

# MICA *wave*

October 2020

A Periodic Publication of the Marco Island Civic Association

*Read by Over 20,000 Members*

[www.marcocivic.com](http://www.marcocivic.com)

## *Election Edition*

Marco Island City  
Council Candidates  
Questions & Answers





# President's Message

*by Bob Brown, MICA President*

I would like to open my message to our members by offering a sincere “thank you” to our past President Kathy Sullivan, who has done so very much for the MICA organization. These will be big shoes to fill. This being said, I was honored by my peers to be elected President of MICA, which I consider an organization that is a very important part of our community and to our residents. Also, we saw a couple of new faces and some “seasoned” veterans elected this year. We wish to welcome our new board members Laura Owen, Bill Holmes, Ron McClay, Tom Valiante, along with the return of Dick Adams. Our Board of Directors is here to work for you, our members.

Due to term limitations, Ray McChesney had to leave the Board. Ray worked tirelessly, especially helping in all of our community Beach Cleanups. Ray will be missed, but my guess would be we will not be seeing less of him. Lost due to a move off island was John Coff. John was certainly a huge help on the financial side of the ledger and will be missed. Joe Swaja has also moved from the area. He will be greatly missed by many in our community. Both were very dedicated to our island and our members.

As we all know, 2020 has been a difficult year. We thank you for your patience and look forward to our new membership year, which kicked off on September 1. When you enter Residents' Beach or Sarazen Park, please give a warm hello to our gate attendants. They work hard for us and are generally the first friendly face we see upon entering the beach area.

This special Election Edition of the MICA WAVE has been assembled especially for you! The November 3 Marco Island City Council election will change the makeup of the council as four of seven seats could have newly-elected individuals! 13 questions were posed to all five candidates and their answers follow.

While Greg Folley was appointed to fill a vacancy created by the resignation of Councilor Sam Young and

is running unopposed for a two-year seat, he also answered the questions as a way of your getting to know him. His responses are shown at the back of the issue.

MICA has partnered with the Marco Island Area Chamber of Commerce and the Marco Island Area Association of Realtors for the first ever VIRTUAL Candidates Forum! On Wednesday, October 7, from 6 to 8 p.m., you can tune into the City of Marco Island's website or one of the government access channels, in the comfort of your own home!

Candidates will be asked questions submitted by the three organizations and members of the public can email questions during the last half hour of the forum. The email address will be provided during the event.

One last important notice: The Marco Island Civic Association is sponsoring a Beach Cleanup on Saturday, October 10, 8 to 10 a.m. The cleanup will begin at Residents' Beach on the sandy side of the boardwalk and will head north and south. We will socially distance as we remove all of the bits of trash from the sand in protection of our spectacular Marco Island wildlife. Please join us!



*Bob Brown, President,  
MICA Board of Directors*

## Marco Island Civic Association

1770 San Marco Road, Suite 204,  
Marco Island, FL 34145

**Phone: 239-642-7778**

**Fax: 239-642-8663**

**www.marcocivic.com**

**MICAwave** is the periodic publication of the Marco Island Civic Association for the benefit of its members. Copyright 2020© Marco Island Civic Association, Marco Island, FL.

All opinions expressed in this **MICAwave** are solely the opinions of the writers and do not reflect the opinions of the Marco Island Civic Association.

MICA does not guarantee or endorse any contributing participant.

All Rights Reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced without the written permission of the publisher.

Cover Photo: taken at Marco Island Center for the Arts by Debbie Barker.





# Marco Island City Council **CANDIDATES FORUM**



**WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 7TH**

**6:00—8:00pm**

**VIRTUAL FORMAT**

**Live Streamed from the City Council Chambers**

**Also can be viewed on the following Government**

**Access Channels :**

**Comcast 93 or 98**

**Summit Broadband 97 or 98, 98-1**

**CenturyLink Prism TV 93**

**Emailed questions will be taken from the  
viewing audience last half hour of the forum**

**5 Candidates competing for 4 seats**

**-Rich Blonna      -Jared Grifoni**

**-Phares Heindl    -Becky Irwin**

**-Joe Rola**

**INFORMED  
VOTING**

**ELECTION DAY IS TUES, NOV 3RD  
PRESENTED BY:**

**Marco Island Area Chamber of Commerce, Marco Island Area  
Association of Realtors® and Marco Island Civic Association  
in support of informed voting.**



# Marco Island City Council

## 2020 Candidates



**Rich Blonna** - Marco Island is a special place and living here is a dream come true. It is a beautiful quilt that is sewn together by friendly, generous people, a deep sense of patriotism, a love of the outdoors, and a small-town feel where folks will make eye contact and say hello and stop to exchange a few pleasant words. Although it is a world class vacation destination, it isn't Miami, or Ft. Lauderdale or even Naples. Its uniqueness lies in the fact that it combines a small-town charm with all of the amenities of a destination beach resort community. Our restaurants, bars, shops, fishing charters, golf courses, jet-ski excursions and other recreational options are second to none. Our local businesses add vitality to our economy and to our quality of life. Rich will fight to maintain Marco Island's small town feel while supporting

our local businesses. He will continue the work that our City Council has begun to clean up our waterways and restore them to their once pristine state. He will protect our beach and expand our parks and open space. All three provide habitat for our unique native species such as burrowing owls, gopher tortoises, and shore birds. By doing all of these things Rich will keep our property values high, and increase the attractiveness and wealth of our island, thus keeping our taxes low.



**Jared Grifoni** was elected to the City Council in November 2016 and he has served as Vice Chairman (twice) and Chairman during his four-year term. Jared is a husband, father, small business owner (both on and off the island), an attorney, and community leader. A proven and successful advocate for Marco Island's citizens over his four years on City Council, Jared has delivered on his pledges based on his principles of fiscal conservatism, limited government, and protection of citizens' rights. He lives on Marco Island with his wife Elsa, and their three children, Calvin, Tosca, and Lorenzo. They love living in Marco Island and enjoy gardening, boating, going to the beach, attending art and music shows, and supporting our community events and organizations on the island.



**Phares Heindl** holds BSChE (chemical engineering) from Mississippi State University and a Juris Doctorate (law degree) from the University of Florida. He is a former Chemical Engineer and has practiced law in Florida for over thirty years. He is a Board Certified Civil Trial Lawyer, member of the Florida, California (inactive) and Mississippi Bar associations, and a registered Patent Attorney with the United States Patent and Trademark Office. He is a member of the Collier County Bar Association. He is an Allied Attorney with the Alliance Defending Freedom, the preeminent organization protecting first amendment freedom of religion and expression. Phares has lived in Marco Island since 2010. He served the community as a Beach Steward, as a member of Marco Island Waterways Advisory Committee for six years, as a stage manager and actor for the Marco Players. He is an avid kayaker and was trained as

an ACA kayak instructor. He led a local kayak club and manages several Facebook groups including Marco Island Paddlers Association, Marco Island Circumnavigation - A Paddle Challenge and Friends of Marco Island Waterways. Phares is running for city council to protect our neighborhoods, to restore and protect our waterways and to bring transparency, community involvement and accountability to our city government. For more information please visit <https://www.facebook.com/heindlforcitycouncil>, [www.heindllaw.com](http://www.heindllaw.com), or email at [heindlforcitycouncil@gmail.com](mailto:heindlforcitycouncil@gmail.com)







**Becky Irwin** is a homeowner, a fiscal conservative and a supporter of the police, families, schools, the environment, and community. She loves Marco Island and plans to live here for the rest of her life, leaving a legacy for her children and grandchildren. She is committed to keeping taxes low, protecting the environment, and ensuring the Mackle Brothers' amazing vision for Marco Island. Becky's family first moved to Marco Island 39 years ago in 1981 and she has a true love for this community. She is a graduate of Florida State University and worked for 20 years as a non-profit executive in Fort Lauderdale. She was married to maritime attorney David Irwin for 20 years and they have a son and daughter, a daughter-in-law, a grandson and another grandson on the way. Irwin moved back to the island in 2013 and has served Marco through her hands-on

volunteer efforts with the Marco Island Woman's Club, The Newcomers Club, For the Love of Cats, Marco Island Historical Museum and Marco Island Center for the Arts. Some of her board experiences include: board of directors of Keller Williams Marco Island for four years, chairing the finance committee, 10 year board member and past president of the board of directors of the Junior League of Fort Lauderdale, past board member of Leadership Broward, past Vice President of Fund Development on the board of the League Club of Naples in addition to many other board positions throughout the years. Licensed by the state as a real estate professional since 2009, she holds a Broker Associate license, and designations as Marco Island Specialist. She personally helped dozens of homeowners after Hurricane Irma and continues to be deeply involved in the community. She has been serving on the city's Beautification Committee for almost four years and was appointed to serve on the Citizen Summit for the Strategic Plan for Marco Island's future. Irwin is a certified Florida Master Naturalist and a Florida Stormwater Erosion and Sedimentation Control state certified inspector. Learn more about Becky: email: [beckyformarco@gmail.com](mailto:beckyformarco@gmail.com) Website: [www.beckyformarco.com](http://www.beckyformarco.com) Facebook: [www.facebook.com/beckyformarco](https://www.facebook.com/beckyformarco)



**Joe Rola** grew up in Philadelphia. He has a Bachelor's of Electrical Engineering (BEE) degree from Villanova University and did graduate study at the University of Pennsylvania in Computer Engineering. His professional career spans 42+ years as an Engineer and Program Manager supporting high tech programs for Department of Defense and other agencies. He has held clearances at the highest levels with Special Accesses. Through his professional career, Joe has been employed by RCA, Raytheon, Northrup Grumman and Ingalls Ship Building. Although Joe has been on the island since 2000 and a full-time resident since 2005, he has NO commercial interests on or with the Island. Joe has been a member of the Marco Island Planning Board for the last 4 years. He has a thorough working knowledge of our Comprehensive Plan and Land Development

Code, as well as the history of how our city has evolved and some of the issues that need to be addressed for the future. He participated in both the 2019 Strategic Planning Process and 2020 resident survey. Joe spent 4+ years supporting Marco Home Owners Association and Marco Property Owners as treasurer and vice chairman and editor of their on-line newsletter and issues publication. Marco Island is approaching build out. The city is in the process of updating the Comprehensive Plan, and that plan is the basis of your vision for the future of the island and is the foundation for ALL our Ordinances. If we get this wrong, the off-island developers and "visitors" will overwhelm your vision of a "small town tropical island" paradise. There is no fallback position.



## Marco Island Civic Association's 2020 City Council Candidates' MICAwave Questions & Answers

**1. On the August ballot, 4,044 Marco Island residents cast non-binding votes to “prohibit the sale, manufacturing, cultivation, distribution, warehousing of Recreational Marijuana in all zoning districts in the City,” with 1,822 opposed. Would you uphold the vote and amend city code or would you take action to disregard the vote and why?**

**Blonna:**

The citizens overwhelmingly voted in favor of this ballot initiative. They spoke, I heard, and I will uphold their vote if I get elected to City Council.

**Grifoni:**

Under our Charter, a citizen initiative is not a “non-binding” vote so it would be a violation of the Charter to disregard it. I look at four criteria: Is it legal?, is it constitutional?, what does the community want?, and what's in the best interest of the community short and long term? I voted in favor of putting the referendum on the ballot so we could get that info from our citizens and ensure that a legal, constitutional, and community supported action is possible.

The question in front of the City after review by the City Attorney and public hearings at the Planning Board and City Council will be whether the binding vote approved an ordinance that was legal since the City could not conduct a legal review until after the vote. There is some question that the ordinance language violated Florida law. More importantly, non-medical cannabis is already illegal/prohibited in Marco Island, throughout Florida, and federally and that has not changed.

**Heindl:**

YES, I voted yes in the referendum and I was on record supporting the referendum before the vote count was known. I will definitely vote to enact the referendum ordinance. Even if enacted, the referendum ordinance banning sale of recreational marijuana can be repealed by a majority vote of city council. If recreational marijuana is legalized, there will likely be a well-financed effort to repeal the referendum ordinance. Can we count on candidates who did not go on record supporting the referendum before the vote to resist efforts to repeal the ordinance? What about the candidates that are on record strongly opposing any restriction of the sale of recreational marijuana on Marco Island? Will they continue to support the referendum ordinance when there is no election pending or when they are term limited for any further service on city council? I will uphold the referendum vote and resist any subsequent repeal of the referendum ordinance as long as I am on city council.

**Irwin:**

As a representative of the citizens of Marco Island, I would support the results of the vote as the will of the majority of the people.

**Rola:**

69% of Marco voting residents voted AGAINST the commercialization of Recreational Marijuana on Marco. In my view, this is a clear indication of the will of the residents. I shall uphold the WILL of the residents as expressed in this referendum. It is important to note that I was one of the original members of the Political Action Committee that proposed to Ban Recreational Marijuana and opposed recreational marijuana on the island a year before it went to referendum.2. Would you support a stricter ethics code for Marco Island elected officials?



**2. What is your opinion of the large volume of daily/weekly rentals (most via VRBO, Air BnB, etc.) in areas deemed residential? What do you suggest to solve the short-term renter problems that are felt by year-round residents? How do you propose these properties be controlled or managed within the city?**

**Blonna:**

I certainly cannot claim to have all of the answers to this decades-old, island-wide problem. A City Task Force has been created to deal with this problem. City Council must use their findings to ensure the right of our community to have peaceful enjoyment of their own homes. For starters, this means swift, consistent, round-the-clock enforcement of existing ordinances involving noise, parking, and trash. Until we have shown Marco Island that we can enforce existing ordinances, I am not in favor of broad changes or new initiatives. Clearly, I have an open mind should enforcement not provide the results we must have.

**Grifoni:**

The short-term rental issue is one that many residents on Marco Island are concerned with. The state of Florida has prohibited municipalities from banning or regulating short-term rentals based on length of stay. Many rentals on the island are not problematic but there are some who do cause unnecessary stress and suffering and that violate our right to quiet enjoyment of our properties. The most effective way to handle issues like this is to address the root of the problem: noise violations, excessive occupancy, and parking and then to provide consistent, uniform, and strict enforcement (with emphasis on repeat offending properties) without creating unnecessary costs (taxes) and additional bureaucracy. Both property owners and renters should be held equally accountable for any problems. I asked the City Manager to put the noise ordinance up for Council discussion recently because in its current format it is simply not working and we need to improve it. The City is now undertaking a staff review to improve the enforceability of the noise ordinance, which as of now is almost purely subjective in nature making it not nearly as effective as it could be. We need clear, objective standards with a dose of common sense that our Code Enforcement/MIPD can be counted on to enforce, with strict penalties for repeat offenders, not \$250 fines because a child is splashing around in the pool at 2 in the afternoon.

**Heindl:**

I have been advocating for a simple non-bureaucratic Short Term Rental (STR) ordinance before beginning my campaign. I have developed a seven-page paper sent around for comment and collaboration to beleaguered homeowners to the Marco Assn. of Realtors seeking collaboration. For a copy of my paper demonstrating my collaborative efforts for a fair and balanced STR ordinance email me at [heindlforcitycouncil@gmail.com](mailto:heindlforcitycouncil@gmail.com). Proposed provisions include: Online registration with the City that is user friendly and carries a reasonable fee only to defray administrative costs (state registration is already required); That basic requirements of the noise ordinance must be displayed in advertisements or listings with online rental services, provided to every renter, and prominently posted in the rental property; A brochure to be developed that summarizes the STR and Noise ordinances and informs renters, neighbors and potential home buyers that the home is in a residential neighborhood and other pertinent information; A requirement that a summary of the ordinance be posted in a prominent location in the rental house along with a warning that failure to abide by the ordinance is likely to result in a visit from MIPD and possible fines; Clear and effective enforcement guidelines with requirement of local agent or contact; and Utilization of the City's Public Nuisance Ordinance to eliminate party houses - STR properties that cannot be brought under control with other means.

**Irwin:**

I've met with city officials, members of law enforcement, Chamber of Commerce, realtors, school officials, friends, neighbors and stakeholders in the community for months now listening to all sides of the issue. My solution would include Enforcement, Resources and Prevention and a surgical rather than a shotgun

## ***City Council Candidates' Questions... Continued from page 7***

approach: i. Whether the offender is a renter or resident, fairly enforce the noise ordinance across the board in real time in order to penalize the offender and stop the nuisance immediately. I'm in favor of issuing a ticket (fine) to the offending parties on the spot, just as anyone driving a rental car would receive for a traffic offense. If the City requires more resources to adequately enforce this, then that would be an important consideration too. ii. More important than punishment, is prevention. I'd engage the assistance of property owners and managers by requiring that they communicate, in writing, the ordinances regarding noise, trash and parking to each renter so that they can be informed and not unintentionally break the rules. I'd be in favor of the city drafting such a communique and providing it for posting in every rental property. To ensure compliance, when called to a scene for noise infraction, the officer would be authorized to request the copy of the ordinance and additionally fine the owner if one isn't provided. iii. As a 40-year full time Florida resident, I'm accustomed to the seasonal ebb and flow of visitors and the problems they pose, i.e. insensitivity to neighbors, noise, parking, trash. I myself live in a popular short term rental area on the island. I appreciate the benefits tourists bring by supporting our local economy and allowing us to enjoy year round restaurants, shops and amenities that otherwise could not stay open without them. However, there must be a balance to address problem renters and allow residents to peacefully enjoy their homes.

### **Rola:**

Rentals, whether daily, weekly, monthly or yearly, are NOT permitted by our current codes (Sec, 30-10, 30-81 to 30-87) in RSF Residential districts. These codes were established in 9/17/2001, predating any state statute (2011) prohibiting municipalities from regulating Short Term Rentals (STRs). Marco's ordinance makes NO distinction regarding rentals. All uses not specifically mentioned as USE BY RIGHT or CONDITIONAL USE are PROHIBITED. There is NO Commercialism allowed in RSF districts! I follow the law. With the current proliferation of short-term vacation rentals, we need to review the Florida State Statute alongside the Marco Island ordinances to determine what changes can be made to control and manage the problems created.

**3. One of City Council's main objectives is to protect the residents of the community. In the recent past, in times of emergencies, such as Hurricane Irma and the COVID-19 Pandemic, the city appeared to be reactive and at times to take actions more supportive of beachfront hotels rather than the residents. What changes would you suggest to be more proactive on behalf of residents during emergency situations?**

### **Blonna:**

I was here during Hurricane Irma and did not see any evidence of the City treating beachfront hotels any differently than residents. In fact, the JW Marriott graciously housed and fed nearly 100 members of the City's Emergency Response Team, including Fire-Rescue, Police, Water-Sewer Utilities, and Public Works, due to lack of space at the Firehouse. As far as COVID-19 was concerned the City enforced the governor's emergency guidelines regarding occupancy and other restrictions on beachfront hotels. Residents living on the beach had the same access and social distancing rules to follow. The City worked with the County to determine a unified approach to managing public access to the beach. As a private organization, MICA had flexibility to set its own rules and guidelines for beach access. We do need to step up our use of Code Red and other social-media outreach to citizens, especially in emergencies. The new position of Assistant City Manager was designed in part with this in mind.





**Grifoni:**

The City was hit by Hurricane Irma in 2017. Luckily, the surge never hit at the magnitude predicted but the city did have to deal with wind damage, debris cleanup, and communication gaps. Post-Irma, I proposed the creation of the Ad Hoc Hurricane Review Committee to provide actionable recommendations that could improve the City's effectiveness. The Committee volunteers were a tremendous success and the City Council adopted virtually all of its recommendations, making the City much better prepared. With COVID-19, the City has from day 1 been closely monitoring, educating, and encouraging public awareness of health guidelines based on risk factors, as well as enforcing executive orders of Governor DeSantis. Hotel rentals not shutting down were orders given by the Governor. Beach closures, like the one MICA imposed at Residents' Beach, prevented our locals from accessing the beach while hotel guests could. Those actions caused much confusion. The City has a low case total, less than 1% of our full time population. Virtually all of the current cases by the time of this publication will have recovered. We are tracking well below Collier County and other island cities. It was the foresight to avoid kneejerk or panic reaction and focus on calm and community-first actions supplemented by the personal responsibility of our citizens that really helped. I was proud to stand up for our local small businesses to be able to reopen safely and appropriately. Marco Island is positioned as a safe community that has not destroyed our local economy.

**Heindl:**

Challenges associated with hurricane evacuation involving the disabled or mobility challenged seniors should be addressed by the following measures. 1) Establish a listing of all households that may need assistance evacuating during an impending hurricane; 2) Implement a procedure whereby concerned relatives can request assistance for those that may have difficulty evacuating during hurricanes; and 3) Implement a method to communicate the availability of evacuation assistance using phone calls, radio, internet and even home visits to those where there is a strong indication that assistance is needed. As to the apparent reluctance to act directed to hotels while closing the beaches entirely to residents, I believe that it reflects troubling policy by city council to put business interests over the interests of residents. I have stated in my platform that "As a city councilor I will be committed to making Marco Island a great place to raise a family, run a business and earn a living while keeping it a perfect destination for retirees and seasonal residents." I will not, however, put commercial interests above interests of our residents and would not support closing of the beaches to residents while keeping them open to beachfront hotels.

**Irwin:**

In general, I would always recommend fair treatment. In times of emergency, cooperation among the organizations on the island that have significant audiences and stakeholders, such as MICA, the Chamber, the condo associations, and hotels should be the norm in order to facilitate one-way and two-way communication as circumstances warrant. The City has a website, a twitter account, Code Red and various other modes of communication that can be employed in emergency.

**Rola:**

Mandatory Evacuation Emergencies: Survey the Residents as to their plans in case of Mandatory Evacuation. The city should act as a focal point, coordinating suitable off island accommodations with prearranged guarantees. The city should arrange local round trip travel arrangements for residents if needed. I would consider recommending a formalized emergency program with a "directory" established to identify residents who may have special needs or be at risk (self-reported) and establish services and programs supporting evacuation of the most vulnerable. Medical Emergencies: The city council, staff and first responders would do well to realize that 65% of our residents are retirement age+. Emphasis should be placed on safeguarding this segment of our population.



**4. What is your opinion of constructing an Assisted Living Facility on Marco Island at the NCH Marco Island Urgent Care location?**

**Blonna:**

It would completely depend on what any new proposal looked like. City Council and the community voiced strong objections to the first submission of a proposed Assisted Living Facility. The developer and NCH have made significant revisions and major improvements, including responding to all of the neighbors' objections and suggestions. This proposal is working its way in regular order, first through City staff, which is studying it now, and then it will at the appropriate time be submitted for review by the Planning Board, after which it will come before City Council for final determination. I certainly cannot prejudice my vote in advance of the process.

**Grifoni:**

While this question seems like it might be a difficult one to answer there is truly only one allowed by law: If an Assisted Living Facility applies to build on Marco Island on a parcel where it is properly zoned, successfully goes through staff review, Planning Board review, community notice requirements, and meets all current codes, what would be the legal basis for denial? If there is a variance request and/or it exceeds our land development code requirements, it can be rejected as one was almost a year and a half ago when I joined the majority of Councilors and voted against the project. As I said then, if it were to come back and meet our codes (height, density, traffic counts, etc.) then it would need to be fully reviewed and voted on based on current laws, codes, and property rights. Finally, another aspect to consider is if our land development code does not explicitly prohibit it, then is it allowed or not? Constitutionally, our government's powers are limited to those explicitly granted under our governing documents. If a power isn't granted then power to regulate does not lie with government but rather is retained by the people.

**Heindl:**

Unless the developer can clearly and unequivocally demonstrate that it is for the benefit of Marco Island residents, I would not approve the proposed project. To show that the project is for the benefit of Marco Island residents, I would condition approval on a binding agreement guaranteeing that at least ninety percent of the facility would be reserved for residents of Marco Island with residents being defined as people whose primary residence is in the city limits of Marco Island and who are qualified for Florida residency for tax purposes. I do support Marco Island residents who may need some form of assisted living and want to remain on Marco Island. Even if the ALF is approved, the proposed facility will be an expensive facility not within the financial means of many residents of Marco Island. We should make every effort to support, encourage and implement in-home care programs as an alternative to live in facilities. I support committing city resources to assist in facilitating in-home care services for Marco Island residents.

**Irwin:**

I believe that if it fills a need in the community for Marco Island residents, it should be given proper and fair consideration. I like that the current plan includes an environmentally sensitive building with LEED (environmentally friendly) elements AND a waterfront park for the public that increases our usable greenspace and allows public access to the waterway. Also included in the revised plan is a brand new state of the art NCH urgent care facility for all Island residents that is badly needed.





**Rola:**

250 words cannot adequately address this question. Marco should NOT be allocating DENSITY out of thin air to support the profitability of ANY commercial enterprise. This island cannot accommodate all projects regardless of how worthy they may seem. I shall always consider all projects coming before me and make educated decisions based upon their merit and compliance with our Comprehensive Plan and the Land Development Code. The past proposal for an ALF on the NCH property did not meet those standards.

**5. With so many years of back and forth, plans, revised plans and mis-steps, how will you help facilitate the completion of Veterans Community Park?**

**Blonna:**

I think the park is finally on track for a timely completion. It has taken a decade, but consistent efforts by the City, the Parks & Recreation Committee, and City Council have resulted in a magnificent park completion just around the corner. City Council has committed the funding, all the appropriate management and construction controls are in place, and the citizens of Marco Island are about to have the open spaces and entertainment facilities they wanted for years – and which will be among the finest in Southwest Florida.

**Grifoni:**

There has been clear, significant progress over the last four years after a decade of mismanagement and delays. Since I've been on Council, the citizens have now fully paid off the Glon property bond, the Master Plan has been updated to reflect current needs and trends, and we have moved headfirst into development of Veterans Community Park without raising city taxes. I have supported this project throughout my term on Council and now we finally are well on our way. The new master plan preserves green space, includes a band shell, and protects the Farmers' Market. The overall design is really well done and when completed, Veterans Community Park will be something our citizens can be proud of. The City just received the 60% design plans and should have 90% within the next few months. Construction is on schedule to commence in 2021. I am proud to support the development of the park without raising city taxes one dime and this can and will be accomplished through the use of Collier County sales tax funds. If re-elected, I will continue to be an advocate to finish this project timely and in a fiscally conservative manner.

**Heindl:**

The project is well on its way. The 60% Construction Document Estimate and Project Status for Veterans' Community Park has been approved by City Council. The future role of City Council on this is quite limited and should be limited. Our community has worked extremely hard on this and I will make every effort to keep the project on track and on budget.

**Irwin:**

I believe at this time it is well underway and I am happy that the city will have a structure to use for entertainment. I enjoy attending concerts and other events there and I look forward to having a nice facility that will bring usability and interest to the greenspace of the park.

**Rola:**

We are approaching a cost of \$10M to facilitate the completion of Veterans' Park. We need to balance the "wants" of a few, the demographics of our population and the intended use of this Park against the cost impact on all our residents. I would place a cap on expenditures on this project and not exceed the cap. A Parks and Recreation Foundation (501 C3) has recently been established and I believe that entity will serve to support park interests rather than placing additional cost burdens on our residents.



## ***City Council Candidates' Questions... Continued from page 11***

### **6. Are the annual survey results of the MICA membership of value to you in developing your position on community issues?**

#### **Blonna:**

Absolutely. MICA members represent the heart and soul of the island and their opinions matter. I will always take these data into consideration before solidifying any position on which MICA has a point of view or information.

#### **Grifoni:**

When I ran in 2016, MICA asked the exact same question which I was happy to answer. I went back and reviewed my 2016 submission and I can say that my answer has not changed. Here is the relevant portion: "Absolutely. Public input into the political process is extremely important and should always be taken into consideration and valued. That doesn't necessarily mean that a City Councilor should use only polling data to determine how to vote if that would violate their principles. If I'm elected by Marco Island voters, my decision making process will always be based on my principles, the merits, the objective facts laid out in public and in the Sunshine during City Council meetings, and in consideration of our entire island community..."

#### **Heindl:**

Absolutely, yes. Too often, however, councilors ignore the surveys and ignore community sentiment. For example, surveys consistently support for water quality. The 2019 survey showed that 69% favor additional spending for our canals and water quality. In the 2017 MICA survey 29.8% said water quality is extremely important and 52.4% said it was important. Only 16.6 percent said water quality was not important, but if actions reflect sentiment, City Council sided with the 16.6 percent who don't think water quality is important. In 2017 when I was chairman of the Marco Island Waterways Advisory Committee, the committee voted unanimously to increase the frequency of testing from quarterly to monthly. Despite the sentiment expressed in the MICA survey, City Council refused a nominal budget increase required to go to monthly water testing. MICA surveys are important, and voters should question whether city councilors who ignore the surveys are serving outside interests instead of the voters and residents of Marco Island.

#### **Irwin:**

Yes - MICA members are a very important segment of the population. They tend to be highly informed on issues and involved in the community. (The 2,029 survey respondents are 16% of the voting population of 12,670 – a significant sample.)

#### **Rola:**

YES, MICA's survey (if narrowly/properly worded) is another good reference point in validating the pulse of a segment of the population.

### **7. Thousands of new residential units are planned in East Naples and South Collier County. Even if Marco Island's population remains constant, traffic congestion is likely to increase as new area residents seek beach access via Marco Island. How would you suggest the city respond to this?**

#### **Blonna:**

Rather than start with the mind-set that we will seek to accommodate everyone, it might be better to





determine what our optimal beach-related density is and use that as our goal. This would require input from the Department of Growth Management, The Police Department, Emergency Management, The Planning Board, City Council, hotel managers, MICA, and citizens. This group would examine everything from traffic flow and parking, to safety and environmental impact. A density-based approach to managing our beaches gives us a sound rationale for limiting visitors when we exceed our desired capacity. I do not think we should increase access points to our beach. Between Tigertail and South Beach and the City access points in between, there are enough ways for daily visitors to gain access to the beach. We must continue to enforce our parking ordinances which help us control access. A key to managing an increased volume of visitors is getting them to and from these access points and their parked vehicles safely and smoothly. The new CAT Trolley should facilitate this.

**Grifoni:**

This has been an ongoing source of concern as areas around us have either been developed or there are future plans to do so. Many of those off-island areas will result in a significant amount of the impact being felt off-island. Those areas are fully controlled by Collier County government, not the City Council. The City needs to be able to engage with the County to discuss the level of impact that Marco Island may be subjected to and to work with the County in a positive fashion to provide the City with additional funding and resources. Another option is to look at less intense transportation options, like the Island Trolley, to limit traffic impacts. Citizens should know that there are no city-controlled parking lots near the beach. Tigertail and South Beach lots are controlled by Collier County so city parking (and county and private parking like MICA and the Turtle lots) are strictly limited. It will be of great importance to have positive working relationships with the County. To that end, I've had the pleasure of speaking with Rick LoCastro, who will soon be the new Commissioner for District 1 (Marco Island and East Naples area), about this issue and I know we'll be able to work together for the best interest of our community. Finally, the city has the power to strictly enforce parking codes. One area to look at would be to strengthen and strictly enforce parking code violations in areas surrounding beach access points.

**Heindl:**

When our community was planned, Marco Island was a remote, isolated location and developed for retirees, winter homes and limited tourism. It was not anticipated that Marco Island would be seen as a beach destination for day visitors. Although day visitors can bring business to the island, excessive numbers cause unnecessary traffic and congestion and place additional burdens on the infrastructure paid for by resident taxpayers. Due to the environmental sensitivity and the residential ambiance of Marco Island, existing public parking at South Beach and Tigertail must be considered sufficient to serve day visitors. I oppose additional parking or shuttle services. I support strict enforcement of parking regulations, a method to alert potential visitors when parking areas are full and placing limits on development commercial parking for beach access.

**Irwin:**

The county will soon be boosting our public transportation system which will include a trolley. I think a trolley shuttle network (multiple vehicles with a reliable schedule) is a great people mover that beach seeking day trippers wouldn't mind and would even enjoy using if it made the trek to the beach easy and expedient. Off-site parking off the island and in various parking lots on the island would be key. Offering public transportation also allows for the opportunity to educate people about "Island and Beach etiquette" on the way there...i.e. Play a recorded message and have onboard posters illustrating key points like: no littering, leave the wildlife alone, and other "Don't trash where you splash" public service messages.



**Rola:**

We should whenever possible, support the county's efforts to provide for off island county residents. However, Marco residents and their Quality of Life is my first concern. The update of our Comprehensive Plan is critical to how we address the future opportunities, threats and risks to Marco Island. Traffic intensity is only one element of that Plan that we need to consider. It is not likely Marco Island's population will remain constant (though we are quickly reaching build out.) A plan to manage increased visitors will be multifaceted. I am not a supporter of creating more parking on the island and would look to control congestion through code compliance and public transportation options.

**8. The prevalence of Red Tide in the Gulf of Mexico and canals in 2018 and 2019 highlighted water quality as an issue of great importance for the economy, public health and quality of life in Southwest Florida. The causes of poor water quality are numerous. What further steps would you suggest the city take to address this problem?**

**Blonna:**

Indeed, water quality is a major issue, and City Council has put into place a rigorous testing protocol under the direction of a qualified Ph.D. We are awaiting the first results, after which the City will propose appropriate next steps. In the meantime, we can enforce our existing Stormwater and Fertilizer Ordinances. I am 100% committed to returning the waters of Marco Island to their condition we enjoyed only a few years ago. This must be done, and it will be done.

**Grifoni:**

I've been at the forefront of moving water quality from the shadows to a city priority. The city's MS-4 was gathering dust in City Hall before I was elected and I was told that we didn't want to "talk about it" because of the cost. In my first budget we got it fully funded without raising taxes. Since I was elected, the City Council has prioritized more money addressing water quality than any other in our history. In our last budget, I supported approving hundreds of thousands of dollars to improve our water quality, with an increase to monthly water quality testing, updating stormwater policy and management, treatment upgrades, and swale analysis. I've recommended to City Council that millions of dollars from the Collier County sales tax be allocated to clean up our water and to engage with State leaders to secure additional grants. Water quality is a local, regional, and state issue. It's critically important that we continue engaging through our state representatives like Bob Rommel who I have a great working relationship with, and our city representatives in Tallahassee to secure grants for water-related improvements on the island. I have supported water quality projects in our yearly "Legislative Priorities" efforts with the state. I strongly supported hiring Dr. Harper to conduct a full analysis to determine the point source of pollutants in our waterways. With the data from his report, we will be able to take direct, data-drive action where deficiencies are hidden in a cost-effective manner.

**Heindl:**

Respectfully, we need action and commitment not suggestions. Due to past neglect of our waterways we do not have the data to address specifics currently. I served on the Marco Island Waterways Advisory Committee (WAC) for six years. In 2015, I warned of declining water quality, the likelihood for our waters to become impaired and urged city council to allow WAC to begin developing a water management plan. DENIED





In 2017 I served as chairman of WAC. WAC was highly active that year, hopeful that a newly constituted city council would support our efforts. WAC unanimously voted to recommend increased water testing. DENIED AGAIN. In 2018 Sam Young, who was then a WAC member and water advocate, was elected to City Council. In 2019 Marco Island's waterways were declared impaired. Sam Young pushed through some measures that will soon make it possible to suggest steps to address our water quality problems. Thanks to former city councilor Sam Young, Dr. Harvey Harper, an environmental engineer was contracted to conduct tests and write a report on the cause of our water quality problems. Past city council's inaction has set back progress on water quality at least five years. I have made many suggestions on the record with WAC. While we wait for Dr. Harper's report in order to have real direction, I would like to see adequate resources committed to evaluate the potential for our swale retention and a methodical plan to restore and maintain our swale retention system.

**Irwin:**

The City has commissioned an extensive water quality report that will be completed next year. While red tide is a naturally occurring phenomenon and has been documented since the first Spanish explorers hundreds of years ago, we should be working with the state, the South Florida Water Management District and even the Army Corps of Engineers to fix water quality issues as part of the larger statewide ecosystem. On the island, restoring our swales to their intended use to allow percolating filtration would be a great start.

**Rola:**

The waterway – Water Quality Issue is a multi-faceted problem. There is NO silver bullet solution for this problem. Our consultant, Dr. Harper, will present his report in June 2021. This report will contain proposed solutions for the problem. It is up to your Council, city staff with the participation of our residents to determine the best, most cost-effective, solutions moving forward. To start, I would look to implement Best Management Practices (BMP's) that are already known to provide water quality benefit and revisit mechanisms that assure we are complying with those practices.

**9. Given Marco Island's critical natural resources (including our beach, waterways, wildlife and sea life), the city currently lacks a point person of authority to rely on for these important topics. Do you support returning to having a position of a FULL TIME qualified and certified Environmental Specialist for the City of Marco Island? Why or why not?**

**Blonna:**

The City should form a new department to handle the many demands of environmental protection and stormwater management. We actually have more people dedicated to these efforts than does the City of Naples on a proportionate basis. Recall that only a few years ago we had a full-time environmental expert. We need to bring that position back and combine it with the existing Stormwater Engineer and Environmental Planner positions to form the core of the new department. I would add a part-time Grant Writer to the department. This person would work exclusively on obtaining Federal and State Grants targeted to Stormwater Management and Clean Water initiatives.

**Grifoni:**

Yes, I think this is an obvious and needed action and I believe that we can accomplish this within the existing constraints of the budget without raising taxes to support it. Between our waterways, our threatened species like the burrowing owl, and our pristine beaches, our unique island environment is one of the leading factors (if not the most important) that brought us all to this piece of paradise. Our environmental policies are a key part of our city's strategic plan we updated last year that I strongly supported. Throughout my four years



### ***City Council Candidates' Questions... Continued from page 15***

on Council, I have had the pleasure of supporting our environment in multiple ways like the burrowing owl incentive program (that garnered attention of all of the country and even internationally), imposing stricter penalties and updating our endangered species ordinance, waterways improvements, and reducing plastic refuse on the beach. Making sure that we have a qualified person on staff whose responsibility will be the environment is a must and a clear logical next step that our citizens can count on me to support based on my track record and commitment to our community.

#### **Heindl:**

I have worked with both part time and full time environmental specialists during my six years with the Marco Island's Waterways Advisory Committee. I support having a full-time environmental specialist but only after reorganization to facilitate his or her independence. At least one highly qualified environmental specialist quit her job with Marco Island because of perceived competing interests that prohibited her from speaking out on some environmental issues. I support a fundamental reorganization of the public works department. Stormwater and environmental protection should be separate from public works and the environmental specialist should report directly to the city manager. I do support the hiring of a full-time environmental specialist after reorganization sufficient to allow the specialist to be sufficiently independent of potentially competing interests.

#### **Irwin:**

As a certified Coastal Systems Master Naturalist, I would fully support a full time environmental specialist to advocate for our wildlife and natural systems. Our economy relies on our pristine environment that attracts businesses, tourists, and residents alike. It is our most important asset and should be managed accordingly.

#### **Rola:**

Over the last three years the city has added Jason Tomasetti as the city staff's designated Storm Water Engineer. Jason is a Professional Engineer and serves as liaison to the Waterways Advisory Committee. In addition, the city's Planning Department has added Tonia Selmeski, an Environmental Project Planner, to staff. Tonia is a credentialed Environmentalist. Tonia serves as liaison to the Beach and Coastal Resources Advisory Committee. She works under the Planning Department and monitors environmental issues related to planning and construction. She has also presented and reported at various Beautification Advisory Committee meetings. I would consider both Jason and Tonia's positions to be environmentally focused, Jason on water and Tonia on land and beach. The community's desire to emphasize and expand Environmental tasking might require additional staff and budget.

**10. The City of Naples has a weak Mayor/City Council/City Manager form of government in which the mayor is elected directly by the people instead of having a chair elected by city council. The mayor has one vote on city council and day-to-day decisions are made by the city manager. Would you vote to amend the City Charter to change to a weak Mayor/City Council/City Manager form of government similar to the City of Naples?**

#### **Blonna:**

I would not amend the City Charter to switch to a Weak Mayor/City Council/ City Manager form of government. City Council examined this issue twice in 2019, and there did not appear to be consensus to move forward. Moreover, there were essentially no public speakers in favor. While it might sound good on paper, a Mayor might not be what Marco Island needs. We do need seven highly qualified, dedicated, knowledgeable Councilors, which by definition would include me.



**Grifoni:**

The Mayor/Manager/Council government can potentially put too much authority into the hands of the Mayor and is a style of government typical of larger cities with little in common with the small town atmosphere and community of Marco Island. A “weak Mayor” system is a bit different. What MICA is suggesting in this question is that we keep the structure of our existing Council/Manager government that retains a City Manager hired by the Council, change the title of Chairman to Mayor in the city charter (for a “weak Mayor” set up), and then have a direct election for Mayor (right now we have direct election of Councilors). Instead of electing 7 city councilors as we do today, the citizens would elect 6 city councilors and 1 mayor. Are those changes really significant enough to alter our City Charter? In my experience speaking with citizens who thought a change to a Mayor would be a positive, they believed that it meant we could get a strong Mayor who ran the city in an executive role. That would be a significant change that would require much citizen input. Citizens ended up feeling that a “weak Mayor” change wouldn’t really do much once fully understood. The question seems to get wrong that the City Council cannot directly amend the City Charter to change our system of government (or anything else for that matter). Any vote to change would actually require a referendum that our citizens would need to vote on directly.

**Heindl:**

No. Unlike Naples, city council position is essentially an extension of volunteer service. For example, a city councilor for Marco Island is paid \$6,000 per year, \$9000 for the chair. Naples city council salary is \$40,000 per year, \$50,000 for the mayor. Any reasonably hard-working city councilor for Marco Island will effectively be paid less than minimum wage. Our present system can attract candidates motivated by community service. Unfortunately, some candidates are backed and funded by commercial interests and seem to have other agendas out of step with community sentiment on issues like controlling short-term rentals, protecting water quality, and restricting possible sale of recreational marijuana? Voters need to elect independent, community-service minded candidates and the present system will work just fine.

**Irwin:**

I would be open to hearing the pros and cons of such a proposal and keep an open mind about both sides.

**Rola:**

NO. I’m not convinced the outlay of additional salaries will guarantee an honest, transparent benefit to the residents. We have not yet evolved to a governmental level of accountability that would warrant establishing a weak Mayor model.

**11. City Council over the last several years has stated it wants complete transparency, yet there appears to have been plans for changes to city council rules, code of ordinances, and comprehensive plan with very little input from the community. Will you commit to working with the community before arbitrarily making changes on the fly?**

**Blonna:**

I do not agree that this City Council has “arbitrarily made changes on the fly.” If anything, the present council has been entirely transparent and has taken its time when considering changes to ordinances, as is appropriate. Further, Council has made no changes whatsoever without inviting full public comment. The Comprehensive Plan is under review, and there has been a full day of public involvement last Fall, and the City reached out for a virtual meeting in early September. And yes, I absolutely commit to working with the community before considering changes.





## ***City Council Candidates' Questions... Continued from page 17***

### **Grifoni:**

This question is a “loaded question.” It’s based on a false or questionable presupposition, without any examples. What changes have actually occurred without proper input from the community? The true answer is, based on Florida law that requires significant public notice and open participation from the public, zero. When I was elected in 2016, there was a resolution on the books that was passed in a 1pm “special meeting” with basically no public attendance. The resolution significantly limited citizen interaction with Council and imposed a “stealth tax” to get a citizen-sponsored resolution considered. Immediately after my election I demanded we repeal it and the repeal passed unanimously. I believe that citizens should be welcomed at our Council meetings. Prior City Councils often held meetings in the morning or early afternoon making it impossible for many workers or families to attend. These meetings were sparsely attended and often were when the most controversial ordinances were “debated.” I immediately advocated that all city council meetings and special workshops be held at 5:30 pm, giving more citizens the ability to attend and participate. I co-drafted updated Rules of Procedure and continued to explore improvements during my term on City Council to improve the flow of the meetings. During my time as Chairman, I increased the ability for public comment on issues in front of the Council, put the people’s business (ordinances and resolutions) at the front of the agenda, and moved other Council and staff items to the end.

### **Heindl:**

When I was the chairman of the Waterways Advisory Committee, I encouraged community involvement. As a result, committee meetings were well attended and there was a lot of public participation. I hosted several workshops to facilitate public participation. Also, I expanded the reach of the committee using working committees to deal with specialized issues. The best way to learn to value community input is to take a volunteer role to try to make a difference. I know from personal experience that members in key committees like the Waterways Advisory Committee often see their hard work unappreciated and disregarded. I intend to change that. If committee members are marginalized, how can citizens have an effective voice in our government? Yes, working with the community is what I do. I will tenaciously resist any attempt by city council to arbitrarily make changes on the fly during my watch and I will support community participation at every level.

### **Irwin:**

I believe that elected officials should accurately represent the people they serve so I would absolutely support receiving input from the community on such issues.

**Rola:** ABSOLUTELY! First, I would (with citizen input) revisit some of the Ordinance /Changes to procedures made over the last 10 (?) years, correcting any perceived abuses or non-contributing changes. All future proposed changes must pass the test, “How does this proposed change benefit the (majority of) residents?” This all ties into the model of government. As referenced earlier, the current government does not proactively seek citizen input. Our Government promotes a “complaint” driven model. I will look for to establish a city organized query system where citizens can provide feedback on a regular basis to timely issues that affect them and that will guide more informed decision making by the council.

## **12. Other than City Council meetings, how do you plan to communicate with residents specifically if you are elected?**

### **Blonna:**

All city councilors have city email addresses and can be reached by phone via the City Clerk during normal working hours. As a private citizen I check my email and telephone messages several times a day. I respond to normal messages within 24 hours. I respond to emergency messages as soon as I receive them. I will continue this behavior once I become a City Councilor.



**Grifoni:**

We can all talk about how we would communicate with citizens and make promises all day long. When I ran for Council in 2016, I pledged to the citizens that I would be the most active, engaged, and available City Councilor in our island's history and that I was making a four-year commitment to them, not just a campaign promise. My community engagement over the last four years speaks volumes and verifies that pledge as fulfilled. I am always there for our citizens, whenever I can and however I can, whether in-person, by email, by phone, social media, or anything else. I am pledging again to continue this involvement and commitment to our community for another four years. Not empty words or hollow promises but real action, solutions, and involvement backed up by my track record, just as I have demonstrated every day for the last four years.

**Heindl:**

I am already taking measures to communicate by means of social media apps like NextDoor and FaceBook. I have created groups such as Friends of Marco Island Waterways on both Nextdoor and Facebook. I will maintain a website, a Facebook page, and issue newsletters as a way to communicate with the community. I will be accessible for phone calls, emails and person to person meetings as warranted. I will encourage City of Marco Island to develop a means to facilitate communication with city councilors through its website so that a broader spectrum of the community will have access to city councilors.

**Irwin:**

I regularly speak with people around town, online and through email communications. I would continue to do so. I welcome input at all times.

**Rola:**

I would prefer to utilize a city sponsored Bulletin Board associated with the city's Website (It doesn't exist yet). If that is not appropriate, I shall issue a mass-emailer to the residents that sign up for this communication where I shall attempt to provide a non-biased presentation of topics and the impact of the proposed solutions to the residents. Other councilors, city staff and residents Opting OUT would be omitted from distribution per Sunshine law prohibition. This in addition to mechanisms that already exist including councilor email, telephone/text, newspaper guest articles, face-to-face meetings, organized presentations (potential zoom) to various groups.

**13. What do you see as the top three infrastructure needs that must be addressed, and how should they be paid for?****Blonna:**

The three top infrastructure needs are (in no particular order): Completing Veteran's park on time and on budget (already budgeted for in 2021); Regrading problem swales and the drainage basins associated with them (already budgeted for in 2021); and Regrading and repaving city streets starting with those that are most problematic (already budgeted for in 2021).

**Grifoni:**

The top three infrastructure needs are water quality improvements, roadways/sidewalks, and parks. All three of which can be and currently are fully funded through the Collier County 1% sales tax. After the sales tax adjustment was passed by the County in 2018, I immediately went to work to calculate the funds and to review the projects eligible for those dollars (the adjustment could only be applied to certain categories of projects). I presented to the City Council a chart showing all the major projects that were going to be needed and/or were requested by the City over the next few years. By using the funds appropriately, we could fully fund the build out of Veterans' Community Park, allocate millions of dollars to roadway repair and resurfacing, takeover the sidewalk maintenance program instead of forcing



## ***City Council Candidates' Questions... Continued from page 19***

citizens to pay for it out of their own pockets, and put millions into water quality improvement projects on the island. The City Council gave approval to my proposed general allocation and as funds are collected, they are being budgeted for these important infrastructure projects without any increase of City taxes. During my first budget cycle, I made sure that the City allocated an additional one million dollars to fix our most traveled and poorly conditioned roadways, all without raising taxes. In subsequent years, I have continued to support an accelerated roadway resurfacing program, vastly outpacing haphazard efforts in years past. I strongly support continuing to do so to improve quality of life.

### **Heindl:**

1. Our stormwater system needs to function to move water off roads and prevent flooding and avoid the direct dumping of nutrient rich water into the canals. The Island is developing in ways not envisioned by the Mackle Brothers and the present stormwater conveyance is lacking. While there are no easy answers studies are being undertaken that will help us begin to evaluate and redesign our system if necessary. Stormwater can be funded out of a public works or as a separate rate assessing utility. Difficult decisions need to be made and these decisions should be made with maximum community input and participation.

2. Roadways. Our roadways need to be maintained in a safe and serviceable manner. However, our property taxes should not be the only source of maintaining our roadways especially since many of our roadways serve as throughways for commercial vehicles serving tourists and are used by visitors from East Naples and South Collier. I believe we should tap expertise of our capable local citizens willing to serve on advisory or ad hoc committees and consider expanding the role of the audit committee to help with budgeting and exploring alternate funding sources.

3. Water and Sewer – We have a well-run water and sewer department, but it comes with a high cost. We need to look for ways to lower cost and lower water usage and associated environmental impacts by developing policies that favor low water use landscaping.

### **Irwin:**

I am against raising property or sales taxes. Existing property taxes, water rates, grants, and tourists pay for these and other infrastructure costs. 1) Waterway flow: I would like to see a study done on the feasibility of connecting our canals and increasing the water flow between canals (under San Marco Rd and Bald Eagle/Heathwood Dr.) to increase the natural ability of the tides to flush our canals out to sea, rather than trapping pollutants and toxins in dead ends. 2) Greenspace: I believe that while the beach is by far our biggest and most visible “green space,” we have a number of opportunities inland to preserve and expand our natural spaces and enhance our parks.

3) Water and sewer infrastructure: Other cities in Florida have seen crumbling sewage pipes spew raw sewage into neighborhood streets, canals and around cities. Disgusting! The reason is that generations of officials have neglected the upkeep of this vital system. For environmental, health and sanitation reasons, we must protect our potable water and sewer systems.

### **Rola:**

1. Replacement of the Winterberry Bridge

2. Restoration of the city's swales and maintenance of failed Storm Water Drains.

3. The city's assuming the Repair and Replacement of Sidewalks. Paid for through 1% sales tax increase, available grants, general fund, Utility fund. The council and city staff have exercised a degree of foresight in planning for infrastructure replacement expenditures. There are 2 Bucket Plans, one for the general fund and another for the Utility. Both are on track, funded to date. In addition, the city has a maintenance – replacement fund. During the past year, the city has also become dependent upon a temporary 1% sale tax increase (est. \$3.5M) for infrastructure projects.

The infrastructure items currently on the horizon and budgeted are: A new firehouse, completion of the Veterans' Park Band shell and restrooms et al, repaving of x miles of city streets, and repainting of the Savage Bridge.





# Marco Island City Councilor Greg Folley

## MICAwave Questions & Answers



**Greg Folley** is a full-time resident of Marco Island and was appointed to the City Council on June 1, 2020 to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Councilor Sam Young. Greg is married to Margo and is father to 9 children and two stepchildren and grandfather of 8. He is a parishioner at San Marco Catholic Church. He is a veteran, an attorney and a retired Vice President of Caterpillar Inc., one of the largest and most iconic companies in the world. During his professional career, which spanned nearly 40 years, Greg served in all three branches of the federal government, including service on the White House staff under President Reagan. He also practiced labor and employment law for over a decade at major law firms and as labor counsel for American Airlines, before joining Caterpillar. At Caterpillar Greg served in a variety of roles, including lead labor negotiator, Chief

HR officer for the company's 100,000 plus employees. He also led several of the company's largest and most profitable divisions, including, most recently, the division which had over 10,000 employees in 60 facilities in 18 states and 18 different countries around the world. While serving in that role Greg helped deliver record revenues, profitability and safety results for that division. While at Cat, Greg also served as Chairman of the Board of the Central Illinois chapter of the American Red Cross and helped deliver vital emergency services to residents displaced by the worst flooding and some of the most destructive tornadoes in the region's history. He also served on the boards of Catholic Charities and Eureka College. Greg attended the Stanford Executive Program at Stanford University Graduate School of Business. He holds a Juris Doctor degree from the University of Notre Dame Law School, a Bachelor of Arts in Economics (cum laude) from the University of Notre Dame, and was awarded an honorable medical discharge from the U.S. Naval Academy. He has extensive board experience with several different companies, and was admitted to the bars of Indiana, North Carolina, Wisconsin, Illinois and Texas.

*Greg Folley was appointed to fill a vacancy and is running unopposed for a two-year city council seat. We wanted to give everyone an opportunity to hear his viewpoint.*

**1. On the August ballot, 4,044 Marco Island residents cast non-binding votes to “prohibit the sale, manufacturing, cultivation, distribution, warehousing of Recreational Marijuana in all zoning districts in the City,” with 1,822 opposed. Would you uphold the vote and amend city code or would you take action to disregard the vote and why?**

**A:** I would uphold the vote for two reasons. First, the people have spoken on the issue, and it is not my role to second guess their decision. Second, I do not want Marco to be a magnet for marijuana customers from off the island, especially if sales are banned in Naples.

**2. What is your opinion of the large volume of daily/weekly rentals (most via VRBO, Air BnB, etc.) in areas deemed residential? What do you suggest to solve the short-term renter problems that are felt by year-round residents? How do you propose these properties be controlled or managed within the city?**

**A:** We can strengthen the noise ordinance and assure more rigorous enforcement, which was a major topic of discussion at this week's Council meeting and will also be addressed at our next meeting. Further, I have asked the City Manager to convene a Task Force and seek broad public input to identify other ways to address the problems our residents are experiencing due to the influx of irresponsible or inconsiderate short term renters. I don't think any tool at our disposal should be off the table, including parking regulations, occupancy rules, and in the case of repeat offenders, nuisance law enforcement. This is a complex issue, but one which we must address with maximum public input.



### ***City Councilor Greg Folley Questions... Continued from page 21***

**3. One of City Council's main objectives is to protect the residents of the community. In the recent past, in times of emergencies, such as Hurricane Irma and the COVID-19 Pandemic, the city appeared to be reactive and at times to take actions more supportive of beachfront hotels rather than the residents. What changes would you suggest to be more proactive on behalf of residents during emergency situations?**

A: Not sure I agree with the premise of the question. However, the most proactive steps to be taken are to assure extensive communication with residents and visitors is happening. The city has taken a number of steps in this regard, including development of the city's webpage and televised council and subcommittee meetings. Additionally, the Police Department has twitter account which conveys critical information to the community. Our City Manager Mike McNees has also developed strong contingency and communication plans to deal with future emergencies such as hurricanes, and I am encouraged by his pro-activity in this regard.

**4. What is your opinion of constructing an Assisted Living Facility on Marco Island at the NCH Marco Island Urgent Care location?**

I am open to the concept as there appears to be a need, but I will need to learn about the specific proposal if and when it is presented to Council after action by the planning board to form a definitive opinion. I am concerned about the cost, impact on traffic and increased demand for city services that any such facility might cause.

**5. With so many years of back and forth, plans, revised plans and mis-steps, how will you help facilitate the completion of Veterans Community Park?**

Council reviewed progress on this project at the August 17 meeting and I voted to support a motion to work towards completion of the project. Changes that have been incorporated into the design have added considerable value for the community while still staying within budget. We will hold the City Manager and his team accountable for delivering the project on time and on budget. This project now has significant momentum, and I am excited to see it completed.

**6. Are the annual survey results of the MICA membership of value to you in developing your position on community issues?**

I think community input from citizens is always helpful to elected officials, particularly identifying issues which are of the greatest importance to them. I value and appreciate this survey.

**7. Thousands of new residential units are planned in East Naples and South Collier County. Even if Marco Island's population remains constant, traffic congestion is likely to increase as new area residents seek beach access via Marco Island. How would you suggest the city respond to this?**

This is an issue which I expect to be addressed in the City's updated Comprehensive Plan which is now being completed with significant public input. As needed, parking and transportation improvements will have to be made, in coordination with Collier County officials, local businesses and property owners. Changes may also be required to our land development code, which will be informed by the Comprehensive Plan.

**8. The prevalence of Red Tide in the Gulf of Mexico and canals in 2018 and 2019 highlighted water quality as an issue of great importance for the economy, public health and quality of life in Southwest Florida. The causes of poor water quality are numerous. What further steps would you suggest the city take to address this problem?**

I am looking forward to hearing the results of the water quality study currently be taken by Professor Harper, and the Council is scheduled to get a preliminary update on his work next month. I am committed to taking effective action to address the water quality issues in our community, but this requires a good understanding



of the causes of water deterioration in our canals, which I hope will be provided by Dr. Harper's study, so that the steps we as a Council do take make a real difference. Additionally, the broader issues of red tide along Florida's coastline require coordinated work with County, State and federal officials about runoff from Lake Okeechobee and related issues. In this regard, I was pleased to support our city's joining with other SW Florida cities and counties in the SW Florida Resiliency Compact, which will bring these entities together to address issues of common concern, prominent among them being water quality.

**9. Given Marco Island's critical natural resources (including our beach, waterways, wildlife and sea life), the city currently lacks a point person of authority to rely on for these important topics. Do you support returning to having a position of a FULL TIME qualified and certified Environmental Specialist for the City of Marco Island? Why or why not?**

I have to consider this issue in more detail, but I am skeptical of adding additional positions to our city payroll and imposing additional costs on our taxpayers without a clear showing of need and value. I haven't yet seen this in connection with a position such as this, but am open to the idea.

**10. The City of Naples has a weak Mayor/City Council/City Manager form of government in which the mayor is elected directly by the people instead of having a chair elected by city council. The mayor has one vote on city council and day-to-day decisions are made by the city manager. Would you vote to amend the City Charter to change to a weak Mayor/City Council/City Manager form of government similar to the City of Naples?**

Yes. I believe only a few cities in Florida do not have a mayor, and we are disadvantaged by not having one ourselves.

**11. City Council over the last several years has stated it wants complete transparency, yet there appears to have been plans for changes to city council rules, code of ordinances, and comprehensive plan with very little input from the community. Will you commit to working with the community before arbitrarily making changes on the fly?**

Yes, but sometimes swift action is needed. The good thing about the actions we take is that if we miss the mark the community can always respond and let us know if something isn't working or requires more work. I think the Comprehensive Plan is being pulled together with excellent community input. The short-term rental challenges are another example of the community providing massive input to the Council, in the form of hundreds of emails and conversations. However, in that case I believe more input is still needed and that a community forum to discuss these challenges is required.

**12. Other than City Council meetings, how do you plan to communicate with residents specifically if you are elected?**

My email is on the city website and available to all members of the public. I am also happy to receive phone calls or texts at 239-276-5071. Finally, I will look for opportunities to appear at public gatherings to make myself available for citizen input and conversations. I am not hard to find.

**13. What do you see as the top three infrastructure needs that must be addressed, and how should they be paid for?**

Sidewalks, roads and canals. I would like to see the city take over maintenance of sidewalks just as it maintains our roads, and I believe there is broad support for that on the Council. There is and needs to be a long term plan for road maintenance on the island, and sidewalks and roads should be funded from our general revenues. Canals are a bigger problem as the solution and costs are unclear, but again, I expect to learn much more once Dr. Harper completes his study of our local waterways. Armed with the results of his study, we as a community will have to assess what steps to take that can directly improve the quality of water in our canals. This will require a lot of consultation and discussion with our citizens.





# The Marco Island Deed Restrictions

*Updated by: Betty Hernandez, Deed Restriction Specialist*

In October 1986, The Marco Island Civic Association (MICA) was assigned the right of enforcement of the declaration of restrictions. The declarations were placed and recorded for properties developed by the Deltona Corporation on Marco Island up to that date. Deltona created the deed restrictions to protect the integrity of the island and to assure conformity of all new construction in the geographic areas protected by the restrictions. As a general note: deed restrictions are an excellent tool for maintaining property values.

A condition of the agreement between Deltona and MICA was to create an Architectural Review Committee (ARC) which would act as an authority in the construction review process. Among others, the restrictions state that no new construction shall take place without a review and written approval of the design drawings by the ARC. The ARC is composed of individual volunteers who have a background in construction. Since 1986, the ARC continues to meet monthly. Of particular interest to the committee are setback requirements.

The deed restrictions cover single family residences, multi-family residential and commercial properties on the island and apply to most of the island. Areas not included are properties located North of Old Marco Lane in Old Marco; the Highlands area; The Esplanade, Hideaway, Key Marco and a

A poster for a beach clean-up event. The background is a photograph of a beach with people walking. At the top, the Marco Island Civic Association logo is displayed. Below it, the text 'BEACH CLEAN-UP with Marco Island Civic Association' is prominently featured. The event details (Date, Time, Place) are listed in large, bold letters. A red box with 'JOIN US!' is on the right. A white box on the left contains information about MICA's support and a call to bring kids. A red arrow points from this box to the event details. At the bottom, a red banner specifies what can be picked up, and a note mentions social distancing and membership ID requirements. Social media icons and a 'Love Your Beach' logo are in the bottom corners.

**Marco Island Civic Association**

**BEACH CLEAN-UP**  
with  
**Marco Island Civic Association**

**DATE:** Saturday, October 10, 2020  
**TIME:** 8:00 AM – 10:00 AM  
**PLACE:** Residents' Beach

**JOIN US!**

MICA supplies bags and gloves for all participants, assists in trash disposal and distribution of supplies. Limited donated grabbers and buckets will be available for picking up the GREEN WAY!  
**BRING THE KIDS - A great opportunity teach them the importance of stewardship and the impacts of TRASH!**

For more info, please contact:  
Ruth McCann,  
Executive Director, MICA  
239-642-7778

**We only pick up non-organic (abiotic) material. Plastic, paper, straws, cigarette butts – general trash.**  
We do not remove sea life or naturally occurring marine debris. Be prepared for beach conditions.  
6-foot Social Distancing is Encouraged!

**NOTE:** Residents' Beach Membership ID Required to access Residents' Beach Facilities.

Find us on Facebook  
Love Your Beach – Marco Island

Love Your Beach  
Marco Island Resources  
Adopt-A-Beach Committee

portion of beachfront properties. In deed restricted areas, construction drawings must be submitted to the ARC for review.

The deed restrictions differ somewhat from the City of Marco Island's Code of Ordinances. In cases where the restrictions don't match, the more conservative of the two must be met. Corner and shoulder lots have unique requirements and a meeting with the MICA Deed Restriction Specialist is encouraged prior to final design.

MICA works closely with the City of Marco Island Building Department. Although our requirements vary, if MICA observes a violation of City codes, we will notify the City. In return, on the City's application for a building permit, there is a notification to check with MICA for applicable deed restrictions.

If you are planning on building a new home or commercial building or adding a new screen enclosure, pool or addition, please call the MICA office to verify if deed restrictions run with your property at 239- 642-7778. The application for ARC review may be downloaded at [www.marcocivic.com](http://www.marcocivic.com).

# General Election

**Voter Registration Deadline:** October 5

**Early Voting:**  
October 19-31  
9 a.m. - 6 p.m. daily

**Early Voting Location:**  
Marco Island Library -  
210 S Heathwood Drive,  
Marco Island

## Vote-by-Mail:

Mail date for ballots sent to overseas and military voters: September 19, 2020

Beginning mail date for domestic voters: September 24, 2020

**Deadline to request a Vote-by-Mail ballot:** 5 p.m. on October 24, 2020  
*Request a mail ballot online or call (239) 252-VOTE (8683)*

Vote-by-Mail ballots must be returned to the Supervisor of Elections office at 3750 Enterprise Avenue, Naples FL 34104 by 7 p.m. on Election Day, November 3; or by 6 p.m. at the satellite office located at the North Collier Government Service Center: 2335 Orange Blossom Drive, Naples FL 34109.

Voted ballots can also be dropped off at a Vote-by-Mail drop box located at an early voting site during the early voting period. Learn more about our Vote-by-Mail drop boxes: [www.CollierVotes.com/Drop-Boxes](http://www.CollierVotes.com/Drop-Boxes).

**Election Day:** November 3rd, 7 a.m. - 7 p.m.

**[www.CollierVotes.com](http://www.CollierVotes.com) | #ElectionReady**