



Don't Be an Ostrich

By Joe Steckler, President, Helping Seniors of Brevard County

I will kick the can further down the affordable housing road, but with more information than before. The facts I have researched should prompt seniors, as well as some of the middle age constituency, to question why more of our elected officials are not involved in the battle for affordable housing. This question might also be directed to Brevard County staff who work in those areas affecting seniors and others who need affordable housing.

My research shows that the general population, those who pay taxes out of hard-earned dollars, are not informed about, nor do they appear to be motivated in finding out how they can cause those we elect and their staff to keep them informed. In sum, I do not know how much those we elect are made aware of solutions available to correct the lack of affordable housing.

First, we need a way to pay for affordable housing. To my knowledge there is no private investor who will build and operate housing at a loss. Elected officials will need to work out a solution and, like it or not, this means government involvement and a tax. Passing a tax is one thing, keeping it on its directed path quite another. It can be done if private citizens are involved to ensure monies are used as intended.

I am aware of a private project costing \$13 million that is being built right now. When finished, there will be forty 3-bedroom/2-bath apartments available for rent based on the ability of the family to pay. That is true affordable housing. Unfortunately, delays have been caused by scarcity of trained workers and materials, plus rising costs. These and other issues might have been avoided if local government had been involved.

Second is the problem of taxes. The County currently has a 1 cent sales tax that generated about \$161 million from 2020-2022 for Brevard Public Schools, in addition to the normal taxes we pay annually. Then we have the lagoon tax, which brought in a like amount. There is also the State of Florida Sadowski Fund that contains millions of dollars for affordable housing but is raided annually by our legislators to help fund the State budget. Recently, citizens of Merritt Island expressed their anger at the lack of housing for seniors in our County. Where is all this new money going?

Our elected officials are to be commended for their interest in giving more to Brevard County schools and the

Don't Be an Ostrich cont'd on pg 49

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12 | www.seniorscenemag.com | JUNE 2023



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