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The Grinch Almost Stole Christmas

By Marv Needles

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For the last many years, the city of Marco Island has contributed to the holiday season by installing holiday decorations on light poles on Collier Blvd., running from the Jolley Bridge to East Elkcarn Circle at a cost in the range of \$15,000. The planning and follow-through for the process was that of the Beautification Advisory Committee (BAC) by use of funds that were allocated to the BAC from the city's annual budget.

Unfortunately, for the 2025-26 fiscal year, the city council cut the BAC's budget substantially, and what it received was directed to be used exclusively for planting trees. While planting trees plays a major role for the BAC, it traditionally is allocated funds to support other programs and activities: one is the holiday light decorations on Collier Blvd.

Once the final city budget was finalized in late September, BAC would no longer have the funds to keep with the tradition of installing decorative lighting on Collier Blvd. At the BAC's October meeting, the most discussed issue was how to fund the holiday tradition.

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At the meeting, Erik Condee (Condee Cooling), representing Christmas Island Style, offered enough decorations to duplicate previous year's installation. The catch: need for labor for installation, removal, and storage once removed. The initial proposal for the labor was in the \$11,000 range, but still no options for storage.

Enter two members of the BAC, Linda Scherzinger and Victoria Myers. Initially, these two, attending a city council meeting, spoke of the holiday lighting issue. As a result of their presentation, two people volunteered with contributions of \$1,000 each. Since that time, additional contributions have been made that will allow the tradition to continue for the upcoming holiday season.

The initial contributor was Stephen Grey, who contributed his annual salary as a city councilor. Additionally, the Marco Island Area Association of Realtors contributed \$1,000, as did Joey Oliverio and Linda Scherzinger; many others contributed to the cause.

The firm of Ridge Valley Exteriors has agreed to provide installation and removal at cost, and find storage at no additional expense to the program.

The Grinch that "almost" stole Christmas? The city council? Maybe not. This city council is the first in many years that hasn't taken a "roll-back" position on taxes and they have been supportive of BAC's efforts. Maybe it's our citizens. Every year, there is an outcry by some that demand "no more taxes." Unfortunately, the cost of living goes up every year, and without increasing taxes, the city can't provide the services that we residents and absentee owners desire and expect.

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