

The Lee Communities Coalition

Local Voices United for Local Communities

Greater Pine Island Civic Association | Matlacha Civic Association | Buckingham Community Association, Inc. | Alva, Inc. | Captiva Civic Association | Captiva Community Panel | Concerned Citizens of Bayshore Community, Inc. | Greater Pine Island Water Association

Contact: Nadine Slimak, Info@GPICA.org

Aug. 31, 2026

TO: Stan A. Stouder, Chair, Local Planning Agency (LPA), Lee County Donald R. Schrotenboer, Vice Chair; Tina M. Ekblad; Dustin G. Gardner; Dawn M. Russell; Jennifer R. Sapen; Henry J. Zuba

CC: Janet Miller — Administrative Specialist, Community Development; Dave Harner — Lee County Manager; Richard Wesch — Lee County Attorney; Mikki Rozdolski — Director of Community Development; Rebecca Sweigert — Senior Manager of Operations; Adam Mendez — Principal Planner; Brandon Dunn — Planning Manager; Kevin Ruane — Lee County Commissioner, District 1; Cecil Pendergrass — Lee County Commissioner, District 2; David Mulicka — Lee County Commissioner, District 3; Brian Hamman — Lee County Commissioner, District 4; Trish Petrosky — Lee County Commissioner, District 5

Dear Mr. Stouder:

The Lee Communities Coalition (TLCC) is a newly formed coalition of civic and community groups from unincorporated Lee County. We're commenting today about the LPA's Aug. 31, 2026, agenda item: CPA2026-00005 Future Land Use Element Update (Plan Amendments) and the accompanying Land Development Code Amendments.

We are making a formal request for a continuance of this hearing under Land Development Code-LDC 34-232(2)(b): "The LPA or Board may continue a public hearing, upon staff request or its own initiative, when necessary to request additional information, public testimony, time to render their decision/recommendation, or to accommodate schedules."

Our organizations have spent decades working to develop Plans for our respective communities, beginning with the Pine Island Plan initiated in 1978 and followed by the plans in 16 other Lee County communities. Collectively, the Community Plans are the result of a historic investment in Lee County's diverse communities, and represent thousands of County Staff and Community Volunteer hours, along with hundreds of thousands of dollars of private funding and taxpayer dollars.

These plans were not developed on a whim. They should not be eliminated on one, either. Furthermore, while the proposed Plan Amendments might comply with Florida law for proper notice to voters and their constituent organizations based on the ads announcing meetings, (F.S. § 163.3181 and § 125.66), they certainly didn't follow the spirit of that law, given how few of our groups or our constituents knew about the hearings.

Staff have stated the Plan Amendments are intended to comply with a BOCC directive from April 1, 2025, "to increase efficiency, reduce unnecessary regulations, while maintaining the

protection of public health, safety, and welfare and meeting State requirements.” These uninformative vagaries do not reflect the wholesale elimination of all the Community Plans.

In addition, the minutes of the April 1 meeting reveal Commissioner Greenwell’s rationale for requesting the review almost as an aside: that state and federal agencies were doing it so we should, too.

It is unacceptable that long-established policies and development planning philosophies are proposed for wholesale deletion — especially without specific notice to or consultation with the communities themselves. This major change in community planning philosophy requires — in fact, demands — a careful and measured review by the residents that Lee County serves.

In addition, the 17 Community Plans eliminated by the proposed amendments were all deemed, after extensive review, to be “in compliance” with the Florida legislature’s requirements for all comprehensive plans. Conversely, these proposed Plan Amendments do not in any manner even attempt to comply with F. S. § 163.3184(1)(b). (“In compliance” means consistent with the requirements of sections 163.3177, 163.3178, 163.3180, 163.3191, 163.3245, and 163.3248.”)

The consequence of these failures requires the entire process to be started anew, or abandoned altogether. By that we mean, if the Board of County Commissioners truly want to eliminate these 17 Community Plans, then they must say so directly and affirmatively on the record at a public meeting in front of their electorate.

Currently, there is absolutely no evidence that our elected officials desire this outcome.

Staff assured us that the proposed Plan Amendments are designed to streamline language, reduce redundancy, and remove unnecessary regulation. Our constituents are almost uniformly skeptical of this representation.

Indeed, in the few days since the proposed amendments were publicly released on Aug. 25, our constituents and supporters have identified **numerous protections from the existing Lee Plan that have disappeared**, and they have been unable to trace Staff’s contentions that all prior protections are preserved in other sections of the Lee Plan. Tracing the changes proposed in the LDC is even more daunting a task.

Before these amendments move forward, Lee County, which has a duty of care to maintain the public health, safety, and welfare of its constituents, should demonstrate **community-by-community and provision-by-provision** the protections that are being preserved, the protections that are being changed, and the protections that are being eliminated.

The County should also demonstrate why the public-participation rights that exist today — the public informational sessions currently required — have been eliminated, costing each of our communities the opportunity for public input and engagement in activities that affect our own neighborhoods. It may be convenient for staff and developers to concentrate public hearings downtown and have them take place only before the hearing examiner, but it is not convenient to the communities and people affected by such proposals.

If anything, requirements for public hearings should be made stronger and give communities a bigger voice, not take it away.

Our major objection, however, is that we disagree that replacing community-specific protections with county-wide rules are necessary or equivalent.

The Community Goals do not simply state that development should comply with County standards; they state they should apply to an ***individual community's character***. In the existing Lee Plan, that mandate is clear; whereas, in the proposed Plan Amendments, this local character mandate disappears.

The very history of our Lee Plan — and its purpose — disappears.

Our communities may be very different, as the existing Lee Plan makes clear. But this Coalition shares an overarching concern: Our Community Plans were created through years of citizen participation to address conditions unique to each community. The staff's rationale for the proposed amendments fails to carry the weight of the resultant impact.

The LPA should put this hearing on hold and send this matter back to the staff. If the Board of Commissioners wants the wholesale elimination of Community Plans — if that is their desired goal — they should state that plainly and openly in a new staff directive.

Respectfully,

- Chris Blum, President, Greater Pine Island Civic Association
- Carol Scott, President, Matlacha Civic Association
- Keith Campbell, President, Buckingham Community Association, Inc.
- Grant Fichter, President, Alva, Inc.
- Lisa Riordan, President, Captiva Civic Association
- David A. Mintz, Captiva Community Panel
- Steve Brodtkin, Vice President, Concerned Citizens of Bayshore Community, Inc.
- Mike Maillakakis, General Manager, Greater Pine Island Water Association