



## *A brief history of the Captiva Community Panel*

The desire to preserve the unique nature and ambience of Captiva Island has been a passion for its residents and visitors dating back to the mid-1970s. From the initial efforts to limiting density and building heights that set the three-units-per-acre limitation that defined the island, to maintaining the low-rise and low-density development pattern in the face of mounting pressure for bigger and bigger homes and commercial structures in ensuing decades, preserving and protecting Captiva has been a rallying cry and impetus for a variety of efforts.

One of those efforts has been the driving force behind the Captiva Community Panel.

Seeking to take advantage of a new concept dubbed “community planning” that was gaining acceptance in Lee County, the Captiva Island Property Owners Association (CPOA) first petitioned county leaders in October 2000 to fund and form a community planning panel to help formulate and support county land use regulations affecting Captiva Island.

Community planning was a way for communities to have greater impact on the land use and development rules governing their area. This allowed planning panels to draft and propose specific goals and objectives to be adopted by the Lee County Commission to become part of the Lee Plan, the comprehensive planning document that regulates activities throughout the county. With those goals and objectives, the panels could then draft and propose more specific regulations for the county’s Land Development Code (LDC), which implements the plan’s objectives.

The planning panels were volunteer efforts involving members of the community (working with paid consultants and county staff) to develop these land use and development regulations via a transparent, consensus-building effort. Eventually, 16 communities formed their own community planning panels; some developed plan and code language, then disbanded, while others continue on today.

In the case of Captiva, the work of community planning continues.

Following the initial request to Lee County in 2000, the CPOA hired a planner and began to work on a draft of possible Lee Plan language through a series of community workshops and meetings. Once the county finalized the actual language and requirements for creating a community planning panel, the

CPOA submitted a formal request to form and fund such a panel, submitting five names for initial members.

At a public hearing in January 2002, the Lee County Commission approved funding for the Captiva Community Panel (CCP); The Captiva Civic Association (CCA) asked the county to be included in this planning effort, and the county agreement then included two additional panel positions to be appointed by the CCA. At the first Captiva Community Panel (CCP) meeting the following month, the existing seven members voted to add two additional seats to the panel (bringing the total to nine), with those positions to be appointed by the panel itself. (Two additional panel-appointed seats were added over the next few years, bringing the total count of panel members to 11 by 2016.)

The initial Captiva Plan, which had been submitted to the county in September 2001, was approved in January 2003 following extensive county staff and committee review and hearings. Since a number of desired objectives submitted in the original draft were omitted in the final approved version, the CCP began work on a second iteration of the Captiva Plan to include those objectives. That version was submitted for county review and approval in September 2003, and finally adopted in October 2005.

Additional Lee Plan amendments addressing Captiva issues were adopted in 2018 after years of extensive community input and review.

To complement its community planning efforts (and also in response to damage done by Hurricane Charley in August 2004), the CCP undertook some additional efforts in the ensuing years:

- Worked with Lee County to establish a safety shoulder along Captiva Drive to accommodate pedestrian and bicycle traffic.
- Secured state grant funding to help revegetate Captiva Drive following Hurricane Charley, followed by a small grant to add vegetation to public rights-of-way.
- Supported hurricane preparedness efforts to enhance the island's resilience and response to storms, which eventually resulted in the island winning a Storm Ready designation.
- Secured county funding for a water quality study to better understand the sources of nearshore and groundwater pollution. The panel paid for a later study analyzing groundwater pollution and the potential impact of sea level rise on existing septic systems.
- Developed a Sea Level Rise Committee to better assess the overall impacts of rising seas on Captiva. This included funding an eventual Bayside Vulnerability Assessment before turning this effort over to the Captiva Erosion Prevention District in 2023.
- The SLR Committee also undertook a study of stormwater flooding issues increasingly affecting the island, eventually securing for county funding of a stormwater study to review needs and present options.
- Worked with county staff to draft a county ordinance to allow golf-cart use on selected island roadways.
- Worked on initial design and easements in hope of creating a pedestrian walkway along Captiva Drive from South Seas to Andy Rosse Lane.
- Conducted extensive fact-finding on options for wastewater management on the island, and secured county funding for studies to assess the current status of wastewater systems, develop

estimates and designs for a potential sanitary sewage collection system, and assist the City of Sanibel in studies on what improvements to its wastewater treatment and transmission systems would be necessary to accept and treat Captiva's wastewater.

- Funded weekly visits from a professional trapper in an attempt to control a growing iguana population.
- Worked in the wake of Hurricane Ian (2022) to communicate recovery and repair efforts as the island labored to reopen.
- Continued to serve as a community forum since its inception, moving to virtual meetings in 2020 in response to the pandemic and continuing them into 2024 first to allow better participation and communication in the wake of Hurricane Ian and later to encourage participation by island property owners when they were not in residence.

The CCP continued its planning efforts throughout all of this, working on draft Land Development Code (LDC) language to implement the Captiva Plan. In June 2009, the CCP hired a planning firm to help finalize that LDC draft, specifically to address concerns about height restrictions, RSC-2 zoning, mangrove protection and signage. After numerous community workshops, meetings and surveys, a final draft of LDC language was submitted to the county at the end of 2011; after review and revision, it was approved in October 2012. Additional LDC amendments for Captiva were adopted in 2017 and 2021, after extensive community participation, review and revisions.

The CPOA continues to be the legal entity supporting CCP activities, and the CCP is the group's only focus. A 501(c)(3) determination from the IRS in September 2007 allows donations in support of the CCP to be tax-deductible.

Currently, in accordance with the panel bylaws and the 2002 agreement with Lee County, seats for the panel are appointed as follows:

- Five seats appointed by the CPOA;
- Two seats appointed by the CCA;
- Four seats appointed by the sitting panel members, via a Nominating Committee and solicitation of interest to the community.

Panel officers, whose duties are spelled out in the panel bylaws, are elected annually by the full roster of panel members at its January meeting.

A more detailed chronology of the Captiva Community Panel is available [here](#).