

HOT TOPICS ON REIS AGENDA

Prepare for this year's political campaigns and learn about key issues affecting the future of Southwest Florida real estate investment and development:

- The REIS March meeting features "**portability of property tax protection**" with Lee County Property Appraiser Ken Wilkinson.
- **Transportation** is the focus of the April meeting, with Johnnie Limbaugh and Dave Loveland from Florida and Lee County Departments of Transportation.
- In May, water resource expert Tom Missimer will address regional **water supply issues**.
- David Mica of the Florida Petroleum Council will discuss **oil drilling** in the Gulf of Mexico at the June meeting.

SCHOLARSHIP FUND TAKES OFF

The REIS Scholarship Foundation is up and running. Chairman Walter Serbon has reported \$10,600 in donations from REIS members, with fund-raising efforts just getting underway. The Foundation provides an opportunity for members to make charitable donations. REIS provides management for the Foundation, allowing 100% of donations to be available for scholarships to area colleges. Contact Walter at 239.437.0025 for more information.

GET IN THE EXPRESS LANE

Prepay your REIS luncheon and take advantage of the new "Express Lane" at the meeting registration table. Make your reservations on the REIS web site, by emailing sheston@swfla.rr.com, or calling Sharon Heston at 239.410.1253. Then mail your check to Sharon Heston, 154 Elephant Way, North Fort Myers, FL 33917. Your membership badge will await you at the Express Lane and you'll zip right in the door to network with colleagues and claim a prime seat. Reservations for the March meeting are required by March 9 and your payment must be received by the 10th. Meeting registration begins at 11:30.

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LEE IMPACT FEES STUDIED

Lee County's **Fire / Emergency Services Impact Fee Study** is finished and may be reviewed at www.lee-county.com/dcd/. These Impact Fees were last raised in 2003. Public hearings are scheduled at the Board of County Commissioners' meetings March 14 and 28.

The recommended increases in Fire / Rescue fees for single-family homes range from 7% in North Fort Myers to 77% (up to \$660) in Bonita Springs. Increases for industrial range from 44% to 121%, while fees for office and retail would decrease 23-25% in every district except Bonita Springs, which would increase. Proposed EMS impact fee increases for single-family homes range from 57% for office up to 300% for industrial and 314% for multi-family.

Study of **Road Impact Fees** will take place in May-June. Lee County Impact Fees are now reviewed every 3 years, however County staff would support 4-year intervals.

LEE MAY EASE BLASTING REGS

The Blasting Ad Hoc Committee has prepared revisions to Lee County's blasting ordinance that would ease some of the measurement requirements now in effect. The revisions are being reviewed by the Executive Regulatory Oversight Committee (EROC), Land Development Code Advisory Committee (LDCAC), and Lee Planning Agency (LPA), with public hearings at the Lee County Commissioners' meetings tentatively scheduled for March 28 and April 11.

The issue of ending the present moratorium on blasting along the Winkler Road extension was deferred to the Board of County Commissioners. The ordinance, proposed revisions, and committee agendas are at www.lee-county.com/dcd/.

The Blasting Ad Hoc Committee is a joint effort by Lee County staff and development industry professionals, including REIS members Mary Gibbs, Ron Inge, and Carl Barraco.

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CHARLOTTE APPROVES MURDOCK VILLAGE COMMUNITY PLAN

Charlotte County is moving forward with Murdock Village, a large multi-use community to be developed by the private sector on land largely acquired by eminent domain. In February, the Murdock Village Community Redevelopment Advisory Board recommended adoption of the Community Redevelopment Plan. The Planning & Zoning Board determined the Plan in compliance with the County Comprehensive Plan and on Feb. 22 the Charlotte Board of County Commissioners approved the Plan and adopted an ordinance creating the Murdock Village Redevelopment Trust Fund.

Developer proposals are now being considered by the County. Plans, maps, concepts, and details are available at <http://www.charlottecountyfl.com/MurdockVillage/>

NEW TRANSPORTATION CORRIDORS

Lee County is looking at new roadways to provide more connections and alternatives to I-75.

Lee Commissioners selected Inwood Consulting Engineers to study extending Luckett Road to Lehigh Acres, subject to fee and contract.

The proposed connection from County Road 951 to State Road 82 will be part of the Airport Connector Road study to be funded next year.

WATERMEIER APPOINTED VICE CHAIR OF AIRPORT COMMITTEE

REIS member and former governor Janet Watermeier has been appointed vice chair of the Lee County Port Authority Airports Special Management Committee, which advises the Lee County Commission on aviation policy. Janet is also vice chair of the Florida Transportation Commission and is the past director of Lee's Economic Development Office.

REIS MEMBERSHIP DIRECTORY

The REIS membership roster is full and the 2006 directory is in production, for distribution at the April luncheon meeting. The online membership directory has been updated. Please review your information at www.reis-swfl.org/membership and advise Bill Burdette (239.936.1404, bill@burdetteinc.com) of errors or revisions.

GROUP INVESTING WORKSHOP

REIS is planning a one day professional educational program, to tentatively take place in June. The program would be conducted by Gene Trowbridge, author, attorney and national CCIM instructor. The curriculum will cover alternative methods for structuring group investments in real estate, including the legal and tax implications. Details will be provided to REIS members in the coming month.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING DILEMMA

Higher impact fees, rising home prices, and condo conversions are all aggravating Southwest Florida's shortage of affordable workforce housing. Zoning decisions based on density, without consideration of mitigating design factors, restrict many solutions.

REIS is considering a workshop to bring government and development interests together to determine solutions. Mary Gibbs is studying local assistance programs and considerations, while Sharon Jenkins-Owen serves on the state's Affordable Housing Study Commission. Both are on the REIS Board of Governors.

EMINENT DOMAIN BACKLASH

Last summer's Supreme Court decision in Kelo vs. New London empowered government to take private property via eminent domain process for the purpose of economic development. Since then, 7 states and 36 local governments have passed "anti-Kelo" legislation, while roughly 38 states have introduced legislation to dull or nullify that authority. Furthermore, a recent national study by Saint Consulting Group found 81% of suburban Americans oppose new development, up from 68% at the time of the Supreme Court ruling. "The study also found that 70% of respondents believe that relationships between elected officials and developers render the approval process unfair."

—according to the February issue of *National Real Estate Investor* magazine.

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