

Weekly Update, March 14, 2008 from Director Public Affairs

Association's Voice Heard by Lee County Commission (BOCC) on March 11th

At the BOCC meeting to discuss a local economic stimulus package and the potential for rolling back road impact fees, the Association's voice was heard loud and clear, along with those of other organizations: Commissioners remained unconvinced that rolling back the road impact fees would provide the economic boost that commercial builders sought, and agreed with our position that it could add to rather than help absorb the existing residential inventory. Thus, the hard work of the Public Policy Committee and Board of Directors, along with Key Contacts, surely proved worthwhile, as the need to absorb the existing inventory clearly won out. The BOCC did decide to expedite the road impact fee study which was not due to be reviewed until late 2009 to this year, with the analysis expected in September, 2007. This actually bumped the fire and ems analyses, so the Board is heeding the advice of their staff, and also allows our members additional time to increase sales efforts of our existing residential inventory.

A number of committee members spoke to the BOCC at this hearing, which was well attended and also has been rerun on cable TV a number of times this week, so that our position has received good exposure. Chairman Gary Verwilt of Public Policy said it best: "Where do we begin to say thank you other than to say thank you to everyone who participated in this from the Committee meeting to this morning's meeting. The bottom line was that the Commissioners went with our guidelines; saw that we were seated in the front row fully prepared, and that we were watching their performance. This project reinforced the REALTOR® position in this county as a serious group to be listened to. The honor of knowing that this was accomplished belongs to each and every one of you who made this happen."

Heads Up! Call For Action Coming!

On Tuesday, March 18, NAR will launch an all member Call for Action (CFA) to urge Congress to move the FHA reform bill that is currently stalled in a House-Senate Conference Committee. Both chambers have passed FHA reform bills, but different; they now need to agree on one bill and then pass this important legislation.

Your association staff will receive the CFA email from the REALTOR® Action Center asking everyone to contact our Representatives and Senators urging them not to delay the legislation any further. Our Association always responds immediately when we receive a CFA, and then we will get the word out so that our full membership can respond. Please encourage your fellow REALTORS® to respond as there is power in numbers and we need this legislative reform to help our industry and the economy.

Positive Real Estate News from FAR

Recent data collected by the Public Policy staff of FAR reported the following upbeat information concerning our Region of the state, all worth knowing and celebrating:

- 1) The number of REALTOR®-assisted sales pending for single-family homes in Lee County was 1,088 on Feb. 14, up 33 percent from 821 a month earlier.
- 2) The REALTOR® Association of Greater Fort Myers and the Beach (Lee County) had an 85.4 percent upswing in pending single family home sales in the last 10 weeks. The current "days on market" for all residential properties has dropped to 12 months from a high of 22.98 months in December 2007.
- 3) Marco Island (Collier County) reports pending sales numbers on March 1, 2008 at 135 while a year ago (March 1, 2007) this number was 104. Their pending sales on January 1, 2008 were 77 and in March 1, 2008, pending home sales were 135, up 75 percent.

4) The Heartland Association of REALTORS® (Highlands County) had 10 pending home sales in January 2008 and 43 in February 2008. This is an increase of over 300 percent.

5) Naples Area Board of REALTORS® (Collier County) had 513 pending sales in February 2008 compared to 413 pending sales in January 2008, an increase of 24 percent. Also, the pending sales for February 2008 are 10 percent higher than pending sales in February 2007 (464).

Use of electronic real estate form start of common sense budget cutting by Legislature

According to the Sun-Sentinel, House Speaker Rubio and other Republican House leaders are championing the introduction of a House Bill to save the state \$11.5 million in the first year by eliminating a real estate tax form. All such common sense cuts such as this are needed due to the tremendous budget shortfall Florida faces because of tax shortfalls in large part as a result of the down housing market.

These Republican leaders said they are looking to slash spending one snip at a time and that it's the first of many unnecessary expenses they are looking to cut. Rubio said the form, DR-219, has outlived its usefulness because state revenue officials now can obtain the same information electronically.

Surrounded by boxes of forms, Rep. Frank Attkisson, R- St. Cloud, said it costs the state \$175,000 a year just to store them. Attkisson is chairman of the House Government Efficiency and Accountability Council, which unanimously voted to introduce a bill to do away with the forms earlier Wednesday.

Lee County to Revise its Affordable Housing Committee Membership

Based on the passage of HB 1375 in 2007, local governments must ensure their Affordable Housing Committees are comprised of eleven specific members that must all have expertise in connection with affordable housing. These eleven include experts in residential homebuilding, banking or mortgage banking, home building, advocates for low income persons, for profit provider of affordable homes, not for profit provider of affordable housing, real estate community member, member of the Local Planning Agency, general citizen of Lee County, representative of employers within Lee County, and a representative of the essential services sector such as fire, police, schools, and so on. As a result, the BOCC must sunset the original Housing Committee and appoint a new one based on these new criteria. Our Association has a position on the Committee and we will definitely ensure the committee continues to have Association representatives on it.

"Homeownership for All" Specialty License Plates Available

The Homeownership for All Specialty license tag created by FAR is available at your tax collector's office, and Association members are urged to upgrade their current plate to this new specialty plate now!! Furthermore, the Department of Motor Vehicles Flow Mobile will be selling these Homeownership for All specialty plates at the Capitol during FAR's Great American REALTOR® Days on March 25th and 26th, for those of you planning to attend this event. FAR was instrumental in creating this license plate and funds received from its sale will be used to support affordable housing programs all over the State of Florida. Please go to your local tax collector's office if you will not be in Tallahassee to obtain the plate. This is what you will need to purchase the license plate:

- Cash or check for payment The license plate costs an additional \$27. For those who are buying the license plate before their registration is due, they will have to pay a \$12 license plate replacement fee.

- Driver license
- Insurance ID card

Buy a plate and help us support affordable housing programs statewide!

Party in Paradise RPAC Auction and Fundraiser is coming – May 21, 2008 5 to 8pm

Preparations are beginning for the **Party in Paradise RPAC Auction and Fundraiser on May 21, 2008 from 5:00 pm to 8:00 pm**. RPAC donors are invited to this exciting event held this year at the brand new PASEO Town Center off Daniels Parkway and I-75. Sponsors and appreciation gifts along with items to auction off are still needed; please contact our office or Marge Mathers, RPAC subcommittee chair for more details.

Upcoming Meetings and Events of Note to Calendar

Urban Land Institute -- Green Building in Southwest Florida - Sustainability
Verandah Clubhouse
12201 River Village Way
Fort Myers, Florida
March 28, 2008
(Registration:8:00am; Program 8:30 - 11:30) Call 1-800-321-5011 to register
Members \$65
Non-Member \$75

Generation Gap Workshop

Florida Gulf Coast University Continuing Education and the Southwest Florida Leadership Foundation will present "The Generational Imperative: Bridging the Generation Gaps in the Workplace and Community" on May 9, 2008. Underwood, founder and president of The Generational Imperative, will lead the workshop. The event runs from 8:30 a.m. to noon at the Three Oaks Banquet and Conference Center in Estero. For cost information or to reserve a seat, contact FGCU Continuing Education at 590-1095.

Fort Myers Beach Chamber Luncheon to feature Estero Boulevard Development Plans

The April 10th FMB Chamber luncheon will be held at the Pink Shell Resort and will feature a presentation by the Town's consultants on possible future plans and development options for Estero Boulevard.