

Captiva Community Panel

WORKSHOP

March 28, 2018

Attending: Mike Boris, Mike Kelly, David Mintz, Tom Rathbone, Dave Jensen, Mike Lanigan, Mike Mullins, Antje Baumgarten

Audience: 20

Workshop convened at 10 a.m. *Mintz:* Welcome and introductions to fourth and final workshop. Survey still online, easy to access through website. Preliminary report at April 10 panel meeting. Put together results and recordings, look over input, create spreadsheet of issues that have arisen, prioritize them as possible, have consultants research and review concerns to report back to the community in the fall. Historic development patterns, native trees and invasive species. Not looking for solutions, just issues and concerns. *Bill Abraham:* Rent signs... Not mention in sign rules. Concern about sign proliferation on island, spoke to code enforcement officer, did not know we had a sign ordinance. Signs supposed to be less than 12 inches off ground, most of them are much higher than that. Supposed to be two feet away from property line, most are two inches away from pavement. No enforcement, everyone is out of compliance. Vacation rentals, nothing legally we can do about it. We built our house as primary residence about six years ago, quickly discovered a huge rental vacation home next store. Decided we had to buy that house, not a solution for everyone. Seems like most homes sold become vacation rentals. Described instances. Beside noise and commotion, frightening to see people you don't know if they are supposed to be there. Don't know who neighbors are. VRBO, more than 300 listings on Captiva. No longer a place for people who want to live here, becoming a vacation island. Are they paying their tourist tax, compliance, health issues? Generate a huge amount of trash, who pay us for that? *Mintz:* Panel heard these issues arise repeatedly. Happening all over the country, a lot of things you cannot do, but somethings you can do. Vision recognizes need to balance residential and rentals.

Ann Brady: Signs, if there is an ordinance it can be enforced. No one is honoring that. Like the subtle signs, suits a small community. *Kelly:* You're right, no reason not to enforce. Vigorous attempt to force enforcement of rental signs. They came out and cited every single person for a violation, not just the rental signs. We're going to do it, but you're not going to like it. Especially for rentals, no reason to have it in the ROW. For Sale is different, owners have rights, Everyone thinks this is an issue all over the island. No good answer. If we don't do something with county, the state is going to do it eventually. Good point, very valid, you have a lot of company. *Brady:* Dark Skies extremely important, becoming more and more rare in the world. Artists come here from all over the world, they comment they can see the stars here which they can't in other places they go. Very significant and special to this area. *Lanigan:* What do you mean by dark skies? *Brady:* Able to see the stars at night, without the washout from adjacent lights. ???: Renters not aware they leave lights on all night outside. ??? No ordinance to protect lights. *David Rohn:* Sanibel looked at this years ago due to turtle concerns. Dark Skies Association, very specific guidelines. Look at Sanibel vs. Fort Myers Beach from the causeway at night, a world of difference. South Seas may be the worst violators, love to shoot lights up at trees. *Mullins:* Problem with fisherman on bridge fishing off docks, added a lot of lighting to deter people from coming out at night when they think we're asleep. Lights have a security implication as well. Look at the stars by going out to the beach. *Baumgarten:* When does light cause pollution? Described views and issues. Security is important, need a very specific definition on that. No

problem in Germany because electricity is so expensive. Here, you could charge people for electricity separately for rentals. *Mintz*: Provided North Captiva dark skies ordinance, so you have a sense of what that could look like.

Mintz: Drones? *Audience*: Don't like them, don't want them here. Very invasive to have them zooming up and down the beach. *Mintz*: Is it prevalent? *Abraham*: Nothing legally we can do about them, don't like them but there they are. ??? Rabbits? Everyone hates them. *Mintz*: Do we as a community need to act on this. People dealing with them individually, not sure that ever works. ??? Solution to rabbits is a Burmese python. *Lt. Mike Sawicki*: Rabbits are a native species, check with Fish & Wildlife to see what you can do about them? *Brady*: History of invasive species on the island? Who invaded and what happened? *Jensen*: Saw an old Island Reporter article, about spotting a green iguana. ???: Rabbit issue, no predator around to control them. ??? Iguana, big one, can't see them until you're right on top of them. *Jensen*: Other nearby communities dealing with them, set up MSTU and get property owners permission. Population is stabilized, no way he'll get rid of them. Community has to get together and make it a common decision. Individuals cannot effectively fight the problem. *Abraham*: recently coyotes spotted in neighborhood, seeing more dead rabbits. *Mullins*: Raccoons decimated, allowed rabbits to explode. ???: Owls in short supply from eating mice who've eaten poison. Control poison use to allow welcome predator to prosper. *Brady*: SCCF has flyer on this, how to save barn owls by avoiding certain poisons. *Jensen*: Need to ask what exterminators are using, they won't always tell you what they are doing. *Mintz*: Or make island poison free. *Jensen*: Need to have a solution for rats. *Mullins*: Solutions mean how you can enforce. *Baumgarten*: If we are a community that embraces nature, we need to find solutions that encourage a natural balance to address some of these issues. If iguanas are not native and do not have predators, man might need to step in. If there are species who belong and there can be a natural predator solution, we should look at that.

??? : What does flat roofs issue mean? *Mintz*: Explanation of changes in height rules. Create a uniform building envelope. Offered options to include more architectural features on rooflines. More of a problem in the Village with the smaller lot size, allows maximum living space under roof, but defeats purposes of allowing more variety. *Elaine Smith*: What does removal of trees issues? *Mintz*: Current code allows removal of five trees on your residential property per year. People thought if you removed a tree you had to replace it somewhere else. Really, you can actually clear-cut the lot. *Lanigan*: Difference between Gold Coast lots and Village lots in terms of trees, would love to remove more than five. *Mullins*: Clarify native vs. invasives. Australian pines can remove all, gumbo limbos can only remove five. Want us to get rid of non-native trees. *Jensen*: Brazilian pepper taking hold again. Verify year of removal in current code. *Mintz*: Pieces of rules everywhere, no one knows what applies to Captiva. Try to get all Captiva codes in the same place. *Mullins*: This does not apply to mangroves. ??? : Noise an issue on the island. Perception that this is a resort area, not a residential area, encourages noise that way. Expand perception that this is a residential area with some rental units interspersed. ??? : Sound like a majority of houses are rental houses, which makes it a resort community. Residents are a minority, 60%-65% rentals? *Boris*: Higher than that. *Tom Libonate*: Proliferation of signs tells you its more than that. ??? : Signs contribute to the perception as well. Set up quiet zones? Signs that this is a residential community? *Jensen*: State prohibits rental regulations locally, supported by VRBO and rental lobby. Can Tallahassee pass laws that squash any opportunity we try to take? *Boris*: Looking for issues, but need to be mindful of what is happening in Tallahassee. Noise from rentals is a problem. *Libonate*: Rentals add amenities to make them appealing, Outdoor TV, hot tubs on the roof, outside games, encourages excess noise from renters. *Mullins*: If noise after a certain time above a certain level, call it in. Cannot regulate amenities, but can require they enforce the noise ordinance.

Sawicki: Ordinance a tough level to meet, annoying vs. what's in violation. *Mintz:* Could pass a Captiva specific ordinance. Rule everyone abides by doesn't really exist. *Libonate:* Could we require rentals to have signage outside to limit uses? *Sawicki:* Described ordinance. 66 dB throughout day, 10 pm drops to 55dB from the receiving property. Bar for noise violation is below 55 dB limit. Also comes down to design of home, concrete walls and deck, echoes noise to adjacent properties. Discussion.

Mullins: Need to know how to measure and what sounds converts to in dB. *Mintz:* Happy to have American Realty and Royal Shell in the audience, feel free to share your thoughts and comments. Boris; Boom boxes on the beach? ???: Why do you need to have music on the beach? ???: Not too many, have asked them to turn it down and they've been agreeable. *Mintz:* Leaf blowers? ?? Has to do his job, don't know what you can do about it. Long drawn-out noise. *Libonate:* Maybe make it one day. *Mintz:* Electric blowers or go buy rakes. HOA only permits on two days, Saturday and Monday. Solution that worked for us, maybe not everyone else. Abraham: Sandwich signs, counted five of them on the way here. *Mintz:* Ordinance allows them only for special events, noticed proliferation and sent emails to businesses who use them. Small community, can have a lot of voluntary compliance. Develop and maintain the Captiva brand. Motivate people to become good citizens and voluntarily comply with reasonable rules. *Baumgarten:* No outside music does not fit with nature, or more about the noise? *Mullins:* noise. *Mintz:* Understand business needs, but reasonable to set limits on outside sounds. ??? Most issues come about with renters. Be careful if you change Captiva too much, renters won't come here. Residents are not enough to support the businesses here now. Renters impact property values, bed tax collections, etc. Needs a balance. *Libonate:* Agree to balance, but we're a little out of balance right now. Rentals have changed the character of the island. ??? Hurricane season approaching, problem to get information about storm impacts. Work on community communications to encourage cooperation. *Mintz:* Who's responsible to get the word out during hurricane season? Upgrading website, need to work with county, to improve emergency communications/. *Mullins:* Hurricane Committee once in place. Beth Oden needs to be wired into whatever the community does. Have someone who runs errands for you in town? Communications to help each other with ride sharing, etc. *Boris:* Someday soon a driverless community car. *Brady:* Next Door Captiva, can sign up for it. A lot of emails, use or ignore the one you want. *Mullins:* LCSO plays a part in that. *Boris:* Hurricane, when it started we did not have the social media we have now, Beth was off-site. Last storm person was on site could show us visuals of what's happened on the island in real time. *Jensen:* Drone would work great. *Mintz:* Put a camera on an iguana? Or a rabbit?

??? Reason a lot of us are here is because we love nature. Sanibel has signs touting its natural values, do we emphasize enough what this island is to our guests and visitors. Emphasize more what it means to us and what it can mean to everyone who comes to visit the island. Tourist or resident we can all love. *Mintz:* Pride and spirit of Captiva. *Brady:* Educational component part of marketing and branding as part of ordinance. If this is where you want to vacation, this is the culture of this place. Animals, nature, environmental quality, won't be here if we don't take care of the island. ??? Enjoy the beach but pick everything up when you head home. ??? California beach communities have beach cleaners, people who come from other places think someone will clean up after them. Love the natural beach here, a real asset. *Brady:* Ways to do it that are gentler, not shove things down people's throats... pass with care. *Mullins:* Balance between education and sign proliferation. ??? An ecofriendly island. *Mintz:* Be in the forefront of green issues? ??? Need rental agencies to help spread this education and brand as well. Royal Shell, provide welcome book to explain rules and regulations, but nobody reads them until they're on their way home. Too busy wanting to play. *Smith:* Make it more of a fun thing, a video that would be fun to go through. *Brady:* Artists, they don't read

anything we send them. You have to create a video. ??? Get the message out that this is an ecofriendly island. *Mullins*: When renters come in they want information, where to go to have fun, things to do. Bundle that in entertaining way with ecofriendly messages. Make it very accessible so everyone will want to put it out. *Mintz*: Come to a special place, make them proud about that. *Mullins*: Welcome to Vermont, don't forget to go home. Message that will resonate without proliferation of signs. *Mullins*: Construction issues. Way to know when construction is going on. Know what the rules are. Can't stop progress but what are the rules governing it? *Boris*: Survey is still out there, through end of the month. Love to hear from them. Thanks to all.

Meeting adjourned at 11:20 a.m.

Ken Gooderham