



P.O. Box 4323 OKALOOSA ISLAND LEASEHOLDERS ASSOCIATION,
Ft Walton Beach, FL 32549

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

There **will not** be a membership meeting in December 2021. The next meeting will be on Monday, January 10, 2022.

IN THIS NEWSLETTER

- ◆ President's Message - **David Sherry**
- ◆ "Come & See What's Growing at the Island Garden Club"
- ◆ Rainfall Report for November 2021
- ◆ Architectural Review Committee Report – November 2021
- ◆ **THE CHRISTMAS 2021 HOUSE DECORATION CONTEST FOR OKALOOSA ISLAND IS 'ON'. LOTS OF GOOD PRIZES!**
- ◆ Island Residents Decorate Santa Rosa Blvd Medians and the Welcome Triangle
- ◆ WW2 in America
 - War Dogs
 - Marilyn Monroe
- ◆ Wuzzle Puzzles
- ◆ Draft Minutes – November 8, 2021 Meeting
- ◆ Opinion "A Tale of Competing Priorities: David vs Goliath – Brick Bradford"
- ◆ Where to Report Code or Covenant Violations
- ◆ Wuzzle Puzzles Answers



FROSTY THE SNOW SURFER

Merry
Christmas



The OIL Lantern

A Happy
New
Year!



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE OKALOOSA ISLAND LEASEHOLDERS ASSOCIATION, Inc.
P.O. Box 4323, Fort Walton Beach, FL 32549, Editor: Jim Simpson, (850) 585-2116
Association Website: www.oilaweb.com



Happy Hanukkah

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE – DAVID SHERRY



There has been an important new development regarding the Okaloosa Island Protective Covenants and Restrictions; see my top item below. We also have important updates regarding the volunteer dune planting, the temporary beach groins, and construction at the former boat basin. Christmas Food Drive donations can be dropped off at the Okaloosa Island firehouse. We will forego our December OILA meeting, so our next meeting is January 10.

I hope everyone had a Happy Thanksgiving and wish everyone a very Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, and a Happy New Year.

Assault on Our Protective Covenants – The Okaloosa County Commission has directed county staff to investigate how Okaloosa County can eliminate the Okaloosa Island Protective Covenants and Restrictions (the “Covenants”), doing so without the consent of those who live or own on Okaloosa Island. This is a major threat to those who love Okaloosa Island, to those who own property on Okaloosa Island, and to the way of life for those who call Okaloosa Island their home (or home away from home).

The Covenants protect us in many important ways; they protect the single family neighborhood section on Okaloosa Island (Zone B1) from short term rentals, and provide our 75 foot building height limit. Okaloosa Island would be a very different place (overcrowded beaches, traffic congestion, noisy) without the protections provided by the Covenants. Previous State attempts to preempt local restrictions on rentals (like our Covenants) grandfathered Covenants written before 2011, so our current grandfathering protection could also be lost with any change to the Covenants.

The Covenants are a contract between Okaloosa County and all the leaseholders who purchased property on Okaloosa Island. The Courts ruled so in 1978, also ruling that one party to that contract (Okaloosa County) could not change that contract without the consent of the other party (a majority of the leaseholders). Now Okaloosa County wants to get around that Court ruling and break that contract (the Covenants).

The only winners in this scheme are the developers and profiteers who could make more money, and the politicians and bureaucrats who would get more power and control.

Those who buy property on Okaloosa Island know (or reasonably should know) the Covenant restrictions on the property. On one hand, they are required to abide by the Covenants. But on the other hand, they (and the rest of us) have the right to the protections provided by those Covenants.

This BCC initiative was triggered (although at least one Commissioner has wanted to do this for awhile) by a homeowner's request for a variance to modify their house. The November 2, 2021 BCC discussion of their variance quickly shifted to a call by County Commissioners to eliminate our Covenants.

To see the BCC's discussion of this topic, please scroll to the 33 minute mark of the video, accessed by using this link or by typing the link address into your browser address line:

okaloosacountyfl.iqm2.com/Citizens/SplitView.aspx?Mode=Video&MeetingID=1775&Format=Agenda

In my opinion having watched the Okaloosa County BCC for years, the initiative to break our Covenants would have little to no chance of going anywhere without the support of our District Commissioner Carolyn Ketchel. Our Covenants would likely already be safe had she stood up for Okaloosa Island at that November 2, 2021 BCC meeting.

I'd suggest everyone contact our County Commissioners, especially our District Commissioner Carolyn Ketchel, to voice your concern, and to request she protect our rights by defending our Protective Covenants from this power grab. The Okaloosa County Commissioners can be reached at: cketchel@myokaloosa.com, mponder@myokaloosa.com, nboyles@myokaloosa.com, tgoodwin@myokaloosa.com, pmixon@myokaloosa.com

(President's Message Continued on Next Page)

North Accessway #2, aka the former Boat Basin – The contract to construct a parking lot and some amenities at North side Accessway #2, formerly the Boat Basin, will be on the agenda at the December 7 BCC meeting at the Crestview Courthouse. The low bid is about \$1.123 million, and the work would be completed within 225 days of contract award.

New Sand Fence and Dune Planting – Sand fence installation is underway. The dune planting is now scheduled for Saturday, March 5, 2022. In case of rain, or if planting takes a second day to complete, the back-up date is Saturday, March 12.

We will contact the dune planting volunteers when the planting date gets closer. If you haven't already contacted Rebecca Sherry or me, and you would like to volunteer to help plant sea oats on the dunes, please contact me at beach_boy_dave@yahoo.com or 850-244-2744.

Temporary Beach Groins On Okaloosa Island – Installation of the temporary beach groins on Okaloosa Island, from Island Princess condo through the Wyndham Hotel, is underway. Installation is proceeding from west to east. As of Friday, December 3, the first 5 groins have been installed so the installation is about one-third complete. The groins are being installed to stabilize and extend the beach.

The photos below show our first five NuShore groins. As I write this, Saturday, December 4, I have seen several people on the beach and in the water between the new groins.



FIRST FIVE SAND GROINS ON OKALOOSA ISLAND



SAND GROIN AT SUNRISE

Island Christmas Decorations – I'd like to thank Nancy Hunt and all the volunteers who helped put up OILA's Christmas decorations again this year. The Santa Rosa Boulevard and Welcome Triangle decorations look great.



**Come and see
what's growing
at the Island
Garden Club!**

Come learn with us, meet neighbors, form new friendships, and enjoy the camaraderie at a monthly meeting the second Wednesday of the month at the El Matador. Socialization at 9:30, meeting promptly at 10:00. Upcoming programs are Christmas at Clemenza's, Growing Orchids, Easter Bonnets, Bus Trip in March, etc. You're invited to attend as a guest, although we hope you will join as a member. 😊 Dues are only \$15 a year.

Questions? Contact Kathy Foster, fosterpk@gnt.net, or 850-244-4490.


**JOIN THE
LEASEHOLDERS! LET
YOUR OPINIONS BE
HEARD!**

**FOR A MEMBERSHIP
APPLICATION CLICK ON
THE ASSOCIATION'S
WEBPAGE:**


WWW.OILAWEB.COM

OR

**CONTACT JIM SIMPSON
at
(850) 585-2116
OR
BY EMAIL AT:
SANLEANNA@COX.NET**



RAINFALL FOR NOV 2021: 0.3 Inches



Nov 11...0.2 inches	Nov 22...0.1 inches
Nov Avg Rainfall.....	4.1 inches
Variance to Average.....	- 3.8 inches
Avg Rainfall for Dec.....	4.8 inches
Dec Record High.....	84° F (1968)
Dec Record Low.....	8° F (1962)
Dec Avg Water Temperature	64° F
Avg Rainfall for January.....	5.0 inches
January Record High.....	80° F (1957)
January Record Low	4° F (1985)
Jan Avg Water Temperature.....	64°
YTD Variance	+ 5.4 inches
Year to Date Rainfall.....	51.1 inches
Avg Annual Rainfall	65.1 inches



ARCHITECTURAL COMMITTEE REPORT FOR November 2021 for projects submitted to them for consideration. The following information is provided by the Architectural Review Committee (ARC).

SPECIAL NOTES: 1) Instructions for preparing and submitting your project for review to the ARC are posted on the OILA website. 2) The applications will be reviewed in the order they are received. 3) The ARC review will be completed within 2 weeks. 4) **ASK BEFORE YOU ACT.** (Note: The ARC no longer holds meetings in-person/zoom meetings the 1st and 3rd Thursdays of the month)

<u>Date</u>	<u>Lot(s)</u>	<u>Block</u>	<u>Owner/POC/Address</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>In Compliance/ Approved</u>
11/13	452	8	Craig Gosselin 801 Tarpon Drive	Driveway	Yes
11/15	304	6	Salli Cumbie and Pittsburgh PusKARICH 614 Pelican Drive	Attached Garages	Yes
11/21	329	6	Fabio Giuriato 639 Pompano Drive	Solar Panels	Yes
11/23	387	7	Suzanne Glass-Troutman 710 Sailfish Drive	Driveway	Yes
11/23	392	7	Theresa Sampson 715 Sailfish Drive	Home Additions	Yes

THE CHRISTMAS 2021 HOUSE DECORATION CHALLENGE FOR OKALOOSA ISLAND IS 'ON'
 -- by Nancy Hunt

Don't forget to have your outside decorations done by December 17th for a chance to win one of the fabulous prizes graciously donated by our local businesses!! Last year we had a 4 hour fishing cruise for 6 on The Misa, a 2 night stay at The Island, one night at The Best Western, gift cards for Old Bay Steamer, Crab Trap, Floyd's, Rockin Tacos, Burrito del Sol, Anglers, Hightide, Wild Willies, wine from Cash Liquor, and tickets for The Gulfarium, The Science Center, and Southern Star cruises!

Decoration categories will be:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First, Second, Third • Most Artistic • Griswald Seen From Space | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • House Beautiful • Most Whimsical • Most Original |
|--|---|

If you know of a business that would be able to contribute a prize, please let me know. To simplify this year, we are not utilizing the wooden pallets. If anyone would like them for decorations or firewood, let me know.

This year, we will resume our food drive. Drop off will be in the lobby of our fire station. Last day to donate is Sunday, December 19.

May the joyful feeling of this season fill you! May we all celebrate its true meaning and be blessed with comforting peace and abounding love!

Thank you, Nancy Hunt
 850-855-9635

ISLAND RESIDENTS DECORATE THE WELCOME TRIANGLE AND THE SANTA ROSA BLVD MEDIANS FOR CHRISTMAS

Thanks to the following volunteers for helping with decorating this year:

- | | |
|---------------|-------------------|
| Jim Hendricks | Ron Tweedel |
| Nancy Hunt | April Hunt |
| Jim Bengier | Michelle Seitz |
| Noel Tweedel | Cynthia Henderson |
| Bob Seitz | |



(left to right) Jim Hendrix, Don Tweedel and Jim Bengier picking up at the storage location



(left to right) April Hunt & Scarlett Young show how to use the Santa Claus cut-outs.



(left) Alan & Carmen Parker. (Right) Scarlett Young & Nancy Hunt

(left to right) Scarlett Young & April Hunt.

→ April is the high steel decorator who did all the climbing.



WORLD WAR TWO IN AMERICA: WAR DOGS AND MARILYN MONROE

This ad was published in 1942. It was put out by Dogs for Defense asking Americans to donate (or enlist) their dogs to/with the Army for the war effort. (Editor's note - the ad shows poodles. I was thinking of dogs more like Steven King's "CUJO").



The Quartermaster Corps of the army took charge of turning these pets into soldiers. The U.S. Marines also trained handlers and canines to be soldiers in the Pacific during World War II.

At first there were over 300 breeds of dogs accepted into the program, but eventually the list was narrowed down to German Shepherd Dogs, Belgian Sheepdogs, Doberman Pinschers, Farm Collies and Giant Schnauzers. Of the 19,000 dogs screened for the program between 1942 and 1945, 45% were rejected.

In the beginning, civilian volunteers trained the recruits, but after the first training center opened in Front Royal, Virginia, the training was done by the Quartermasters Corps soldiers for the Army and the Marines trained their own canines.

The training took 12 weeks. It started with basic obedience and progressed to training with gas masks, muzzles, military vehicles, and gunfire.

HOW CLOSE DID "ROSIE THE RIVETER" COME TO BEING "MARILYN THE MACHINIST"

During WW2 Norma Jeane Dougherty (later Marilyn Monroe) worked in a defense factory making drones (photo to the right). She worked 10 hours a day and was paid \$20 a week. The job, in a way, may have started her rise to stardom. She won a \$50 war bond after she was



chosen "queen" of the company picnic. Later, she posed with a propeller and a Radioplane ID for a photograph in color by Pvt. David Conover of the Army's First Motion Picture Unit, who was assigned to shoot some Rosie the Riveter publicity pictures. The image, along with others helped bring fame to Dougherty, who soon change her name. Also, there was another link to her future—the officer who assigned the photographer to take her pictures was Captain Ronald Reagan. Just think – with changes in time, events, interactions and circumstances....



ROSIE THE RIVETER



MARILYN THE MACHINIST

COULD HAVE BECOME

WUZZLE PUZZLES

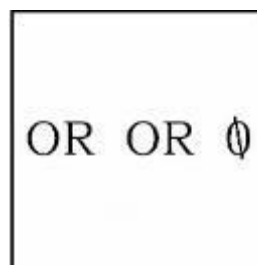
Wuzzle No. 1



Wuzzle No. 2



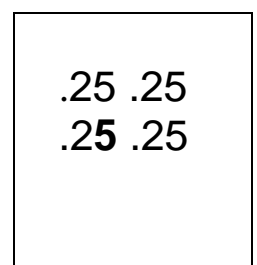
Wuzzle No. 3



Wuzzle No. 4



Wuzzle No. 5



DRAFT MINUTES – OKALOOSA ISLAND LEASEHOLDERS ASSOCIATION – NOVEMBER 8, 2021

CALL TO ORDER: Meeting called to order at 7:01 PM by **President David Sherry** at the Okaloosa Island Firehouse and via Zoom. David announced he connected the TV screen in the meeting room so that those at the Firehouse could see the Zoom participants. He asked for feedback on whether to continue this option at future hybrid meetings.

I. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: **President David Sherry** leads the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. ROLL: Board Members Present: **David Sherry (President), Rick Deckert (Vice President), John Donovan (Secretary), Brick Bradford, Ed Henderson, Jessie Hunt, Jack Pous.**

III. MINUTES: Secretary John Donovan made a motion to approve the draft October 11 membership meeting minutes, with one revision, changing “minutes” to “newsletters” under Announcements, item 1. Vice President Rick Deckert seconded the motion (passed 44-1, Paula Hudson opposed).

IV. TREASURER'S REPORT: Presented by President David Sherry on behalf of Treasurer Jim Simpson (See Attachment 1). OILA has 288 members. Secretary John Donovan made a motion, seconded by Director Jack Pous, to approve the October 11, 2021 Treasurer's Report and to reimburse Jim Simpson for expenses (passed 47-0).

V. COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Standing Committees

Architectural Report: President David Sherry stated the October ARC report is in the OIL Lantern.

VI. NEW BUSINESS:

1. President David Sherry read the first resolution published in the November OIL Lantern, “Resolved, that the Resolution adopted at the OILA Members Meeting of September 13, 2021, approving a donation of \$1,000 to the Okaloosa Island Fire Department for the purchase of two laryngoscopes, is hereby rescinded, because the donation is no longer needed or wanted.” Secretary John Donovan made a motion, seconded by Vice President Rick Deckert, to approve the resolution.

President Sherry said this motion is to clean up the OILA accounting records after Kathy Foster sent an e-mail notifying him the OILA \$1,000 donation was no longer needed or wanted. Kathy Foster and Paula Hudson objected to the vote. David then read aloud Kathy Foster's e-mail to him stating the OILA donation was no longer needed. Motion passed 38-3 (Carey Sue Beasley, Paul Beasley, Paula Hudson opposed).

2. President David Sherry read the second resolution published in the November OIL Lantern, “Resolved, that because the Northwest Florida Daily News newspaper has not been willing to print OILA's letter objecting to the Okaloosa County Board of County Commissioners' decision to proceed with the Santa Rosa Boulevard lanes reduction project, OILA is authorized to pay up to \$1,000 to purchase advertising in the newspaper in support of the OILA membership's position against the said lane reduction project.” Secretary John Donovan made a motion, seconded by Vice President Rick Deckert, to approve the resolution.

President Sherry stated after last month's Okaloosa County BCC meeting he had investigated options to publicize OILA's position in support of keeping Santa Rosa Boulevard's 4 driving lanes. In response to Mark Lillard's question why OILA was taking this action, Director Jack Pous offered to contact the newspaper's editor to find out why the OILA letter was rejected. Jack added our message to a wider audience could say “they could do it to you” or “you could be next”.

In response to a question by Lew Paul, David Sherry confirmed OILA can buy placement within the newspaper so that our ad is not buried.

Rebecca Sherry said newspaper advocacy ads were effective for another group in scaling back a proposed Fort Walton Beach tax increase. She made a friendly amendment, accepted by Secretary John Donovan and Vice President Rick Deckert, to modify the original motion to allow up to 14 days for Director Jack Pous to get the letter published prior to OILA purchasing newspaper advertising.

Director Brick Bradford related that at the most recent BCC meeting which he attended, Okaloosa Island property owners and residents spoke in favor of keeping driving lanes while the Fort Walton Beach city council members and the Greater Fort Walton Beach Chamber of Commerce board, which does not represent us, supported lane reduction. He was disappointed our district County Commissioner, Carolyn Ketchel, changed her public position to oppose Okaloosa Island at the eleventh hour. He encouraged OILA members to write letters to the editor opposing the planned Santa Rosa Boulevard driving lane reduction.

Nancy Hunt asked if the BCC was trying to save money, and several responded the proposed project costs \$10 million. She recalled Commissioner Ketchel saying at the OILA June meeting that if we did not want this, she would take it to Shalimar.

(November 8, 2021 Draft Minutes continued)

Farley Street and Lisa Johnson spoke in support of the lane reduction project, with Lisa calling it "reasonable".

Dick Olson spoke on 10 problems with the proposed Santa Rosa Boulevard lane destruction plan that he nicknamed "Hotel California Boulevard" because you can check in, but never leave.

Kenton Kruger suggested members use bloggers and blog posts to spread our message, adding that newspapers have fewer subscribers than in the past. President Sherry agreed OILA should expand our reach to be effective. He will post our no support for Santa Rosa Boulevard lane reduction message on the OILA website and direct Jim Simpson to send an e-mail blast to the membership.

There was a brief discussion on increasing the ad spend above \$1,000. Secretary John Donovan said that because the motion was noticed for \$1,000, additional spending could not be approved at this meeting.

President David Sherry read the revised motion, "Resolved, that because the Northwest Florida Daily News newspaper has not been willing to print OILA's letter objecting to the Okaloosa County Board of County Commissioners' decision to proceed with the Santa Rosa Boulevard lanes reduction project, OILA is authorized to pay up to \$1,000 to purchase advertising in support of the OILA membership's position against the said lane reduction project. Prior to the ad spending, Director Jack Pous will have up to 2 weeks to reach out to the Northwest Florida Daily News to attempt free placement or determine the reasons it will not be forthcoming." Secretary John Donovan and Vice President Rick Deckert concurred with the revised motion.

The motion passed 34-7 (Carey Sue Beasley, Paul Beasley, Kathy Foster, Paula Hudson, Nancy Hunt, Mel Mattison, Farley Street opposed).

VII. ANNOUNCEMENTS:

1. President Sherry gave an update on the Okaloosa Island temporary groins, sand fencing and volunteer dune planting. The temporary groins and sand fencing are scheduled for November installation.
2. Cynthia Henderson reminded the membership the importance of all Okaloosa Islanders to support each other, regardless if they own property in the form of a single family home or as a condo. President David Sherry agreed, and used the example of the northside accessways where home owners and condo owners stuck together, although stopping accessway development is a higher priority for home owners. President Sherry also noted that the County uses any division on the Island against us and against our best interest.
3. President Sherry said the OILA Architectural Review Committee forms and new procedure are on the OILA website.
4. President Sherry announced that at the November 2 BCC meeting, the Okaloosa County Commission granted a variance to the Okaloosa Island Protective Covenants and Restrictions to permit a homeowner to build into the fifteen foot side setback. He said that public hearing triggered a discussion where the BCC directed the County Attorney to investigate how to eliminate the Covenants on Okaloosa Island. County Commissioners Nathan Boyles and Carolyn Ketchel appeared to be leading the effort. President Sherry mentioned OILA v. Hayes, a case in which OILA sued Okaloosa County and OILA won. In that case, upheld at the First District Court of Appeals, the judge ruled the Covenants are a contract, and the County cannot change a contract without the consent of the other party to that contract, in this case the leaseholders. A discussion followed on the importance of the Covenants to protecting the character of the neighborhood including no short term rentals in the B1 single family home section, requiring majority of owners in the block approval to split lots, etc., and the 75 foot building height limit.
5. President Sherry said at the end of the November 2 BCC meeting, the County Commissioners decided by consensus to limit public participation by Zoom at future meetings. He said the BCC provides very short notice of their agenda, and that this new restriction will make it more difficult for citizens' voices to be heard.
6. Paula Hudson asked who to contact to report short term rental violations. President Sherry said Lisa Payton of Okaloosa County is our Code Enforcement contact. Vice President Rick Deckert and Director Jack Pous suggested Ms. Payton's contact information be included in the next OIL Lantern. President Sherry agreed, and added it is important that the person contacting Code Enforcement have first hand knowledge of the alleged violation to assist Ms. Payton in enforcement. Director Brick Bradford said that having screen shots of VRBO and Airbnb is useful when contacting Code Enforcement.
7. Nancy Hunt asked that OILA send an official letter to the local Realtors organization, the Emerald Coast Association of Realtors, including a copy of the Covenants, and highlighting short term rentals are not allowed in sections of Okaloosa Island. Secretary John Donovan said this action would have to wait until the next meeting since it was not noticed in the agenda. Director Jack Pous said, and Director Ed Henderson concurred, that any Realtor incorrectly conveying to a buyer that short term rentals are allowed could face significant liability.
8. Nancy Hunt asked for volunteers to help her decorate Okaloosa Island for Christmas.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT: Rebecca Sherry made a motion, seconded by Secretary John Donovan, to adjourn the meeting at 8:35 PM (passed 33-1, Scott Standish opposed).

John S. Donovan, OILA Secretary

Attachment 1: Treasurer's Report – November 8, 2021

MEMBERSHIP TOTAL: 288 (TENTATIVE NUMBER – MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS STILL COMING IN)

October 11, 2021 TOTAL BALANCE: \$ 27,662.01

ASSOCIATION DISCRETIONARY FUND BALANCE AS OF October 11., 2021\$ 25,426.68

RECEIPTS SINCE LAST REPORT:Membership dues..... \$ 720.00
U.S. Mail.....\$ 64.00
Total.....\$ 784.00

EXPENDITURES SINCE LAST REPORT.....No Expenditures

EXPENSES PENDING APPROVAL FOR PAYMENT:

- Payment to reimburse Jim Simpson for postage to mail the November 2021 OIL Lantern
(50 copies at 58 cents each).....\$ 29.00

**ASSOCIATION DISCRETIONARY FUND BALANCE AFTER RECEIPTS,
EXPENDITURES & EXPENSES PENDING APPROVAL FOR PAYMENT AS OF
November 8, 2021\$ 26,181.68**

BEAUTIFICATION FUND BALANCE AS OF OCTOBER 11, 2021..... \$ 1,421.28

BEAUTIFICATION FUND EXPENDITURES SINCE LAST REPORTNo Expenditures

BEAUTIFICATION FUND BALANCE AS OF NOVEMBER 8, 2021.....\$ 1,421.28

CHRISTMAS DECORATING FUND BALANCE AS OF OCTOBER 11, ,2021\$ 814.05

CHRISTMAS DECORATING FUND EXPENDITURES SINCE LAST REPORT.....No Expenditures

CHRISTMAS DECORATING FUND BALANCE AS OF NOVEMBER 8, 2021\$ 814.05

SUMMARY: October 11,2021 Fund Balances

-- Association's Discretionary Fund Balance. \$ 26,181.68
-- Beautification Fund Balance.....\$ 1,421.28
-- Christmas Decorating Fund Balance (Donations).....\$ 814.05

Respectfully submitted, Jime Simpson, Treasurer **TOTAL FUNDS BALANCE..... \$ 28,417.01**

A Tale of Competing Priorities: David VS Goliath?

Okaloosa Island has been in the crosshairs of competing interests and priorities; those of Island residents who seek to preserve our quality of life, and those of condo and hotel developers, VRBO investors, businesses, FWB City Council, FWB Chamber of Commerce, County Commissioners, and the Tourist Development Department, all of which either seek personal financial gain, or increased revenues spawned by increased tourism on a county level. The current target is transformative change of Santa Rosa BLVD (SRB). Specifically, eliminate the current traffic management model in favor of a trendy multimodal concept.



- by Brick Bradford

Hypocrisy

Following a public workshop dedicated to outlining alternative solutions for improving SRB in Aug 2020, our own County Commissioner repeatedly stated that she heard the voice of her constituents and promised she would not consider any proposal that included a reduction in the number of lanes on SRB. This was our County Commissioner's recurring public promise for the following 12 months. Yet against the will of her constituents, our Commissioner has embraced a multimodal transportation concept that increases pedestrian, bicycle, and alternative vehicle lanes at the expense of a normal transportation avenue that provides the sole access to condos, residential neighborhoods, and beach accesses. While the Public Works proposal is aesthetically pleasing to the eye, *these*

(continued on next page)

changes increase total traffic density as it will not reduce the total number of automobiles transiting SRB.

A Government Unconcerned: A Collective Voice Ignored

Commissioner Ketchel has committed Island residents to increased traffic density by eliminating a center lane that enables vehicles to make left turns into one of the 50 plus condos on the South side of SRB. Likewise, a single Eastbound Lane severely limits vehicles from merging onto SRB's current righthand lane from these Condos and makes the prospect of turning left onto SRB from the Northside residential communities much more challenging with a steady stream of cars moving along a single lane. This resident will need lots of luck while towing a 40ft trailer from my house onto SRB enroute to Marler Park where I launch my boat.

The argument from private citizens who *actually* live on the island is not that we are against aesthetically and functionally improving SRB. Rather, we are desperate to improve SRB in a way that addresses habitual flooding, collapsing sidewalks and any other improvements that does not increase traffic congestion that already exists. As one neighbor adroitly asked our County Commissioners during the 19 Oct BCC meeting, "name one community that is actively pursuing a goal of reducing the number of traffic lanes anywhere?" His point was clear, traffic density corresponds to population density, and both are increasing! Eliminating a center turn lane and reducing East bound traffic to a single lane is not just counterintuitive, it is reckless and irresponsible.

Yet over the last several years, those of us who call Okaloosa Island home have been dismissed by our County Commissioners who have not sought to preserve the unique lifestyle and quality of life we have historically enjoyed. Instead, members of our BCC have sought to exploit the short two-mile corridor that runs the length of SRB all in effort to maximize tourism at the expense of those who *actually* live on the Island.

County Fidelity and Special Interests

We have experienced multiple occasions where our BCC has acted in a way that gives all appearances of fidelity to commercial interests over those of the individual. For example, Island residents still struggle with daily incursions and abuses by Beach Vendors for shared beach access. Nathan Boyles continues to aggressively clamor for turning our Northside freeways into public parking lots, which is in direct defiance of the Protective Covenants and Restrictions for our residential neighborhoods. Why does a North County Commissioner have such keen interest in Okaloosa Island? Does it have anything to do with the fact that he received over 30 percent of his reelection campaign donations from Destin businesses? More recently, Boyles suggested Okaloosa County eliminate Okaloosa Island's Protective Covenants and Restrictions, which County staff has been directed to evaluate. Make no mistake, the threats are real!

Undeniably, our voice has been drowned out by condo and hotel developers, VRBO investors, businesses, FWB City Council and their respective influence over our elected leaders who have ceded to these varied entities' interest for personal financial gain or increased tourism dollars. Virtually all of those who spoke in favor of reducing the number of lanes on SRB do not *actually* live on the Island. Only one person who *actually* lives on the Island spoke in favor of the project. The question I keep asking our County Commissioners is, ***when is enough tourism, enough?***

How is it that a well-organized parade of FWB Council members, Chamber of Commerce, hotel and condo developers, and other business owners suddenly and very publicly affirm the initiative to improve SRB within two months of its surprise unveiling? Why has the Fort Walton Beach City Council involved themselves and put their hand on the scale in an area of the county they do not represent? These circumstances strongly suggest governmental manipulation against the people who have already considered and decidedly rejected this SRB "improvement" proposal. What is going on behind the veil with our elected County Government? Why was the Daily News so reluctant to publish the view of OILA?

Frankly, it feels like a proverbial David versus Goliath scenario where our limited voice is completely ignored and cannot compete with those of condo and hotel developers, etc who likely wield enormous influence over our elected representatives as they tout their many contributions for the "greater good" of our community. In truth, the rich get richer and county coffers increase at the total exploitation of limited natural resources and the expense of private citizens who just want to live a simple life and enjoy equal representation and protection from our elected leaders. It appears this dynamic has emboldened our elected leaders to commit themselves to support this initiative that defies the will of the people directly impacted. Still not convinced. One business owner in favor of this plan essentially said as much, he said "going forward with this project is good for Okaloosa County and those who live on Okaloosa Island will get used to it!"

REPORTING CODE OR COVENANTS VIOLATIONS TO OKALOOSA COUNTY

Code or Covenant violations should be reported to Lisa Payton of Okaloosa County Code Enforcement at Lpayton@myokaloosa.com or 850-609-6192.

WUZZLE PUZZLES ANSWERS

Wuzzle No. 1



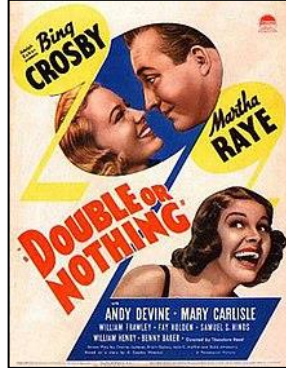
Covered Wagon

Wuzzle No. 2



Just in Case

Wuzzle No. 3



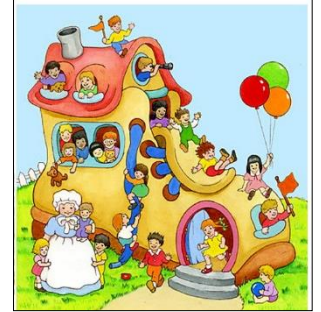
Double or Nothing

Wuzzle No. 4



Vanished Into Thin Air

Wuzzle No. 5



Close Quarters