

The Board of Directors
Southport on the Bay
March 22, 2010

Dear Southport Homeowner:

As you all have noticed, the Coconut palms in our neighborhood did not go through the recent cold spell this winter unscathed. Approximately 40% of the “common” (on the property lines between lots) Coconut palms are dead or look seriously injured. The ultimate fate of these “common” palms has been debated within the Southport community for years. Some members felt that they should be removed when they became unsightly and not replaced by the Homeowners Association. Others have felt that, like our mailboxes, the palms are a unifying landscape feature and should be preserved and maintained by the Association. The current Board is of this latter opinion provided that we can financially afford to maintain community palms without having to raise the current annual maintenance fee. The current condition of these trees has brought this discussion to a head as it is obvious that not only the palms at the gate need remediation or removal, but also Coconut palms throughout the community.

There exist strong arguments for removal of the Coconut palms. They are expensive for the Association to maintain. We spend close to \$7000 per year trimming them and removing dead fronds and coconuts. This removal is necessary for both aesthetic and safety reason. The coconut palms need to be injected 3 times yearly with an antibiotic to prevent the disease lethal yellowing weakening and killing them. These palms were planted in about 1990 and were injected once or twice to prevent the disease. These injections have not been done since, but will be necessary from now on as lethal yellowing is again being noted in Collier County. These injections may well cost at least \$2000 to \$3000 per year for the life of the palms. Replacing coconut palms of the size of the ones in Southport would be prohibitively expensive. As we saw this winter, coconut palms are susceptible to cold and we are at the north end of their range here in Florida. For all of the above reasons, many communities have chosen to remove their Coconut palms and replace them with Royal palms.

Royal palms are the type of palm that now line Barefoot Beach Boulevard. Many people think that they look more impressive than Coconut palms. They also have many other features to recommend them. They are immune to lethal yellowing and require no injections. They are self pruning and require no trimming. They grow quickly. They are stately trees. Most important, perhaps is that, because of the economy and nursery growth cycles, they are currently exceedingly inexpensive.

For all these reasons, the Board has made the decision to remove the Coconut palms at the gate entrance and replace them with mature Royal Palms. If this project goes well, the Board will consider extending this project to all the “common palms” in the community. The Board has hired Wolverine Landscaping, Inc. headed by Kenneth Pluff (239-777-4212) to do this project. Many of you have Coconut palms on your private property and may want to consider replanting with Royals. Contact Mr. Pluff directly if you are considering this move. If you have comments or questions for the Board, please email me at jfountain20@comcast.net. No phone calls please. The gate project will probably start within the next week or two. You will see workmen “striping” for utility line location soon. When and if the project moves into the community, please readjust your irrigation to give these new trees at least 30 minutes of irrigation daily until we are well be into the rainy season and that will allow these new trees to establish themselves. Better yet hose watering for 5-10 minutes daily would be even more appreciated. Keeping these trees watered post planting is a major concern of the Board. Phase II limitations on watering were stopped as of March 15. Please access the Collier County Website for current irrigation rules. As always, the Board and the ARB are working hard to maintain and enhance Southport.

For the Southport Board of Directors
James Fountain, President