

Commission Communication for August through 9/12/22

Celebrate Charlotte for Valerie's House – was a model in the fashion show

WMS Free Day

Back to School Bash by Young Professionals

Native Fauna planting at the Art Center

Attended FLC Annual Conference

Several Chamber meetings and ribbon cuttings

RAB meeting of GCJFCS

Teen Court meeting

EDC of Sarasota meeting

Welcome back Cooper at Cranberry Elementary

Chamber Gala

Duck Derby for Family Promise

Ukrainian Flag Ceremony

Leadership North Port Graduation

South Tiger Bay

Art Center Gallery

Chamber Champion Reception

Tri-County Chamber event

NPPD Graduation

Bay Park Conservatory in Sarasota

Ribbon cutting for Greenway Trail

Ribbon cutting for Legacy Trail

Remember the Fallen Race

FLC Conference – 8/11-13/2022

Update to committees... I sit on Utilities, Natural Resources and Public Works.

Review of Bills passed.

Bills expected to come back in this coming year... SB280 – deals with Municipalities doing a fiscal analysis on Ordinances when put in place. This is a priority of this year's Majority Leader. Congress does this analysis, and they want the cities to do it, too. During this session, FLC was able to place in some amendments that made the Bill neutral in their viewpoint. Though, it passed, the Governor vetoed it. FLC feels that it will be back this year and if it remains the same, they will not put up too much of a fight.

SB621 – which deals with the transfer of funds from an Enterprise Fund to a General Fund account. I posed the question of... would administrative cost be allowed to be transferred, and the answer was, yes.

Breakout on Broadband.

A resource is... Internetforall.gov

Magellan, a company, is another great resource.

Though, there is a difference in a city that is the supplier of internet versus a city that has private companies provide internet... I did gather that cities could run Fiber to their own facilities and properties, and then residential and commercial could be run off of that. I thought that was excellent.

Breakout on City Growth.

There were 3 different cities representing various types of cities. Cape Coral was one of them and the closest to what type of foundation our city has... pre-plotted! It was like sitting in on a session of what we are doing in NP!! Rezoning, increasing economic development, balancing the commercial to residential. I don't know as I heard them speak of anything that we haven't already thought of, but a collaborative conversation might be a good thing for staff. They may have some resources for us to glean from.

Breakout on CM/Council Relationship.

Doug Thomas was the presenter in this session. There were 3 cities present with various types of structure to their leadership. A takeaway that I gleamed was... if a topic is combative or tough/long... 'table it' for another meeting. It allows time to reflect and calm down.

Breakout on Economic Development Assistance.

Of course, grants were most of the conversation. They stated that the grant process should start at the Regional Planning Council. There are 10 Councils in the State and we reside in the Southwest Council. These types of grants are 50/50 matches. They, also, stated that 'impact research' can be obtained through the Regional Planning. Nice to know!

Breakout on 'Truth in the Political Climate'.

The presenter was my favorite from FLC, Dr. Scott Payne, who will be retiring at the end of the year. He made the topic fun by using an online question app. He demonstrated that everyone has biases simply because of their environmental exposure and belief systems. Just by changing the words, the outcome of the various questions equated to different outcomes, though, they were basically the same question. He defended the right for everyone to have their own viewpoint, though, differences should not be taken personally. It's their opinion, not ours. Facts should be unchanging, but the viewpoint of the fact varies... and that is okay. The political climate during campaigning is always heightened, and this session was a calming oasis during those times.

Manasota League Breakfast.

There was a combined breakfast of 3 leagues that tend to line the I4 corridor. Our League's President, Jen Ahern recognized all from our league which were present and remarked that because of the trading of tours with Comm. McDowell and herself, the rest of the League is doing so now. Venice was their last tour.

General Sessions.

These sessions are always inspiring, and this year was no exception. National speakers came in to inspire and encourage our community leaders to 'keep on keeping on' by achieving their 'bucket lists'... and make the music for others to hear and follow. There was also the annual awards and installation of this coming year's officers.

100 year Anniversary.

This year is the 100th year of the establishment of the Florida League of Cities. There was a timeline table with notable events during this past century and the closing evening saw a celebratory dinner, show and gala... formal style!

Home Rule Heroes.

All around the hotel were projections of the long list of Home Rule Heroes. It was an honor to be on that list, as well as Comm. McDowell. This League does a great job of advocating for our city and all the other cities of this State. I'm proud to have been an advocate with them.

Networking and Convention/Event Hall.

The ability to share, learn and gather info is at every turn at these conventions. I meet individually with a couple of different vendors who specialize in various fields that could potentially help our city in its growth. These topics are passed to the City Manager for review. The relationship with other local elected officials is very rewarding... they become extended family... and we care about each other's challenges... as we can identify with the position, they are in. I'm grateful to be an active part of this organization by representing my city. Thank you.

Teen Court meeting – 8/16/2022

The organization is approx. \$90K above the budget at this point in the fiscal year and have had an increase of students go through the program this year.

All courts are open again... Sarasota, Venice, and NP

A couple of great articles were recently published about Teen Court. The Herald Tribune did not name a court in NP, I brought that fact up.

There will be upcoming fundraisers and the team is preparing for the awards banquet this year, already. They try to cover the cost of students and families that can't afford to attend.

Some stats:

690 youth served in 2021 and will be higher this year. Half of the referrals come from the school district, the remaining come from parents, local law enforcement agencies and the Civil Citation Referral Process. Over 200 youth volunteers serve the court and approx. 10,000 community service hours are completed yearly. 85% of the youth served are on or below the poverty-line, and/or on free or reduced lunch. 80% of youth improved their grades after participating in TC. 95% of parents noticed positive changes in their child after participation in TC. The re-offense rate for Teen Court is 6-8%, vs. 42% of youth engaged in Juvenile Court. The Teen Court program saves the Sarasota County taxpayers nearly \$3.5 million dollars annually by diverting youth to Teen Court instead of the costly Juvenile Court System.

Next month will be the election of new members, including the student board members. This year I was honored to submit a recommendation for Simone Fletcher, our City Manager's daughter to be part of the Board as the secondary student member. She is currently an attorney in the NP Court and doing an excellent job!

We honored Max Schoenfeld, who was the primary student member and has served on the board for 5 years. He will be attending the University of Florida, with his sights on Law.

Quarterly RAB zoom meeting of GCJFCS... 8/17/2022

There is an office in North Port at our Family Services Facility.

There have been 40 refugees come to North Port from a lot of various countries this quarter. Afghanistan still has a lot coming due to the withdraw of US troop in the Fall last year.

Daily, the NP office has refugees from Ukraine come in looking for help, as their sponsor has told them they need to move out!! This type of sponsored aid to refugees is a separate program within the Federal Government and not part of the regular operations of GCJFCS. So, the office is taxed with trying to aid more than what they are prepared to. In the sponsorship program, the sponsor tells the government that they will financially care for the refugee until they can get on their feet. Legal partners state that a penalty for a sponsor not following through with their intent would create more problems and cause a lack of empathy toward the refugees, so they leave the system as is.

Lutheran Services has aided 85 individuals during this quarter and are planning on aiding 350 resettlements in 2023.

Church World Services – Global has taken in around 200 Ukrainian refugees in the Tampa area.

Some of the struggles that these organizations face is the slowness of getting basic needs met, such as food and medical. There is a free clinic in North Tampa affiliated with USF, but getting to it can be an issue, as these refugees don't have transportation.

It was stated that the Ukrainian refugees are a different culture than what the organizations are used to aiding. This is a proud people who do not want 'hand outs'... they want to work and make their way. There were some even refusing food stamps, though they were in need of food. With jobs available they are finding work for them, but it takes 3 months to get the paperwork completed for them to be able to legally work! There is money flowing now from Preferred Community for Ukrainians for 90 days.

Within the Afghanistan refugee population, they are trying to file for asylum for them, as this is the best way for the families to be reunited, as so many have come by themselves, separated from their family which is still over there.

EDC of Sarasota County Board Meeting – 8/18/2022

The organization is in excellent financial standing coming up on the closing of this fiscal year.

Honor was given to Drayton Saunders as he rolls off the Board this year and to Saun Merriman who oversaw the finances for the past couple of years and did an excellent job. I will miss Drayton, he and I have been on the same side more times than not and we have formed a comradery that I will miss. I was reconfirmed as the NP representative for this coming year.

Reports of the organizations work were presented with the highest note being that of an 'unnamed' company, out of Canada, will be utilizing the next phase of the Benderson warehousing in North Port on Toledo Blade, close to 75. That phase will be complete by the third quarter of 2023, and this company will take 274,000 sq. ft initially, and then utilize 440,000 sq ft. after that!! North Port is always given praise for exciting things and the excellent work of our economic development team, staff, and leadership in every meeting. This was one example. We have a lot to be proud of!

There were 8 companies attending, non-board members, who gave reports on their recent awards and an introduction to their companies. This is something new in the meetings... introducing companies to the work of the EDC.

The final discussion was about a succession plan for the Executive position. Lisa has done a great job building relationships and mending broken partnerships. The organization has been extremely successful in bringing back trust and value to the organization. But Lisa knows her expertise is HR/relationship building and not Economic Development. She feels she has taken the organization to the point where someone with the economic development knowledge and experience needs to take the reins. There was quite a bit of discussion about the gentleman who was selected over a year ago, but he did not accept the job because of the County Commission decisions... and, how Erin Silk has really been a major part of the change and culture that has happened in the organization and how she has achieved higher certification to make her valuable to any organization, not just ours! The conclusion of the Board was to not go back out with a recruitment team, but to invite Erin and the past gentleman to interview for the Executive position. Lisa was given a 10% bonus for her work this year and her contract was extended for another year with the ability for either party to cease it with a 30-day notice. She is willing to stay on for a while with whoever is chosen for a smooth transition.