

OPINION

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Letters to the editor: September 3

September 3, 2003

One body better than two at IRMH

The Indian River County Hospital District should not renew the hospital lease under any conditions. Both governing entities — the "district" and the hospital "board" — should be terminated.

One clearly accountable governing entity should be created to manage the district and hospital. The current dual hospital and district boards structure could be compared to a situation in which the School Board creates a separate legal entity with complicated and blurred lines of authority and accountability to operate the schools.

We could then have arguments, legal challenges and duplicative administrative costs to determine how the facilities should be maintained. Would the maintenance include the timely replacement of air conditioners or would the air conditioners be part of the operating obligations of the School Board?

There are certainly more serious issues than air-conditioner maintenance, but I think that you get the picture. Bluntly stated, it is foolish to have dual and, from what I have observed, competing boards at the expense of the public.

The Indian River County Hospital District is charged with meeting the medical needs of the community. In addition to the hospital operations, there are broad-based community medical needs, but there is absolutely no clear line of accountability to the taxpayers under the current structure. The original hospital lease was initiated to accommodate special interests. When special interests prevail, the public loses.

Let's face it, the current structure is flawed and not in the best interest of the public. I challenge both boards to use their collective wisdom and find the integrity to do what is right for the public. Create one legal entity in which all of the stakeholders are adequately represented and accountable to the taxpaying public.

Russell Bjorkman
Vero Beach

Beach quality crucial for Vero

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Vero Beach and Indian River County have the finest beaches in the United States.

After sleeping on Guam Beach overnight and visiting Waikiki, I have also had experiences in Boston, Cape Cod, Long Island, New York, New Jersey, Cocoa Beach, Miami Beach, Palm Beach and Florida's West Coast beaches. Vero Beach is No. 1 and must be kept that way to maintain our economic position overall.

Fortunately, all beaches are under surveillance by ATM, Applied Technology and Management, a consultant responsible for monitoring for coastal beach conditions.

We must realize that beach sand is mobile. From the 1984 storm, an examination of the photograph albums in the Ocean Grill lobby, as well as the photographs in County Engineer Jim Davis' office, will demonstrate the awesome destruction of the beach, buildings and roads when the beach is unprotected.

Applied technology specifies sand of 44-millimeter screen size, which minimizes the effect of normal beach erosion.

Leonard W. Miller
Vero Beach

County Commission needs good people

What seems to be the trouble with our five county commissioners? I don't think any of them know what they are doing.

They keep raising the assessment, plus the taxes. They always plan on the sales-tax money. Yet people can't afford to buy much, so there won't be much sales-tax revenue.

It looks as though our spendthrift five want to take the people's property for not paying their taxes, and then auction them off to the rich.

I thought when I helped elect Art Neuberger and Tom Lowther they would help straighten out our out-of-control commissioners. They are just as bad as Caroline Ginn, Ken Macht and Fran Adams. Most of the time, the votes go 5-0.

Between Dodgertown, the North County pool, sand pumping and all the land they are buying and taking off the tax rolls, they should work for nothing. But, then, they give themselves a raise.

I wish we could have gotten Frank Zorc in office. Let's look for some honest, clear-headed people to run for office next year.

Richard Dittmann
Sebastian

Reading project offers kids hope

William Raspberry's Aug. 25 column on "Meaningful differences" was a real eye opener...pregnant with simple truths that must somehow be injected into the education bureaucracy in massive doses.

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Let's hope that small community in Mississippi, with its reading program, can help its youngsters and parents find success in the classroom. I'm sure there are many of us who will be praying for a home run.

Kenneth H. Larson

Vero Beach

Give birds room to soar at park

Though your Aug. 3 photo of two scarlet macaws was breathtaking, not all the birds at Miami's Parrot Jungle Island can experience such exuberance of flight.

Of the 1,100 varieties of birds at the park, 200 of them have a free-flight enclosure. Natural habitat is crucial, especially to exotic birds. Their ancestry is from the rain forest, and the old parrot jungle reflected that feeling, with the lush nature trails and native flora.

Housing is important, too. Parrots require much more than just concrete enclosures or a cage. The priority should be on improving the quality of living for the birds, not just turning a profit.

The article didn't mention that the park sells birds. My fear is how some unsuspecting soul, after watching an amazing parrot do tricks, decides to bring home a living souvenir without realizing the responsibility involved.

Like so much of the pet bird population, will the bird be "rehomed" over and over, or neglected in cages once the novelty wears off?

The decision to purchase a parrot should not be made lightly. One should not just decide whether a parrot is right for you, but whether you are right for the parrot.

On one side of the park, there is a simulated tropical living environment for some of the birds to fly free. But then walk over to the gift shop, where anybody can purchase a parrot on a whim, contributing to the already-increasing number of unwanted parrots.

Sally Brooks

Jupiter

Dock worker director sets record straight

I appreciate being featured in Louis Park's splendid Aug. 24 commemoration of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s historic "Jobs and Freedom" march Aug. 28, 1963.

However, not to be pedantic, but just for the record, my position at the Brooklyn Longshoreman's Union was not "labor organizer," but "director of news, research and education."

Jonathan Visel

Vero Beach



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