Table of Contents

1. President’s Message
2. Economic Development Update
3. Government Affairs Update
4. Lee County “Business Snapshot” Survey
5. Builders Hail Late Legislation Change
6. Protecting Voters’ Rights
7. Growth Management Reform Passed
8. Bonita Springs Economic Development Council Investment Levels
9. Bonita Springs Economic Development Council Investment Form
President’s Message

On the Economic Development front we are gaining traction, having just elected a board of directors and set a date for strategic organizational planning. I was pleased to spend two days in Atlanta last month learning the latest tools and best practices for setting up our Business Retention and Expansion program. I feel grateful that I was able to attend and know that this knowledge will be helpful to the Council as they form a retention program scaled to the size and unique qualities of our marketplace.

We continue to work hand in hand with the Fort Myers Partnership staff, helping to identify local retirees who may have connections to businesses in other areas of the country. This countywide program, “Together We Can” seeks to connect the partnership staff with companies who may want to relocate to the area. It is in this spirit of regionalism that we continue to work to diversify our economy with year round high paying positions which we know will help us to weather future fluctuations in the world economy.

Once again, I was delighted reading through the Bonita Springs Area Chamber of Commerce Foundation’s scholarship applications. The school systems in both Lee and Collier County are turning out very bright and capable high school seniors of whom the community should be proud. This year’s inspiring winners and all our past recipients are part of our workforce development efforts which we know will pay off in the future. To date, the Foundation has given out more than $68,000 in scholarship monies to deserving local graduates.

Enjoy this edition of the Government Affairs and Economic Development Report which is chock full of items relating to legislation that passed before the close of session this month.

Until next time,

Christine Ross

President & CEO

Bonita Springs Area Chamber of Commerce
The Bonita Springs Economic Development Council Investors unanimously approved its nominating committee’s slate of candidates for Board of Directors at the Thursday, April 21, 2011 EDC meeting. In its first order of business, the Board voted a charter group of officers. The Bonita Springs EDC Board of Directors, its officers, companies and locations represented are listed as follows:

1. **Chairman** Richard Mancini, Esq., Henderson, Franklin, Starnes & Holt, Bonita Springs
2. **Vice Chairman** Joe Ariola, Key Bank, Fort Myers and Naples
3. **Treasurer** Joe Murgalo, Hyatt Regency Coconut Point Resort and Spa, Estero
4. **Secretary** Vince Modarelli, Naples News Media Group, Bonita Springs and Naples
5. Jan Conrad, Owen Ames Kimball, Fort Myers
6. James Dati, Esq. of Bond, Schoeneck & King, PLLC., Naples
7. Andrew DeSalvo, Premier Commercial Properties of Southwest Florida, Bonita Springs
8. Regina Eberwein, Lee Memorial Health System, Fort Myers and Bonita Springs
9. John Kozak, FineMark Bank, Estero
10. Bob Lienesch, Estero Council of Community Leaders, Estero
11. Mayor Ben Nelson, Nelson Marine Construction, Bonita Springs
12. Marjorie Rubacky, Retired Business Executive, Bonita Springs

The Bonita Springs Economic Development Council is organized exclusively for the purpose of supporting and growing existing businesses, attracting new business and enhancing the business climate in the Bonita Springs, Florida area in an effort to create a more sustainable and diversified economic base for the benefit of the surrounding community. **The EDC meets on the second Wednesday of each month in the Bonita Springs Area Chamber Board room.** If you are interested in becoming a member of the Council, contact any of the Board members above or Christine Ross at 239-992-2943.
Government Affairs Update

Now that the video about our national debt has gone viral and people are all asking where their Lotus sports car is, it is time, as Americans, Floridians and Bonitans - or do you call them a Bonita Springer? - anyway, it is time we ensure that we are all spending wisely. Now that they have all passed and for your information and trivia knowledge, the Florida State budget has been set at $70.4 billion, or about $3,800 for every Florida resident. By comparison, the Federal budget is about $12,250 per US resident, Lee County spends about $3,200 per resident and the City of Bonita’s budget is about $600 per city resident. This puts things into perspective; the City budget is almost equal to what the University of Montana received in Federal earmarks this year. On a bittersweet note, we are all preparing to say farewell to Gary Price, the only city manager we have known since incorporating in 1999. Gary has done a tremendous job for the citizens of Bonita Springs and we will be sad to see him leave, although we are happy for him to get more time to pursue his hobbies in retirement. We will be welcoming Carl Schwing (and I must apologize as I cannot say that without the sophomoric tone of Mike Myers ala Wayne’s World) in June and, word on the street is that Mr. Schwing will follow in Gary’s footsteps nicely. Mr. Schwing, we look forward to working with you. Until then, party on Wayne...

Scott Duval
Board of Directors
Governments Affairs Liaison
Lee County "Business Snapshot" Survey

As previously announced, I invite you to participate in a business survey conducted by the Horizon Council and the Lee County Economic Development Office. The "Business Snapshot" is produced by the Communications Task Force of the Horizon Council and will be used quarterly as a tool to identify business climate issues in Lee County. Feedback will be provided to business leaders and the Board of County Commissioners in aggregate form only. Your answers are strictly confidential and will remain anonymous.

This on-line survey is designed to take less than 5 minutes to complete. All results will be tabulated and shared with all respondents within 3 - 5 days following the closing of the survey.

The link to the survey is http://questionweb.com/84659/
The Pass Code is: Horizon2011

Please take a few minutes to complete the questions. If you are the designated representative of a Horizon Council member organization; it is your responsibility to forward the survey to your membership. Remember….everyone’s input is valuable…everyone’s input is invited.

We will compile the data and return the results to you within 5 business days. The survey costs nothing…and the results are free. All of the results and unedited comments will be shared with the staff of Lee County Government and with each of the Lee County Commissioners.

If you would like additional information on this survey, feel free to contact me directly at spontius@water.net, or to contact Jennifer Berg at jberg@leegov.com.

I look forward to your ideas and input…and thank you in advance for participating in this survey.

Steve Pontius
Environmental groups called it a stunning setback.

Developers called it a positive step.

One thing is clear: A bill sent Thursday by state lawmakers for Gov. Rick Scott’s signature makes a 180-degree change in how future Southwest Florida developments will be approved or denied. House Bill 993 flips several decades of legal precedent on its tail by requiring challengers to prove why permitting a proposed development would harm the environment, instead of the developer proving why it wouldn’t.

"I think it's shocking and appalling, and shame on our governor if he signs that bill," said Nancy Payton, Southwest Florida field representative for the Florida Wildlife Federation. "I'm sure he's got his pencil sharpened," Payton added. Combined with some of the other pending legislation, "it looks like a free-for-all on behalf of those who want to develop and want to negatively impact the environment," Payton said.

The bill will make it extremely difficult to challenge any growth-management decisions, could be detrimental to water quality, and increase the burden on the area's water supply, said Andrew McElwaine, president and CEO of the Conservancy of Southwest Florida.

"Just when you think it's not going to get worse, it gets worse," McElwaine said. "It's really quite stunning, and it will have severe repercussions for the people of Southwest Florida."

In the meantime, the state Department of Community Affairs is being whittled, and with it resources for environmental oversight and the checks and balances that manage growth.

"We're not in a deep recession because we didn't have enough development," McElwaine said.

But supporters say developers are tired of being tied up for months and sometimes years in court by activists who in some cases live hundreds of miles from the projects they target.

The Lutgert Companies, developer of the Naples Park Shore neighborhood - luxury high-rise condominiums and numerous commercial projects such as the trendy Mercato shopping and dining center in North Naples - welcomes the measure.
"We think this is a positive change to the process, as the governmental approval process certainly doesn't work well in its current form," Dougall McCorkle, Lutgert senior vice president, said in an email. "And the 'presumption of guilt,' as per the current process, isn't an equitable starting point."

However, "There does need to be some kind of counterbalance to make sure our environment isn't adversely impacted, particularly in large-scale developments and industrial uses," McCorkle wrote.

Representatives of several other local developers either couldn't be reached Thursday or couldn't immediately comment.

Democratic critics labeled the bill, amended on the fly and passed 79-36, a sneak attack mounted in the hectic final days of the legislative session.

"We are about to change 30 years of environmental law," warned Rep. Scott Randolph, D-Orlando. The legislation makes such a fundamental change that it will cost the state its delegated authority to enforce the federal Clean Water Act, he said.
Senator Nelson spoke out against a controversial bill in the Florida Legislature (HB 1355), which would significantly reduce early voting days and change voter registration requirements. Senator Nelson wrote Governor Scott asking him to veto the law and also requested that the U.S. Justice Department open an investigation into the law since five counties in Florida are under the Voting Rights Act which requires preclearance from the Justice Department before any changes are made to election rules.

### Ensuring the Survival of American Citrus

Senator Nelson introduced the Citrus Disease Research and Development Trust Fund Act (S.903), a bill to establish a Citrus Disease Research and Development Trust Fund for seven years, consisting of revenues from duties on imported citrus and citrus products. The purpose of the bill is to establish a dedicated source of funding for scientific research aimed at addressing diseases, domestic and invasive pests, and other challenges to the U.S. citrus industry and disseminating the research findings to the citrus industry. Currently, citrus research is funded through annual appropriations. The research would aim to find a cure for imported diseases such as “greening,” which threatens to wipe out the entire stock of citrus trees in the United States.

### Hurricane Bill Clears Committee

On the heels of devastating weather-related natural disasters in the South, and with hurricane season just around the corner, the Senate Commerce Committee favorably reported out S. 692, Senator Nelson’s National Hurricane Research Initiative (NHRI) Act of 2011. The bill would provide specific goals for increased hurricane preparedness through coordinated research of hurricane predicting, resilient infrastructure development, mitigation of impact on coastal environments, and improvement in public communications. It would coordinate a multi-agency effort to study hurricane intensification, storm surge, rainfall, inland flooding, engineered structures, disaster response, and evacuation planning. The Committee also reported favorably on a bill that Nelson originally cosponsored, the Coral Reef Conservation Amendments Act (S. 46).

### Helping Cities Do More with Less

Senator Nelson filed legislation that would allow Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) recipients to spend more of their funds on public services. CDBG grants were cut by 16% in the FY ’11 budget compromise, and the
existing cap for spending on public services is 15%. S. 887 would authorize an increase in the public service cap of up to 25%, giving grant recipients more flexibility in how they use their funds to help residents.

**Protecting Servicemembers from Mortgage Abuses**

Senator Nelson is a cosponsor of the Protecting Servicemembers from Mortgage Abuses Act of 2011, S. 486. This legislation encourages compliance with the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA) by increasing criminal and civil penalties for mortgage abuses, including felonies for unlawful eviction, foreclosure, or seizure. The bill also amends SCRA to extend the period of protection against mortgage sale or foreclosure from 9 months to 24 months, giving servicemembers time to readjust to civilian life.

**Muscogee Recognition**

Senator Nelson reintroduced a bill (S.880) to recognize the Muscogee Indians as an official tribe. The tribe, known as Eastern Creek Indians, resides in Walton County and has been seeking recognition through administrative means for over 20 years. Unfortunately, the Bureau of Indian Affairs has been very slow to act. This has required the extraordinary step of legislative recognition. There is precedent for other tribes who have had problems being recognized, but the bill still faces a long road through the Indian Affairs Committee and eventually through the House and Senate.

**Reducing Administrative Burdens for Businesses**

Senator Nelson voted for the Comprehensive 1099 Taxpayer Protection and Repayment of Exchange Subsidy Overpayments Act of 2011 (P.L. 112-9), which fully repeals expanded information reporting requirements. The bill is fully paid for. Senator Nelson has consistently supported full repeal of these onerous tax reporting requirements, as they would have needlessly increased administrative costs for many local businesses. The bill became law on April 14, 2011.

**Mayport Carrier**

Senator Nelson sent a letter and a copy of a recent General Accounting Office (GAO) report to the Senate Armed Services Committee to reiterate that, despite a House subcommittee markup striking $30 million in planning and construction funding, cost should not be an impediment to establishing a new homeport for a nuclear carrier at Naval Station Mayport. The GAO report from March of this year found that costs are estimated to be between $258.7 million and $356.0 million, significantly lower than the Navy’s estimate of $537.6 million. Moreover,
Senator Nelson pointed out that in recent testimony to Congress the Navy reiterated its commitment to completing the move, which is required by the definitive 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review.

**Protecting Taxpayers from Identity Theft**

Senator Nelson sent a letter to the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration urging an investigation into the rising level of tax fraud perpetrated through identity theft. In 2010, the Federal Trade Commission received over 250,000 complaints of identity theft connected to tax fraud. Recent investigations in Florida have uncovered online tax scams that use stolen identities to defraud taxpayers of their federal and state refunds. In response to Senator Nelson’s letter, the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration recently initiated an investigation into the matter.

**Honoring Recipients of the Distinguished Flying Cross**

Senator Nelson is a cosponsor of the Distinguished Flying Cross National Memorial Act, which designates a memorial at March Field Air Museum in Riverside, California in honor of members of the Armed Forces who have distinguished themselves in aerial flight. He also signed a letter to the Energy and Natural Resources Committee asking for a hearing on this legislation; there are five chapters of the Distinguished Flying Cross Society in Florida.

**Honoring Special Forces**

The Senate adopted S.Res.159, a resolution honoring the members of the military and intelligence community who carried out the mission that killed Osama Bin Laden.

**Palestinian Unity Agreement**

Along with 26 other Democratic Senators, Senator Nelson wrote President Obama to express concern about the Fatah-Hamas unity government and the implications of such an agreement on the Middle East peace effort and on U.S. relations with the Palestinian Authority. The letter also highlights Hamas’s condemnation of the killing of Osama Bin Laden by the U.S. to underscore Hamas’s ideology and support for terrorism. It urges President Obama to make it clear to President Abbas that Palestinian Authority participation in a unity government with an unreformed Hamas will jeopardize its relationship with the United States – including its receipt of U.S. aid.
Growth Management Reform Passed

On Friday evening, the Florida Legislature passed growth management reform. Click here for the summary of the bill prepared by the lobbyists for development interests and the Chamber. The Florida League of Cities supported it.

If you just search for HB 7207, you won’t find it online because there is a different bill with that number – very confusing. It was a conference bill.

Links to the amendments passed, which I am told comprise the final bill, are below:

http://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2011/7129/Amendment/195750/PDF
http://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2011/7129/Amendment/603424/PDF
http://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2011/7129/Amendment/865646/PDF

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Bonita Springs Economic Development Council

**Investment Levels**

**Industry Team $25,000**
All benefits that Corporate Team receives plus:
Ability to participate on advisory board
Month-long highlight on EDC website as Investor of the Month

**Corporate Team $10,000**
All benefits that Enterprise Team receives plus:
Enhanced company profile up to 100 words on EDC website

**Enterprise Team $5,000**
All benefits that Business Team members receive plus:
Complete company information including logo and one staff contact
Link to website on EDC webpage

**Business Team $2,500**
All benefits that Investor receives plus:
Recognition on banner at EDC functions
Company name and contact information on EDC webpage

**Investor $1000**
Company name of EDC webpage
Company name and link to website in the bi-weekly e-brief at time of renewal
Ability to post news releases on the website and events in bi-weekly e-brief
Bonita Springs Economic Development Council
Investor Pledge Sheet

Company___________________________________________________________

Name______________________________________________________________

Address____________________________________________________________

City, State__________________________________________Zip______________

Telephone__________________________Cell_____________________________

Email address________________________________________________________

Investor Level Preference (please check the box)

Individual Investor $1000     ☐
Small Business $2,500        ☐
Enterprise Team $5,000      ☐
Corporate Team $10,000      ☐
Industry Team $25,000      ☐

I ______________________________ of ________________________________
pledge the above amount to the Bonita Springs Economic Development Council BSEDC to support their program of
work for the 2010 fiscal year. I understand that this is a one year pledge and that the organization expects payment
in full. Please make checks payable to the Bonita Springs Economic Development Council.

Signature_________________________________________ Date______________

BSEDC Representative____________________________________________________

cc#____________________________________________________exp_____/______

Name on Card__________________________________________________________