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BOARDROOM REPORT

News from recent REIS board meetings

Luncheon Programs:

The March 9th luncheon, featuring a presentation by Gary Jackson, Ph.D., Director of the Regional Economic Research Institute, will be sponsored by Henderson Franklin Starnes & Holt, PA, Real Estate and Land Use Divisions. The April 13th luncheon will be sponsored by Advanced Roofing.

Program Chairman Kevin M. Fitzgerald, (239) 437-3330, ext. 201, is considering a variety of programs and welcomes suggestions from REIS members to determine the most important topics and speakers for upcoming meetings. Sponsorship of future meetings is available. See Jim Garinger, (239) 418-0300 for details.

Legislative / Regulatory Action:

The REIS officers and board have voted unanimously to oppose Amendment 4, which will be on the November ballot. The amendment would require voter approval of changes to local comprehensive plans.

Lee County Commissioners are expected to decide in April how to proceed with a referendum on proposed changes to Board of County Commissioners. Options include single-member voting districts or a combination of district and at-large commissioners.

The process of redrawing state and county political districts will begin later this year in conjunction with the U.S. Census.

The implications of new FEMA flood maps and building restrictions in flow ways continue to property owners, particularly along the Orange River and Metro Parkway.

Scholarship Programs:

The REIS Scholarship Foundation is launching its annual fund-raising campaign. Anyone wishing to make charitable contributions is encouraged to contact Shelton Weeks, (239) 590-7373 or sweeks@fgcu.edu.

LEARN MORE ABOUT AMENDMENT 4

A free training session for those interested in defeating Amendment 4 will be offered at 3:30 pm on Feb. 22 at Trianon Bonita Bay in Bonita Springs. Registration and information: Heather Mazurkiewicz, (239) 470-2478.

2010 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

A Pre-Session Luncheon with Southwest Florida's Legislative Delegation takes place Feb. 24 at Embassy Suites Hotel in Estero. Opening remarks by Senator Garrett Richter on "Florida's Perfect Storm: SB 360, Hometown Democracy, and the state's Budget/Tax System." Other legislators will discuss their priorities for the session. The event is presented by The Chamber of Southwest Florida and AIA Florida Southwest. Registration and information: (239) 278-4001; www.chamber-swflorida.com.

LEGISLATIVE ISSUES TO WATCH:

Unemployment Insurance: Unemployment is reaching historic highs and the state's trust fund is broke. An automatic readjustment of unemployment insurance rates is resulting in huge increased costs to business, further threatening employment and economic recovery.

Property Insurance: The proposed Consumer Choice Act would exempt homeowners insurance providers from state regulation of premiums.

Water Resources: Legislators may consider a central commission to oversee water resources and distribution on a statewide basis.

Stormwater Rules: Expect Rep. Trudi Williams and Sen. Mike Bennett to introduce legislation to provide incentives for low-impact development strategies and ease the requirements on stormwater discharges.

Developer Liability: A bill may provide relief from current law which deems anyone who purchases more than 7 condo units in a project - or a lender who takes title via foreclosure - to be a "developer" and responsible for all developer responsibilities and construction defects.



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AMENDMENT 4 STUDY RELEASED

A study by economist Tony Villamil, of Washington Economics Group, forecasts that Amendment 4 would result in the loss of 267,247 jobs in a "Most Likely" economic impact scenario. "If you like this recession, you'll love Amendment 4" said Mark Wilson, President of the Florida Chamber of Commerce. More information is at <http://Florida2010.org>.

REDISTRICTING LEE COUNTY

In April, Lee County Commissioners are scheduled to decide on a redistricting plan for a voter referendum this November. The Charter Review III Advisory Committee supported a change from the current method of electing 5 commissioners all by county-wide vote but the committee did not provide unanimous recommendation for an alternative. A plan for 5 single-member districts, with commissioners elected by voters in their respective districts received 9 votes. A hybrid plan for 5 single-member districts plus 2 at-large commissioners elected by voters county-wide received 8 votes. Most urbanized counties in Florida use single-member or hybrid methods.

NEW STORMWATER RULES

The new statewide stormwater rule is scheduled for adoption in July. The rule intends to reduce nitrogen and phosphorus released into waterways by raising water quality standards - which could raise the size of retention ponds upward to 20% of a development site. The rule will be implemented by water management districts.

ADOPTING LEE PLAN AMENDMENTS

The final adoption hearing for the 2008/2009 Lee Plan amendments before County Commissioners will take place March 3 and 4. The proposed amendments and state comments are at www.leegov.com/DCD/.

The 2009/2010 Regular Amendment Cycle to the Lee Plan has begun with the Local Planning Agency (LPA) reviewing 2 proposed amendments in January. One would revise the Level of Service requirements for a segment of Six Mile Cypress Parkway and the other would reduce maximum Floor Area Ratios (FAR) within portions of North Fort Myers and Fort Myers Shores Planning Communities.

NAVIGATING THE NEW ECONOMY

John Jung's presentation at the REIS Feb. luncheon may be viewed on the REIS web site. On the Home Page select About REIS, then Press Releases. The brief release includes a link to Jung's PowerPoint slide show.

MARKET WATCH 2010

Overview and forecast for local real estate market, with 2009 statistical review. Realtor Denny Grimes presents residential market and former REIS president Stan Stouder, CCIM, presents commercial market. 4—7 pm at Harborside Event Center in Fort Myers. www.MarketWatch2010.com.

THE CASE FOR SUSTAINABILITY

The CSI Sustainability Lecture Series continues March 11 with "The Business Case for Sustainability." The day-long program is presented by the Southwest Florida Chapter of the Construction Standards Institute, in association with Edison State College. Register at www.csifloridasw.org.

CAPITAL FINANCING AVAILABLE


Credit-worthy businesses planning to build a new facility or make capital improvements to an existing facility in Lee County may apply for tax-exempt bonds offered through the Industrial Development Authority, which is administering \$56.3 million in federal Recovery Zone Facility Bonds and is accepting applications requesting at least \$3 million in financing. Further information: Sue Noe, (239) 338-3161 or EDO@leegov.com.

COUNTIES SUE OVER IMPACT FEES

Collier and Lee joined other counties in a lawsuit against the state Legislature over impact fee laws that became effective in May. The law shifts the burden of proof to local governments when impact fees are challenged.

VAUGHAN-BIRCH APPOINTED

REIS member Cody Vaughan-Birch has been appointed to Charlotte County's Marine Advisory Committee, which advises the Board of Commissioners on protection of marine resources, public access, and coordination with state and federal agencies on marine issues.



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