

Memo

To: UCCA Board Members
From: Mike Swinford
Date: 06/28/2021
Re: Update on Swin's UCCA Initiatives

Hi all,

I'm looking forward to our board meeting this afternoon and catching up on things. Below is an update on areas I'm working on.

Conservation Efforts

This is still slow-moving regarding collaboration with SCCF as Ryan Orgera, their Executive Director, is out on paternity leave. He's back in office on July 6th. I've had a couple recent emails with Ryan and he and SCCF are still very much on board for assisting with conservation efforts on North Captiva. More on this over the next couple months

Island Access Fund

I am still vetting out various paths for island access. I think it is a foregone conclusion there is no financially viable way for UCCA, on its own, to purchase outright a properly zoned dockage parcel or properly zoned land parcel in which to build a dock.

Any path will require either collaboration with another entity or further fundraising from the membership and/or community. Having said that, I believe there are several potential paths in which to collaborate either in the form of a long-term lease or possible UCCA investment into a new dock project to gain member access.

Potential dock partners: Mainstay, Verona, Tortuga, Dunes Homeowners Lot, New ownership of commercial lot on Pieces Of Eight.

Safe Harbor Marinas Treehouses Development

I'm behind the original timeline for launching these town halls and survey due to the process of obtaining open records requests with Lee County. I've been working the past two months to get any/all communication between those involved with the Safe Harbor development and the county. I identified 5 external people and 14 county employees who may have had communication regarding the proposed development.

I was notified this past Friday that the county has finalized my request. The last step was them going through each communication and redacting any potential personal information. They are mailing me a CD with all correspondence. I feel reviewing this correspondence to pull out information is important prior to having the town halls as it would be unproductive to have the town halls only to discover a treasure trove of new information afterwards. New rough timeline for the townhalls below:

Schedule

Mid-July – begin notices of Zoom Meeting 1 to educate.

July 21 – Zoom Meeting 1

August 2 – begin notices of Zoom Meeting 2 to educate

August 11 – Zoom Meeting 2

August 18 – send Survey – collect through August 31st (create sense of urgency)

September – analyze survey data – create report

October 1 – release report to community / send to Safe Harbor

October – November – December – Town Hall Zooms with Safe Harbor

Lee County Sheriff's Office Town Hall

On May 19th we held the first UCCA Zoom Town Hall with the Lee County Sheriff's Office. We had both Lieutenant Mike Sawicki and Deputy Chris Lusk on the Zoom to answer the most common questions that arise on our island regarding the LCSO – from golf carts to drones.

I feel the Town Hall was a major success with over 50 dialed in participants, many were spousal couples, and several were larger groups of islanders who got together to view. I estimate we had upwards of 80 individual participants. Many engaged with questions and comments for Mike and Chris.

Post Town Hall, David did a great job of posting the Zoom to the UCCA website and Bill and David excellently cataloged the video so anyone who wishes can jump to the specific topic discussed. 21 people have viewed the video since the Town Hall.

This piece will serve as a great educational tool for the entire island with a preserved video with answers directly from our LCSO for these ongoing questions. It will be easy to direct islanders with these questions to the Town Hall page on the UCCA website.

Infrastructure: LCEC

On June 9th I had a call with Tricia Dorn with LCEC. She is the LCEC account executive covering all North Captiva. It was very easy to reach her, and she had much great information for me.

Power Outages

LCEC is very aware of the increase in power outages on the island over the past couple years. They've been seeing the major rise in incidents and are acting.

They currently have LCEC surveyors and environmental people working on the island. They are marking where all current lines are as they are about to replace every enclosure on the island, including the underground cables. The core work of this project should start within 2 months and is scheduled to be complete by end of year. We're basically about to get all new electrical equipment island-wide and LCEC will have a much better map of all their service on the island.

LCEC Substation

Additionally LCEC is looking into the possibility of building an unmanned substation on the island. As we all know - everything and everyone must get here by boat. When there are issues - they not only have to get their crew over but gathering the equipment and bringing it over is a chore as well.

The substation would likely house all equipment and supplies they might need when over here - and would house a small vehicle - most likely something like their van sitting on the NCIC area now. They currently do not have a land parcel for this - early stages for this project - but something they are vetting out.

LCEC Town Hall

I have asked Tricia if she would be up to doing a Zoom "Town Hall" with the island sometime in the next couple months so everyone can hear about the work LCEC plans on the island and to field questions from the community. She said "of course". I'd like to plan this Town Hall for late August.

Island Trash Problem

On June 14th I had a call with a couple of our Lee County Assistant County Managers (Glen Salyer and Peter Winton) and our Director of Community Development (David Loveland). Deputy County Manager David Harner was scheduled to be on but had to leave town unexpectedly.

One of the main topics we discussed is our island trash problem, the lack of waste management assistance from the county yet the overabundance of code enforcement for waste management issues many times caused by illegal dumping. The island must come up with better solutions for waste management beyond just household trash, to include horticulture and junk. The solution is not turning our neighbors into Code Enforcement.

After some robust conversation, the County Managers have connected me with Joshua Malo who heads up Municipal Service Benefit Units (MSBU) for the county. I believe it is time for the community to look at the potential of an MSBU to modernize waste management on the island. This process will take education and then a petition process to have the county do the legwork on vetting out potential solutions the MSBU would cover. After that work, there would be a formal petition process of islanders to create (or reject) the MSBU. I'd like to take on this initiative and have it be an UCCA initiative.

Problem Areas:

- Island vendors illegally dumping waste on empty lots (usually horticulture)

- Island homeowners using other homeowner's trash bins for their own trash
- Island homeowners and/or vendors dumping junk on other homeowner's lots and empty lots (vacuum cleaners, washing machines, old patio furniture and horticulture)
- Island guests, employees and homeowners littering, both intentionally and un-intentionally.
- Lack of efficient, timely and affordable options to remove both horticulture waste and junk.
- No uniformity in ensuring all homeowners/residents are paying for trash services.

Community

This is a community issue, and we really need to come together as a community to find **consensus** to solve the issue. If we are going to approach the trash issue as an "us versus them" problem by blaming renters or homeowners who rent for all the problems, we'll never make progress. Every cross-section of "islander" contributes to this problem even if individually we know we do not. Residents, Snowbirds, Homeowners who rent, Businesses, Employees, Contractors and Guests are all contributors to our waste problems.

As many of you also know, recently a couple of homeowners drove around making a list of "piles of vegetation" and under cover of the fire department got that list turned into Lee County Code Enforcement with 36 property owners receiving certified notices of violation. This is not a community building process and does zero to help solve the problem. It is disappointing neighbors would do this to each other. Most of these violations were created by illegal dumping or from island vendors not having the capacity to deal with the waste in a timely fashion. Ironically these same homeowners, during their sloppy work, accidentally turned themselves in and received their own violation letter.

We need to begin constructive and civil dialogue regarding solutions.

Taxes

Anytime discussions begin about large scale issues like these terms like "we pay taxes for this" start flying around. Let's be clear. All of us pay exactly zero taxes for waste management. You will not find one line item on your property taxes regarding waste. What you do pay for is schools, the Lee general fund that funds everything from law enforcement to other community services that mainly serve the mainland but that you have use of, the fire district, mosquito control etc.

Are there services you pay taxes for that you do not use? Of course, but they are available to you. I'm not going to list all those services here but if anyone would like a breakdown, I'm happy to send it to you. Are there services you do not realize you use? Absolutely. Like the Lee County roads you use when you are off-island and the entirety of the county itself from building development to code enforcement. The same goes anywhere you live in the U.S.

Let's be clear. You currently pay zero taxes for waste management or removal. You get what you pay for (or your neighbor pays for). If you paid taxes, then you rightly should expect that someone besides you should be handling our issues.

Horticulture Dump

Let's talk quickly about the horticulture part of the issue and it's a large part of the issue and seems to be a sticking point for our code enforcement list neighbors. It's obvious there is not adequate capacity in number of vendors who support our island for removal of horticulture debris. Many of these vendors

take money from homeowners to either chip or remove the waste and then haul it off and illegally dump it on empty lots or never return to complete the job. Are there some good vendors on the island? Absolutely. Enough or them? No.

A simple solution would be for us to create a horticulture dump on the island much like the one Safety Harbor has. Unfortunately, I went down this path with Dirk Danley in Lee County Zoning earlier this year. We cannot have a horticulture lot on the island because they are zoned “light industrial” and that type of zoning will never be allowed on a bridgeless barrier island. The reason is the heat inside the piles of chipped vegetation gets so high it’s a major fire hazard and those type operations constantly must move and water the piles to prevent spontaneous combustion.

Safety Harbor has one, why can’t the rest of us? Safety Harbor is a PUD and it’s possible their horticulture lot is grandfathered into their development. Regardless they seemingly do a good job of keeping their horticulture under control and it would be up to the fire chief to oversee their horticulture operation from a safety standpoint. I spoke with Rick Fox about the island-wide issue and while he’d love to help, the size of their operation cannot manage the waste of the entire island.

So, if we can’t haul our horticulture off to an island dump, what are the other solutions? Chip it in place or remove it from the island. Many of us have our vegetation chipped on our lots. Some reuse it as mulch and spread it back on our own properties and some leave it in piles. Unfortunately, per science, those piles of chipped mulch are just as much a fire hazard as the original piles of vegetation. The other solution is to have it removed from the island and taken to the dump, just as mainlanders can have their vegetation picked up weekly and hauled off. That solution would be best from both a “fire safety” and beautification standpoint. But that will take money – and money from every single property owner and business.

Trash Service

Most, and I stress the word “most”, of us homeowners pay for household trash service to have our daily waste picked up weekly by the likes of Team Davenport, Safety Harbor Club or NCIC. I pay \$400/quarter to Team Davenport which in their calculation is to cover approximately 2 bags per week at \$20-ish per bag.

Not all homeowners/residents pay for trash service. If someone is not paying for trash service where does their trash go? Well, it goes in other homeowner’s trash bins. This has been documented recently at the Safety Harbor townhomes where those owners received trash pickup bills when they had no trash. In my conversations with Danny Davenport, many just throw their bags of garbage over his fence at night only for his crew to show up to trash everywhere from racoons tearing it apart. Some of your fellow homeowners/residents are not carrying their fair share.

How do we hold all homeowners, residents, and businesses accountable that they are paying for services for their own trash

Junk/Appliances

Illegal dumping of junk is becoming more prevalent. Junk, unlike trash, is the larger refuse that cannot go into normal trash bags/trash bins and is usually handled by renting a trash box or Bagster. I’m not sure what all the services charge but I know Team Davenport is \$400 for one of their wood boxes as we

usually get 1 or 2 each year per house to pile in our larger debris.

Many of our fellow homeowners/residents are too cheap or lazy to pay for one of these boxes and resort to dumping their junk on other's properties or in their rented boxes. Recent pictures of old vacuum cleaners, washing machines, patio furniture have been posted here. On an empty lot across from one of our homes someone has placed old, rusted chairs and an old BBQ grill. We personally have caught and told a worker to remove his construction debris from one of our boxes.

Accountability. Again, how can we hold homeowners, residents and businesses accountable for making sure they are going through the correct process and payment for removal of their junk and broken appliances? We can't put cameras on every parcel on the island and even if we did, there will always be blind spots and ways for those who choose to circumvent to do so.

Litter

Litter is another issue caused by all cross-sections of people on the island. Please do not tell me that residents or homeowners who do not rent cause zero litter. Trash flies out of carts all the time. I've picked up trash that has fallen out of non-renter carts. Trash bins are broken into all the time by racoons and that trash spread and blown around the island. And as mentioned above we have some homeowners/residents who do not carry their fair share in their own trash removal.

Do guests to the island litter? Of course. Do most of them litter. No. Do day boaters who anchor to our island litter? Yes. Do residents, businesses, contractors, employees' litter? Absolutely.

Currently I believe the island has three public trash cans for people to use on the island. Those are 1 at NCIC ferry landing, 1 at Mangos Store and 1 at Boats & Fun. Mainstay has a trashcan, but it's primarily for the bussing of their tables. Island Girl has no trash can at their Mainstay landing spot. There may be others, but offhand I cannot think of them.

Is that reasonable? Should the island have more publicly available trashcans for everyone to use? I think it should. Is that easy to do? Nothing here is ever easy. In the most basic terms, if trash receptacles are added in some strategic spots on the island, then someone or some entity needs to pay for them and install them, so they are weatherproof, wildlife proof and dump proof. Yep, you can bet some islander would dump their household trash in one of those cans. Additionally, there would need to be ongoing service of those cans. I spoke with Danny Davenport about this concept several weeks ago. He'd of course be happy to service those trash cans if the community put them in, however there would have to be a cost for him to do it. Someone or some entity will need to pay those ongoing costs.

Will there still be litter on our roads and beaches if we install public trash cans? Yes. Will it solve some of the problem. Probably. Will they fill up quickly because those who would normally take their trash back to the house start using these trashcans? Likely.

The Bigger Conversation.

In my opinion the best overall solution is to fix the waste management problem by offering a more efficient path for removal of all waste on the island (trash, junk, and horticulture). That would entail doing a current study of the extent of waste on the island, the challenges and the current processes and costs for removal. This was last done in 2009. The island has changed enormously over the past 12 years

and is now in a hyper-growth cycle.

That process is called a **Municipal Services Benefit Unit (MSBU)**. The county would work with the community to analyze the overall issue, create a study, report, and various solutions and the anticipated cost per parcel for the solutions. The community would then decide the path to choose. If the community chose to select one of the paths, then a **Municipal Services Taxing Unit (MSTU)** would be created and that would create a new MSTU Tax on your property taxes. That tax would extend to every land parcel (developed or not) in the service area. That means everyone in the service area would pay that MSTU. You'd no longer pay Team Davenport or NCIC for trash, the county would pay the contractor(s) whose bids they accepted for that service. It will only make sense to go down this path if the solution includes horticulture waste and junk.

There is much that goes into an MSBU and starting that process. Education is paramount so everyone in the community understands what it is, the process and costs. Over the coming weeks and months, I'll post more about it. Perhaps UCCA will want me to help lead this initiative as part of our civic association – we'll see. Regardless, I can't do it alone. I'd love volunteers to jump in and help me do some of this legwork and education.

Remember, you get what you pay for. Right now, these problems are mostly caused by those not paying their fair share and resorting to illegal dumping and from the lack of proper services to remove junk and horticulture.

We personally probably average \$2400/year in trash/junk removal per house – plus additional for landscape chipping. An MSTU would likely not cost me much more money, if anymore. Will it cost others more than they currently pay? You bet, but if they aren't paying close to what I'm paying how are they properly having their trash, junk and horticulture waste dealt with?

To get an MSBU study started it will take a petition of 50% of parcel owners "plus 1". That in and of itself will not be an easy task. I'm still gathering information as to if Safety Harbor Club could be excluded from the MSBU service area (if those chose to be) since they are a PUD and self-managed.

There you have it. Who will join in to help discuss solutions rather than continuing with fruitless complaining? We will not solve these problems without spending money. Communities pay taxes for services like these. Our community does not. Better and broader waste management services are needed to tackle these issues.

Swin