

Highlights of the May 18, 2011 COBWRA Meeting at Bellaggio

State Legislators Report on 2011 Session

Senator Lizbeth Benacquisto, District 27, stated the Legislature filed over 3,000 bills but only 295 were passed by both houses. The most critical bill was to overcome a \$4B deficit and pass a balanced budget. She said they called her "The Library Lady" since she fought so hard to keep funds in the State budget for libraries and the budget keeps **library funding** at \$23M. Her priorities were to protect the children and the elderly. She worked with Rep. Abruzzo to pass the **Silver Alert** bill to help find Alzheimer's patients when they go missing. She is serving on the State legislative redistricting committee. To follow redistricting, go online to www.floridaredistricting.com.

Representative Bill Hager, District 87, said the only job of the Legislature by law is to pass a balanced budget. The only money that can be spent is what comes in the front door. The legislature balanced the budget by decreasing spending by \$4B. He believes the **Pill Mill bill** that passed is good start since 10 people die every day in Florida from prescription drug overdose! Another bill that passed **prohibits smoking** anywhere on public schools properties.

Representative Steve Perman, District 78, said he was not happy with the Medicaid bill that passed but he was able to add language to the bill that **allows seniors to stay in their homes** on Medicaid instead of going into a facility, and saving the State over \$1.2B a year. The Enterprise bill will stimulate business activities in depressed areas of western Palm Beach County like Indiantown and Belle Glade. Finally, his bill passed that makes it a felony to possess a **stolen credit card**.

Representative Lori Berman, District 86, stated she felt the Palm Beach County delegation, led by Rep Abruzzo, worked well together for the benefit of County issues. She was the sponsor of the bill to permit the Lake Worth Drainage District to issue bonds so they can build a **reservoir** for our future drinking water. Another bill of hers requires student drivers to be taught the dangers of **texting while driving**. She regrets the education budget that cuts over \$500 per student. Some 4,500 state jobs were cut in the budget. The Legislature also made it harder for laid-off employees to collect unemployment insurance. She expects the League of Women Voters to challenge the voting rights bill that passed.

Representative Joe Abruzzo, District 85, said that Sen. Benacquisto was often the voice of reason in the Senate. One bill he sponsored changed the penalties to a minor for **sexting** – sending inappropriate texts and photos via phone. Current law makes sexting a felony and requires kids to register as sex offenders until they are 47 years old, ruining their lives. The bill that passed makes the first offense a violation requiring community service. A second offense is a misdemeanor and the third offense is a felony. He said he **voted against the budget** because the cuts were too drastic and did not try to collect more income, such as his proposals to tax Internet gambling, tax Internet sales or approve casinos. Rep. Abruzzo serves on the Federal redistricting committee.

Senator Maria Sachs, District 30, was invited but was unable to attend because of a family emergency.

Officials' Reports

Commissioner Burt Aaronson, District 5, reported that the county-wide **Ethics Ordinance** passed is the most stringent ethics law in the country. We are Corruption County no more. This ordinance applies to the county and all municipalities. **Lyons Road construction** will begin this summer and be completed in November 2012. Completing Lyons Road will help so many people driving north and south in the area. The County is considering revising the **County Charter** for the first time in 27 years. What do you think should be changed? Your ideas are wanted. The County Charter is online at <http://www.pbcgov.com/countycommissioners/pdf/charter.pdf>. The Jog Road library has limited copies.

Capt Marty Bechtel, PBSO Dist 6 reported the crime stats for April:

- 12 stolen vehicles and 45 vehicle burglaries
- 37 residential burglaries and 10 business burglaries
- 344 false alarms

COBWRA Reports

Growth Management. COBWRA delegates voted to recommend approval of two proposals:

- To change the zoning from Commercial General to MUPD for **Pinewood Square Shopping Center**, Jog and Lantana Roads, to permit Monkey Joes, an indoor playground facility for children ages 3 to 12, in an unoccupied space in an existing building. Approval is required to satisfy current zoning regulations.
- To change the Land Use from LR-3 to Commercial Low and change the zoning from RTS to CL-O for medical and professional offices for the site located on the SW corner of Lantana and Hagen Ranch Roads. Two medical/professional office buildings will be constructed and their designs are compatible with the surrounding area.

Future Meetings (Open to the public)

June 7, 6:30 pm: Growth Management at Lantana Library, 4020 Lantana Rd. Informational meeting on a Mosque approved on Military Trail N of Le Chalet.

July: No meetings

—Ken Lassiter for COBWRA Communications
www.cobwra.org