

# Town Debates Private Road Clean-up Responsibility

## Debris, from Page 1

be pushed by a "snowplow" to clear the roads, but the debris would be pushed to the sides out of the way for later pick-up.

The next push would clear roads that are normally used by utility vehicles. After that, the roads would be cleared for postal vehicles, with the smaller roads cleared so that emergency vehicles could reach anyone on Longboat Key.

St. Denis explained that it would get more involved and more expensive as they traveled further away from the main circulatory roads.

He had contractors on call, he said, who had made a commitment to help the Town remove the debris.

Commissioner Randal Clair's main concern was that the Town needed to know where to draw the line between what property owners want and what they don't want. He is also wondering how the condominium neighborhoods will react to the Town bringing in heavy equipment to remove heavy debris.

Vice Mayor Lee Rothenberg said he was afraid that it may cost the Town \$10 to \$15 million the next time a major hurricane comes around if they don't make the right decision.

"If it's \$5 million extra, you will double your tax rate," Rothenberg explained to the board. "If it were only \$1 million to \$3 million we can absorb it. What potential cost would this work entail? What are the other coastal communities doing?"

Rothenberg felt that the information from FEMA implied that reimbursement for clearing debris would not be reimbursed unless there was a threat to life.

"We don't want to be ruled by FEMA, but it would be imprudent not to worry about the money." Commissioner Robert Siekman said to the board. "There's a rush to come to a conclusion on a very complex matter."

St. Denis said he thought that Sanibel spent \$9 million when Charley hit their barrier island, with only \$6 million reimbursement from FEMA.

## Sanibel's Experience

Actually, Sanibel had more damage than \$9 million, as City Manager Judie Zamomra explained on Wednesday.

"We had \$14 million in damage in the public sector after Charley. This was the clean-up of the debris, city structures, beaches, but no vegetation," Zamomra said. "There was \$792 million damage to the private sector."

Their "First Push" was cleaning-up on the main public roads for the first 72 hours. Then they worked on the side roads, whether they were public or private. It took them months to remove the debris.

She also said that they burned the vegetative debris, unlike other coastal communities.

"If we hadn't burned it on site," Zamomra said. "We would still be sitting in a pile of debris."

Zamomra said the day after Hurricane Charley hit,



Should the Town clear debris from private roadways?

they took out a \$10 million bank loan. They have been paying it back at \$1.5 million dollars a year. They also increased their city "hurricane" reserves from \$1 million to \$2 million after Charley, Frances and Wilma hit their island. What Sanibel has learned is that \$1 million doesn't go far when it comes to rebuilding a town.

"Contractors will stop working if they don't get paid," Zamomra said. "They will pack up and move to another city."

According to Zamomra, between FEMA and personal grants they worked hard to get, they were reimbursed only \$10 million. Because their building codes were so good, structures in the private and public sectors were not damaged more than 50%.

Zamomra stressed that any process should be examined for cost out because she has found that FEMA is becoming more and more stringent in reimbursing them every year. Zamomra has asked for help after Hurricanes

Charley, Frances and Wilma.

According to Longboat Key consultants Nathaniel Counsell and Jonathan Burgiel of Beck Disaster Recovery, Inc., their understanding of FEMA policy is that the removal of debris from private drives and the parking lots of condominiums and apartment complexes would not be reimbursable.

FEMA would reimburse whatever debris would be removed from those areas and then brought to Gulf of Mexico Drive for the Town's contracted help to remove. In this case, it would be Grubbs Emergency Services. Those services would be fully reimbursed.

Beck Disaster Recovery is the consulting group which would be used as monitors reporting details of debris removal to FEMA, according to St. Denis.

## Stormy Questions

At the Town meeting this past Monday night, more questions were raised than answered. Who's going to pay for the debris clean-up after a major hurricane hits Longboat Key? Should it be a combination of private and public owners, or should the Town of Longboat Key shoulder the first responsibility of cleaning up the tons of debris after a major storm? Will Longboat commissioners be setting a precedent in Florida by paying the bill for cleaning up more than public access roads? Or, will they be caught short with no plan in sight as storms gather on the horizon because they are undecided?

"I believe we will have policy in place one way or the other," said St. Denis on Wednesday. We will know by June 15."

Commissioner Peter O'Connor said he thought it was Ronald Reagan who asked the hard questions.

"Didn't Reagan say, 'If not now, when?'" O'Connor said. "If not us, who?"

## LongboatLetters



Longboat Key News encourages Letters to the Editor. Please mail, e-mail or fax to one of the following: 5370 Gulf of Mexico Drive, Ste. 210, Longboat Key, FL 34228; e-mail: letters@lbknews.com; fax: 941-387-8288. We also print letters sent to Town Hall that address Key issues.

## The Real Philly is in Philly

Dear Editor:

This comment is for Peter Holliday. I just read your article on Jersey Mike's. Having eaten a cheesesteak there, I gotta tell you your barking up the wrong tree on this one.

I grew up in Philly and there's no way Mikes can compare with either Pat's or Geno's. It's all in the bread and Jersey Mike's bread is not even close. Publix sells a better roll to put Mike's cheesesteak on. As far as being rude to the customers, well that goes

back to when I was a kid. The lines for cheesesteaks would be half way around the building with people waiting to order. Then along comes an out of Towner who don't know what he wants, doesn't read the sign and holds up the whole line. And you wonder why he's told to go to the end of the line?

Tony Arcolesse  
Palmetto

P.S. My wife and I disagree on who has the best cheesesteak, she says it's Geno's, but what does she know... Pat's is still the king of steaks.

## Hershatter, from Page 4

*And we'll say bello  
To all the folks we know  
And tell them that it won't be long.  
They're happy to know  
That last time we saw you,  
We all joined singing this song.*

*We'll meet again;  
We know where;  
Don't know when  
You'll be back here, at last, to stay.*

(apologies to Parker/Charles, 1941)

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## Burgum, from Page 4

questions of Executive excess leading to violations of constitutional rights; and the presence of the telegraph which, like current news channels, brought news faster and made it all more personal.

But there are also significant differences. Lincoln did things with personal rights that would cause the American Civil Liberties Union to hyperventilate. He suspended habeas corpus, imprisoned American citizens for long periods without even a warrant, and sometimes closed unfriendly newspaper offices. Clement Vallandigham of Ohio was a former congressman, a tire-

less critic of the Lincoln war policy and an emotional searcher for peace at any price. He had been arrested illegally and Lincoln backed the arrest. Rather than sending Vallandigham to prison, however, Lincoln, in an act not without humor, sent him instead to the Confederacy, which didn't want him either and almost immediately returned him to Ohio. One has to believe that Bush would secretly love to ship Cindy Sheehan and Nancy Pelosi to Afghanistan or Iraq even if he knows that, given Muslim's views of women, they likely would be immediately returned.

Another striking difference can be found in the newspaper accounts of the time. There was absolutely no attempt to be "fair and balanced." Nor was there an attempt to hide the prejudice of a particular paper. The New York Times described a Democrat from the peace wing of the party as a man with "an excellent talent for silence," and then went on to say that he seems intelligent only when silent. Some of the newspaper utterances make better reading than anything available today. The Cleveland Herald described those who attended a rump Republican convention in July 1864 as, "a convention of sly politicians from New York, impetuous harebrained Germans from St. Louis, abolitionists, and personal friends and parasites of Fremont [a Republican seeking to run against Lincoln]." The Cincinnati Daily Commercial, not to be outdone by anyone in Cleveland, called the rump convention, "a collection of long-haired radicals who had called a meeting in Cleveland because they couldn't afford to go to Baltimore."

But the New York papers had to have been the most fun to read, although not necessarily the most illuminating. When Lincoln was finally nominated for a

second term in Baltimore, with Andrew Johnson as Vice-President, the New York Word's Democratic sympathies and purple prose came to the fore. "The age of statesmen is gone," the paper complained editorially. "The age of rail-splitters and tailors, of buffoons, boors and fanatics has succeeded. In a crisis of the most appalling magnitude, requiring statesmanship of the highest order, the country is asked to consider the claims of two ignorant, boorish, third-rate backwoods lawyers, for the highest stations in the government. God save the Republic!"

## 2006: A Kinder, Gentler Era

The election of 2006 will feature some discussion of corruption; nothing today can hold a candle to 1864. Republican funds were obtained from federal employees and government contractors, all who had to give 10% or more of whatever they had received in salary or contracts. Voter fraud was an art form in 1864. Indiana was a key state and General Sherman was asked to release all Indiana men so they could return home and vote. Sherman complied, and it is recorded that "even the Nineteenth Vermont Volunteers and the Sixtieth Massachusetts, to their surprise, found themselves voting in the Indiana election."

We can rejoice in the political misdeeds, at least in this case. Because of Lincoln's victory in November 1864, the Union and the democratic experiment would survive to the benefit of all.

(Note: John C. Waugh's, Reelecting Lincoln, is the source of the quotes in this column. Waugh's book is highly recommended as a most readable and reliable construct of the events leading up to the most important election in the history of the United States.)