

The Truth about the Pine Island Community Council (3/08)

There has been considerable criticism from a few people about the Pine Island Community Council (PICC). It's a real shame that some people can not see the value and spirit of a democratic process. And as with all new processes, the PICC still has some work to do before it can effectively provide the forum the citizens on Pine Island have a right to.

First off, please allow me to put the concerns of some to rest. There are no members of this council who represent a special interest group. There are no hidden agendas. And, this is not a pro-growth group. The PICC is being formed so that citizens of Pine Island have a means to provide their input to how they want the island to evolve.

The PICC is still in the process development phase. Meaning, the processes for ensuring members are selected appropriately and fairly, processes for holding community meetings on issues, processes for conducting community surveys, and processes for ensuring compliance to Florida Sunshine rules are all being developed. These processes are being developed by citizens, not organizations and/or special interest groups. Process definition is critical to ensure public trust in the future actions PICC. Process is also important to ensure sustainability of this citizen-based structure for self-control.

Once processes are defined and accepted, citizens of Pine Island will be empowered to create a citizen-based definition of Pine Island. Meaning, what should Pine Island look like not only today but 20 and 50 years from now? This is the key value proposition of the entire effort. Today, there is no structured mechanism for Pine Islanders to express their desires for the island. This means, we get what Lee County officials decide is good for us. And, in the past this may have been acceptable. However, the rate of county growth is increasing and unique island issues are becoming further apart from the rest of Lee County. Since there is not a member of the Lee County leadership who lives on Pine Island, how would we expect them to truly understand what it is that we need or want?

For those who say that the PICC is for this issue or that issue, they do such in their own speculation. The PICC has not weighed in on any issue at all – no bridges, marinas, signs, or music has been discussed by the PICC. The PICC has only been working on process. So, those who speak out against the PICC, are speaking out against a fair island-wide process to get our voices heard on issues the people weigh in on.

The citizens of Pine Island deserve the right to have a simple mechanism to voice their input. The PICC has been developed by designees from Bokeelia, St. James City, and Matlacha civic associations. Members from Pineland and Center are being actively sought. All we are asking is that we give the democratic process a chance. United we stand, divided Lee County will dictate our future.

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