



March 15, 2008

Cape Mailbag: Where is land revenue going?

If you are under 50 and living in Cape Coral, you have a lot to worry about. There is something coming not too many years down the road that is very bothersome. Let me explain. At many council meetings we have heard the words "built out" and a plan for "Full Built Out." We have also heard about the disadvantages of being a pre-platted community. We never hear about the advantages of being a pre-platted community.

Take for example all of the lots that are unbuilt and paying taxes but not demanding services in return for the taxes being paid. Right now, according to the numbers the city is built out about 40 percent of maximum. Which means that 60 percent of the properties are paying taxes and demanding no services in return for their tax money.

Those empty lots are paying utility assessments, which include road building and storm drain rebuilding in the assessment areas as well. The empty lots are paying "Full Boat," they don't get a tax break via Save our Homes nor do they get a deduction for being a full time residence either. So in effect these unbuilt lots actually pay a premium and demand no services.

All we have heard is that we need to make provisions for total built out, and yet I have never heard what the community is planning to do in order to provide services without the "free ride" built into the mix that we have today. Just exactly, what will this mean to the residents at built out? Will we be expected to pay more taxes on a per capita basis in order to provide these same services? Why are we spending this extra tax money now to support non existent services that the empty lots don't receive?

It seems our government wants to speak about the disadvantages of a pre-platted community, but is not willing to even mention the advantages of this type of arrangement and I have to wonder why we never hear about this and where the extra revenue is going? What will this situation lead to at full built out? Is there a tax plan?

We keep on hearing that we need a plan but I have never heard any discussion about the tax plan. You hear about a plan for building the infrastructure but never hear what the cost will be and who will pay how much.

JOHN SULLIVAN
Cape Coral

Using recapture rule

As I have discussed with Rep. Nick Thompson in the past, the recapture rule is the only thing that closes the gap on the disparity of Save Our Homes. I think that we would all agree that the last 12 years with Save Our Homes has created a nice situation for our current residents. I really don't have a problem with that or portability, however, we must draw the line somewhere. You can't have it both ways. My point about the recapture rule is that during a time of downturn in property values our newer residents will be able to close the gap in homesteaded values due to the unintended consequences of Save Our Homes.

The way I would explain it is a graph where homesteaded SOH will go up approximately 3 percent and the property values of residents that have purchased in the last five years will come down and close the gap of unintended consequences. I am sure this is what the state had in mind when this

legislation was passed.

We really need to think about the gap created in 12 years and if we pass a law that removes the recapture rule, just think where that gap will be in 20 years. It is important that we get a handle on this because we now have a cap on commercial and non-homesteaded properties and the recapture issue will likely come into play sometime in the future on these types of properties also.

LARRY ST. AMAND
Cape Coral

Wounded Warriors worthwhile

On Saturday, Feb. 23, my husband and I went to the Wounded Warriors Project Concert at Tarpon Point in Cape Coral. Wounded Warriors Project is one of the few organizations that donates the majority of their proceeds to help military personnel who are wounded or disabled. As soon as they are rescued, they are given a care pack, which is later used as a pillow to cushion their heads during the bumpy air ride to the military hospitals. They also help troops adjust to life with their disabilities and assist the families.

A very talented group, "The Del Prados," sang songs, along with entertainment from the DJ's. A young soldier named Ed, who had lost his leg in Iraq, spoke highly about the WWP and how they had helped him and also how he and other members of WWP helped a wounded soldier who had lost his house during the tornado in Tennessee. There was food and information about WWP, and people of all ages who had volunteered to help with this event, and all proceeds were donated to The Wounded Warrior Project.

Although The News-Press did publish some articles informing the public of this event, I wish they had been there to cover it and show some photos that would make people more aware of this organization. There were two photos and articles about the art festivals in Naples, but nothing about the Wounded Warrior Project concert.

Regardless of whether or not you agree with the wars in the Middle East, please remember the sacrifices that have been made by our brave troops and their families.

If you would like to learn more about WWP or make a donation, please visit woundedwarriorproject.org or call 877-832-6997. They really are legitimate and are a Godsend to our injured troops.

MARILYNE ROTH
Cape Coral

Everyone should pay for growth

Growth pays for growth and impact fees are charged due to the impact you have on that service. This is not true! The brunt of locally financing schools, roads, parks, etc., is on the building industry's shoulder and this is not fair!

Take a look at the following average building permit and impact fees for an average 1,400 square foot home with sewer and water in Cape Coral over the years: In 1995, \$4,200; in 2000, \$5,200; in 2007, \$16,100.

There are many inequities found in the current impact fee structure. Anyone who had a home build prior to 2002 didn't pay a penny for school impact fees. However, today the school impact fee on a new home is very high — and what impact to the school system does a new homeowner have if he or she is a part-time resident?

And growth pays for growth? Who pays for the new family moving in that does not build a new home?

Maybe they rent, or buy an existing home. They ARE growth but do not pay. What about the family that has been here, has paid prior impact fees and taxes, and decides to build a new home? They pay high impact fees for growth, but they certainly aren't "growth!"

Figure this one out.

In 2007, Lee County raised its road impact fees. They said there were fewer permits being pulled. Fewer permits means LESS growth, yet they need to RAISE impact fees?

If the permit numbers stay down, guess where they will turn for more money — us, the taxpayers.

People we vote into office must start representing us fairly. They must use a little common sense. Now is the time to find other means of revenue. Why don't they explore charging a fee on EVERY real estate transaction? This way everyone pays, not just new construction.

ANTHONY SOZIO
Cape Coral
