

Matecumbe Neighbors



Newsletter of the Lower Matecumbe Key Association

Sept-Nov 2010

Our Special Island

Lower Matecumbe Key is special...nestled between azure blue ocean and the fishing wonderlands of the back country. But it is the people here that contribute the most, making Lower Matecumbe a fabulous place to live!

Twenty five years ago the Lower Matecumbe Key Association (LMKA) was formed so property owners could join together to assure a better future for the island. LMKA became a formidable and effective voice, working diligently on a wide range of projects.

If you aren't already a member join today.

Get involved! There are so many ways we can all make a difference. And it is such a great way to make new friends. Friends that share an island and a goal to make our community even better!

A Museum is Coming Soon!

Irving and Jeane Eyster win the prize for being the residents who've lived on Lower Matecumbe the longest! They are part of our history. And history is their passion. Read about the Eyster family on page 3.

After years of researching and collecting documents and artifacts to eventually display in a local museum, the dream is near for the Eysters. The Matecumbe Historical Trust plans to lease the Russell House at the Green Turtle Hammock property owned by the Village, as an interim museum until a permanent site is located and a new museum built. Located at 81224 Overseas Hwy, the temporary location is down the driveway north of TIB bank, on the bayside of the highway. This charming house, tucked behind trees just off U.S. One, was built after the 1935 hurricane and later moved to its current location. It is about 1100 sq ft. A porch was added all around after the house was moved. Plans call for interpretive panels, photos, and some artifacts. There will be a flat screen TV with information about the museum, items collected, and some of the history of Islamorada.

JOIN LMKA TODAY! **RENEW FOR 2011**

Your \$20 check for a family membership in the Lower Matecumbe Key Association may be the best investment you can make!

The LMKA newsletter will help you stay informed about issues that impact Lower Matecumbe.

Attending meetings is a great way to learn about the area and to get to know your neighbors!

Having a group voice about local concerns is often a more effective way to accomplish goals.

Volunteer to serve on the Board, to write newsletter articles, to help with beach clean-ups. Suggest meeting programs or be one!

Send a note to let us know if there's something you'd like to do to help us or if there is something we can do to help you!

Provide your EMAIL address please.

It saves us postage, print costs, and time. You'll get meeting notices, alerts and the newsletters by email. Email address won't be shared with other groups.

If you joined before and didn't get our newsletters, we apologize. We had a glitch in our membership updating.

In this issue:

Meet the Village Council
The Eysters, a Family with a Passion
Wastewater- Where are We Now?
Florida Constitution, Amendment 4
Sea Oats Beach Cleanup Sept 25
News from Village Hall
Our Island

Contact the Islamorada Village Council

If you have questions, ideas, or complaints you'd like to share with our local elected officials, email Village Clerk at Beverly.Raddatz@islamorada.fl.us and ask her to distribute the email to council.

Or send an email to individual members:

Mayor Michael.Reckwerdt@islamorada.fl.us

Vice Mayor Don.Achenberg@islamorada.fl.us

Dave.Purdo@islamorada.fl.us

Ken.Phipp@islamorada.fl.us

Bob.Johnson@islamorada.fl.us



From left to right: Achenberg, Philipson, Reckwerdt, Johnson, Purdo

Meet our Village Council.....They are working for us.

Lower Matecumbe Key Association Statement of Purpose

The Lower Matecumbe Key Association, Inc. shall actively work to preserve and enhance the quality of life and environment through participation and democratic process by the residents.

Goals shall include:

- 1. Monitoring activities such as zoning and construction.**
- 2. Communicating with all members to alert them to potential problems or opportunities.**
- 3. Coordinating the efforts of the individual neighborhood associations on common objectives.**
- 4. Providing an open forum for presentation and discussion of issues.**
- 5. Taking appropriate action on behalf of the membership.**

Board of Directors:

**President Gordon Hadley: 305-664-0621; gordo0621@aol.com Vice Pres Donna Gleason
Treasurer Ted Blackburn Secretary Claire Johnson**

Board members: Ann Haber , Ron Winget, Dave Elbaum, Dick Wilson, George Young

Newsletter: Sue Miller, editor

The opinions in this newsletter are not necessarily the opinions of the Board of Directors of LMKA.

Articles with opposing points of view are encouraged.

The Eysters, a Family with a Passion

By Mary Ann Sturken, LMKA member

Imagine sharing your home with tens of thousands of historical documents, photos and artifacts of the Florida Keys, and trying to get a museum started, all at the age of 91! This is the dream of Irving Eyster, his wife Jeane, 88, and their family. Irving and Jeane live oceanside on Lower Matecumbe Key. Irving is the president of the Matecumbe Historical Trust Corp., a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to the education, history and preservation of the Florida Keys.

The Eysters have lived on Lower Matecumbe since 1952 and have raised their three children here. They feel very fortunate to have their grown children and grandchildren here in the place which they consider to be %Paradise.+

The day in late April that my husband and I visited the Eysters, their daughter Barbara Edgar was at their home and she filmed our interview. Barbara shared her firsthand experiences of growing up on Lower Matecumbe with the ocean as her playground. She said she loved living on the ocean and learned a great deal about birds, fish, aquatic animals, and other wildlife during her childhood.

Irving and Jeane met and married in Indiana. They were both pilots and came to Miami in January, 1947, to attend an air show. At that time they traveled to Key West for the first time, and liked it so much they decided to move there. They lived there for a few years and then Irving thought it became too crowded, so they searched the Keys looking for a new place to live and settled on Lower Matecumbe because of its beaches and beauty. At first they bought a trailer and moved it onto their property while their home was being built. In addition to their home, they had eight motel rooms constructed near their house, which they rented out. Two of those rooms sank during one of the major hurricanes of the 1960s. Ultimately, they ended up making three apartments, which they continue to rent. When they built their home, the Eysters were the eighth house on Lower Matecumbe. They have a beautiful view of the ocean and enjoy magnificent sunrises.

Irving Eyster has been an archaeologist and historian in the Florida Keys for more than 60 years. He taught archaeology at Florida International University and the University of Miami. He also taught anthropology at Miami-Dade Community College. He is the author of several books, his most recent is Dr. Jeremiah Reade Explores Florida 1882-1883, which was published in 2007.

Irving was greatly influenced by his grandfather, Dr. Jeremiah Reade, a country doctor, and he credits his grandfather with instilling a love of history in him at a young age. The book contains many old, interesting photos of Florida. The introduction to the book is written by Irving; the remainder is devoted to the writings of his grandfather as he visited Florida from 1882-1883. At that time, little was known about Florida and many people were curious about the state. During his travels, Dr. Reade developed a wonderful affection for Florida. He loved the climate, the vegetation, and opportunities that abounded for people willing to take a chance. Dr. Reade's important writings offer a very descriptive look into a Florida of the past with facts that will intrigue you. These writings appeared in a column in the Indianapolis Times newspaper back in 1882-83.

For many years, Jeane has been the typist of her husband's writings. She originally typed the writings of Dr. Reade using a typewriter and later she retyped them using a computer. She is no longer able to type, so their daughter Barbara has taken over that job.

Irving Eyster and his family hope that their passion for building a museum will come to fruition in the very near future. They want to share the history of the Keys with others, and what better way than to have the artifacts and memorabilia exhibited in a museum for all to see?



If you're interested in learning more about the Irving Eyster Museum of Florida Keys History, please visit the website at: www.MatecumbeHistoricalTrust.com, or you can call the Eysters at 305-664-9504.

Wastewater- Where are We Now?

By Kenneth F. Wagner, D.O., FIDSA

Take time to deliberate; but when the time for action arrives, stop thinking and go in; (fortune cookie).

The mandates and timelines for wastewater compliance have been clearly stated by the authorities and the clock, recently extended to 2015, is ticking. However, the Village remains paralyzed in indecision and are back to where they were a long time ago; nowhere.

- Hazen & Sawyer (H & S) has essentially been fired
- The question of sending waste to Key Largo remains unanswered until the KL Wastewater Board election in November,
- There is no money in the wastewater budget,
- NPK issues are unresolved with rising O & M costs,
- No grants can be obtained due to inactivity,
- The village manager responsible for moving forward is now a lame duck,
- The only solution offered by the Council is a RFP that essentially says we need a wastewater system, you all come+

The Water Quality Improvement Advisory Committee (WQIAC) has been intensively investigating the Septic Tank Effluent Pumping System (STEP) for waste water removal since May, 2010. Unless we discover problems after a visit to a STEP community next month, STEP appears to be a proven, reliable, highly efficient, easy to maintain, cost effective waste water system.

In fact, using Lower Matecumbe (LMK) as a model (including Indian Key causeway), the WQIAC subcommittee compared STEP with a Vacuum System using H & S cost projections that were presented to the Council in Oct 2009 & January 2010 Program Delivery Analysis Reports. This comparison revealed that in LMK, STEP could yield a potential savings of up to 1/3 (33%) or ~ \$12 million over the H & S engineering estimate of costs of a Vacuum System. The analysis suggests similar savings could be gained for other areas of the Village. It was also discovered that most Engineers have little to no experience with STEP systems and therefore don't consider it or present it in their designs. This apparently is the case with the current library of Engineers approved by the Village and STEP is currently not in the plan for a RFP.

The current thrust by the Council appears to be soliciting a RFP and turning over the entire wastewater system to a Public Private Partnership (PPP). Under this form of PPP, the contractor undertakes to design, build, operate and maintain the asset for a period specified in the contract, normally 20-25 years. Although this might relieve all the pressure and decision making from the Council, it is one that could have significant drawbacks. Although PPPs initially appear to be cheaper or cost neutral, they frequently end up more expensive in the long run when compared to traditional practices, as the devil is in the details. In the PPP, the Village

- Would lose control,
- Not be able to benefit from grants or other potential funding,
- Competitive bidding is eliminated, and unless the PPP is very carefully written,
- O & M costs can cause significant increases to the users, as they are passed on.

I would argue that a better solution would be to set a logical specific course of action and stick to it. For example:

1. Set a reasonable budget: Without one, the engineers don't have any incentive to keep costs within the limits set. This should not be difficult as the Village knows H & S's wildly high estimate of \$132 million, Marathon's \$69 million cost and KL's Capital costs for collection and transmission. A pretty good guess would be around \$80-95 million. The bids will either come in at, under, or over budget and the council can then decide to go forward or get other bids no matter what the amount.

Continued on next page

Continued from previous page

The Village seems to be fixated on cost per EDU, Equivalent Dwelling Units (the average amount of wastewater generated by an average single family residence -157gal/day flow) and is not looking at the big picture, total cost. There are ~ 7,644 non-package plus package plant EDUs not counting NPK (~3000 EDUs) in Islamorada. This 7,644 number is not the mitigated number of EDUs but the real number by definition. This is a number the engineering company would use to calculate average cost/EDU for comparison purposes. Therefore, they would say \$85 million divided by 7,644 would yield an average cost of \$11,120/EDU.

However, as you can see the cost/EDU can change with how you decide to count them. If the council mitigated 1500 EDUs for package plants, then the cost per EDU would rise significantly (\$13,835/EDU) even though the total cost doesn't change. This is not the engineering company's problem as to how we divvy up how much each entity pays and should not stop us from going forward. These details can be apportioned later. For example, a single family home could be 1.0 EDU, a package plant 1.5 EDU, empty lot .5 EDU, etc, to pay for each entity's percent of the total cost. This is what the Council was elected for; to make these decisions and not have paralysis by analysis.

2. Consider all central wastewater systems, i.e., gravity, vacuum, STEP, and grinder, if they meet criteria for quality, longevity, capital cost, and O & M. This means any of them can be used as a single system or in combination with others, on any island. Let the engineers sort out the best systems for each island within the given budget.

3. Increase the library of engineering companies the village has qualified in order to meet 1 & 2., companies that have proven experience and excellence in value engineering with all types of central wastewater systems utilizing the **design, bid, build** process to do a facilities plan for all of Islamorada, being fully aware of the budget and utilizing work already done by H & S. The vetting of engineering companies should be started now but there is **no reason to rush** the design until the key decision on Key Largo is made, as it would waste design money if we do not go to KL.

4. Approve an assessment to pay for a facilities plan only by the engineering company that is hired. This plan should be in the neighborhood of ~150-200K. Any additional funding should be decided after the plan has been reviewed and approved. Do not let the arguments of how much each party pays into the assessment slow down the process. **MAKE A DECISION AND STICK TO IT!**

5. Finalize the decision as to where treatment will be done, and it will be final unless a disaster takes place, end of discussion.

6. The Village will take out a loan to cover the cost of wastewater. The citizens will have the right to pay off their portion all at once or over time. Any and all wastewater grant monies will be put toward reducing the amount of the loan and returned on a pro rata amount to our citizens.

Tick, Toc!

Kenneth F. Wagner
Consultant, Infectious & Tropical Diseases
Islamorada Water Quality Improvement Advisory Committee since 4-08
STEP subcommittee member

*Dr. Kenneth Wagner lives on Lower Matecumbe with his wife Nancy. They have 3 daughters and 3 grandchildren who live in Maryland and Georgia. He and his wife enjoy fishing, boating, golf, and traveling. Ken consults in infectious diseases and tropical medicine, is in demand as an invited lecturer, serves as a consultant to the pharmaceutical and biomedical industry, continues to publish in the medical literature area, and is on editorial and Biotech Boards of Directors. He has won many awards, authored over 150 book chapters, abstracts and scientific articles in medical literature.

25TH ANNUAL International Coastal Cleanup Sep 25

First For Sea Oats Beach

Every year in September the Ocean Conservancy organizes an incredible grassroots beach cleanup effort with more than half-a-million people in 100 countries removing millions of pounds of trash from beaches, oceans, and waterways all over the world.

It all started back in 1986 when Linda Maraniss, a former Ocean Conservancy employee, was walking the beach on South Padre Island in Texas. She was appalled at the amount of trash on the beach and decided to do something about it. She organized a cleanup along the gulf coast of Texas. There were 2800 Texans who participated in that first cleanup day, and they managed to pick up 124 tons of trash in just 2 hours. Since 1986, that effort has spread across the world, becoming a much-loved and valued experience for the hundreds of thousands of beach lovers who participate. And what a difference it has made.

Sea Oats Beach

This year is our year to join in the effort on our own special beach on Lower Matecumbe- Sea Oats Beach. Many local residents regularly walk the beach with their garbage bags to make our beach as beautiful as it can be. Join them September 25. If enough participate, it will take just a little time to make a big difference.

Spread the word, give your time. Your efforts will be most satisfying! Water, trash bags and removal are all being donated by Bruce Williams with Veolia. Bring gloves, hat, sunscreen and spend the morning cleaning Sea Oats Beach.

Any questions..please contact .. Ann Haber at 305 517 9035.

Amendment 4...Florida Growth Procedures to be Decided in November

By Sue Miller

A proposed amendment to the Florida Constitution, Amendment 4, will be on the November 2010 ballot. This is a critical and controversial issue that could change the way growth decisions are made all over the state.

So often we are critical of the land use decisions made by a simple majority vote of council. Many complain that the local government officials that make important growth decisions are lobbied effectively by developers who will receive tremendous financial benefit, and can therefore afford to hire lobbyists, planners, and attorneys to fight for their interests. Opponents of development projects, up-zonings, and increased density are fighting for community character, not financial reward. They cannot be expected to spend equal amounts to hire experts to combat intense lobbying efforts on each and every development issue.

Backers of Amendment 4 are citizens who worry about the impact of over-development on their community and state and its quality of life. The amendment would give voters oversight over how their communities grow.

Opponents fear the amendment will be cumbersome, making all growth decisions too difficult. They fear the system will be cost prohibitive, limiting economic development which some believe is crucial to the future of Florida.

Amendment 4, impacts all local governments in Florida. If Amendment 4 passes, city or county commissions/ councils will study and vote as usual on proposed changes to the local comprehensive land use plan, which is the blueprint for future development. Plan changes approved by the council will then be submitted to voters on the ballot at the next regularly scheduled Election Day. Voters will either veto or approve them. Amendment 4 does not require special elections.

In an area like the Florida Keys, where limited growth is critical to the protection of our fragile environment and our extremely limited infrastructure, a yes+vote on Amendment 4 would seem a prudent way to give the public a true voice in future growth decisions.

Budget News from Village Hall

In March three new members of the Islamorada Village Council were seated: Bob Johnson, Ken Philipson and Dave Purdo. All three promised to diligently protect tax dollars during these tough economic times. Their impact is noticeable.

The village-wide wastewater assessment of 2009 was refunded, with the majority on council believing it was unfair and perhaps premature, as there is still no specific wastewater plan. The engineering firm of Hazen and Sawyer, previously charging the Village \$80,000 per month for wastewater program management is no longer working for Islamorada. The Village manager's days are numbered, along with his huge costs to taxpayers.

After numerous very difficult budget workshops, the Islamorada Village council passed a budget for 2010-2011 at the rollback rate, 2.2839, primarily by cutting employees' pay by 2% and waiving retirement contributions for a year. (Fire/EMS employees were excluded from these cuts) Rollback rate is the millage necessary to raise the same amount of tax revenue as the previous year. It was a struggle for council to get to rollback, using fund balances to avoid a greater tax impact to property owners. The vote at the first public hearing was 3-2. Don Achenberg voted against the budget because he thinks the village needs more revenue to operate effectively. Dave Purdo voted against, believing more expenses need to be cut during these tough economic times.

The taxable value of nearly every homesteaded property increased by 2.7%, resulting in a tax increase of about 15% for most all homesteaded properties.

Council had to cover another \$798,000 deficit for the North Plantation Key wastewater system, on top of the \$2 million deficit last year. No new wastewater assessment was approved for this year, except the ongoing assessment on NPK, but certainly we need to be prepared for hefty wastewater costs in the near future.

In an effort to improve the budget process, the council is planning to have quarterly budget meetings prior to approving the next budget in September of 2011. Hopefully these added financial meetings will help tighten financial oversight and make the budget process better next year.

Tough Economic Times—Any end in Sight?

The village council has struggled with the need to provide adequate tax revenues in spite of declining property values. It would appear the declining values may well continue. Real estate sales in 2010 will determine how the tax appraiser values properties next year. And the market remains weak.

In the last year, according to the tax appraiser's figures, 186 properties sold in Islamorada, 33 on Lower Matecumbe. Five of the 33 (15%) sold for \$1 million or more.

In the 12 months ending Sept 1, 2005, there were 438 properties that sold in Islamorada. On Lower Matecumbe there were 81 properties that sold, 35 out of 81 (43%) for \$1 million or more.

Below is a chart showing the total taxable value of all real estate in Islamorada since the year 2000. Property values have declined 31% since 2007 with no end in sight.

Year	Tot Assessed Value for Islamorada	Change from prior year	Percent change
2000	1,150,383,174.00		
2001	1,278,008,097.00	127,624,923.00	11.09%
2002	1,488,882,269.00	210,874,172.00	16.50%
2003	1,841,059,577.00	352,177,308.00	23.65%
2004	2,239,748,409.00	398,688,832.00	21.66%
2005	2,794,634,050.00	554,885,641.00	24.77%
2006	3,642,257,495.00	847,623,445.00	30.33%
2007	3,864,223,373.00	221,965,878.00	6.09%
2008	3,583,275,137.00	(280,948,236.00)	-7.27%
2009	3,015,322,432.00	(567,952,705.00)	-15.85%
2010	2,676,894,159.00	(338,428,273.00)	-11.22%

Our Island

(reprinted from April newsletter)

By Don Achenberg, Village Vice Mayor
LMKA member

I am pleased to have been offered the opportunity to write a piece for the LMKA Newsletter. Pleased - but somewhat concerned when I was told that I could write on any subject. The temptation to raise again that which divides us rose within me. But this morning, after being on the annual Lower Matecumbe people path walk led by our president Gordon Hadley, I realized that there is far more good that binds us than disagreement which divides us. In these few lines I hope to bring the good to the forefront of our thinking.

We live on perhaps the prettiest island in all of the Florida Keys. We are not beset by overcrowding or crass commercialism. We are blessed. In this blessing we find that which has drawn us together - a diverse group of residents drawn close by the beauty of our island home. This island is the one tangible thing that we all share - that we should all enjoy - that we should all work to preserve.

From the walk this morning came the suggestion that we form a future plan for enhancing our island. A plan that will accentuate its beauty and show our pride in living upon it. The specifics of the idea should be left up to the residents. But the theme of the plan should be the expression of the pride that we all feel for Lower Matecumbe. The pride is there. It was the singular factor that shown through among the walkers this morning.

Membership Application/Renewal

First Name(s): _____

Last Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Local Address: _____

Phone (local): _____

Other phone: _____

Email: _____

Provide your email please!

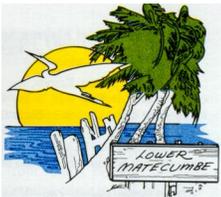
Get your newsletter faster and save LMKA printing/postage costs! We only use the email address to send newsletters, information and reminders about Lower Matecumbe.

Make check payable to

LMKA P. O. Box 911, Islamorada, FL 33036

Family \$20; Single \$12

**Enclose a note if you will serve on the Board,
volunteer with projects or newsletter or if you
have ideas for making our community better.**



**Lower Matecumbe Key Assoc
P. O. Box 911
Islamorada, FL 33036**

**News From
Islamorada!!!**