

# BOKEELIA CIVIC ASSOCIATION

## Open Letter to the Citizens of Pine Island

**From: Dr. Michael Dreikorn, BCA President**  
**Date: 04 August, 2009**  
**Subject: It's about process for and by the People**

Dear fellow Pine Islanders:

In the recent Lee County Planning hearing (07/27/2009) on proposed changes in language for the Pine Island Coastal Rural Future Land Use Category, Lee County staff provided the Local Planning Agency (LPA) with proposed language regarding various commercial properties on Pine Island. Though the language is still more restrictive than other parts of Lee County, it still maintains consistency with the Pine Island Plan and preserves individual rights. In fact, the staff's charter was only to provide further clarification to the existing rules, not propose new restrictions.

However, during the hearing, representatives of the Greater Pine Island Civic Association (GPICA) spoke out in support for more stringent language. The proposed GPICA language greatly reduces the existing rights of people on the island, by only allowing a very narrow definition of what is allowed to be constructed on their own properties. The GPICA proposal was developed by a single individual and only circulated to a small group of GPICA members. Their proposal clearly does not represent consensus of their membership, let alone the citizens of Pine Island.

In this week's issue of The Pine Island Eagle (08/04/2009), Mr. Phil Buchanan grossly mischaracterizes what the county staff is proposing. He states the commercial portion of the Pine Island Plan "would be gutted and Stringfellow Road would eventually turn into a smaller version of Route 41." This is simply not true and I encourage Pine Islander's to become informed by reading what the staff is proposing, as well as, what the GPICA is proposing. Simply go to the Bokeelia Civic Association (BCA) website at [www.BokeeliaFL.com](http://www.BokeeliaFL.com) to see the actual language regarding this matter. Please do not allow others to spin the truth into fiction.

As a citizen who has served in defense of our nation I have great concern about a small group of activists who wish to dictate to the citizenry of Pine Island. Though I am not personally affected by either of the proposed changes, in reality few of us are, I am adamantly against to any further limitation to our rights without due process and consensus. If, we the people do not stand up and understand how a handful of individuals are trying to control us at a local level, then eventually we will have no control or influence. Where the present issues may seem abstract and disconnected from your daily life, they will come full-circle to your doorstep. Before you know it, we may have the GPICA telling us what color to paint our homes, or how to park the boat in our driveway.

For the past few years I have had the privilege of serving as the president of the BCA. Despite what some critics may claim, the BCA is about providing a forum for the citizens of Bokeelia to learn about and discuss issues that are relevant to us. During issues of island-wide concern, such as the music ordinance and the fire stations, the BCA has reached out to the other four civic associations on the island to seek out consensus of the people. Interestingly enough, only the GPICA has routinely opted out in civic association teaming.

This past week, I have again challenged the leaders of the four civic associations and chamber of commerce to come together in a Pine Island Round Table so that we might collaborate and stop the verbal assaults and mistruths. I'll keep you posted on who chooses to participate and who does not. But, this is not about the BCA taking over anyone's turf. This is about the established organizations on the island working together for common purpose and good. And yes, the BCA will be taking a more vocal position on issues that affect us all. The BCA will also attempt to keep those who claim to be looking out for our welfare, environment, and future honest and accountable.

In the recent LPA hearing, as the BCA President, I spoke out in support of the proposed staff language because it was the lesser of the two evils. One hand, we have a staff proposal that provided clarification of existing regulations and minimal limitations on existing rights. And, on the other hand we have a GPICA proposal that was not approved by their membership and greatly reduces individual property rights. The decision to support the staff language was simple. In her letter to the editor last week, Ms. Patsy Anderson stated that she felt "this proposed change should not be rushed and ... Pine Island should be able to meet and discuss this change." I absolutely agree with Patsy, but why has the GPICA failed to do just that with their membership and fellow civic associations?

I firmly believe the only entity that should be allowed to reduce the existing rights of Americans, are the people themselves. It is clearly time for those on the island who truly want their voice to be heard and considered to get involved. Pine Island is unique and it should be preserved in a way that the people decide. To accomplish a citizen-based future land use plan, we need to establish a process where input is welcomed and issues debated in open-door forums. Our existing process, which by the way is driven by County Commissioners and the LPA, is broken. The GPICA has been anointed the custodians of the Pine Island Plan and will not allow any others to play in the sandbox. They have precluded numbers of Pine Island citizens from joining their association and participating in Pine Island Plan development and discussions. By joining your local civic association (Bokeelia, Matlacha, or St. James City) and engaging in issues that matter to you, your voice can be amplified and heard all the way to downtown Ft. Myers. If we allow a few individuals who claim to represent the GPICA to continue their path of miscommunication and mischaracterization, then we are doomed to live the life they chose for us.

Your fellow island neighbor,

Dr. Michael J. Dreikorn  
President of the Bokeelia Civic Association