

# Martin County Commissioner Sarah Heard

District 4 Newsletter - September 6, 2023



## Contact Information

**Commissioner Sarah Heard**  
[sheard@martin.fl.us](mailto:sheard@martin.fl.us)

**Executive Aide Sarah Philion**  
[comaide4@martin.fl.us](mailto:comaide4@martin.fl.us)

**(772) 221-2358**

Dear Friends,

Here is the link to the Martin County Comprehensive Plan Evaluation and Appraisal Report survey: <https://www.martin.fl.us/evaluation-and-appraisal-report-ear>.

Scroll down to the box labeled "Take the Evaluation and Appraisal Report (EAR) Community Survey" and click to get started. The survey is critically important and will only take about 10 minutes to complete.

District 4 is experiencing an unprecedented number of development applications, both inside the Port Salerno Community Redevelopment Area (CRA) and outside the CRA. More and bigger projects are anticipated, and most will not receive public hearings or even Board of County Commissioners review. These applications will be reviewed and approved or disapproved by Martin County staff.

Two projects of note are pending inside the CRA. Both are under the 50 unit threshold that triggers a Board public hearing of approval. The Cove is a 48-unit apartment building of 3 stories that sits on 4.5 acres. This project is located north of Cove Road at the Western boundary of the CRA. Another pre-application proposes an 18 unit apartment building on 1.9 acres on the site of the District Table on Dixie Highway.

Two projects outside the CRA propose to utilize SB102, the Live Local affordable housing bill enacted into law on July 1. The law stipulates that if at least 40% of the units are affordable, we must authorize multi-family and mixed use residential in commercial or mixed use zoning. Further, we cannot restrict density below the highest allowed density or height below the highest currently allowed height. These developments must be approved administratively with no action by the Board of County Commissioners. If all units are affordable, then 100% of the value is exempt from property tax collection. If less than 100% of the units are affordable, then 75% of the value is exempt from property taxes. The property tax exemption lasts until December 31, 2059.

The 21 acre former Golf World parcel on SW Kanner Highway is the site of an SB102 proposal. 275 units are proposed in 4 story buildings.

Another SB102 project is proposed on the north side of Cove Road, east of Willoughby Boulevard. 200 units are requested.

The ramifications of 36 years of property tax exemptions are not knowable. We should ask our state legislators how we will pay for all the services they require, like schools, fire rescue, police protection, roads, flood protection, parks, etc.

The Classical Academy also has a high school under development review. It seeks to add 450 new students in a 20,000 square foot building.

As always, my top priority is protecting the residents and resources of Martin County. If I can help, please call me at 221-2358.

Thank you,

Sarah Heard

## Board Summary from 08/08/2023

Our entire morning was taken up with public comment and Board response to a standing room only crowd. Most residents joined us to oppose the approval of a proposed 90 unit apartment building to be located on CR-714 in Palm City.

From 2000-2005, the majority Board voted to approve 7 new Community Redevelopment Areas (CRAs) in Martin County: Indiantown, Rio, Jensen Beach, Palm City, Golden Gate, Port Salerno and Hobe Sound. Heard consistently voted against the creation of the CRAs and the weakened policies created for the CRAs.

In the ensuing years, the Board majorities continued to eliminate protections in the CRAs that are requirements in the rest of unincorporated Martin County, again with Heard's objections. Important design protections like tiering and compatibility, open space, and buffering are weakened or absent in the new CRA rules. But, these same rules make possible, perhaps inevitable, an application to build a 90 unit apartment building in this location.

A portion of the property taxes raised in the Palm City CRA can only be spent within the geographic boundary of this CRA. Each commission district also may levy an additional Municipal Service Taxing Unit (MSTU) as ad valorem taxes. These, too, can only be spent in the district in which they were raised.

Upon learning of widespread opposition to the 90 unit project, the property owner volunteered to sell the property for \$4 million. Palm City residents urged the county to buy the property for some public purpose. I enthusiastically support purchases of land for public access and uses, utilizing CRA and District MSTU funds. In this case, the CRA is fully encumbered by debt until 2026, and the district MSTU funds are unavailable. The Board has a policy that prohibits presiding Commissioners from indebting their successors, and Ciampi's current term ends in 2024.

Currently, in all or nearly all of our CRAs, staff is reviewing project applications that neighbors may find incompatible within these traditional neighborhoods. Multistory apartment buildings may be proposed next door to a single family one story homes. I can foresee that more neighborhoods will object to these novel, non-traditional developments. If the project complies with our laws, but a Board majority voted to oppose the project because of its unpopularity with its neighbors, legal expensive lawsuits could result. And, we cannot afford to buy every parcel upon which an incompatible but legally defensible project is proposed.

In July, the Board approved the FY2024 budget of \$637 million. We will adopt a final budget in September. That budget can be lowered but cannot be higher than the



tentative budget approved in July. So, a \$4 million addition to that budget is not possible.

Ciampi, Hetherington, Jenkins and Smith voted to purchase the property for \$4 million. Heard opposed.

**PH-1** was a public hearing and final assessment for the Port Salerno/New Monrovia Wastewater municipal service benefit unit.

This project entails construction of a vacuum assisted gravity sewer system to provide sanitary sewer service to approximately 939 single family, multi-family and commercial parcels in the Port Salerno/New Monrovia area.

The total project cost is \$24 million. Grants totaling \$14.8 million were received from various sources lowering the assessable cost of the project to \$9.5 million, resulting in a lump sum assessment of \$9,877 per lot.

This is an historical neighborhood, full of residents on fixed incomes. They explained clearly that while they welcomed and wanted to be hooked up to our sewer system, they simply can't afford the nearly \$10,000 per lot fee.

The Florida legislature this year appropriated \$100 million for counties along the length of the Indian River Lagoon, to be used for projects that improve water quality in the Indian River Lagoon. This project meets that goal.

The Board voted unanimously to postpone this project and to apply for a grant from the Indian River Lagoon legislative appropriation.

**PH-2** was a public hearing to adopt the final assessment for FY2024 for solid waste collection.

The FY2024 proposal is proposed to be \$421.65 per single family dwelling unit, up from \$405.55 per single family dwelling until in FY2023.

The Board unanimously approved.

**DPQJ-1** was a request for approval of the Showcase Planned Unit Development (PUD) Phase 2 final site plan.

This project received PUD zoning and master site plan approval on July 14, 2020 for 167 single family and townhome units on 47 acres located between SE Salerno Road and SE Cove Road approximately 200 feet east of SW Kanner Highway in Stuart.

Phase 2 of the Showcase PUD project includes 88 two-story townhomes on approximately 10.7 acres of the 47 acre site. The main access will be on Cove Road.

The Board unanimously approved.

**DEPT-1** was Office of Management and Budget items requiring Board approval.

**#2** was an item requesting permission to apply for a Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) grant for the eastern flow way of Kitching Creek. The purpose of this project is to create a flow way so that water can move from Bridge Road through a series of wetland systems and into the Eastern Flow Way of Kitching Creek within Johnathan Dickinson State Park. Wetlands systems here have been altered by drainage and lack of freshwater flow for several decades. By diverting water into this area, the project will hydrate several hundred acres of cypress habitat within Jonathan Dickenson. This project will also help restore freshwater flows to the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River. The project will also help to alleviate flooding, issues in residential communities to the south of Bridge Road.

The grant request of \$500,000 was unanimously approved.

**#4** Permission to apply for the Inflation Reduction Act - Urban and Community Forestry Grant.

Martin County seeks USDA funding to launch a tree planting initiative on public property in disadvantaged census tracts. Forest Service resources will enable Martin County to plant 2,785 trees along scenic byways and on public property.

The grant request of \$4,327,200 was unanimously approved.

## Board Summary from 8/22/2023

**PH-1** was a public hearing to rename a portion of SW Citrus Boulevard in Palm City to SW Newfield Parkway.

The Newfield developer, Mattamy Palm Beach LLC, asked to rename SW Citrus Boulevard from the center of the C-23 Canal to SR714 SW Newfield Parkway.

Smith, Jenkins, Ciampi voted to approve.

Hetherington opposed because history and tradition are important.

Heard opposed because inconsistencies are poor Board policy.

**DEPT-3** was a market analysis and adjustment for positions of county administration and county attorney.

No analysis was included in this item.

The Board majority (minus Heard) approved a 12% pay raise for this year's IAFF contract. The Sheriff requested the same 12% pay raise for his employees. Therefore, staff recommended that the county administrator and county attorney received the same pay raise.

Heard suggested matching the 3% pay raises the Teamsters will be receiving this year.

The Board voted unanimously to table this item.

**DEPT-4** was a Brightline update.

Brightline asked the Board to support applications to the Florida Department of Transportation and the US Department of Transportation to fund the replacement and expansion of the railroad bridge over the St. Lucie River.

The existing iron bridge is the property of the Florida East Coast Railroad. It is over 100 years old. When closed for train passage, the vertical opening underneath is 6'6", which precludes all but perhaps 5% of boats to traverse.

Brightline is asking for \$218 million. Representatives will not say what percentage of funding will be contributed by either Brightline or FEC.

The Roosevelt Bridge is the only single-tracked bridge on the shared corridor.

The proposed bridge would increase the vertical opening to 16' and expand the horizontal clearance from 50 to 90 feet.

The Board voted unanimously to support the City of Stuart's application to apply for eligible FDOT and USDOT grants.





## Martin Digital History

Explore and appreciate Martin County history! If you are a history buff or just want to see more photos of Martin County from days gone by visit this site. Follow the link below to find out more.

[martindigitalhistory.org](http://martindigitalhistory.org)

## Library Events





*Adult & Caregiver Connection*

# HEALTHY MEAL CLASSES FOR SENIORS

Presented by Florida Nutrition Education & Treasure Coast Food Bank  
Join us for food samples and demonstration in this 1 hour class for  
four weeks and learn how to plan a budget healthy meal, reduce salt  
and sugar intake, and create smart goals for a healthy lifestyle!

Raffle prizes included.

All classes FREE & open to the public.

**Tuesdays • September 5, 12, 19 & 26**

Blake Library at 10:30 - 11:30 a.m.  
and Elisabeth Lahti Library at 1:00 - 2:00 p.m.

**Thursdays • September 7, 14, 21 & 28**

Hobe Sound Public Library  
at 10:30 - 11:30 a.m.



*LIBRARY EVENTS*



This document may be reproduced upon request in an alternative format by contacting the County ADA Coordinator (772) 320-5311, the County Administration Office (772) 288-5400, Florida Relay 711, or by completing our accessibility feedback form at [www.martin.fl.us/ada/feedback](http://www.martin.fl.us/ada/feedback).

[Click here for Library calendar of events](#)

[Explore Natural Martin](#)





## Autumn Adventure: Equinox Nature Walk

Saturday, September 23 · 5 - 6:30pm

Maggy's Hammock Park  
3854 Southeast Kubin Avenue Stuart, FL 34997

[Click Here to Register](#)

## Upcoming Martin County Board Meetings

### Board of County Commissioners Upcoming Meetings

*Commission Chambers - 1st Floor  
2401 SE Monterey Rd, Stuart, FL 34996*

September 12, 2023  
September 26, 2023  
October 10, 2023

MCTV Television Information - [MCTV Links and Info](#)  
Martin County YouTube Channel: [YouTube Channel Click Here](#)

[Newsletter- Click Here to Sign Up Now!](#)

*This document may be reproduced upon request in an alternative format by contacting the County ADA Coordinator (772) 320-3131, the County Administration Office (772) 288-5400, Florida Relay 711, or by completing our accessibility feedback form at [www.martin.fl.us/accessibility-feedback](http://www.martin.fl.us/accessibility-feedback).*

Martin County BOCC | 2401 SE Monterey Road, Stuart, FL 34996

[Unsubscribe](#) [its-help@martin.fl.us](mailto:its-help@martin.fl.us)

[Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)

Sent by [sheard@martin.fl.us](mailto:sheard@martin.fl.us) powered by



Try email marketing for free today!