

Regaining Local Control of Our Community

The Greater Pine Island Civic Association (GPICA) was created more than 40 years ago as a voice for residents and business owners, advocating for the health, safety and quality of life in our community. Today, as residents of St. James City, Pine Island Center, Pineland, Bokeelia, Matlacha, Matlacha Isles and Cape Royal, we have an important decision to make about our future.

Over the decades, GPICA has worked to preserve and maintain a desirable, livable community that promotes smart growth and preserves sensitive natural areas by working with Island residents to develop a future land-use plan — the Pine Island Plan — governing growth rules. Over the past two years, these protections have been put at risk:

- After legal challenges to the Pine Island Plan, the Lee County Commission revised it in 2016 to allow greater building densities.
- On Dec. 12, 2016, the City of Cape Coral annexed six parcels covering 5.47 acres in Matlacha. Members of the Greater Pine Island Community had no say in the vote and, under Cape zoning rules, the city could add additional boat ramps, a marina and buildings up to eight stories tall.



In addition to the public safety risks that increased building densities pose to the Island during hurricane evacuations, they also risk the coastal-rural way of life that embodies our community.

In response, GPICA is studying whether Island residents could better control our destiny by incorporating as our own town. GPICA hired BJM Consulting, Inc., to conduct an initial feasibility study to explore whether incorporation would be financially possible. We also completed an analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) related to incorporation and today we're sharing highlights of our initial findings. (Full reports can be found at www.gpica.org).

We are also asking for your help. Enclosed you will find an envelope where you can vote on whether we continue investigating the idea of incorporating Greater Pine Island. We ask that you simply answer, share you email address if you have one, seal the envelope and drop it in the mail. Postage is paid; you won't need a stamp.

We will use this unofficial ballot as a gauge of community interest and support. It is a **non-binding vote** and you may change your opinion on incorporation later. The findings will **help us decide our next steps** in our efforts to protect and preserve our community. **Your voice matters! Please let us know what you think.**

We thank you for your help,

Greater Pine Island Civic Association Board Members: *Roger Wood, President, with members Claudia Bringe, Carol Crane, Bryan Crane, Tim Heitz, Nancy Hindenach, Greg Lehman, Nadine Slimak, Scott Wilkinson*

GPICA Incorporation Subcommittee Members: *Noel Andress, Ken Cox, Michael Dreikorn, Mike Shevlin, MaryKay Stevens, Greg Stuart*

(See reverse for FAQs)

Pine Island Incorporation: Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Why incorporate?

A: To give our citizens local control over land use and protect us from future annexations by Cape Coral.

Q: What area would be incorporated?

A: As currently proposed, it would be contiguous with the boundaries of the Matlacha Pine Island Fire Control District (see map to the right).

Q: Will my taxes go up?

A: No. Not according to our initial fiscal forecast.

Q: Won't government just get bigger?

A: No. GPICA envisions a "government light" concept with minimal local government staff that would contract with Lee County to continue to provide services at our current level.

Q: How will we pay for services?

A: We are a donor community to Lee County. That means we pay more in taxes than we receive in services — **the county keeps our excess tax dollars.** As a town, all the taxes would come directly to us. We would then contract with the county to provide services (police, streets, waste, permitting, parks, library, etc.) at the current levels. The surplus would pay the cost of our local government and provide a rainy day fund **under our local control.** (Note: water and fire are already provided by our own special districts and schools are provided by the Lee County School District — this would not change.)

Q: Would property taxes be our only revenues?

A: No. As a town, we would be eligible for state revenue sharing funds, franchise fees from utilities and able to negotiate with the County for a share of the communication services tax.

Q: What are the projected revenues and expenses?

A: With our millage rate remaining the same at 0.8398 mils, the BJM study "best case scenario" projects revenues of \$3.24 million in three years and \$3.44 million in five years; expenses of \$2.45 million and \$2.7 million in three and five years and \$2.49 million and \$4.05 million in reserves. (The study also projected middle-case and worst-case scenarios, available at our website: www.gpica.org)

Q: What's next?

A: We need to know whether voters support incorporation. Please fill out the information on the envelope, seal it and drop it in the mail. Postage is included; you don't need a stamp.

Q: Will there be a formal vote?

A: Yes! After this poll, the next step would be to create a charter defining the purpose and goals of the town, including our purpose to be a small government that represents Matlacha, Matlacha Isles, Pine Island Center, Pineland, Bokeelia, St. James City and Cape Royal. Residents will be able to voice their opinions during this process. After our SWFL delegation (state Representatives & Senators) approves, it is presented for a vote of the full state Senate and House. Once that is approved, the Governor signs the bill and it comes back to our community voters for a full referendum.

