

Spring Lake BREEZE

Florida... the way it should be!



Construction to Begin

The long awaited Storm Water Treatment Area project is about to begin the construction phase. The multi-million dollar project will take several years to complete and leaders



from the Department of Environmental Protection and South Florida Water Management District have praised Spring Lake and stated this is a model water quality project for the entire State. As the rules and regulations continue to tighten on water quality, affecting developers, Spring Lake will be insulated from any negative impacts of future Legislation by this project.

On March 16th 14 contractors and sub-contractors (pictured) attended a Pre Bid meeting with the District Engineer to review all of the contract documents and specifications. Bids are due by no later than April 24 and construction should begin by June 1. To give you an idea of the size of this project, hundreds of tons of fill will have to be relocated. The entire Storm Water Treatment Area Project details, as well as all of the Bid documents, are available to the public. Simply stop in the District Office and ask to review the information.

When the water control plan was first developed it looked like Spring Lake residents were facing a \$5 million project with no financial help in sight. To date, we have received two grants from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection for \$625,000 each; a State Legislative Appropriation for \$416,000 and were approved for a nearly \$3 million loan from the State Revolving Fund at the incredible rate of .057. Other grants and assistance are being applied for, and the low cost loan allows us to complete the total water control projects while the search for additional funds continues.

Vision

Workshop Scheduled

By Jennifer Codo-Salisbury,
Central Florida Regional Planning Council

Communities change over time. Do you ever wonder what Spring Lake might be like in the future? Are there things you like about your community today that you want continued? Would you like for Spring Lake to be a more connected community: to have access to neighborhood businesses; to have job opportunities nearby; or to have more housing choices for your friends and neighbors? With trails and sidewalks, more walking and safer biking, these connections could offer more convenient access to jobs, recreation and shopping. Can you picture Spring Lake with these and other choices for the future?

Over the past several years Highlands County and the Central Florida Regional Planning Council have been working with the Spring Lake Improvement District and the Sebring Airport to explore ideas for the future of the area. It is now time to dialogue with residents and stakeholders who will be receiving the benefits of these plans; asking for their ideas, thoughts, and reactions. How would you like to envision Spring Lake in the future? What will your community look like in tomorrow's world?

Please join us as we explore options and opportunities for the future of the Spring Lake Area.

Spring Lake Community Workshop Date & Time:
Thursday, April 23, 2015 from 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm
District Offices, 115 Spring Lake Blvd. Sebring, 33876

For more information please contact Susan BuChans, Highlands County Development Services (863) 402-6650 or Jennifer Codo-Salisbury, Central Florida Regional Planning Council (863) 534-7130 ext. 178.

District Services Begin



One of the main responsibilities of the Spring Lake Improvement District is ensuring that the 1,295 vacant lots and 70 acres are mowed. Additionally, the District mows all County Right of Ways and Medians. There are three tractors dedicated to lot mowing, and there is additional equipment for all entranceway medians, Duane Palmer Blvd., and the parks.



For those of us who reside in the community year long it is no surprise to see grass and weeds grow so quickly; some lots even grow faster than others depending on the type of soil it has. While our staff tries to keep up as best they can, heavy rains can prevent the tractors from going on the

properties and sets our mowing schedule back. The action plan that is used for this program has lots that are near homes as a mowing priority, and the large acreage of lands, such as off of Rt. 98, as the secondary priority. This process allows neighborhoods that may have only a few vacant lots to not have an eyesore when grass and weeds get too high.

During this lot-mowing season if you notice a particular problem you can contact the District Office to report it. We can more often than not let you know when a certain area is going to be mowed and ensure that the problem is taken care of.

Another program about ready to begin is the annual mosquito control effort. While the District maintains the equipment and chemicals to fight mosquitoes, there are State Laws that govern the frequency of spraying. The District is NOT allowed to have a regular schedule for spraying and can only be initiated by resident complaints. Certified and trained staff is employed to oversee this program, and requests for service can be met within 24 hours, unless winds or rain are prevalent. Residents can help with mosquito control by making sure they break up any small pockets of water that might be at the end of their driveway, in the right of ways, near culverts, or are collecting elsewhere. This is a major battle every year and while the spraying does not prevent mosquitoes, it certainly helps with controlling them. Spring Lake is fortunate to have this service, as it is not provided anywhere else in the County.

Sewer Plant Update



The District is attempting to create what is known as Perk Ponds at the existing plant site.

A Public Hearing was held on March 11 to discuss the newly acquired Waste Water Treatment Plant, operating expenses thru the end of this fiscal year (September 30), and the establishment of rates and fees. After reviewing data supplied by staff, and hearing public comments, the Board established a monthly fee thru September 30 of \$44.46 per user. This includes any repairs and maintenance that may be needed in the future. Similar to our Water Utility, the District is responsible for the upkeep of the system. Users will be responsible for any electric. There are currently 314 customers, and it is important to note that if you are not on this system, you are not paying a fee. We have had several inquiries asking why a user has to pay a monthly fee if they go back north. The answer is the same as with the Water Fund; this is a year round Utility and all users are responsible for its operation.

As with many projects, it involves a number of our current District staff to make the transition. Our staff is being used for construction work, minor repairs and upkeep, inspections, and general maintenance. These in-kind services will be close to \$50,000 by the end of the fiscal year and minimizes the monthly fee by not charging the waste water fund. Additionally, the District Water Fund is loaning the Waste Water Fund up to \$100,000 as unrestricted reserves to be drawn as needed. Any loan funds used will be paid back by the Waste Water Fund over the next several fiscal years to lessen rate increases.

Pugh Utilities is staffing the plant seven days a week, six hours per day. If the District can successfully create perk ponds the requirement goes down to 6 days a week, 30 minutes per day. The plant is currently spraying water throughout the golf course to eliminate the effluent; the perk ponds keep the effluent contained and it seeps into the ground.

The District has already begun to apply for funds to construct a much needed new sewer plant. Engineers are compiling the necessary plans and data for the applications for funding, and staff is searching out locations for the new plant. As we move forward, developers will be able to secure Sewer from the District, along with Water. Owning both Utilities will be a big advantage in attracting future development.

Bits and Pieces

- Pickle ball lines have been added to the Tennis Courts after numerous requests.
- County Commissioner Don Elwell, a Spring Lake resident, recently spent time with staff to tour the newly acquired Waste Water Plant and the various golf course ponds that have been cleared of debris and had affected Duane Palmer flooding.
- The Board will begin considering a proposal by staff to publish The Breeze electronically starting the next fiscal year. Two issues (January and June) would still be printed, but all other issues would be on the website or sent via e-mail. The District currently has over 1,000 e-mail addresses and the communications with residents would be greatly enhanced.
- A recent article in Highlands Today focused on the amount of money it costs the County to pick up illegal dumping items; close to \$100,000. Our District has the same issue and staff time, equipment, gas, etc. has a yearly cost of close to \$13,000. Our medians, boulevards, and right of way areas have cans, bottles, fast food bags, tires, and other debris on a daily basis.
- Community Center usage remains high. If you are planning a family gathering, birthday party, shower, or any other events check with our District Office to make reservations. A \$50 refundable deposit is required, and a short rental form needs to be filled out.
- WATER ANGELS. Like any community, we have people in need. It has been popular over the Christmas Holiday for residents to make contributions that get credited to a person's water account. These contributions are anonymous and a note is sent to the recipient. Water Angels can contribute throughout the year, not just over the Holiday. If you feel led to participate in this program, simply stop by the District Office and let us know.
- The next time you stop in the District Office, or use the Drive Thru window, say hello to our new Administrative Assistant, Cindy Bacon.

District Engineer's Update



*Gene Schriener, President,
Craig A. Smith & Associates,
Boca Raton, Florida*

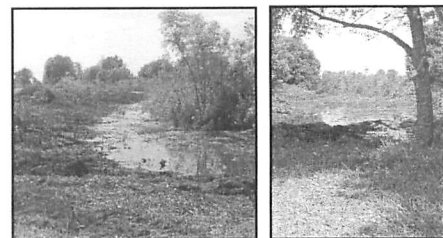
I continue to be amazed at the positive work that is being done by the District Staff, supported by the Board. Our company works with many municipalities much larger than Spring Lake, yet this District has surpassed all of them when it comes to perseverance and dedication.

Your District Manager has led the way in securing nearly \$2 million in grants, and another \$3 million from the State Revolving Fund. Your Board has supported all of the Engineering work that needed to be done to proceed with the Storm Water Treatment Area that is a model for the rest of the State.

You received the District of the Year Award for 2014, as well as the 2014 Water Plant Operations Excellence Award for the State of Florida. When our firm started with Spring Lake in 2006 the problems, concerns, and lack of resources were preventing any type of progress.

Today, the future is very bright as the water control projects that were once dreamed about are coming to fruition. Future development in Spring Lake will be enhanced by these improvements.

Finally, let me congratulate the District for acquiring the Waste Water Treatment Plant. It was the right thing to do for the current users, and a tremendous benefit for future users. Craig A. Smith Engineering truly enjoys its relationship with Spring Lake. Your story of success reminds me of the children's book, "The Little Engine That Could." You are truly THE LITTLE DISTRICT THAT COULD!!!!



Highlands County Road and Bridge have provided assistance on the second stage of the Duane Palmer Drainage problems caused by overgrown ponds on the golf course.



This picture clearly demonstrates why our District may be discontinuing the recycle bins.



Major water leaks are repaired quicker using a machine called The Vactron, a high powered vacuum. Pictured left to right are Matt Thompson, Clay Shrum, and JR Clarke.

SPRING LAKE

IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

115 Spring Lake Blvd.

Sebring, FL 33876

863.655.1715 phone

863.655.4430 fax

Budget Process Begins



Beginning with the FY 2006 budget process a set of optimum financial goals, and a timetable, have been followed to assist the Board of Supervisors with the development of a yearly budget for the District.

Financial Goals include:

- The District will have a budget reflective of a sound staffing pattern, a progressive salary administration program, and organizational goals and objectives to determine expenditures.
- The District will maintain adequate reserves to protect it against unforeseen circumstances and situations.
- The District will have sound financial management and reporting including investments, controls, adequate insurance coverage, and utilization of appropriate external counsel and assistance as needed.
- The District will have a budget process that involves the Board, management staff, working groups, and public input.
- The District will develop a budget process timetable and chart of work for each fiscal year

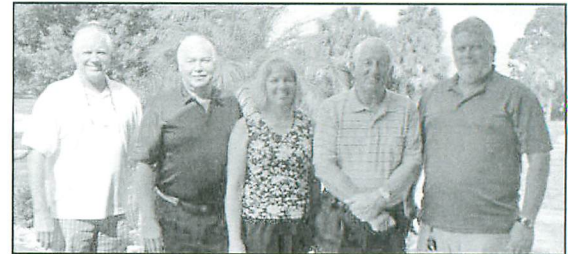
Fiscal Year Projected Timetable:

April – June	Manager, Administrator, and working groups gather financial data
May	Finance working group develops projected budget
June	First draft of budget projection presented to Board
July	Second draft of budget projection presented to Board
August	Public Hearing
September	Budget approved by Board and assessments sent to Tax Collector

The development of the District Budget is an open process that is thoroughly discussed and reviewed at the monthly Board meetings, held the second Wednesday of each month at the District Offices, beginning at 10:00 a.m. Additional information can be secured and discussed by contacting the District Office at 655-1715 and making an appointment.

Chairman's Message

by **Brian Acker**



Pictured left to right are: Secretary, Tim McKenna; Chairman, Brian Acker; Arlene Klingbiel; Past Chairman, Bill Lawens; and Gary Behrendt, Vice-Chairman.

One of the most important functions of the Board of Supervisors is the adoption of the fiscal year budget. The adopted budget serves as the basis of the assessment; funding the general fund, and the fees and charges which fund the water utility, the lot mowing fund and the recently acquired waste water utility. In order to allow for better planning and increased discussion by the Board and the public, the Board amended its financial policy in November 2014 initiating discussions on the budget at the January meeting and continuing those discussions until the adoption of the budget at the September meeting. Budget discussions have been held since January and will continue at each Board meeting in the coming months. The public is encouraged to attend these meetings and comment on their concerns. A noticed public hearing on the budget will be held on August 12th of this year. The public is encouraged to attend and speak. There is no better way to understand how your money paid to the District is spent than by attendance at Board meetings.