

April 18, 2017

A meeting of the Corkscrew Island Neighborhood Association (CINA) took place at the Corkscrew Sanctuary meeting room on Tuesday, April 18, 2017. Nine members were in attendance, plus Fire Chief James Cunningham of the North Collier Fire Control and Rescue District.

1) Pledge of Allegiance

President Bill McDaniel opened the meeting at 7 pm with the pledge of allegiance.

2) Approval of February Minutes

The minutes of the February 21, 2017 meeting had been sent out by email prior to the meeting. The minutes were approved by the following motion:

Motion: A motion was made that the minutes of February 21, 2017 be approved with no corrections or amendments. It was seconded and passed unanimously.

3) Election of Officers

President Bill McDaniel asked for volunteers for president and directors. Debbie Gartzke volunteered to take a directors position as there was a vacancy caused by Maureen Bonness' resignation. There were no volunteers for president. Doug Wilson and Nancy Wilson agreed to remain as Secretary and VP/Treasurer, respectively. After a short discussion the following motion was made:

MOTION: That the current officers and director be re-elected: Bill McDaniel, President; Doug Wilson, Secretary, Nancy Wilson VP/Treasurer; John Hinson, Director; and Debbie Gartzke, be elected as Director to replace Maureen Bonness. The motion was seconded and carried unanimously. This motion is to be ratified at the June meeting as required by the newly amended Articles of Incorporation:

4) Presentation by Fire Chief James Cunningham

Chief Cunningham gave a fast-moving, interesting talk on the very dry and dangerous fire situation. We have dryness and need rain. He reported they had moved around properties ramping up for fire season. Citing the recent 700 acre fire in the Picayune Forest, they are changing the way they're doing business. Moving medical people out to outlying areas and getting equipment so they can get to the fires more quickly. "We over-extended our budget, but we're more ready." Their budget needs to put money out front. He explained how they are assisting Ft. Myers, and Ft. Myers and Port Charlotte are helping us when we need it. "We are backing each other up," adding that there is cooperation between the departments. The fire chiefs have met together and decided on a new burning ban. Florida Forestry is banning open burning, but will allow string burning, rows of crops but will not allow open burning. Embers blow long distances and ignite dry timber. One ember blew a quarter of a mile and ignited a new fire. The burn ban will be in effect for 30 days and then be re-evaluated.

Questions and answers brought forth more information. Two members stated that they lived on opposite ends of the neighborhood and smelled trash burning. The Chief said, "When that happens again, call us. We'll send someone out to investigate, plus we have overhead helicopters. The number to call is 239-252-9300, which is the non-emergency number of the 911 center at the Sheriff's Office. That number is for both the Sheriff and EMS.

Chief says we see the fires on weekends. It's so dry, it could start from a spark from a motorcycle or from a camp fire, or dry trees beneath power lines giving up sparks. Fires move so fast. Another question asked was, are property

owners responsible for clearing thick brush on their property? What about neighbors with heavy growth on their property? The Chief said, "We try to reach out to homeowners in that situation, but there is a law that allows us to go in and take care of the clearing. All our efforts are on suppression. We put home owners on alert to "get ready, set, go" when there is danger of fire coming their way. How fast can you get out of your house? Have your valuable papers ready, clothes, medicines, pets. The fires move very fast. Forestry can go wherever they want to go. The County has to ask homeowners, but Forestry doesn't have to. We're working closely with Forestry to mitigate brush fires.

Doug asked, "We live 100 feet back from the road. We have all these trees and leaves, can your guys come out and scout around, see what's necessary or needed? Can they use our pool for water?" The Chief replied, "We don't draw from lakes or pools. From lakes and rivers the problem is we suck up too much gravel and sand. Plus it takes too long to set up the equipment. We rely on our own tenders. We can get a truck down your driveway with our own water ready to go. Good water we can rely on. It takes too much time to set up with your pool. We're mobile and we trust our equipment. Forestry doesn't have the trucks. We have ground troops. We cooperate. We can come out and look over your property. Our trucks are 11 feet high and 8 feet wide. Call me to have a crew come out. They'll back the truck in. The truck needs good ingress and egress.

His email: jcunningham@northcollierfire.com

What about pets? Going to residential in a fire we go in to make sure everyone is out, including pets. At the Fire Creek fire last week they assured us that everyone was out, but we went up into the third floor anyway to make sure. We check everything. We pulled out a bird and a dog there. That fire started from a metal railing that had been a welding job. A fire was burning inside the metal railing. They smelled smoke but thought it was from outside since there were other fires burning in the area, so they didn't call it in until it had taken hold. That fire was in the attic by the time the crews got there.

A suggestion was made that there are some trees that carry fire well, such as Brazilian Pepper and Malaleuca and others. They don't burn fast. The Chief said the Melaleuca burns black smoke because of the oil in it. Oak doesn't burn as much. But a green belt is not safe either. If you have an all green area, it burns anyway. There was a fire at an all green area recently that went very fast. It spotted ahead of itself, creating its own weather and wind. When the fire is moving fast we have to make fast decisions which house we want to save. We can save three houses that have 30-foot space around them better than one house with trees covering it. We'll move on to the three houses with open space and let the one house go. We have to protect the truck too. We lost a truck when a fire went so fast it engulfed the truck and we couldn't get to it. I'm afraid we're going to lose a man in a fire this year, so we have watch out for driveways that have close hedges on both sides and trees overhanging it.

Watch out for radiant heat. If radiant heat gets too hot from a fire burning too close, it can start burning your house, wood, curtains without flames or an ember touching it. Once a house is burning, we move on. We consider it a loss and move on to a house that we can save. At the Williams fire we had 78 trucks on site. We wrote off garages. You set your priorities. If a building has all these trees around it, that building is gone. Fires can start from landscape lighting or a pool heater, any in-ground electrical wiring that has grown old and brittle. Underground wires can start burning and burn the mulch lying on top. Gated communities think they don't have any brush to burn around them, but we're seeing it happen. Mulch starts burning from an air conditioning unit, its wires old and sparks come from it. Put dirt down on the ground first, then the mulch on top because dirt won't burn, the mulch will. A suggestion was made about hooking up a water hose to the water tank at the house in case of fire, but the chief said when a fire starts they kill the power lines. Power lines will arc in a fire, so you won't have electricity unless you have a generator.

The Chief added that he feels he owns the houses in his community. He takes responsibility for them. Forestry doesn't feel that way.

The question was asked, does EMS have advanced life support in it? Yes, thanks to Commissioner McDaniel. He approved it. We have to renew our application for ALS every 12 months. So every EMS has advanced life support, cardiac monitor and everything an ambulance has, but we don't transport to hospitals. ALS is advanced life support.

Bill said he is working with the Sheriff's Department and there is a lot of cooperation between departments. "The politics are gone," he said. "We meet with first responders on a regular basis. I'm 140 days on the job now. There's been a board shift and a cooperative attitude is prevailing."

5) Other Business

Meeting tomorrow at Ag Center

Melissa Barry announced that there is a meeting tomorrow, Wed., April 19, 5 - 6:30 pm, at the Ag Center concerning what trees and greenery to plant in the median along Immokalee. They want to use native shrubs instead of landscaped greens.

Pythons growing in number

A discussion took place about the growing population of pythons. The reason they are growing is because they have no natural enemy. Birds normally eat baby snakes but python babies are 3 feet long, so they look like a full-grown snake. The birds don't eat them. We have an infestation. Bill suggested if you see one, take a picture of it and send it to www.IveGot1.org. It's a site to report invasive animals and plants in Florida. Just log in and send a message or photo. You can shoot them, it's legal. Bill said there is one piece of good news - some python hunters came to Corkscrew and they couldn't find any. They found rabbits, raccoons and other small animals, which means we don't have any pythons. Fire won't harm them because they just lie in the water and let the fire go right over it. A python can go dormant for up to two days while it digests a large animal. You can walk right by it if it's on the ground and not notice it. It blends in with the foliage. You won't even see it. Bill told about Ian [Bartoszek] being in a two-year study tracking pythons. The python had a GPS on it and they followed it everywhere it went. The Florida panther population survey said there are thousands of these pythons out there. The problem comes when pet pythons are let loose and the population grows. If you can catch an infestation of a invasive early enough, when it's small, you can trap it and control it. But it's too late with the pythons. Like the tegus, we needed to catch them earlier when there were only a few.

Ways to monitor locations of fires

A question was asked, is there an app that shows where the burns are? Forestry has only state fires. Would the weather app be able to pick it up with its doppler radar? The chief said they post on North Collier Facebook as soon as they can. Check the North Collier Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/Allhazardsresponse/>
We are trying to keep the residents calm so we're being pro-active and posting as soon as we know what's happening.

A motion to adjourn was made at 8:30 pm.