

AVE MARIA - A TOWN WITHOUT A VOTE: AVE MARIA STEWARDSHIP COMMUNITY DISTRICT BOARD

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AVE MARIA — The Ave Maria Stewardship Community District consists of a five-member board that makes decisions on the public financing of development in and around Ave Maria town.

Board members serve two- or four-year terms, and are chosen at biennial elections, most recently in November.

At this point, the town's developer, Ave Maria Development, the partnership between Tom Monaghan and Barron Collier Cos., chooses all the board members because it is the district's largest landowner. Language in the law that created the district allows Ave Maria Development to elect the board's three-member majority in perpetuity.

Since the board's first meeting in October 2004, it has approved 48 resolutions on matters such as issuing bonds and purchasing land without a single "no" vote.

Tom Peek: Peek, 69, is a retired partner at WilsonMiller, the Naples engineering firm that designed Ave Maria and numerous projects around the state. He has estimated he's been involved in 60 percent to 70 percent of the major developments in Southwest Florida. Peek chairs the board, and his term expires in November 2012.

Liesa Priddy: Priddy, 51, and her family are large landowners in eastern Collier County and participated in creating the rural growth plan that gave rise to Ave Maria. Priddy is former president of First Bank of Immokalee, now Florida Community Bank. Her father, Jack Price, was responsible for many of the county's oil wells. Priddy is the board's vice chairwoman. Her term expires in November 2012.

Douglas Baird: A 30-year employee at Barron Collier Cos., Baird, 59, began his career as an accountant for the company and has now reached its upper echelons as manager of treasury services. He also serves on the board of directors at Naples-based TIB Bank. Baird is Ave Maria board's newest member, first elected in November. His term expires in November 2010.

Herb Cambridge: A legend in the local African-American community, Cambridge, 81, is a longtime community activist and in 1965 became the first black public schoolteacher to work in an integrated Collier County high school. He worked as director of staff development for Barron Collier Cos. from 2000-01. Cambridge's term expires in November 2010.

Paul Roney: See "The Players." Roney's term expires in November 2010.

About This Series:

The Daily News spent more than a year researching and reporting "A Town Without A Vote." Any narrative reconstruction is based on interviews and thousands of documents, including internal Ave Maria Development memos obtained by the Daily News.

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