

A JOURNEY BACK IN TIME: THE HISTORY OF PALM BEACH COUNTRY ESTATES

Part Four: The 2000's

We moved into the first decade of a new century. With that came the Y2K panic that all the computers would stop working. New Year's 2000 came and the computers still worked but nothing prepared us for the tragedy that occurred on September 11, 2001. Everyone will always remember where they were and what they were doing that fateful morning. As the decade progressed, we saw the U.S housing market skyrocket only to be followed by the implosion of our economy into the most dramatic employment contraction of any recession since the Great Depression. Added to the mix was the start of the Social Media phenomena. Locally this already tumultuous decade threw us Hurricanes Francis, Jeanne & Ivan in 2004 only to be followed the next year by Wilma and a drought in 2007.

What was happening in Palm Beach Country Estates? As the housing market surged the prices for lots and houses in the community rose dramatically. Many of the lots were stripped of any native foliage and much larger, grander houses appeared. There started to be a division in the vision for the community. The original settlers wanted to retain much of the rural lifestyle. The newer residents were interested in improving the infrastructure.

As we closed out the 1990's there were still items to address. A petition had been started for putting water lines into the community. Twenty-five per cent (25%) of the landowners needed to approve and we were at 15%. The Community Park was still a vision. The Department of Environmental Protection had initiated new Wetlands regulations that would affect our community. We were waiting on their final ruling. The community was still working on getting street lights in strategic areas. A Daycare had been proposed for 64th and Donald Ross. We had petitioned the county for sidewalks. Road Paving was still a hot topic.

Potable Water & Fire Hydrants

In April 2001, 18 months after the initiation of the petition the community had the necessary 25% signatures to allow SIRWCD to do a cost and feasibility study. Various options surfaced regarding where to get access to potable water. In 2002, the City of Jupiter was approached but a big stumbling block was PBCE would have to be annexed into the City. SIRWCD even looked into the possibility of building our own water system.

During the first half of 2003 the Town of Jupiter agreed to bring in water without annexing us. Ballots were sent out to the residents to vote on moving forward with water. Estimated cost per lot was approx. \$680/yr. for 25 years. This cost would be accessed to all property owners on their tax bills and would cover running all 46 miles of pipelines into the community as well as fire hydrants. Homeowners would have the option to hook-up to the system and would incur the cost from the meter at the road to their home. 80% of the property owners voted with 754 in favor and 442 opposed. The next step would be to conduct public hearings. The Town of Jupiter had started drilling 3 deep water wells along the C-18. The neighborhood expressed concerns of potential noise and how it may affect residential wells.

Finally, in March 2005 the proposal went out for bids. Bids were received only to find out the original bid package had to be modified and it wasn't until April 2006 that a contract was signed and work started. The installation would start in the "P" section and work its way toward Donald Ross Rd. with a projected completion duration of 2 years.

Late 2007 saw the first residents hooked up to Jupiter water. Interest for hook up picked up steam after the loss of electric during the hurricanes resulted in homeowners being without running water because the well pumps could not function. The cost of the project changed from the original \$11 million to about \$18.6 million bringing the assessment to around \$780/yr. SIRWCD also obtained special financing for homeowners to cover the cost of installation and Town of Jupiter fees. These fees totaling about \$4000, only paid by residents choosing to hook up, were collected for the Town to build the required infrastructure for the additional water-servicing capacity

ROADS & SIDEWALKS

PAVING

More residents were expressing an interest in getting their roads paved. A cost estimate petition had to be completed by 25% of the residents and to approve the paving took 51% of those that voted. The paving estimates were based on paving to County standards and were estimated at \$5500/lot. SIRWCD also looked into OGEM as an alternate material to stabilize the roads. This cost would be \$1900/lot. This brought up concerns from Equestrian groups in PBCE and Jupiter Farms as well as environmental concerns. In 2006 the price to pave to County standards had gone down and SIRWCD sent out a ballot for getting the whole community paved. The cost would have been approx. \$1000/yr. for 20 years. The Referendum was voted down 42% approved – 58% opposed. Beside the fact that some folks still wanted to maintain the rural lifestyle, other factors that played in it being voted down included economic downturn, increasing property taxes, and impending assessment for the potable water installation. As the decade closed out the decision for paving was back to the residents on the individual streets to decide.

JOG ROAD EXTENSION

In late 2008, the Jog Road project to Donald Ross was started and it would include installation of two roundabouts on Donald Ross. Completion was set for early 2010. The Association took meetings with the County to ensure that no further extensions of Donald Ross Rd. or Jog Rd. were on any future plans.

I-95 & TURNPIKE

2008 saw the start of plans to expand I-95 into 10 lanes between Donald Ross Road and Indiantown Road. The State was looking at Turnpike expansions and a potential exit at Hood Road. Through the efforts of a group of residents we were able to get a Sound Wall for the community put into the plans. These plans were long range and were not expected to take place for at least 15 years.

SIDEWALKS

In 2001 a committee was formed to get some traction on having sidewalks installed. Streets being considered were 69th, 75th, 150th and 155th. In 2005, the County obtained the funding to do the sidewalks on 69th but that was delayed due to the water line project as both would be running on the east side of the road. In 2009, after the water lines had been installed, the sidewalk on 155th was completed and the other sidewalks were completed once their water lines had been installed

ROAD HAZARD 75th & 155th

SIRWCD was able to get AT&T to move their switching boxes from the northeast corner of 155th at 75th to south of 155th on 75th by the canal. The previous location of the boxes blocked the view of drivers coming south on 75th to turn east onto 155th which was a contributing factor in car accidents.

COMMUNITY PARK & PLAYGROUND

Realization of the park & playground moved from on paper into actual work getting started. The complete history of the park will appear in the next issue of *Countryside Living*

VANDALISM & BREAK-INS

The community continued to see an increase in the amount of vandalism and break-ins.

PBSO started attending the Association meetings to provide update on crime as well as advise what could be done to help prevent some of these incidents.

Conversations regarding the Sheriffs Neighborhood Watch Program and Citizen Observer Patrol (COP) continued but it wasn't until 2009 that there was enough interest to get a Neighborhood Watch organized

HURRICANES

2004 was a rough year with Francis, Jeanne and Ivan. After Frances's 10.55 inches of rain the canals reached an elevation of 16.3 feet. SIRWCD managed the draining only to have Jeanne show up with another 8.99 inches and brought the canals up to an elevation of 17.3 feet. Again, they were drained then Ivan showed. Through all of that there were no reports of flooding of homes in PBCE.

Downed vegetation proved to be a real challenge. SWA was in our development almost every day. They picked up 2.5 million cubic yards of yard waste in 59 days. This is the equivalent to 5 years of garbage pick-up for our area.

OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST

DAYCARE

The proposal that started in 1996 was again presented to the County in September 2000 for a Daycare at 64th & Donald Ross. After hearing residents' concerns and the developers input the PBC Commission sitting as the Zoning Board split 2 – 2 on approval. The developer requested a rehearing for November. This again was a tie vote. In January 2001, the PBC Commission voted 5 – 2 against the Daycare. The developer indicated their next option was to sue the County.

COMMUNITY CLUB HOUSE

The house on the northwest corner of 69th & Donald Ross came up for sale and an idea was floated to purchase it for a community club house. Unable to come up with a viable way of obtaining the necessary funding resulted in the property being sold to a church.

HOME OWNERS INSURANCE

Between the rising home values and the hurricanes the cost of homeowners insurance skyrocketed. The lack of a fire station within 5 miles also had a large impact on the rates. Installation of Fire Hydrants helped to reduce a small percentage of the cost but more needed to be done. Efforts were underway by some residents to see what options were available to further reduce the cost.

PROPERTY SETBACKS

In 2005 the County made changes to the property setback regulations that would have adversely impacted PBCE. Meetings followed with the County Commissioner, Zoning and PBCE. In early 2006, PBCE was able to convince the County to return to the previous setback requirements

CANAL WEED CONTROL

SIRWCD looked into the possibility of using Carp for weed control. Ultimately this had to be rejected due to varying water levels in the canals that would not produce enough oxygen for the carp.

SCHOOL BOUNDARIES

Potential changes surfaced in 2002 for Duncan & Abacoa middle schools. The Northern Educational Coalition was formed from the communities of PBCE, North Palm Beach Heights and Jupiter Farms. Working together they were able to get the boundaries changed that worked for each of the communities. In 2002, PB County starts talking about taking the steps to become a Charter School system.

STREET LIGHTING

Residents expressed concern about the lack of street lights at the bus stops. The Association contacted the County asking them to exam 12 different bus stops within the community for lighting. The County reviewed and denied our request for street lights.

WEBSITE

PBCE.org was up and running – 2002

DUES

Dues started the decade at \$15 and by the end of the decade was \$35 annually.

SCRIPPS RESEARCH

The Jupiter Campus was completed 2009 attracting new residents to the community

EVENTS

A variety of fun activities and events took place

- PBCE Equestrian Gallops group won awards in several of the Jupiter Farms Christmas Parades and in February 2005 the Ocean to Lake Greenway Equestrian Event took place which celebrated event the newly designated state Ocean to Lake Greenway which borders our community. The event originated at PBCE and ended at Lake Okeechobee.
- A Motorcycle club was formed by several residents and in 2005 15 riders rode to Lake O
- Trunk or Treat was held in 2009 for the first time
- Fall Festival in 2001 had over 250 children in attendance
- Car Shows were held
- PBCE Camping Club held several excursions
- Several community Clean-Up Days took place during this decade
- Biking to Riverbend opened 2008 when a south entrance to the park opened in line with the old cattle bridge