

As we all know, having a good neighbor can be a blessing. It can be a great relationship where you share common interests and help each other when times are tough. When there's a disagreement ...you work it out or you just agree to disagree. You respect the relationship because you know that if there's real trouble, you will be there for each other.

Having a bad neighbor is an altogether different experience. One which can range from grumbling and gossiping, to rolling around together in the dirt fighting over whose garbage can hasn't been brought in from the street for a week. The situation is often made worse by a lack of communication (and by communication I don't mean yelling at each other over the fence while you're picking the grass out of your hair). From what I've heard from constituents since I've been on City Council and from what we've all seen on the news and "the Peoples Court"... it is a pretty miserable way to live.

On a larger scale, I've always thought of Estero as a neighbor ...a good neighbor, with good people. Neither Bonita Springs nor Estero can collectively "pick up and move," so it is in both of our best interests to maintain good relations.

I read an editorial recently in the paper on an upcoming meeting regarding Estero, annexation and incorporation, which was followed by an e-mail sent to some Estero residents indicating that the City of Bonita Springs had "announced its intentions to annex approximately half of Estero's territory." I want to assure our neighbors in Estero that this statement is simply not true. It is probably the result of a misunderstanding of an inter-local agreement that the County is requiring all cities to enter into.

This inter-local agreements main purpose is to encourage local governments to jointly determine how to provide services to residents and property in the most efficient manner. The City of Bonita Springs was "required" by the County to mark areas that may someday request to be annexed, however remote that possibility may be. The resulting map is not an indication of intention or even an expectation. It simply creates a joint land-use planning tool "if" these areas should "choose" to annex or incorporate. Unfortunately, as some of us had predicted, the required map in this document has bred undeserved fear and mistrust between our communities.

Simply put, Bonita Springs has no intention, nor plans, to annex to Williams Road and has had no discussions that should lead anyone to believe that we would or could somehow force people to annex. We do, however, continue to look for common ground and opportunities to build better relations with our neighbors in Estero.

But whether it's two neighboring Communities or the person next door, being good neighbors takes patience, respect, understanding and quite often, (at least if I'm your neighbor) a sense of humor.