

L-1

Charlotte County Board of County Commissioners
Agenda Item Summary REQUEST NUMBER:

1. DEPARTMENT MAKING REQUEST/NAME/EXTENSION:
 Administration/Kelly A. Shoemaker/1994

2. MEETING DATE:
 March 23, 2004

3. REQUESTED MOTION/ACTION:
 Presentation by the Little Gasparilla Island Steering Committee

4. AGENDA
 CONSENT
 REGULAR
 PRESENTATION X
 AT 10:00 A.M.
 TIME REQUIRED:

5. IS THIS ITEM BUDGETED (IF APPLICABLE)? YES ___ NO ___ IF NO, STATE ACTION REQUIRED

BUDGET ACTION:
 FINANCIAL IMPACT SUMMARY STATEMENT:

DETAILED ANALYSIS ATTACHED?: YES ___ NO ___ BUDGET OFFICER _____ DATE _____

6. BACKGROUND: (WHY IS THE ACTION NECESSARY, AND WHAT ACTION WILL BE ACCOMPLISHED)

Presentation of the Little Gasparilla Island Steering Committee's final report information and recommendations.

7. RECOMMENDED APPROVAL AND DATE (YES & NO BLOCK INDICATE IF APPROVAL IS/IS NOT REQUIRED)

DIVISION/DEPARTMENT DIRECTOR	PURCHASING DIRECTOR	OTHER	OTHER	COUNTY ATTORNEY	COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR
YES <u>X</u> NO	YES ___ NO	YES ___ NO	YES ___ NO	YES ___ NO	YES <u>X</u> NO
<i>K. Shoemaker</i>					<i>M</i>

8. COMMISSION ACTION:

- APPROVED
- DENIED
- DEFERRED DATE TO BRING BACK:
- OTHER SPECIFY:

L-1

**Report
To
The Charlotte County Board
Of
County Commissioners**

**From
The Little Gasparilla Island
Steering Committee**

March 23, 2004

Little Gasparilla Island Steering Committee Final Report March 18, 2004

The Little Gasparilla Island Steering Committee was formed after a group of concerned islanders met with Commissioner Horton to ask his help in trying to solve some of the problems facing Little Gasparilla Island.

After the initial meeting Commissioner Horton helped by asking the Commission to appoint a steering committee to look into the problems and report back. On November 26, 2002 the Commission passed resolution 2002-79 creating "The Little Gasparilla Island Steering Committee" for the purposes to include:

- a. Evaluating the recommendations of the public and county staff regarding matters affecting Little Gasparilla Island, including such things as emergency medical services, fire suppression services, right-of-way and access issues, and addressing;
- b. Prioritizing the recommendations; and
- c. Presenting to the Board its findings and recommendations on or before June 24, 2003.

This we have attempted to do.

The membership included one member representing each of the two condominium associations and one homeowners association. In addition, the Board appointed two members at large. The members were:

Ken Bonds	Representing Placida Beach Condominiums
Jim Lewis	Representing Hideaway Bay Beach Club Condominiums
Mac McCarthy	Representing Gaspar's Hideaway Homeowners' Association
Dick Bublitz	Member at large
Bob Hill	Member at large

At the first meeting Bob Hill was chosen by the Committee to be Chairman and Mac McCarthy to be vice-chairman.

The start was pretty rocky due to misunderstandings and rumors spread that the Committee was trying to get water, sewers, and paved roads on the island in order to increase the tax base for the county. A great deal of misinformation was circulated that was counterproductive and hampered the real purpose of the Steering Committee. The consensus of that group was "Save Our Island. No Roads. No Sewer. No Water." We heard quite a bit of "We like it like it is. We don't want any change." Actually most of the Committee feel the same way. Unfortunately the way it is, is not the way it was, and certainly not the way it will be. With careful planning and action we can help to make Little Gasparilla Island a better place than it will become in the absence of thoughtful consideration now.

The rumors finally subsided somewhat and the Committee was able to concentrate on the work it was charged to accomplish.

The Committee held numerous meetings on the island and in Murdock inviting county staff members to share their expertise. Information provided, especially input as to how specific tasks might or might not be accomplished, was especially helpful to the committee's deliberations.

Kelly Shoemaker, Assistant County Administrator, our liaison, was invaluable in providing assistance on questions concerning county policy, and in arranging for staff to assist the committee in obtaining needed information.

The following information is a brief synopsis of our findings and the recommendations we feel are the next step in guiding Little Gasparilla Island property owners to reasonably address the problems confronting our island.

Fire and Emergency Services

The Committee began by focusing on fire and emergency medical services. During this process the Little Gasparilla Island Fire and Rescue began to come into being and has steadily progressed with many islanders taking training in various aspects of firefighting and EMS. LGIF&R has established officers and a board of directors and have their legal requirements pretty well in order. They are able to respond to fire and EMS emergencies, which is a great deal more than we have had before. Obviously funding for equipment is a real need in order to help the group to become more proficient.

Addressing

Addressing and signs denoting roads or lanes are basically non existent. There needs to be a focus on house numbers placed on every home so as to be visible to emergency workers trying to locate someone or some place. Signs appropriate to LGI should be on streets and trails to assist residents and visitors in moving around the island.

Law Enforcement

We met with then Sheriff Clement, and islanders voiced their opinions about slow response times and lack of visibility of deputies. Sheriff Clement gave us hope for better service. We do not believe that service has improved, but perhaps with a change at the top the situation will change for the better.

Platting

Replats of the island are causing undue problems with access for many island residents. Prior to 1972, replats of the island were done in a manner that has proved very detrimental to the way Little Gasparilla has developed. The original "Town of Seaboard" platted in 1895 had roadways, alleys and large lots. With the exception of a few tracts at the extreme south end of the island, all lots had road access.

A lot of the replats go from bay to gulf with many of them having no north-south access. Therein lies the main problem. One of the other downsides is the large number of 50' x 75' lots

and 50' x 100' lots with only easements from gulf to bay. Some easements are as small as 4'. Roads or trails of convenience are the norm in these areas. A large part of the island is accessible north and south only by trespass.

Those parts of the island with adequate access don't feel they are affected by this problem and don't feel they should be part of the solution. This is understandable. However, it does nothing to address a problem that has implications beyond travel access.

Early development in many cases used the path of least resistance or most convenient path to locate power lines and telephone lines. In some places the lines go right over homes. Now there are many places without utility easements which create still more problems. The island water system serves about 70% of the island, with water and fire hydrants. Another small percentage is served by residential water only, due to the lack of easements or rights of way to get to hydrants. About 30% of the north end has no easements or rights of way in order to extend the water lines to the north. This issue will be the same for any sewer system that may be in the future.

Access to Island

Access to the island is a growing problem. Docks built at the bay end of easements and rights of way are becoming crowded and will continue to be a growing problem. Even with a place to embark from the mainland to the island, at some point it is doubtful that everyone will be able to find docking on the island.

Our two condominiums that represent about 18-20% of island properties do not share in some of the problems that will continue to grow for most islanders. They both have:

- a. Ferry service that runs five times a day
- b. Parking and Docking on the Mainland
- c. Docking on the island
- d. Water
- e. Sewer

Almost all other parts of the island rely on public marinas for mainland access. These seem to be diminishing, and there does not appear any viable alternative on the horizon. Since the property on Placida Road for boat ramp and parking did not materialize, most islanders are wondering what lies ahead. Perhaps islanders can find a way to acquire parking on the mainland, but it will be a very large and expensive undertaking requiring a concerted effort.

Manatee Corridors

As the committee was coming to the end of our original task we were asked to work on the Manatee Corridor issue. A single corridor was proposed that followed an existing route that for the most part went to the north end of Little Gasparilla. The committee proposed a route that went toward the center of the island and had forks going toward the north end and the south end. While the corridor was revised to accommodate the central island and north end, the last plan still leaves the south end with a time consuming long minimum speed route. The committee recommended to the Commission that they ask the FWC to revisit the south corridor. The Commission has done this and we hope further good will come from your request.

Little Gasparilla Island is unique. A wonderful place without traffic lights, crowded roadways, high rises, shopping malls, and the hustle and bustle of the mainland. It is the "Old Florida" so fondly remembered. A barrier island with native plants and trees, pristine beaches, a bountiful bay, hospitable neighbors and a relaxed lifestyle seldom found today in other beach communities.

As much as islanders want to preserve status quo, they understand that is not realistic. More people will come, more homes will be constructed, more boats will require access and more problems will develop. While these problems have not suddenly appeared, they are escalating. The formation of the Steering Committee has focused attention on these issues and has made most islanders aware that they need to begin a process to deal with the issues.

At the beginning of the process the committee heard over and over, "We pay a lot of taxes to the county and they don't do anything for us." "The million dollars paid in ad valorem taxes in 2002 went everywhere except Little Gasparilla Island." That attitude has not completely died, but a learning process about how the tax monies are distributed has helped islanders realize that most of the problems encountered will have to be solved by islanders themselves.

Recommendation

The Little Gasparilla Island Steering Committee believes and recommends to the Charlotte County Board of County Commissioners that an advisory committee of Little Gasparilla Island residents should be established by the Board to advise commissioners of recommended actions dealing with Little Gasparilla Island. We recommend that a board of at least seven members be appointed in order to give adequate voice to the different groups on the island and have sufficient at large representation. By giving islanders a hand in their own destiny the Committee feels many of our problems will be solved and sensible planning will give direction to development of this unique environment.

We feel this advisory committee could continue the work begun by the Steering Committee and with the same spirit of cooperation from the county staff we have enjoyed in the past, create a community development plan to help find solutions to our problems and give direction to future development. Such a guide would insure orderly progress into the future of Little Gasparilla Island.

The Steering Committee has completed its assigned task and all members wish to thank the CCBC for giving us an opportunity to investigate and relay to you our findings. We hope that by giving islanders a hand in planning for the future we can help preserve the rights of property owners and protect the fragile environment of this beautiful barrier island.

March 23, 2004

VII. PRESENTATION AGENDA

L. 10:00 A.M. - Presentation

Agenda Item L-1, Little Gasparilla Island Steering Committee - Final report information and recommendations

Kelly Shoemaker, Assistant County Administrator stated the presentation by the Little Gasparilla Island Steering Committee will be given by the Chairman. Bob Hill, Chairman of the Little Gasparilla Island Steering Committee gave the following brief synopsis of their findings and recommendations to reasonably address the problems confronting our island:

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VII. PUBLIC HEARING AGENDA

M. 10:00 A.M.

Agenda Item M-1, Z-03-12-62 hold the first of two Public Hearings requesting a rezoning for 54.93+ acres from Commercial General and Residential Multi-Family-10 to Commercial Incentive (Proof of publication was in order)