA is taking over much of the economic development function. The IDA can create incentives that can compete with Desoto County's Enterprise Zone. The IDA will be able to give away land for the tax base or provide incentives on the back end and have the ability to partner with developers to get costs down to \$1 per foot. This will make the County more competitive. The IDA will better allow the County to partner with private developers.
- Interested in the old golf course on the east side of US 17 just north of I-75. Would like to see a high tech park and supporting retail on the site.
- Sees a university as a necessary part of the economic development package in a community, but does not believe it is essential. Questions if FSGU is the correct university for Charlotte County or if the location in the US 17 corridor is the correct location.
- Likes the Hudson site for industrial use versus the university. The site is as good as ECAP. Believes an air cargo airport is important as an economic driver in the region and potentially the Hudson site could provide the site, although an air cargo airport will need about 4,000 acres. Apparently the air cargo airports on the east coast are overburdened. Not averse to seeing it developed across the County line in both Charlotte and Desoto Counties.

June 11, 2008

Charlotte County Environmental and Extension Services

- County has grant to complete Habitat Conservation Plan for scrub jay, will need to buy additional land in County. HCP will identify lands to purchase to implement. US 17 area is likely potential location.
- Suggested talking to Dr. Bill Wilcox, biology professor and Edison College regarding landowners to talk to in the area.
- George Saffron, Jim Fox, Paige Kregal part of Praire Creek Estates HOA are people to talk to.

## Environmental Groups

- Concerned that US 17 study will lead to expanding development opportunities in the US 17 area and this will drain development from the Port Charlotte area of the USA (encourages sprawl).
- Way things stand now should encourage more intense development west of US 17. No compelling reason to allow more intense development east of US 17. Does not see existence of four lane highway or extension of utilities as a reason to consider moving USA.
- Would like comprehensive and thorough review of natural resources in study area to serve as base before any consideration of change in USA or expanded development opportunities. Need to bring natural resource data together. Noted presence of scrub jay in area.
- Concerned that this area is a prime corridor for panthers moving north. Wants to be sure that corridors are maintained to the Fishing Creek. Particular concern that they be wide enough. Suggests preservation of 30% of vegetation. This percentage helps maintain a base of small animals, which then provides food for larger animals. Offered to provide information regarding panthers in the area.
- All were interested in type of development that may occur in corridor and where USA will be altered or expanded. Generally, not opposed to adjustments to USA.
- Concerned about low impact development standards. Concern comes about from discussion with Sarasota County staff, is that LID minimizes open space, which is in conflict with the need to consider sufficient open space to maintain wildlife corridors. Wants to see open space and habitat area allotted in addition to LID.
- Suggested need to restore tributaries to Peace River. Agrees a narrow area east of US 17 could be USA (does not define narrow).
- Reported State will be mandating new storm water management standards in July 2009.
- Recommended talking to community groups around Washington Loop and Environmentally Sensitive Lands Committee (ESLOC).
- Advocates that we should plan for what we want rather than have the obsessive focus on density. Need to focus on the vision. Need political leadership to institute the vision.
- Need to throw away or disregard the plat and start over.
- Need significant chunks of raw land (15,000 to 20,000 acres) to have modern residential development, although he is not sure how to get there. Large land areas will allow for creation of communities. Also makes it easier to plan to support wildlife.
- Need infrastructure (expanded sewer and water), transportation to give better control. People will hook-up once it is available, cheaper than maintenance and repair of septic systems.
- Recommends creation of smaller localized fill areas (5 acres) reducing traffic that hauls fill along the local traffic network and reduces haul time (making it less expensive).

August 13, 2008

US 17 business owners.

- They all agreed that the area needs a clean-up. They noted that commercial properties in the Cleveland area are blighted due to code violations, lack of nice landscaping, parking all over lots, unloading of trucks on streets. Must drive through the commercial areas to get to the residential areas and this makes a bad impression and therefore people will not want to live there.
- They felt that Charlotte County code compliance is not enforcing regulations or is enforcing them primarily on residential properties when the bigger problem is commercial properties. They suggested the County should get the commercial properties to clean-up first than the residential properties. We pointed out that code enforcement is complaint driven. Without a complaint, code enforcement will not investigate. The business owners do not agree that this is appropriate, particularly now that the County is less busy. Similarly we pointed out that many of the uses without proper landscaping occurred before the passage of landscape and buffer codes and are grandfathered. Areas of particular concern cited by the business owners were the recycling yard and a truck yard just before Washington Loop and the Thai restaurant.
- They suggested incentives to get business owners to comply. Did recognize that it may be an educational issue to get the owners to recognize that a nice appearance in the area and of individual properties will improve property values and this is how to sell upkeep and improvements to property owners in the area. Suggested creating a committee or coalition of property owners in the area as a mechanism to make complaints and coordinate complaints to Charlotte County code compliance.
- Speed of traffic and lack of turn lanes was identified as a problem along US 17. Trucks move fast on US 17. The concern is that drivers of cars are afraid to slow down to turn if they are being followed by a fast moving truck. This is a safety problem and not good for businesses as cars will not stop due to fast moving trucks behind them. They suggested that the speed limit from Bermont to Peace River Seafood (where we had lunch) be reduced to 35 to 40 mph. Slower speed will benefit safety and commercial businesses.
- They noted that the County is out mowing a lot along US 17. They suggested improving the landscaping using xeriscape techniques to eliminate the need for constant mowing while making the area more attractive.
- They reported that prior to Hurricane Charley, there were signs in the area identifying the residential neighborhoods. They think it is hard to find the neighborhoods so signs would be helpful.
- All agreed they would like to see a campus of FSGU in the area. They see it as a way to spur commercial development and even residential development. Nova U. in Davie was cited as an example of success worth copying.
- There was discussion of the need to landscape the highway ala Naples to support a nice commercial environment. They agreed, however, the area through

architecture and other design elements, should maintain an old Florida feel and character versus the Naples look.

- It was recognized there is a need for utilities to serve the area. Lack of utilities has made the real estate market softer in the US 17 area, even during the boom. Utilities (central sewer and water) would support the small lots and get over the hassles from the Health Department regarding septics. It was noted that septic limit the type of commercial tenants that can be accepted. Need lots of land for drainage, which limits building square footage. Also, some said there are water quality issues from use of wells. It was mentioned that there is a ten inch force main through Cleveland and the City of Punta Gorda has capacity. Apparently there is a need for a lift station to service the area.
- They suggested that the Southwest Florida Water Management District site located on the west side of US 17 be available for public use.
- They suggested that properties fronting on US 17 be a gateway to the corridor. Because of traffic, uses should primarily be non-residential. Concern was noted that County has denied some commercial rezonings from residential along US 17.

June 20, 2008

Charlotte County Public Schools

- East Elementary School, 27050 Fairway Drive, is furthest east school in County. All others are west of I-75.
- Do not expect development east of US 17 for at least four to six years. School Board has no sites east of US 17, expects it would be helpful to talk to developers early.
- If FGC locates in area would definitely be interested in locating public school campus adjacent. This would provide opportunity for training of teachers at FGC and provide convenient location for student teachers programs at public school.

June 29, 2008

### Charlotte County Utilities

- Provided brief history of Sun River utilities (now N. Ft. Myers River Utilities). Owner, Vin Maltese, wanted to develop land on Hunter Creek, bought an RV park that included a water and sewer treatment plant.
- Maltese was granted an initial expansion to include additional land near RV park, all on west side of US 17. CCU did not oppose.
- Maltese has applied for second expansion. Initially, the second expansion included six sections east of US 17 and a small area fronting on the west side of US 17. The second expansion has been enlarged to include another entire section and portions of five others (see map), and into Desoto County. As part of the expansion they propose moving the plant to the east of US 17. The existing site is too small and too close to the river. They have letters from property owners saying they would hook up if infrastructure is available. Expansion area is also of interest to Punta Gorda and Desoto County.
- CCU opposes the second expansion.
- CCU noted the ability of the area to be served by water through the Peace River water authority. CCU is doing an interconnect with Punta Gorda in Cleveland or could have Peace River do a line down from the Wal-Mart distribution center.
- Punta Gorda has capacity to provide sewage treatment and could run lines up from Bermont Road. Property owners would pay to hook up. CCU needs commitments (i.e. cash) prior to extension.
- Need for good jobs and worker housing in the area.

June 20, 2008

City of Punta Gorda

- Provided map showing City of Punta Gorda utility service area.
- To upgrade the line that extends out US 17 requires significant dollars as it is a main trunk line.
- City has developed overlay providing design standards; I believe largely landscaping and streetscape improvements. Wants Charlotte County to apply along arterials and collectors, including US 17, which enter City ensuring consistency in the event of future annexation.
- They prefer not to see residential development proximate to US 17, does not make sense socially. Advocate mixed use and industrial uses.
- Noted Charlotte County owns island near US 17 crossing of Shell Creek.

July 21, 2008

Desoto County

- Desoto County has a State Enterprise Zone along the entire length of US 17. It extends ½ mile from the right-of-way of US 17.
- They plan to redo the Enterprise Zone, with the objective of concentrating it more to create employment hubs rather than the strip. Hubs should allow for more substantial development. The County has about 1,200 acres of industrial lands and they want to better match the Enterprise Zone to the industrial acreage.
- It is understood that under the regulations the Enterprise Zone must be contiguous with just three non-contiguous areas. They went with the linear shape to maximize the area to include in the Enterprise Zone.
- As a result of the Enterprise Zone, more families have moved to the County. Many have located near the Walmart distribution center on the Charlotte County line.

June 29, 2008

Eco-voice and Peace River Audubon Society

- Noted that the Babcock settlement included \$200,000 for wildlife corridor studies ensuring connections with the Peace River. Suggests TDUs or rural land swaps to allow property owners to get value to support creation of wildlife corridors.
- Shell Creek area of US 17 needs complete preservation, it is a paradise.
- Thought that defunct Seaboard rail bed passes through area connecting to Babcock webb wildlife, now in hands of Zemel family.
- Only real wildlife crossing of US 17 is at I 75 and US 17 interchange. There is a need for logical places for other crossings.
- Prefers building up and providing greenbelts to provide corridors versus horizontal development across the land.
- Recommends talking to Clarke Keller (35380 Washington Loop Rd., 941-697-6269) and Gregg Klowdon (Peace River Audubon Society, PO Box 510760, 941-613-6753).

July 2, 2008

## FDOT

- Reverse frontage and other connections that minimize traffic on US 17, would benefit County. Water is an obstacle, may need to expand US 17 bridge over river.
- FDOT's ultimate goal is to purchase line from CSX for future multi-modal. FDOT has not done a study regarding what to do but think of it as a diamond in the rough and should look at the options.
- Widening of US 17 north of Charlotte County has been reinstated to Collins (four or five miles).
- US 17 through the County is classified as part of the Strategic Intermodal System (SIS), which are the State routes in Florida that move freight or connect to larger systems such as ports and airports, or hurricane evacuation and such.
- FDOT lets the locals determine LOS on all other State facilities except those designated SIS. Due to the SIS classification, the LOS of US 17 from the north loop of Washington Loop is B and south the LOS is C. The State's LOS supersedes local LOS. As a result of the decennial census in 2010, FDOT may reevaluate the LOS.
- Punta Gorda has sent FDOT a letter requesting greater jurisdictional authority over US 17 north of the City to the I-75 interchange.
- It was clarified that the West Central Florida Outer Beltway (identified by the MPO) is no longer a priority and there is no money for it. Even if the money reappears, it will take years for anything to happen.

August 25, 2008

Ridge Harbor HOA Board:

- Raised drainage issues/concerns for the community
- wanted that any future development will not create any issues for the community
- They have a mix of feeling for changes in that area. Younger people want changes and older people do not want any change.
- They have a mix of feeling regarding the extension of water and sanitary lines along US 17. Some people do not want it because of money factor.
- They would like to see more restaurants, gas stations, grocery stores, truck stops and convenience stores along US 17.
- They also want to see some recreational opportunities.
- Wanted to have employment centers
- Wanted to attract more people into this area
- Saw a variety of animals in their area
- Wanted to preserve trees
- The HOA owns a boat ramp
- Concerned about mining and water quality

Peace River Shores HOA Board:

- More commercial opportunities but they don't want to have to hook up their homes to utilities because of the cost
- Would like more convenience services such as gas stations, pizza places, mom and pop stores
- They like how traffic flows on US 17 except for the Wal Mart trucks, which can be a nuisance
- Mixed feelings were expressed about the possibility of an FGCU satellite campus. Most liked the services that would sprout up to service it, but some expressed concern about security and change.
- They like the quiet, country feel of their neighborhood and don't want to see that changed
- Establish design standards for landscaping on commercial premises. Expressed dissatisfaction with the look of the Wal Mart distribution center
- Would like designed bike lands and sidewalks
- Would like to see the tax relief that economic growth would bring
- Raised drainage issues.

June 11, 2008

MPO

- Identified West Central FL Outer Beltway Study prepared by FDOT (districts 1 and 7). Road would be an I-75 bypass connecting Charlotte County to Hernando County. No specific alignment, but factors narrow down potential alignment to follow US 17 in Charlotte County. Would be limited access highway. Would serve as right-of-way for other lines including gas transmission lines, fiber optic. Talk to Ming Y Gao (813-975-6454) and Ben Walker (863-519-2300).
- I-75 will be six lanes in Charlotte County and I-75 and US 17 interchange will be changed.
- Thinks rail line has more potential for bike and pedestrian path than development for commuter rail.
- LRPT – US 17 six lanes from the interchange to Washington Loop.

June 3, 2008

Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council

- Need for parallel access as corridor develops, connections from back roads.
- Big utility corridor, which was a reference to the FPL line and right-of-way. This is a constraint, can't be moved.
- Natural resource issues including significant watersheds, creek corridors, gopher tortoise, scrub jay habitat across corridor, xeric sands.
- Public access to river lacking, no dock or ramps.
- Logical to do blueway with access to fresh and salt waters, for canoes and kayaks. Need for portage on Shell Creek at reservoir.
- Reservation of public use property.
- FDOT talks about acquisition of rail reservation for public transportation for local commuter rail.
- Need to preserve viewsheds and require voluntary design standards for platted lots.
- Dangerous portion at south intersection of Washington Loop and US 17. MPO once considered connecting Washington Loop with Bermont Road.
- Wildlife corridor connects Webb to Shell Creek, need to preserve and enhance.
- TDU scheme to better preserve.
- University not good at Hudson site.
- Need mixed use with real villages.

## Hands-on Visioning Session 9/13/2008

- More access to the water, more boat ramps, specifically in the northern area;
- water access that's mindful of the residential character of the river front;
- reed redevelopment of Cleveland and Solana;
- establish a university campus;
- development of neighborhood commercial nodes at several key locations, such as the intersection of Washington Loop N and US 17;
- preserve farm land in the Washington Loop area;
- provide hospital;
- maintain I-75 interchange for highway commercial uses such as hotels;
- consider existing railroad lines;
- more Urban Service Area;
- platted lots strategy to support flexibility;
- expand local road connections to avoid US 17 and truck traffic, connect US 17 with ECAP and connect Washing Loop with Bermont Road;
- realign the south end of Washington Loop to intersect with US 17 at Riverside Drive;
- village with assortment of uses university, commercial, and workforce housing;
- nodes at intersections;
- create industrial uses compatible with the DoSoto enterprise zone;
- establish a wildlife corridor and preserve environmental connections;
- capture historic nature of Cleveland and Solana area while coexisting with ECAP;
- gateway at Winn-Dixie Plaza;
- ecotourism focus on the river with mixed use;
- acquire lands between the bridges at the creek for kayak launch
- infill at the interchange;
- better management with agencies; and
- industrial uses away from water.

October 1, 2008

#### Property owners in the Study Area

- Concern with increased taxes. It was explained that the objective is not to increase taxes, but may increase County's tax base. There may be increased taxes due to increased property values.
- Questions were raised regarding process and fears were expressed regarding additional cumbersome regulations. Dan explained it is expected the changes will be implemented through the FLUM without changes to underlying zoning thus not necessarily limiting what they can do in the future from what they can do now. He suggested use of performance criteria.
- Property owners envision an extension of the USA to the east, incorporation of utilities, treat I-75 as a higher commercial priority and evacuation route. Want to keep the plan very open and general giving the end use land owner leeway and flexibility. They raised the concern with over regulation, the addition of regulations and red tape that binds owners. They state it is wrong for the County to dictate what owners do with their land. They would like an infrastructure strategy. They are concerned with talk of green and ecotourism. They support preserving the environment where appropriate such as Shell Creek and green with common sense.
- The green theme fits in with the format very well and finds it is a good idea to bring eco-businesses to this area of the County. The property owner does not want to see the Washington Loop area disturbed.
- Would like to see prevention of spot zoning and urban sprawl. The property owner wants to avoid a hodge podge of uses next to each other.

November 3, 2008

#### Charlotte County Parks, Recreation, & Cultural Resources Department

- A portion of Hathaway Park is under construction in order to provide more parking spaces and kayaking opportunities
- Wanted to preserve waterfront
- Lack of water access to serve southeast population in the County
- Limited community and regional parks
- Mentioned blueway trails
- Would like to have community parks including meeting rooms and gyms in the future; however, it depends on the population growth.
- Location of the community parks, the preferred location is along US 17
- Would like to have riverwalks
- Use FPL and utilities easements as trail systems or bike trails
- Would like to buy waterfront properties for future boat ramps – currently there is no funding
- Mentioned a historic archive center for historic collections, etc. which will be located on Edison Charlotte County Campus
- Regional library not needed in this area based on likely future growth.

#### US 17 business owner

- Would like to have septic tank storage and associated uses on his property (Parcel ID: 402312276005) located on US 17, which is currently zoned for residential uses. The surrounding properties are zoned AE or MHC.

#### Property Owner in the Study Area

- Would like to have commercial uses for his clients' properties located on US 17
- Would like to have 5-acre lands along US 17 for commercial uses and the remainder for residential and recreational vehicle use for property located at 1401 Duncan Road (US 17). His client also would like to consider commercial or industrial uses for his property because of the railroad tracks adjacent to the property.

#### Charlotte County Chamber of Commerce

- US 17 has the limited access points. Do we plan to have an access road or reversed frontage road?
- Need to have US 17 by-pass to avoid trucks going through Punta Gorda downtown area
- What is the plan for large tracts along Bermont Road?
- Need some commercial uses such as convenience store and community services in the study area

- Maintain small neighborhood uses and the corridor's natural areas
- Need a wildlife corridor to make sure large animals can safely cross Bermont Road
- The most important study is to find out what is there now and what kind of improvements need to be updated for the existing communities.
- Would like to see a State Welcome Center located at the intersection of I-75 and US 17.
- The intersection of I-75 and US 17 should have some industrial uses.
- Are there any big tract lands used for eagle nests? If yes, it should be protected.
- Maintain some areas within the study area to be agricultural uses.
- The ECAP area should be a future job area.
- University site should be located in the study area
- Putting a university site in the Murdock Village is a mistake
- Use the railroad for industrial uses.
- Heavy industrial should be located on Bermont Road.