

FALL 2024

MICA *Awave*

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A Periodic Publication of the Marco Island Civic Association



SPECIAL ELECTION EDITION

CITY COUNCIL ELECTION COVERAGE

by Marco Island Civic Association Board of Directors



The Marco Island City Council election will be held on Tuesday, November 5, 2024, in conjunction with the county-wide General Election. Four of the seven City Council seats are up for election. City Council terms are for 4 years.

Running for election are six Marco Island citizens: Bonita Schwan, Stephen Gray, Tamara Goehler, Becky Irwin, Deb Henry and Rich Blonna.

Who of the current seven councilors will remain on City Council? Erik Brechnitz and Darrin Palumbo. Councilman Greg Folley recently resigned from City Council due to his bid for the Florida State House. City Council members will appoint a replacement at an upcoming meeting.

The MICA Board of Directors urges you to be informed, read as much as you can from different sources about all the candidates, watch City Council meetings to see how incumbent councilors interact with residents and their fellow councilors and attend the City Council Candidates Forum on Wednesday, October 9.

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You can also access the City of Marco Island's website to see how the two incumbents voted on many significant issues: <https://www.cityofmarcoisland.com/media/69891>

The next four years are critical to our four mile by six mile island, with many important concerns on the horizon, such as canal water quality, our precious environment and protected species, and preserving our residential community, to name just a few.

The MICA Board of Directors developed a list of 16 very relevant questions to ask the six candidates. Their responses, along with their biographies and photos, are listed in this Special Election Edition of the MICAWAVE. Please enjoy and we hope to see you on October 9!



IMPORTANT GENERAL VOTING INFORMATION

The deadline to register to vote is Monday, October 7.

To register to vote:

<https://www.colliervotes.gov/Register-to-Vote/Registration-Application>

To request a vote-by-mail ballot or update your request:

<https://www.colliervotes.gov/Voters/Vote-by-Mail>

To check your voter registration status:

<https://www.colliervotes.gov/Voters/Check-My-Registration-Status>

For information about the upcoming General Election - November 5, 2024:

<https://www.colliervotes.gov/Upcoming-Elections>

VOTING LOCATIONS

Early Voting will be held at the Marco Island Library, 210 S. Heathwood Drive, Marco Island, and begins Saturday, October 26, through Saturday, November 2.

Voting Day locations will be held at three locations. Please check your Voter ID Registration card for your location. You will need to bring a current and valid Florida driver's license.

Following is the contact information for the

Collier County Supervisor of Election Office:

Phone: (239) 252-8683

Email: Supervisor.Elections@CollierVotes.gov Hours: Monday-Friday, 8:00am - 5:00pm

Location: Rev Dr Martin Luther King Jr Building, 3750 Enterprise Avenue, Naples, FL 34104

2024 MARCO ISLAND CITY COUNCIL CANDIDATE BIOGRAPHIES



RICH BLONNA

Dr. Rich Blonna is a first-term City Councilor. A retired Professor Emeritus from the Department of Public Health, William Paterson University of NJ, he is a well-known author of college textbooks and self-help books. A major focal point of his research and writing over the past 30 years has been understanding how the mind and body work together to promote health and prevent disease. A prolific writer, he has authored several White Papers since becoming a City Councilor. Dr. Blonna lives on Marco Island with his wife Heidi. They have been married for 53 years and have two adult sons and two grandchildren. Dr. Blonna and Heidi have been full-time Marco Island residents since 2012 and have experienced both condo and single-family home living. They currently live in a single-family home on San Marco Rd. Prior to building their home in 2017 they lived in a condo in San Marco Villas where Dr. Blonna served on the Board of Directors of the San Marco Villas Condominium Association. They love to cook together and spend quiet time on the beach reading or relaxing

by their pool. For fun, Dr. Blonna loves outdoor sports and is an avid kayaker, cyclist, beach runner, tennis player and fitness devotee. He also loves to read, write, meditate, and take photos at sunrise, his favorite time of day.



TAMARA GOEHLER

Tamara Goehler was born in the former Soviet Union and legally immigrated to the United States in 1992 to give her son a better life. She became an American citizen with a deep appreciation for the freedom and democracy of this great country. After many years of working for the U.S. Special Operations Command and the U.S. Department of State in the Washington, D.C. area, Tamara and her husband moved to Marco Island in 2021 to enjoy its small-town charm, peace, and natural beauty. Throughout her career, she managed programs for the U.S. Army JFK Special Warfare Center, overseeing \$150 million in operations, training over 7,500 service members, and hiring and training over 1,000 instructors worldwide. She developed effective curricula, ensured cost-efficient operations, and delivered high-quality outcomes. Tamara's ability to coordinate diverse teams and tackle complex issues would be invaluable to the residents of Marco Island. She is deeply committed to public service, serving as a member of the Collier County Republican Executive

Committee, the Republican Club of South Collier, and organizations like the American Legion and AmVets. She also worked as a poll watcher during the last Marco Island election and as a poll worker during the Primary Elections 2024. As a member of the city council, Tamara Goehler will use her experience to promote unity, collaboration, and a high quality of life for all residents of Marco Island.



STEPHEN GRAY

With over 40 years of experience as an entrepreneur, commercial banker, and wealth manager, Stephen Gray brings valuable insights to this role. He holds an undergraduate degree in Plant Sciences from Indiana University and an MBA from Northwestern University. As a father of three daughters and grandfather to two lively grandsons, Stephen Gray is deeply committed to our community.



DEB HENRY

Deb Henry was born and raised in the suburbs of Philadelphia. In 1989, Deb joined her father in the family specialty construction business. When Deb took over Tracorp in 2010, it became Philadelphia's only woman-owned specialty construction company. Her main focus was project management and accounting while maintaining complete responsibility for the entire firm.

Deb and her husband Brian were married on the beach here on Marco in 2003, moving to Marco full time in 2019. Their daughter Emily, now a sophomore at The University of Florida, attended St. John Neumann Catholic High School in Naples. Deb has made her second career one of volunteerism. She is the former president of St. John Neumann Catholic High School home and school association. She is a member of the Marco Island Noontime Rotary, Marco Island Chamber of Commerce, volunteers at Our Daily Bread, Little Pink Houses and Meals of Hope. She is on the Audit Advisory Committee for the City of Marco Island and is on the Board of Directors for Avow Hospice. In August, Deb started participating in Leadership Marco, class of 2024. To be a leader in the community, she believes you must be a part of the community. As a city councilor, Deb's goals are to find an equal balance for residents and visitors along with clean water, maintaining the roll back tax, and better communication from the city.



BECKY IRWIN

A certified Marco Island Specialist, Master Naturalist, with Florida Stormwater Erosion and Sedimentation Control certification, Becky Irwin has been a full-time Florida resident since 1980. Her family moved to Marco Island in 1981 where she attended East Naples and Golden Gate Middle Schools. Later, her family moved to Ft. Lauderdale where she graduated from St. Thomas Aquinas High School, then from FSU with a BA in Classics. Becky worked professionally for two decades in South Florida as Executive Director, Development Director and Volunteer Services Manager for organizations including the Broward

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Becky Irwin, Continued from page 5

Center for the Performing Arts, Habitat for Humanity, Take Stock in Children, and HANDY (Helping Abused, Neglected, Disadvantaged Youth). She served as a board member and volunteer for others including Florida Grand Opera Society, Junior League of Greater Ft. Lauderdale president, Beaux Arts, Leadership Broward Class 23 and others. Becky moved home to Marco Island in 2013. Becky has volunteered with Beautification Committee, For the Love of Cats, MI Historical Museum, MI Center for the Arts, Woman's Club, Newcomers, waterway cleanups, The League Club and Mensa. She is a sitting City Councilor, Leadership Marco 2024 and Leadership Collier 2022. Her son and daughter played on Marco beaches over the past 30+ years, and now have families of their own. Maris and her husband live on Marco and welcomed their daughter in June. Peter and his wife live in Raleigh with four children, making Becky a grandmother of five! She loves it when they all visit her at "the beach house."



BONITA SCHWAN

Bonita Schwan is a dedicated leader with a strong foundation in law, accounting, and public service. She holds a Bachelor of Business Administration in Accounting, with honors, from the University of Texas at Austin, and a Doctor of Jurisprudence from Drake Law School in Des Moines, Iowa. Her educational background has provided her with the skills to make informed, strategic decisions that benefit the community as a whole. Professionally, Bonita has served on the personal staff of Governor Branstad of Iowa, where she was responsible for overseeing budgets and policies for five state departments, including Revenue and Finance, Health, and Human Services. As an attorney in private practice, she specialized in legislation and administrative rules, bringing a wealth of legal expertise to her work. Her dedication to Marco Island is demonstrated by her active involvement in local organizations including the Marco Island Historical Museum, Marco Island Chamber of Commerce, Marco Island Woman's Club, Marco Island Newcomers Club Board of Directors and Cape Marco Cozumel Building Board of Director. Bonita is deeply committed to service everywhere she has lived including Western Samoa where she was a U.S. Peace Corps Volunteer,

Big Brother Big Sister of Iowa Board of Director and South Dakota Make-A-Wish Foundation Board of Director Chairperson. Known for her respectful, positive leadership style, Bonita is passionate about making decisions that reflect the best interests of the community. With strong credentials and a proven track record of service, she is committed to ensuring a bright future for Marco Island.

2024 MICA QUESTIONS OF MARCO ISLAND CITY COUNCIL CANDIDATES

QUESTION 1

The current Marco Island City Council “holds the line” on property taxes, which means that the property tax rate is not inflation adjusted and gets lower each year. Tax revenue stays the same. Collier County and Hideaway Beach do not do this. Of 393 Florida municipalities, only 17 use this approach. Marco raises less and less inflation-adjusted property tax revenue each year. Hideaway Beach prospers. Marco Island “gets by on less.” Are Marco Island City Councilors harming the community with this “hold the line” policy?”

Blonna: No, I do not think holding the line (rollback rate) has harmed the community. In the three- and one-half years I’ve been on City Council we’ve gotten an incredible number of projects completed and provided a Level of Service (LOS) to residents that exceeded Florida recommendations. In the first three years of my term, it saved taxpayers close to \$10 million in taxes. That is a significant savings that allowed taxpayers to keep more of their hard-earned money. That is particularly important for residents on a fixed income. The most important, overriding variable in this discussion is the increased valuation of homes on our island. Home prices soared in my first term raising the valuation of the island’s homes to \$17 billion dollars. This fact allowed City Council the luxury of going to roll back. We must never forget the importance of real estate value when thinking about setting a millage rate.

Goehler: Whenever possible, the City Council should avoid raising property taxes, especially considering that so many residents are negatively impacted by rising costs of living and inflation. However, in the event additional funds are absolutely necessary, the City Council should explore keeping the property tax rate level, rather than keeping property tax revenue level. This would have the effect of balancing meaningful property tax relief with important investments in needed areas.

Gray: Every effort should be made by the City to live within our current budgeted revenues. I would like to see our emergency reserve grow over time. A ten year pro-forma capital budget should be assembled and shared with the community. The purpose is to show total forecasted investments for Marco Island infrastructure and environment. I consider this capital investment plan to be the ‘goals and objectives’ for how to improve and protect the community. If the investment requirements, as determined by the voters, exceeds our ability to pay, then we have three options. Grants, loans and taxes. Marco Island has a lovely triple A debt rating and strong financial discipline. We are in great shape and just need stay the course. If there is a need to raise taxes, it should be put forth proactively to the voters so the choices are clearly understood. I would prudently exhaust loans and grants before considering raising taxes.

Henry: I do not believe that the Marco Island City Councilors are harming the community while holding the line. Does our city need to make up the 1% tax that was lost this year, yes. I’d like to represent the city council for the tourist

tax commission and attain our fair share of the tourist taxes sent to Collier County. We are a full-service city, with many amenities, I stand with the Marco Island residents and will not raise taxes.

Irwin: At 1.24 mils, Marco Island enjoys one of the lowest municipal tax rates in the state, if not the country. By law, Florida municipalities are allowed to tax up to 10.0 mils and some do(!) Prosperity doesn't come from over taxing, it comes from industrious people. As a current City Councilor for the past 4 years, I have never voted to raise taxes and I never will. I will fight waste, keep Marco Island's belt tight, and keep more hard earned money in the pockets of our families and retirees.

Schwan: I bring a fresh perspective and strong credentials to deal with this fiscally conservative complex issue of rollback. With my law degree and accounting degree and extensive professional experience I can help lead with the rollback issue that comes before the City Council. For Governor Branstad of Iowa I recommended budget and policy overseeing the Iowa Department of Revenue and Finance in addition to four other State of Iowa departments. Additionally, I have a vast understanding of municipal bonding practices as I am personally and currently invested in 33 municipal bonds. I can be part of the team for smart planning for fiscally conservative policies and the best interests of Marco Island Residents.

QUESTION 2

City Council has authorized funding of \$200,000 for a two-bus circulator pilot program on Marco Island during three months of the 2025 season. What is your opinion of the residents paying for an obvious tourist incentive?

Blonna: The City of Marco Island routinely funds studies, design projects, and trial programs. These types of projects are designed to provide information and data that guides our policy decisions. The three-month Pilot Trolley Project is designed to do the same thing, giving us information regarding the viability of an ongoing Trolley. The City Council, after much discussion and resident input, passed a Comprehensive Plan in 2021 that looks 20 years into the future. Section two of the plan is the Transportation Element. If you read the first several objectives, they all refer to establishing a "multi-modal" transportation plan. Multi-modal means different ways (modes) of getting around the island. It includes walking, riding bicycles and scooters, and driving around in Low-Speed vehicles (similar to golf carts), motorcycles, cars, buses, and trolleys. The idea behind a multi-modal plan is to provide different options for different residents and visitors to get around safely. This plan is intended to provide safer streets with less traffic, fewer accidents, and less of a demand on parking. A Trolley, whether it services the entire island, or only the beach and shopping corridor along Collier Blvd, and Bald Eagle Dr. is one form of multi-modal transportation that could result in removing hundreds of cars off of the roads and out of the parking lots during peak season times. This will benefit residents as well as visitors.

Goehler: I am strongly opposed to this proposal, which many residents have voiced their clear opposition to. Businesses can and should thrive on Marco, but they do not need residents' tax dollars subsidizing their prosperity with such a controversial proposal that could actually worsen traffic on the island and bring more congestion to Marco.

Gray: I am strongly opposed to this proposal. Many residents have shared with me their emphatic objections to this whole transportation notion. The City of Marco Island, as a municipality, currently makes no money from tourism. Spending money on a two-bus circulator ensures that tourists are a loss leader on Marco Island. The actual bill for this two-bus circulator will be higher than is being forecast.

Henry: First, please remember that our snowbirds and commercial properties pay taxes too. Also, the money allocated to pay for the trolley pilot program is from the 1% sales tax, not our collected city tax dollars. Items to note are 1) we are a tourist destination 2) locals and snowbirds will use it too. In season I don't head out to many restaurants because parking is a burden, with the trolley I'm given an opportunity to try new places.

Irwin: Residents, businesses and non-resident homeowners all pay taxes. Most of the population during season lives and stays in the condos, houses and high-rises within walking distance of Collier Blvd. The route appears to give preferential access to those living in or staying in that corridor, to alleviate traffic congestion in an obvious hotspot. With a pilot program, we will all see the outcome, whatever that may be. If people choose to use it or not, the exercise will provide valuable information in formulating solutions for traffic and parking on the island for the benefit of all.

Schwan: I believe in making informed decisions by carefully weighing both sides of every matter. In addition to the facts being generated by the three month 2025 study it also will be very important to consider the legal, financial and safety implications of adding a Trolley to the streets of Marco Island. I will put to use both my legal and accounting skills in a comprehensive review.

QUESTION 3

How do you propose city staff and City Council interact with the Marco Island Civic Association with respect to enforcing Deed Restrictions?

Blonna: MICA's Deed Restrictions were set up years before the incorporation of the City of Marco Island. Once established, the City set up its own standards that were codified in the Land Development Code (LDC) and Comprehensive Plan. The City has worked with MICA over the years to standardize minor differences ("glitches") between the LDC and their Deed Restrictions. I support continuing this practice. MICA is responsible for enforcing their Deed Restrictions when a problem arises between them and a deed holder. The City of Marco Island enforces its LDC, not MICA's Deed restrictions. The City cannot, and should not, assume responsibility for enforcing privately-held deed restrictions. There are hundreds of properties that are deed restricted other than those controlled by MICA. They all manage their own deed restrictions without relying on the City. I am concerned with MICA's Deed Restrictions on public parking within the Commercial Zones. MICA's Deed Restrictions on parking in Commercial Zones limits the City's ability to use the private sector to help alleviate the island's shortage of parking spots. MICA should consider revising their 40-year-old restrictions on parking in commercial zones. Those restrictions were put in decades ago when parking was not a problem. The City's LDC has stringent parking requirements for development and redevelopment of commercial property. There is no longer any need for MICA's additional restrictions on parking in Commercial Zones.

Goehler: Ideally, MICA and the City should collaborate to preserve Marco Island as a peaceful, beautiful, and law-abiding community. Given the respective powers of MICA and city government, in order for the City to enforce deed restrictions, those restrictions must be incorporated into the code of ordinances. If any entities on the island - whether citizens or MICA - wish for the City to enforce specific rules or regulations, those must first be adopted by the City. I encourage increased communication between MICA and the City to discuss potential changes or additions to the code of ordinances that could benefit the community. This would allow the City Council and the community to thoughtfully assess the pros and cons before making any updates to the code. Expanding or strengthening the code of ordinances would empower the City to more effectively enforce these rules and maintain the character of the island.

Gray: I have great respect for the rights of all property owners. Property owners should understand what deed restrictions apply to their parcels at point of purchase. I believe MICA should be an active partner with the City, to inform property owners of any deed restrictions. The City in turn, should give MICA any information on known violations. We need a uniform system to ensure that property uses follow their intended purposes to maintain order within our community.

Henry: I propose that MICA, the city staff and City Council work together to have all requirements be the same so that all enforcements can be implemented properly.

Irwin: The Marco Island Civic Association's deed restrictions aren't city wide and don't apply to all properties on the island. Residents and businesses in different areas and whole units of development can and have voted to opt themselves out of MICA's deed restrictions. In the future, more may decide that their neighborhoods don't benefit from deed restrictions and vote to drop unnecessary encumbrances. The city enforces our building and zoning codes island-wide that the people have voted for, and the councils have enacted in the sunshine with public input over the years, but it doesn't have the legal authority to enforce or monitor MICA's deed restrictions, any more than it would to enforce a condo's or HOA rules. MICA has access to building permit requests as they come through the City building department and the City staff cooperates with them.

Schwan: There must be equal enforcement of all Marco Island laws and ordinances in a cooperative effort of City Council, City staff and MICA.

QUESTION 4

On June 11, 2024, an equal cost-sharing agreement was entered into between Hideaway Beach Taxing District, City of Marco Island and Collier County for the Tigertail Lagoon-Sand Dollar Island Ecosystem Maintenance. This is a 15-year permitted project that calls for repairs and maintenance every two years and for storm-driven events. What is your position on using city taxpayer funds to continue to maintain Collier County-owned Tigertail Park and to protect the privately-owned Hideaway Beach property? Should this decision be referendum based?

Blonna: Marco Island taxpayers have always paid Collier County taxes that have been spent on a variety of services that benefit us; bridge and road repair and maintenance, parks and recreation facilities and programs, County Sheriffs etc. County taxes also fund our routine beach maintenance and the rebuilding of beaches after hurricane and storms. The Hideaway Beach Taxing Authority has been double taxing themselves for decades to create a special fund for keeping the lagoon open and navigable and for rebuilding their beachfront. Boating and beachcombing in this area has been open to the public since these efforts began. Many Marco Islanders (myself included) have paddled or boated into the lagoon, beached, and had a wonderful time swimming, picnicking, and shelling. Prior to the 2022 Tigertail Lagoon Restoration Project the lagoon entrance was almost sealed, and the lagoon had become a giant stinky mud-flat that no longer supported any boating. In addition, marine mammals were being stranded at an alarming rate because of the shallow lagoon water. The Restoration Project widened the opening to the lagoon, dredged a deepwater channel for boats, kayaks, and sea creatures, and got rid of the stinky mud flat. It also widened the lagoon by several hundred feet and built up the shoreline on the gulf side by five feet. As a living restoration project, the area will continue to need scheduled re-dredging and beach restoration. I fully support these activities that continue to maintain the lagoon and gulf side beaches.

Goehler: When considering the allocation of city taxpayer funds for the Tigertail Lagoon-Sand Dollar Island Ecosystem Maintenance project, it is crucial to make informed and effective decisions. Although combating natural forces is challenging, we need to invest in proven methods and avoid wasting taxpayer money on ineffective approaches. Given the involvement of privately owned land, it is crucial to have strong leaders who ensure that financial commitments are fair to taxpayers while effectively addressing environmental concerns and safeguarding our community's interests. That being said, I have recently been made aware that inaction could lead to the destruction of valuable land owned by the City of Marco Island, emphasizing the urgency of the situation and the potential interest of the taxpayers in this project.

While listening to residents is always a priority, making decisions based on a referendum can be problematic when addressing complex issues involving extensive scientific research, as voters may not have the time to thoroughly study the details. If a referendum is proposed, I would recommend extensive education of the public so that voters are aware of the potential consequences of the options on the table.

Gray: This question points to the simple fact that the Tigertail Lagoon-Sand Dollar Island Ecosystem Maintenance Project is a JOINT VENTURE between three taxing authorities. Joint ventures can be very challenging. While mother nature has not been kind to this valuable ecosystem, I respect that decisions have been made and I like to keep my commitments. Life is what happens while plans are being made. We have a responsibility to honor this joint venture. We should thoroughly evaluate the merits of what can and should be done going forward. Wherever reasonably possible, I believe we should protect wildlife habitat. Sadly, there will be hidden costs to this 15-year project.

Henry: I do not think the city should be funding a county owned park. It is my understanding that no Marco Island General Funds are being used for Hideaway maintenance, HBSTD funds this with their special taxing.

Irwin: The City of Marco Island doesn't provide taxpayer money for that project.

Schwan: I feel that this question is misstated. The question did not seem correct and after reading it I contacted Guillermo Polanco Marco Island City Finance Director. Mr. Polanco, see attached letter, confirmed to me that no Marco Island taxpayer funds are being used for any work related to Hideaway. You need to vote for a City Councilor with a law and accounting degree. *On Sep 5, 2024, at 4:29 PM, Guillermo Polanco<gpolanco@cityofmarcoisland.com> wrote: Mrs. Schwann, As to taxpayer funds being used for any work related to Hideaway, it is only Hideaway Beach Special Taxing District (HBSTD) funds that are used for this purpose. The HBSTD levies a millage amount annually for beach renourishment and maintenance purposes. I believe legally the City is part of these agreements as City Council is charged with oversight of the Special District. Best, Gil*

QUESTION 5

Regarding canals on Marco Island:

What is your description of the current canal water quality situation on Marco Island?

What changes or projects do you support, if any? Which ones do you not support?

Does the Marco Island City Council have a responsibility to improve canal water quality?

Blonna: Our canal water is impaired for Nitrogen. Regular water testing shows that visibility, and nutrient and oxygen saturation levels, vary according to the season, water temperatures, and proximity to major storms. The City's founders made four major mistakes regarding canals. (1) They separated the northern and southern canals with San Marco Road instead of joining them with major through canals. (2) They built 242 dead-end canals with no culverts interconnecting them to facilitate flushing. (3) They never developed a long-term canal maintenance program. (4) They never passed a fertilizer ordinance. These issues all contributed to our waterways becoming impaired for Nitrogen by the FDEP. To fix the problem, the current City Manager, Staff, and City Council followed the guidelines of two notable water quality scientists and created a state-approved 4E Water Remediation Plan that identified several strategies that could be used to reduce Nitrogen levels. These strategies are working and we should be removed from the FDEP Nitrogen impaired waters designation sometime in 2025. I have consistently voted yes on all of the activities in the 4 E Plan. In addition, I support a Pilot Dredging Project and Canal Interconnect Program. The pilot dredging project will target a section of our canal system and see if removing the muck from the bottom will improve water quality. The Canal Interconnect Program will open up or build culverts that connect the northern and southern halves of the island and some dead-end canals.

Goehler: Water quality is one of the most critical issues we face. As a resident living right on a canal, I witness its condition firsthand every day. I have thoroughly reviewed various water quality reports, including the Harper Report and the Jacobs Engineering report; consulted with water quality experts and City officials; toured the City's wastewater treatment facility; attended a Waterways Advisory Committee meeting; and monitored monthly offshore water testing by boat. The City Council has a duty to enhance canal water quality and ensure our waterways are clean and healthy for all who live in them, beside them, and enjoy them. We need to adopt innovative approaches to address our water quality challenges promptly. It is crucial that we take effective action, guided by science-based methods and creative strategies. Additionally, we should explore what has worked for other communities facing similar issues to find solutions that have proven successful. We are still researching these approaches to ensure that when we take action, it will be both effective and cost-efficient.

Gray: Water quality is a very serious issue facing Marco Island. I have reviewed various water quality reports, including the Harper Report and the Jacobs Engineering Report. I participated in an on-site visit at our water treatment plant. I was also able to join some recent water sampling outings. I did speak briefly at the August Waterways Committee meeting on the importance of trying to enhance tidal flushing in the canals. I believe this would lead to improved oxygen levels. My efforts to understand are ongoing, as I continue meeting with passionate residents to discuss their water quality strategies. The City Council has an obligation to make all reasonable efforts to improve canal water quality. Our objective should be to limit the presence of excess nutrients in our waterways to the maximum extent possible. Our watershed is complex. We need to carefully study the available science with advice from qualified professionals. The ultimate goal is to address the needs of all our citizens, including homeowners on canals, environmental activists, boating enthusiasts, and sports fishermen.

Henry: My description of the current canal water quality situation is that it varies from canal to canal, and their locations on the island. The changes I support on our water quality is that testing needs to be increased from quarterly to monthly along with an oxygen pilot program and options for canal flushing. Absolutely, the Marco Island City Council has a responsibility to improve canal water quality.

Irwin: Since our waterways were declared impaired for nitrogen by the DEP prior to this current council, the city and councils have spent millions of dollars on stormwater treatment and retention, street cleaning, swales, etc and have sought state funding to increase water flow. Because of this and our 4e plan, we were declared UNIMPAIRED in 2023 and will be delisted from the impaired list soon. Council continues to evaluate every proposal that comes forward for cost benefit. We are on a path with the state to address these items together. I support source testing for phosphorus to determine definitively the source of phosphorus in our water and once found, focus on solutions. Ideas that have come forth for consideration include aeration techniques, dredging, aquaculture, water treatment plant advances, etc. That said, according to wildlife experts, wildlife is thriving in our canals including dolphins, manatees and fish.

Schwan: We all agree there is a problem with canal water quality on Marco Island. Oxygen levels in the canals are down. I support immediate monthly water quality testing. We must first determine the source of the water quality problem and then determine the solution. I believe the Marco Island City Council, all Marco Island residents and companies conducting business in Marco Island have a responsibility to canal water quality and healthy waterways for all of Marco Island.

QUESTION 6

On August 21, 2021, the Harper's Water Quality Report was completed and presented to the City Council on September 20, 2021. Dredging Marco Island canals was one of the recommendations, with a cost estimate of \$189,820,000, but Harper indicated twice that he did not recommend dredging Marco Island Canals. At the August 21, 2024, City Council meeting, "Dredging Marco Island Canals" was a proposed "future agenda." Given that Dr. Harper does not recommend dredging, are you in favor of dredging Marco Island's canals to remove nutrients that settled to the bottom to partially or fully deal with canal water quality issues.

Blonna: This is a misleading question because your statement, “Dr. Harper indicated twice...” is anecdotal and based on unofficial verbal communications. I do not base my policy decisions on such innuendo. On page 12 of the official report submitted by Dr. Harper to the City Council (Marco Island Nutrient Source Evaluation Final Report), he includes a table of “Recommended Management Options.” The first recommendation is “Internal Sediment Nutrient Recycling” (aka dredging). He warns however that sediment removal is prohibitively expensive (Estimated Cost \$189,820,000) and states that the most feasible option is to reduce the rate of nutrient release by managing other sources to maintain aerobic conditions in waterways.” The City Council followed Dr. Harper’s advice and did not recommend a full-scale dredging project because of the cost. Instead, we sought (and I supported) funding for two other options for “managing other sources to maintain aerobic conditions in waterways,” canal flushing and aeration of waterways (see my answer to # 5). Since Dr. Harper’s report was presented in 2021 the City Council has received several inquiries regarding much less expensive sediment removal/ dredging pilot projects. These projects involve a sample of canals rather than trying to dredge all 242 of them. I am committed to re-opening the topic of dredging and will be developing a White Paper on that subject to deliver to the City Council.

Goehler: While dredging may be effective, it comes with a staggering price tag that is six times the City’s entire operating budget. Additionally, the cost estimate has likely increased over the years due to inflation, and dredging over 100 miles of canals would take an impractically long time. Dr. Harper’s recommendation against this proposal was prudent, and I would not support dredging. Dredging also poses risks of unintended consequences. Disturbing the sediment at the bottom of the canals could potentially worsen water quality and even lead to ecological disaster for the plants and animals residing there. Moreover, even if dredging proved effective, one must consider the duration of its effectiveness. It could result in an enormous, never ending expense. We need to proceed with caution and continue exploring cost-efficient, innovative approaches to address the island’s water quality issues.

Gray: I am confident the 2021 estimate of \$190,000,000.00 to dredge the canals is understated. I would speculate in 2025 dollars, it is likely to be a \$225,000,000.00 project. Dr. Harper was right to recommend against this proposal. I do not support a dredging project. Our mission statement is to keep an open mind in search of ways to reduce pollutants and enhance oxygenation in the canals.

Henry: I would support dredging options if grants were received to cover the costs. Again, a pilot program to see what the results are before attempting something on a larger scale.

Irwin: Dr. Harper’s report put dredging at the top as the number one solution. He stated that because of the cost, he wasn’t recommending it at that time. According to his report, the buildup of sediment over the years on the bottoms of the canals is a major natural source of nitrogen and phosphorus in the water. The presentation to council on a future agenda by a local Marco resident and homeowner with decades of experience and expertise in large scale dredging, deserves to be heard, at the very least, if we purport to be open to exploring all possible solutions to address water quality. Keeping an open and inquisitive mind is how we find solutions, not by knocking down ideas we don’t know enough about, or we think we don’t agree with before knowing the facts.

Schwan: As a Water Quality Advocate I believe in the restoration and protection of our waterways with immediate and long term solutions. I believe in the exploration and implementation of proven best practices to protect and improve the quality of our waters, beaches and natural habitats. I believe in real solutions with a defined return on investment for Marco Island citizens

QUESTION 7

Marco Island City Council is pushing ahead with installing Astro Turf at the Winterberry Ball Field and is also discussing installing Astro Turf on fields at Marco Island parks. What is your preference for ground cover on ball playing fields on Marco Island and why?

Blonna: Neither I, nor the City Council is pushing ahead with installing Astro Turf at the Winterberry Ball Field. We dropped our plans to install artificial turf at Winterberry Park after discussing the matter with Fleet and Facilities Staff, the Parks and Recreation Manager, representatives from the Men's Softball League and other concerned citizens. Artificial turf is being considered for installation on the soccer fields at Mackle Park. I have no preference on the type of ground cover but it makes sense to consider it for the heavily-used soccer fields. This would allow for play 12 months a year without having to let the fields sit idle while the grass regrows.

Goehler: While the proposal to install astro turf is moving forward at the Winterberry Ball Field, I would be supportive of taking a more cautious approach before expanding astro turf to other fields at our park facilities. Astro turf does have some advantages: no fertilizer is needed, the City would save on landscaping costs, and it looks the same as real grass. On the other hand, it is man made from petrochemicals, and we do not know the long-term potential adverse health effects of exposure to those chemicals. We also don't know about the potential for increased injuries when playing on Astro Turf v. grass. Given that this decision could greatly impact our children's health and safety, I believe the community should carefully weigh the pros and cons before pushing ahead with additional astro turf.

Gray: Astro Turf comes with an unacceptable set of unknown variables regarding potential harmful effects to our children and our environment. I have also spent decades learning about unintended consequences. The prudent choice is grass turf. I have great respect and appreciation for our natural environment. My guiding principle: when in doubt, trust mother nature.

Henry: My preference for ground cover on ball fields on Marco would be grass (with advanced drainage) or something similar to what MIA installed at their stadium, artificial grass. I believe "Astro Turf" was invented in the 1960's, it's a trade name, not the actual product.

Irwin: The discussion at the council was regarding "artificial turf" (which is not the same as "Astro turf," that hasn't been used in decades.) One soccer field at Mackle Park was discussed in relation to the overall parks masterplan, that also included possible TDC funding. There are pros and cons to both. I would consider facts such as costs, maintenance, injuries to athletes, environmental factors like flooding and fertilizer needs, and staff / expert input in making any decision regarding the options for athletic field turf.

Schwan: My preference for cover on ball playing fields on Marco Island is grass. I've played softball and my preference as both a player and ball diamond spectator supporter is grass. I grew up in Iowa "The Field of Dreams" I love the grass playing fields.

QUESTION 8

How do you envision the future of Marco Island - is it to advance commercial tourism of the city or more residential driven?

Blonna: I envision the future of Marco Island as an ongoing interplay between the two. As the once-empty residential lots are being built upon by their owners (folks are entitled to build on their property) the island gets closer to residential build out. As this happens, there will be a need for increased commercial development to serve residents and visitors. Development is driven by market forces. As long as commercial and residential development follows the guidelines set in our LDC and Comprehensive Plan the interplay between commercial and residential development will take care of itself.

Goehler: Unfortunately, this City Council as a whole has demonstrated a tendency to ignore the input of most residents while prioritizing the interests of tourists and developers, leading to an erosion of community trust. Some Councilors have even gone so far as to demonize residents for opposing overcrowding and overtourism, which is completely inappropriate. We all want local businesses to thrive—but Marco Island businesses would not exist without our resident population, just like our residents enjoy patronizing our great local businesses. Moving forward, protecting residents' quality of life has to be the top priority in order to rebuild community trust in the City Council. We have a responsibility to adhere to our City's Comprehensive Plan to protect the small-town charm which is at such a great risk of fading away.

Gray: I share the City's vision in the Comprehensive Plan to: "PROTECT MARCO ISLAND'S SMALL TOWN CHARM". Tourism, short term rentals, and commercial pressures need to be balanced by the needs of the residents and the community as a whole. Moving forward, protecting residents' quality of life has to be the top priority in order to rebuild community trust in the City Council. Our island needs to work together. We must strive to diminish the polarizing effects of overcrowding and over-tourism.

Henry: My vision for the future of Marco Island is to continue to find the equal balance for tourism and residents. My focus is on our residents and their families. We need to focus on an island that our children will return to, as our future.

Irwin: As a 44-year resident of Florida, I have seen the development and over development of many, many quaint old-timey Florida towns, including seeing the growth of Marco Island from way back when I moved here in 1981 with my parents. Florida also has its share of abandoned and run down places that once boomed but then went bust. Growth is necessary to the survival of a thriving community, but overgrowth chokes out what was good in the first place. I want my children and grandchildren to know Marco as a thriving place to live, work and play. Striking balance is key and I believe this council and others have a keen awareness of that responsibility. No one wants to see

Marco Island ruined by overtourism nor by the other extreme of becoming a deserted ghost town. Moderation is the objective.

Schwan: I believe in a long term vision to ensure the best decisions are made for all of us on the Island. We must move forward united as a community not divided. I am a volunteer at the Marco Island Historical Museum and graciously accepted a President's Award for Volunteerism this Spring 2024. When I greet Visitors and Local Residents to the museum I proudly share how the Mackle Brothers envisioned Marco Island as a full-scale self-sufficient community with affordable housing for middle class families and designated areas for families, schools, churches, public utilities and commercial businesses. A community of businesses catering to culture, glamour, hospitality, nature and recreation.

QUESTION 9

What are your three top concerns for the next decade on Marco Island?

Blonna: My three top concerns are:

1. Loss of open space and critical habitat for Gopher Tortoises, Burrowing Owls, and other listed or endangered species.
2. Increasing vulnerability to high tides, storm surge, and flooding due to Hurricanes.
3. Maintaining aging infrastructure as they age and are subject to the ravages of water and weather.

While I have many other concerns, failure to pay attention to the three I listed puts homeowners, our property, and vulnerable species at the greatest risk of harm and loss.

Goehler: My top three concerns are:

1. Protecting Residents' Quality of Life: Time and time again, the current City Council has ignored the pleas of residents who are tired of their quality of life being eroded. We desperately need to improve oversight of short-term rentals and excessive noise violations; push back on taxpayer-funded tourist experiments like the trolley proposal or the condo beach parking idea; and respect the limits on development and density contained in our Comprehensive Plan.
2. Improving Water Quality: Water quality effects all of us, whether you swim, boat, fish, or simply own a property near a waterway. Listening to the voices of all stakeholders and consulting with the experts is a necessity to improve our water quality moving forward.
3. Rebuilding Resident Trust in the City Council: Marco Islanders' trust in the City Council has been shattered. While some Councilors still keep the residents' interests at heart, others flagrantly ignore their concerns and even attack residents from the Council dais. Ideas like a taxpayer-funded trolley, condo beach parking, excessive commercial variances, and more, add insult to injury. We need a City Council that cuts through this divisiveness and truly listens to the voices of the residents.

Gray: Over the past few years, significant issues have fractured the Marco Island community. I feel all three of my top concerns have equal weight as objectives to achieve. One of the top concerns is rebuilding residents' trust in the City Council. Current councilors appear to show concern for the community while ignoring resident feedback. I have

met with an overwhelming number of residents who are gravely distressed at the trajectory of our island and feel they are not being heard. Improving water quality is also at the top of my list of goals that need resolution. There are a multitude of knowledgeable residents who can help direct us to operable solutions based on the current studies and ongoing testing. Marco Island deserves better than to merely come off the 'impaired' list. We should have ecosystem stewardship as the hallmark of our core belief system. Quality of life for residents is paramount. The City Council should continually strive to make improvements. The deterioration of quiet enjoyment in residential neighborhoods needs to be reversed. We must have oversight of short term rentals and control excessive noise violations. I believe we can work together to allow this amenity to exist for visitors and family. We must also keep our density in check and be mindful of the consequences of promoting excessive tourism.

Henry: My three top concerns for Marco Island over the next decade are

1. Water Quality
2. Balance of life for our residents as a tourist destination
3. Infrastructure of our bridges, roadways, and underground drainage.

Irwin:

1. Improving Water Quality
2. Keeping taxes and crime low
3. Preserving a clean healthy environment and a thriving economy

Schwan: The three top concerns for the next decade on Marco Island are

1. Inflation pressuring our City Budgets
2. Clean water quality
3. Protection of our green spaces

QUESTION 10

What are your thoughts on spending city taxes (above the voter-approved tax collected to fund Conservation Collier) to purchase additional land for preservation of endangered species such as burrowing owls and tortoises?

Blonna: Obviously, I am in favor of this since I have publicly advocated each year during the Budget Meetings for the City to establish an Open Space Preservation Fund and seed it with enough money to be able to apply for grants that often require matching funds. One of my FY2025 Initiatives was setting aside money to hire a consultant with experience in acquiring public and private Open Space Preservation Grants. The City is in the process of preparing a Request for Proposals (RFP) to attract applicants for the position. Another one of my FY 2025 Initiatives that was approved was to set aside \$200,000 in seed money for Open Space. However, the funding was reallocated with my permission for use as matching funds to complete the Winterberry Beach Access upgrade.

Goehler: Over the last several years, the City has purchased several lots and partnered with organizations like Conservation Collier to improve protections for species. This has two benefits: first, it helps protect endangered

species (like owls and tortoises) and second, it actually helps reduce density and overdevelopment. I would be supportive of continuing to explore these types of land purchases on a case-by-case basis. However, while the goal is laudable, we do have an obligation to make sure the cost does not rise to an excessive point that would become a burden to taxpayers.

Gray: The City has purchased several lots and partnered with organizations like Conservation Collier to improve protection for various species. This helps to reduce density and overdevelopment. It clearly helps protect these valuable species. I am supportive of continuing to explore these types of land purchases on a case by case basis. I would prioritize obtaining grants to compliment what our budget can afford.

Henry: My thoughts on spending city taxes on additional land for preservation should be reviewed in a case-by-case basis from what Conservation Collier is already doing.

Irwin: As a certified Master Naturalist, conservation of natural habitats for wildlife is extremely important to me. Rather than using city taxes to accomplish this, I support increased focus with Conservation Collier to utilize the millions of dollars they control to identify and purchase fragile habitats here in Marco Island. I support our City Council continuing to work closely and cooperatively with this organization going forward.

Schwan: Given the current inflationary state of our national economy as a fiscal conservative I do not believe now is the time to purchase additional land for preservation. I love the burrowing owls and tortoises but now is not the time for additional expenditures of costly land purchases.

QUESTION 11

Do you feel that Marco Island Ordinances to protect the environment are being enforced? For example, Marco Island has a Sea Turtle Light Ordinance. Sea Turtle Season is from May through October each year, and Marco Island has the highest sea turtle hatchling disorientation in Collier County. Disorientation is a function of bright lights from beachfront properties. What would you propose the City of Marco Island do to protect sea turtles during nesting season?

Blonna: Yes, I do feel that Marco Island Ordinances to protect the environment are being enforced. All you have to do to see this is to look at the monthly Police Department Report delivered to residents at the end of each City Council Meeting. It lists violations related to environmental and other issues. One can also watch previous Magistrate Hearings and see that fines are being issued each month for violators. I voted for the upgraded Sea Turtle Lighting Ordinance. Each year the Marco Island Police Department, Code Enforcement Division, and volunteers from the Beach and Coastal Resources Advisory Committee conduct multiple educational sessions for condominium residents and managers regarding the Ordinance. Part of the educational activities include discussing the penalties for non-compliance. I propose continuing to provide the MIPD and Code Enforcement with the money and tools they need to enforce the Ordinance. I have consistently voted for funding related to MIPD and Code Enforcement staffing and enforcement activities.

Goehler: Many Marco Island ordinances to protect the environment are not being enforced enough. Failing to implement our Ordinances already on-the-books is simply unacceptable. The City needs to prioritize Code Enforcement efforts and be willing to fine repeat violators if necessary in order to ensure Compliance.

Gray: I was recently able to attend the Code Enforcement session with the Magistrate. It was clear to me our Code Enforcement officers are making the maximum effort available. I believe we should raise fines and consider adding an after hours and weekend enforcement team to ensure that our wildlife and environment have full protection.

Henry: I would propose that the City of Marco Island, the volunteers and the beach front condo associations have designated areas that they are responsible for.

Irwin: The 2023 turtle season was considered “very successful” with high emergence numbers and low storm damages. 85,745 hatchlings are presumed to have entered the Gulf of Mexico. According to the Collier County Sea Turtle Protection Plan 2023 report, Vanderbilt Beach (not Marco Island) had the most disorientations (71). Predator depredations affected 5.9% (76) of all Collier County nests, with Marco Island having most of those. Raccoon and coyote depredations were responsible for most of the egg loss 80.6%. Tidal inundations and storms washed over 79 nests, and washed out 175 nests. On Marco, the beach condos are vigilant about advising their residents to close drapes and code enforcement does issue citations for violations.

Schwan: Our current Marco Island sea turtle protection through the code must be enforced. All Marco Island ordinances need to be enforced. Marco Island residents must take responsibility, accept enforcement and pay the fines.

QUESTION 12

The city has claimed that it is enforcing the Fertilizer Ordinance, yet there is no proof of any efforts other than having some landscaping companies sign a paper saying they agree to it. It has been reported that the city itself is the largest single violator of the Fertilizer Ordinance by overlooking the Nitrogen and Phosphorus content in reuse irrigation water, which are the same nutrients banned by the fertilizer ordinance. What steps would you take to lessen Nitrogen and Phosphorus in the reuse water?

Blonna: There is plenty of proof that the Fertilizer Ordinance is being promoted and enforced. The City provides training and educational materials related to our Fertilizer Ordinance to all contractors registered to do business on Marco Island. The City also uses a social media campaign about the Fertilizer Ordinance with informational posts for both professionals and residents who maintain their own lawns. Code Enforcement Officers do random checks on landscape contractors to ensure that they have completed the City’s mandatory training. Code Enforcement Officers also initiate contact with and respond to reports of suspected violators.

The City does not violate the Fertilizer Ordinance by applying reuse water. The Water Utility is in complete compliance with the permit issued to it by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. The level of nutrients in reuse water, the application methods, and the ground well testing of nutrient levels in groundwater all meet or exceed the standards set by their FDEP Permit. I will continue to support these ongoing activities related to the Fertilizer Ordinance and recycling of Reuse Water by our Water Utility.

Goehler: First, we must ensure true compliance with our Fertilizer Ordinance. Code Enforcement should adopt a more proactive approach to ensuring adherence. Signing an agreement to follow the rules is insufficient; repeat offenders should face penalties for blatant violations of our City codes. Regarding the broader issue of nutrients in reuse water, I am deeply concerned about our water quality, and addressing these problems is a top priority. The City Council should be committed to improving canal water quality and ensuring that our waterways remain clean and healthy for all residents and visitors. In particular, when it comes to reuse water, it is vital that we take decisive action based on scientific evidence and innovative strategies. Upgrading the water treatment facility could be a viable solution; I am open to any approach that is both effective and cost-efficient. We are actively researching successful methods used by other communities facing similar challenges.

Gray: We must ensure true compliance with our fertilizer ordinance. Code enforcement should be given more resources to adopt a more proactive approach to achieving adherence. On the subject of the nutrients in re-use water, I am deeply concerned with the possible impact of these nutrients entering our watershed. Addressing these problems is a top priority. Upgrading the water treatment facility could be a viable solution. I am open to any solution that is effective and financially acceptable. We continue searching for successful methods implemented by other municipalities with similar challenges.

Henry: The city is enforcing the Fertilizer Ordinance, the last violation was written in August of this year, 108 violations in the past 18 months. The option of modifying the medians is costly, however it would lessen the reuse water needs.

Irwin: Here is a direct quote regarding nitrogen from the memo from Benjamin Ralys, Environmental Consultant, Watershed Assessment Section of the Florida DEP on September 8, 2023, "The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) received the Marco Island 4e documentation on June 14, 2023. Following review of the documentation, I am pleased to inform you that the Marco Island document satisfies all the department's requirements. We recommend that this waterbody be removed from the state's Verified List for nutrients (total nitrogen) and delisted into assessment category 4e." The city's efforts produced the intended results and nitrogen has been satisfactorily addressed as stated above. It is public record that landscape companies receive citations for violating the ordinance, so enforcement is happening and will continue. The landscape ordinance is being enforced by code enforcement.

Schwan: Immediate water testing needs to be performed on a monthly basis to determine causes. We need real solutions with proven best practices with a defined return on investment.

QUESTION 13

In September 2023, councilors supported the "Possibility of Allowing Public Parking in Condominiums and Churches Along the Beach Corridor." This proposal was defeated by City Council but can be brought back a year later. What is your position? Should this be brought back for reconsideration?

Blonna: I support the idea of allowing property owners along the beach corridor to open their parking lots up to paid public use if they wish to. I'm willing to listen to new proposals from staff that promote this. I don't believe that the City should fund this activity and I prefer to let the individual property owners and associations work out the details.

Goehler: The residents have spoken clearly: they do not want to pursue beach parking proposals that would significantly contribute to overcrowding and potentially violate MICA's deed restrictions. This issue should not be reconsidered for future implementation. The strong opposition from residents must be respected.

Gray: The residents do not want to pursue beach parking proposals that would significantly contribute to overcrowding while potentially violating MICA's deed restrictions. This issue should not be revisited under any circumstances.

Henry: My position on the possibility of allowing public parking in condos and churches along the beach corridor is that it should be up to the property owner and/or church members to allow such policies. The government should not be interfering with our property rights.

Irwin: I'm a strong proponent of private property rights. Allowing condos or churches to decide whether they want to rent their unused parking on their own terms is conceptually no different from allowing rentals in their units or facilities. It's property they own and should not have the city dictate that they can't. They should be allowed to make rules for their parking that suit their needs. Marco's condos are aging and facing many new expensive state mandates for inspections, reserves and repairs. Houses of worship face rising maintenance and replacement costs. Income from parking can help offset those expenses. It was never, and never will be proposed to force private property to provide public parking. The hysteria surrounding this topic that spread through emails and social media was unfortunately started and perpetuated by disinformation and fake news.

Schwan: I oppose public parking in condominiums along the beach corridor. I am an Owner and a Board of Director of the HOA Association Cape Marco Cozumel Building. I believe in protection of property rights.

QUESTION 14

The headline was "Marco Island restaurant wins land variance to expand to within 3 feet of Jewish Cemetery." Marco Island City Council approved a reduction in a buffer variance from 15 feet to 3 feet for the lot at the corner of Elkcam Circle and Bald Eagle Drive. At the same time, campaign donations from the restaurant owner that benefited from the vote are raising the issue of "pay to play" politics. How would you have voted?

Blonna: What the headline fails to mention is that the Cemetery sold the property in the first place and that the owner could have built a 75' tall office building there with no need for a variance. I voted in favor of the proposal because it made the traffic flow safer and quieter and was an example of smart development. I do not allow "pay to play" to factor into my decisions. I make decisions based on the facts and what I think is in the best interests of the City of Marco Island. Many people have contributed to my campaign because they like my ideas, proposals, and the way I voted on issues that were important to them. However, if they expect that their contributions will result in me automatically supporting anything they bring before the City Council they are sadly mistaken.

Goehler: I would have voted “no” if for no other reason than this variance was remarkably excessive (reducing the buffer next to the cemetery by an astonishing 80 percent). Applicants for a variance need to demonstrate a “hardship,” but the primary reason for granting the variance was to accommodate the proposed business operation. As Councilor Brechnitz rightly pointed out at the time of the vote, an inconvenience to a business operation is not a hardship. This variance should not have been approved.

Gray: I would have voted ‘NO’ on a variance for this restaurant. The variance was beyond excessive. There was no demonstrated evidence of hardship. There is no reason this landowner could not have built within the space available without a variance. This variance should not have been approved.

Henry: This is a small city where anyone involved in a charity or proactive group knows each other. Inferring that someone supporting another to “pay to play” is absurd. The discussion in council was if the buffer variance would be landscape or concrete. The building size did not change, so all codes were met.

Irwin: I voted with the majority to allow it. The proposed variance was for landscape and in practicality, the extra paved lane vs. grass in the 12 feet in question provides a public benefit for safety. The lane isn’t noisy or bothersome in and of itself. Nothing else about the building was changed. The property is zoned for up to 6 story tower but the owner proposed a modest building consistent with the neighborhood on his property.

Schwan: The Marco Island planning commission and Marco Island City Council both voted for the passage aligning with United States Constitutional property rights. In review of your question, with not counting the Councilor whose vote was called in question there was enough remaining votes for passage.

QUESTION 15

2500 signatures have been received to Ban Shark Fishing and Blood Baiting Practice from Marco Island land. What is your position on this topic?

Blonna: I am not a fisherman but after discussing the matter with residents who fish, and researching current regulations regarding the two practices, I do not think we should ban them. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission (FWC) is responsible for statewide fishing regulations. What the City of Marco can, and does regulate, is commercial shark fishing and chumming from the beach. I’ll leave it up to MIPD, Code Enforcement, and Florida Fish and Wildlife to enforce the rules.

Goehler: This is a complex issue. There is an existing discrepancy between Marco Island’s City Codes and what the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission (FWC) allows as it relates to shark fishing. Additionally, sometimes fishermen inadvertently catch shark from our beaches while targeting other fish—which they shouldn’t be unfairly penalized for if they are following all applicable rules. While FWC does permit shark fishing from the beach, it also places several conditions on it, such as a prohibition on chumming. The City can mirror some of FWC’s rules in its own codes and enforce them, which I would support. We need to be mindful of the fact that our beaches are

enjoyed for a variety of recreational uses, whether it be swimming, fishing, shelling, etc. I would support rules that prohibit those fishing from using drones, kayaks, or other strategies to carry baited hooks out beyond casting range in order to attract big fish like sharks. This would allow people to fish from shore, and swimmers to feel safe swimming. I would also crack down on any illegal shark fishing charter businesses operating from the beach. The police and/or code enforcement needs to make sure those illegal operations are promptly shut down.

Gray: There are some subtle nuances to this question. A discrepancy exists between Marco Island's city codes and what the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission (FWC) allows as it relates to the legality of shark fishing on the beach. Fishermen can inadvertently catch a shark from our beaches while targeting other fish. Those fishers don't deserve to be penalized if they are following applicable rules. A commercial fisherman, running a tour operation for shark fishing, has no business on our beaches. I would support legislation that would prohibit the use of drones, kayaks or other strategies to carry baited hooks beyond casting range in an effort to attract large fish like sharks. The goal is to have our swimmers feel safe while allowing our fishers to enjoy their sport. I would support any upgrade of the City's codes to keep commercial fishing off our beaches. I urge everyone to go to the FWC website and request a change in this law that prohibits the City from taking meaningful action.

Henry: My position on shark fishing and the suggested ban is moot because The City of Marco Island does not own the beach. Fishing laws are handled by the FWC, this is not a City Council issue.

Irwin: I lived next door to one of the world's most prominent shark scientists for a number of years so I have learned a great deal about sharks and their importance in the ecosystem. I personally would never fish for sharks. Blood baiting (chumming) is already banned. The city has issued a notice of violation related to the commercial shark fishing activity on the beach because there is no permit for it available. As a matter of the greater right to hunt and fish in Florida, however, I am supportive of preserving our rights to do so. I'm in favor of Florida Right to Hunt and Fish Amendment 2 coming to the ballot in November.

Schwan: I am concerned about the safety of the beach users, residents and sea turtle nesting as it relates to shark fishing. My condo looks directly down on the area of South Beach that this is occurring on at night. I have called and reported to police my concerns of bright white lights flashing at 8:42pm before 9pm ordinance.

QUESTION 16

Please grade the current city council from 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest and best rating, and explain how you reached that grade.

Blonna: I would give us an 8.5 (85% or a B+). I think the City Council has worked well together and with the City Manager and City Staff on a variety of projects. Among them are:

- Passing Four \$20+ million budgets to fund the City's Needs
- Conducting the City's Monthly Business with Minimal Discord
- Lowering taxes four years in a row
- Revising the Comprehensive Plan
- Revising the Code of Ordinances
- Surviving a Hurricane and major storms with minimal financial and infrastructure loss
- Implementing Major Clean Water Recommendations to reverse Nitrogen Impairment
- Accreditation of the Police Department

These are just highlights of some of the major accomplishments of the City Council since 11/20 when I was elected.

Goehler: I would give the current City Council a 2.5 out of 10. While some Councilors still respect residents' quality of life and promote a balance of residential and business interests, the majority of the Council has been deaf to the concerns and pleas of residents on a number of issues for far too long. The arrogant attitude taken by some Councilors has created additional distrust. This is perhaps best reflected in the City's own 2022 Citizen Survey, where only 6 percent of residents indicated that they "trust completely" when it comes to the City Council. We desperately need a Council that listens to the concerns of our residents.

Gray: I would give the current City Council a 2. Our council needs to listen and learn from our residents. At times, I have observed an arrogant attitude used by some councilors which fuels resentment. We need a City Council built upon trust with the residents. The 2022 citizen survey results highlight the deep mistrust toward City Council and their chronic failure to represent the wishes of the residents. The focus of our council needs to be residents' quality of life and promoting a balance between residential and business interests.

Henry: My opinion of the current city council is mixed, the work with Conservation Collier is outstanding, the efforts to maintain green space and plant trees is admirable. I think some things in the budget should have been reviewed a bit more as well as clearly communicating properly with the public on many issues. With that being said, as a fiscal conservative, the roll back taxes and the services provided as a full-service city, are impressive. Water quality has to stop being a presentation, we need implementation. As a candidate for city council, that has attended almost every city council meeting over the past 3 years, I would say, don't judge until you've walked in another's shoes. An opportunity I hope to be given.

Irwin: I have very much enjoyed serving with my fellow councilors for the past four years. Each member of the council brings a strong sense of civic responsibility, a love of our community and different experiences and expertise as would be expected from a diverse community like we have. While we sometimes disagree amongst ourselves, and we witness disagreements within the populace, we strive to maintain civility and an open dialogue. I see this as a show of respect for the people not only who voted for us, but for all those who are affected by our decisions on every level.

Schwan: I believe in respectful positive leadership. I believe in a long term vision that moves Marco Island forward.

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www.snookinn.com

Texas Tony's Ribs & Brewhouse

15% off at this Phelan Family Brands location
4519 Tamiami Trail E, Naples, FL
239-732-8392

SALONS & SPAS

Mary Rando Hair Styling and Make-up Artistry

15% off all hair and make-up services
10% off products
2 Marco Lake Dr., Suite #4
239-248-7944/617-775-6007

The Spa at JW Marriott MI Beach Resort

400 S Collier Blvd, 389-6029 10% off spa services

Skin Renewal Systems

1000 N Collier Blvd Ste 1113, 394-1083
10% off Haircut, Blowdry and Style Service with Master
Stylists Kaydee, Linda, or Priscilla. 10% off Acupuncture
Treatment with Barbara, Massage Therapy Session, Cryo
Treatment for the Face or Body, Tixel Treatment and Facials
with Krista OR Salon Retail Hair Products. This offer can not
be combined with any other promotions.

HEALTH CARE/WELLNESS

Always There Home Health Care

Loyalty Program, 389-0170
www.alwaystherehomehealthcare.com

Better Balanced Living

In-home massage therapy & pilates training
15% off first serve; 10% off always!
610-331-6184
BetterBalancedLiving@gmail.com

Feather-Light Living, Wellness Coach

15% discount offered;
free 30 minute consultation
573-356-1727
featherlightliving@gmail.com

Healthy Body Fitness Training

Initial personal training sessions & group
classes, 860 Bald Eagle Drive, Suites 4 & 5,
394-3705 www.marcofitnessclub.com

Personal Training & Pilates Studio

Above Subway on Collier Blvd
www.10lifit.com, 650 Bald Eagle Dr, 333-5771

Summer Day Organic Café

Marco Town Center Mall
Vitamins only. 394-8361
www.summerdaymarket.com

RETAIL STORES

APPAREL/JEWELRY

Beach Unlimited

1001 N Collier Blvd, 642-4888

Butterfly Beach, Esplanade

www.butterflybeachmarco.com
760 N Collier Blvd #103,
394-0837

Bottoms Up Yoga Pants

www.BottomsUpYogaPants.com
239-207-0820 Receive 10% off with code MICA10

JetSet Surf Shop,

394-5544, Excludes hardgoods,
674 Bald Eagle Dr

Jewelry by Laura 394-2511

JW Marriott Marco Island Beach Resort

Kathein Jewelers of Marco,

239-259-8937
(Formerly known as Golden Gate Jewelers)
Shops of Marco
www.ggjmarco.com

Ocean Soul, 970-2916

10% off, excluding sale items
www.oceansoul.net,
740 N Collier Blvd Suite 108, The Esplanade

OMG That's Chic, 239-970-2102

10% off, excluding sale items
www.OMGthatschic.com,
287 N. Collier Blvd & Town Center #306

Patchington Ladies Boutique –

Marco Island & Venetian Village
Marco Walk #104, 642-5006
Fun for organizations, such as fashion shows,
charity events, trunk shows, in store & out
of store events. www.patchington.com

Sunshine Stitchers,

970-0200
1106-1/2 N Collier Blvd, Chamber Plaza
www.sunshinestitchers.com

Surf & Sand / Sweetwaters / Crosswinds

JW Marriott Resort,
389-6051

NON-APPAREL

Bella Florals and More

9 Front Street, 239-316-2373
10% off any arrangement/walk-in only
www.bellafloralstc.com

duo furniture & lighting

Interior Design Studio and Showroom with
Indoor/Outdoor Furniture, Lighting, Home
Accessories and More! Town Center #411
239.970.2346

First Pawn Jewelry & Loan

889 Airport Rd S, Naples, 434-7296
5%-20% off jewelry. Firearms,
instruments & tools discounts vary.

Keep In Touch, Shops of Marco

Excludes Post Office, copy and internet
services and sale items, 393-6300

Esplanade: Collier Blvd & Elcam Circle. **Marco Walk:** South Collier Blvd & Winterberry Drive.
Shops of Marco: North Barfield Drive & San Marco Road. **Town Center:** N. Collier Blvd. & Bald Eagle Dr.

Linda Roberts Gallery/Marco Art
"As Seen in the MICA Office"
Marco Island art prints and notecards.
30% discount to MICA members.
Also 30% off non-Marco Island prints.
www.lindarobertsgallery.com
410-944-4440 & 410-302-2387

Sunshine Booksellers
10% discount on all hardcover books;
20% discount on, fax and copy services
(In store only). Excluded from discount:
paperback books, toys, gifts, greeting
cards, shipping & USPS Services.
1000 N Collier Blvd, 394-5343
677 S Collier Blvd, 393-0353
www.sunshinebooksellers.com

DRY CLEANERS

Cache Dry Cleaners 666 Bald Eagle Dr, 394-0099

HOME SERVICES/IMPROVEMENT

A. Pinto Self Storage, 394-1822
5% off new rentals & document shredding
994 N Barfield Dr

Adam Peters Construction
Fine finish carpentry; 207-7650
\$100 off any job over \$1,000

Bella Faux Finishes
15% off for first time clients, 272-3090

Collier Tropical Landscaping
10% off all landscaping, tree trimming or lawn service
contracts not less than \$125.
Sergio 821-3213. www.colliertropical.com

Complete Stone Management, 642-3173
Free quote, 10% discount on service
www.completestonemanagement.com

Dry & Clean Carpet Cleaning, 642-0092
Carpet, Tile, & Upholstery cleaning
www.dryandcleaninc.com

Easy Street Moving, 248-4136
www.easystreetmoving.com

Fussy Fraulein, Inc.
First cleaning only, 394-0562

Global Cleaning Services
gcs-clean.net, 389-9140
Free estimates, free rental unit setup
consultation, as well as 10% off service charges

Gulfcoast Painting & Pressure Cleaning
642-1005

Gulfside Electric
784-8086

JCR Screen Repair & Service
394-9410

Marco Home
10% in-store purchase
Discount available for design/staging services
207 N Collier Blvd., 239-389-9700
www.marcohomeshop.com

Marco Island Floor Covering
Discounts vary.
1711 San Marco Rd, 394-1711

Marco Island Lock
394-2121
www.marcoislandlock.com

Ridge Valley Exteriors Inc.
Free roof enhancement/upgrade on roof
replacement & up to \$1,000 off replacement or
\$250 off repairs www.ridgevalleyexteriors.com
551 E Elkcom Circle,
239-237-3717

Southern Comfort Air
10% off repairs; 5% off installation of new equipment,
maximum of \$100,
642-6642

Sunflower Services of Marco, Inc.
Lawn Maintenance, 465-8086
First month free lawn maintenance

ADVENTURES/TOURS

Aviation North
Marco Island Executive Airport,
747-226-KEYS 10% off air shuttle to the Keys
www.AviationNorth.com

Beach Bum Equipment Rentals
10% off rentals of \$100 or more, kayaks included
www.beachbumequipmentrentals.com
239-280-0321

Dolphin Cove Marina
1135 Bald Eagle Drive (next to Sunrise Condo)
239-289-8654
www.DolphinCoveMarina.com
Free shirt with every boat rental

Dolphin Explorer
Rose Marina, 642-6899
www.dolphin-study.com

Marco Island Princess
Rose Marina, 642-5415
www.themarcoislandprincess.com

Marco Island Watersports
JW Marriott & Hilton Resorts 394-4344

Marco Pedal Boat
Book online: www.MarcoPedalBoat.com
10% discount use code "MICA"
when booking. 239-920-1230
Pickup at 3620 Collier Blvd, Naples 34114

Paradise Cycle Boat Cruises
At Rose Marina, 951 Bald Eagle Drive,
A Dock, Slip 9,
239-300-8176.
www.ParadiseCycleBoat.com Free UV color changing
Sun Fun bracelet with each adult or child cruise
purchased with MICA card.

MARINE/AUTO

Blue Marlin Marine Construction
Seawall inspections only
642-4284

Enterprise Rent-A-Car
Daily & weekly rate, 642-4488

Pelican Pier Marina,
10 4/gal discount on fuel; 10% off apparel.
1085 Bald Eagle Dr (behind Riverside
Club Condo) GPS:25°58.291 81°43.608
www.pelicanpiermarina.com 389-2628

Sea Tow Marco Island
Sea Tow Membership, 394-1188

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

Avon by Lucinda,
Cosmetics, 642-0297, 821-7976

Blue Marlin Home Watch
10% discount to pricing list
239-241-1597 jcwilson@comcast.net
FB: Blue Marlin Home Watch

Jeffery M. Bogan Insurance Agency
15% off annual prem. for long term care,
261-6533

Davis Security & Home Watch Services
10% off each visit & trip escort to RSW
Free site surveys & safety training
www.DSSHW.com 239-946-9047
1770 San Marco Rd #201

Global Computer Services, Inc.
601 E Elkcam Circle B12, 389-9140
No trip charge for on-site visits, free
analyze/diagnose of all equipment, free
pre-sales consultation + 10% off service fee

H.I. Studios, 821-9458
Personality Portrait Painting by Heidi

James Karl & Associates
Free initial consultation, 678 Bald Eagle Dr, 642-9988

Living Refreshed, LLC
Concierge/Home Watch Service
www.LivingRefreshed.com 630-610-3464

Marco Island Computer Service
Computer, Photography & Web Design
816 E Elkcam Circle, 239-537-0523
www.marcocomputers.com

Marco Island Living
10% off advertising-web site hosting & services.
802-221-1498 www.marcoislandliving.com

Marco Island Photography
Portrait sitting & finished portraits by
Peter Berec, 642-3500
www.marcophotography.com

South Made Marketing
865-214-7216 Derek@southmade.com
10% off website design, search engine
optimization, graphic design, social media
management, photography & marketing
strategy. www.southmade.com

The above businesses participate in MICA's Members Only Discount Program and extend a minimum 10% discount to MICA & Residents' Beach members unless otherwise noted. Please present your card at time of purchase. Discounts are not valid with any other offers. Discounts are for MICA members' purchases only.

MARCO ISLAND CIVIC ASSOCIATION
1770 SAN MARCO ROAD, SUITE 204, MARCO ISLAND, FL 34145

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Marco Island City Council **CANDIDATES FORUM**

**Wednesday, October 9th
6:00 - 8:30pm**

Marco Island City Council Chambers
Open to the Public
Live Streamed from the City Council Chambers
and Live from Marco's Own 98.1 FM

6 Candidates Competing for 4 Seats

**Rich Blonna
Tamara Goehler
Stephen Gray
Deb Henry
Becky Irwin
Bonita Schwan**

**ELECTION DAY IS TUES, NOV 5TH
PRESENTED BY:**

Marco Island Area Association of Realtors, Marco Island Civic Association
and Marco Island Area Chamber of Commerce.

