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## BOARDROOM REPORT

### News from recent REIS board meetings

**Luncheon Programs:** On June 12th, Lee County Manager Don Stilwell will conduct an open discussion of Lee County government services, budget, priorities, and any other topic of particular interest to REIS. He's looking forward to stimulating questions and suggestions from REIS members. Questions may be submitted to Steve Hartsell in advance if anonymity is desired.

**Seminar on Future Trends:** Plans are being developed for members-only program by national futurist Chris Lee.

**Annual Social Event:** REIS will return to the Heitman House on the river in downtown Fort Myers for our annual social event, scheduled for Nov. 8. Co-chairs Kim Donnelly and Cody Vaughan-Birch have exciting plans in mind. Details will be forthcoming.

**Regulatory Issues:** Lee County Land Development Code amendments, including bonus housing density and mandatory water/sewer issues to be decided in June.

**Horizon Council:** REIS is contributing \$500 to Horizon Foundation, to support Industry Appreciation Luncheon.

**REIS Scholarship Foundation:** Scholarship Committee Chairman Tom Woodyard has received scholar nominations from participating institutions and needs contributions to fund their scholarship awards.

**Sponsorship Opportunities:** Only a few opportunities remain available to sponsor REIS luncheons in 2007. Interested firms are encouraged to contact Paul Sands, (239) 489-3303, quickly.

**Luncheon Payment Options:** REIS has established a merchant account to accept advance lunch payments by VISA or MasterCard and processing procedures are being tested. A "Shopping Cart" is also being developed to accept credit card payments on the REIS web site. All systems should be functional by mid June.

## REMINDER: NEW LUNCHEON POLICY

"Walk-ins" are no longer be accepted at REIS monthly luncheons. Reservations are required by the Thursday prior to the meeting in order for Pelican Preserve to properly prepare the room and the meals.

Luncheons paid at the door are \$35 for members and guests alike. Luncheons are still be \$25 for REIS members who pay in advance.

## WORKFORCE HOUSING ISSUES

In May, REIS President Gerald Hendry submitted a letter to Lee County Commissioners to express REIS's concerns about possible implementation of linkage fees on commercial projects to fund affordable housing. The letter strongly urged alternative funding sources be considered and offered REIS assistance to find solutions. Hendry also published an article in the News-Press to explain the issue, present REIS position, and call for the business community to get involved.

The REIS Committee on Workforce Housing Issues met recently with representatives from the local CCIM Chapter, CIP, Lee BIA, and others to put together a coalition of groups who will work with the Horizon Council to offer assistance to Lee County to find creative and effective ways to help address these important issues.

Many from the coalition also attended a Horizon Council special workshop to review the affordable housing study, and represent the concerns of the development industry. Following that event, Horizon Council Chair Bruce Gora and Ron Inge, chair of the Horizon Council's Business Climate Task Force and a former REIS president, wrote to Lee Commissioners to convey concerns about linkage fees and encourage the use of incentives to stimulate market-driven solutions to affordable housing needs.

The REIS committee will keep REIS members informed of future developments on the issue.

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## INDUSTRY APPRECIATION EVENT

Lee County Horizon Council will present the annual luncheon to salute business and industry on Sept. 21 at Harborside Event Center. REIS is a co-sponsor. Contact the Economic Development Office, 338-3161, for details.

## TRACK ZONING CASES ONLINE

Information on current Lee County zoning cases, such as finalized documents, staff reports, and administrative decisions, are available through Community Development Dept.'s "eConnect" service. Go to <http://www.lee-county.com/econnect> and look at "Application Activity." The "A" designation indicates an attached document.

## DEVELOPMENT CODE AMENDMENTS

Lee County Commissioners will conduct public hearings on proposed amendments to the Land Development Code (LDC) at 5 pm June 12 and June 26. The hearings are in commission chambers, 2120 Main St., Fort Myers.

Key items include Bonus housing densities: lowering monitoring requirements to 7 years; including provision for moderate-priced housing; and increasing the fee to \$40,000 per unit.

Review all amendments at <http://lee-county.com/dcd1/downloads/ordinancereviews.htm>

## DRGR STUDY DUE IN JUNE

A study of Lee County's DRGR area (Density Reduction and Groundwater Recharge) is due to be released in mid June. The DRGR area is an extensive area east of I-75, from SR 82 south to Bonita Springs, where development is severely limited. The study is expected to assess the importance of the area to natural resources and water supply. The data will assist county staff, the Local Planning Authority (LPA), and commissioners in reviewing proposed development in the DRGR area.

## NEW ADA STANDARDS

A bevy of new rules on access for the disabled will be issued in July under the Americans with Disabilities Act. New buildings and renovations will have to meet revised standards for lower light switches, bigger bathroom stalls, more reserved parking, wider aisles within work areas, and more entrances for the disabled.

## ECONOMIC INDICATOR REPORTS

The Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU) Regional Economic Research Institute is developing a database including a wide range of economic data from SW Florida. Analysis of the data is published periodically as "Regional Economic Indicators." The most recent edition is at <http://www.fgcu.edu/cob/reri/>. The Institute may also be commissioned to conduct economic studies on specific issues.

## FGCU ENGINEERING AND BUSINESS SCHOOLS BREAK GROUND

Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU) has broken ground for Holmes Hall, which will house the U.A. Whitaker School of Engineering. The 70,000 sf facility is due to open in fall 2008 and include the Hole Montes Lecture Hall and Owen-Ames-Kimball Company student lounge.

Work has also begun on an adjacent site for 62,000 sf Lutgert College of Business building with completion also slated for fall 2008. The College of Business has earned accreditation with the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB International).

## INTERNATIONAL COLLEGE NOW NAMED HODGES UNIVERSITY

International College, which participates in the REIS Scholarship Foundation program, has been renamed "Hodges University." The university has campuses in Fort Myers and Naples, plus off-campus learning sites.



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