



# Florida House of Representatives

## *Representative Dan Daley*

District 96

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January 11, 2023

Chair Jason Pizzo & Vice Chair Michael Caruso  
Joint Legislative Auditing Committee  
876 Pepper Building  
111 W. Madison St.  
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Re: Request for Internal Audit of the North Springs Improvement District (“NSID”)

Dear Chairman Pizzo and Vice Chair Caruso,

I am respectfully requesting the Joint Legislative Auditing Committee (the “Committee”) direct the Auditor General to perform an operational audit of the North Springs Improvement District (“NSID”).

Over the past several years, our office has received several questions and complaints regarding the operation and actions of NSID. These accounts have multiplied as of late and include threats, nepotism, cronyism, unethical practices, and potential illegalities.

The original complaints regarding a lack of transparency and issues with operation led me to file and successfully pass a local bill during the 2022 Legislative Session that aimed to change the voting mechanism by which the public elect the NSID Board of Directors. That measure will be on the ballot during the 2024 election and will likely lead to the direct election (by popular vote) of the Board of Directors. I fear that changing the voting mechanism may not be enough, nor would it have the same immediate accountability that a state led internal audit would render. I am confident if the Committee chose to undertake such a review, the taxpayers of the State of Florida, and the ratepayers of NSID would be much better off.

In the past several months, local news outlets have shined a light on NSID, and the result has been quite concerning. Accounts of the District Director, Rod Colon, using a loophole in the ethics law

(a loophole I am filing a general bill to close in the 2023 Legislative Session) to pay himself \$240,000 in real estate commission as part of the sale of NSID property; accounts of the District Director hiring friends, relatives, loved ones, and lovers (even going so far as to allegedly provide the love interest with clean urine for a drug test); accounts of NSID funds being paid to friends, relatives, and sitting board members of NSID for work performed purportedly on NSID's behalf; and the list goes on.

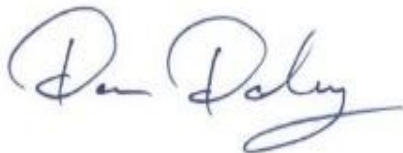
Several years ago, when I initially filed the NSID local bill, I described NSID as a "fiefdom" and Mr. Colon as King. Based on recent revelations, I clearly was not far off, and I am deeply concerned with what else may be happening at NSID – that is why I am asking the Committee and the State Auditor General to pull back the curtain and audit NSID.

At a minimum, the audit scope should include NSID's compliance with laws, rules, regulations, contracts, and other requirements in the areas of:

- Purchasing and procurement processes, including contracting, use of competitive bidding, sole source procurements, and other purchasing methods;
- Land purchases (in particular the purchase of the Heron Bay Golf Course with the intent to resell a portion of the land for commercial development and whether the District has the authority to do such);
- Related-party transactions;
- Sale of District land and the process used, including Board approval and direction; and
- Hiring and employment practices.

I have included copies of the most recent articles that relate to the activities of NSID and its Director. I am respectfully requesting the Joint Legislative Auditing Committee conduct a review and direct the State Auditor General to conduct an operational audit. If you need any additional information or have any questions, please feel free to reach out at any time.

Best,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dan Daley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dan Daley

## **Article 1**

Public official received \$16 million in contracts from own agency

Wed, May 04, 2022

By Bob Norman, FLCGA News

The ghost government is tucked behind steel gates on a dead-end road in a quiet suburban Coral Springs neighborhood.

Known as the North Springs Improvement District, the agency provides water and sewer services to roughly 40,000 residents of Coral Springs and Parkland, collecting roughly \$17 million a year in taxes and fees to do so.

Small taxing districts like NSID are ubiquitous in Florida. They collect hundreds of billions of dollars between them, yet receive precious little attention, hence their ghost-like profile.

A brighter spotlight might have been helpful in 2017 when NSID's elected three-member board voted unanimously to build a stormwater pumping station in a rural and flood-prone residential area at the upper northwest edge of Broward County, called the Wedge.

That \$4 million contract was awarded to a company called Intersol LLC. It was quite a score for a home-based company with no track record of commercial or government construction work.

More surprising, Intersol was owned by a top NSID official: Rod Colon, then its deputy district manager. Records show Colon was Intersol's sole officer. His Plantation home was its corporate address.

The \$4 million contract was but the first major job Colon's company won at the agency. During a two-year period, Colon's company received roughly \$16 million in contracts for everything from installing water pipelines, to building aquifers, to designing wells. If ever the board discussed the propriety of awarding such contracts to a top employee, meeting minutes don't reflect it.

Florida ethics laws generally prohibit public employees from doing business with their own agencies. But Colon says the rules are different for special taxing districts.

"We're quasi-governmental," Colon told the Florida Center for Government Accountability when reached by phone. "We can do things that other governmental entities can't do."

Later, Colon underscored; "Everything I made was legal."

There does, in fact, exist a little-known provision in the Florida Ethics Code that exempts officers and employees of special districts like NSID from the prohibition against having contractual relationships with their own agencies.

However, the exemption says all other ethics laws still apply and any conduct that runs contrary to the code's "intent" would be deemed a conflict of interest.

When potential conflicts arise, public officials are encouraged to request an opinion from the state's Ethics Commission. NSID instead obtained a letter from a private law firm, Miami-based Genovese Joblove and Battista, which gave Colon a conditional go-ahead.

The November 2017 letter cited the exemption, but also cautioned that the arrangement not "create a personal benefit to Rod's business to the exclusion of others." Attorney Michael Joblove wrote that Colon is still beholden to the state ethics rule that forbids public employees from "corruptly" using their official position to secure a special benefit for personal gain.

In the phone call, Colon stressed that the district engages in a strict competitive process. But our investigation found a system rife with irregularities, inconsistencies, and mounting debt, leaving open the question:

Is this really legal?

### **The rise of Intersol**

In bid documents for the \$4 million contract, Intersol is portrayed as an experienced player on South Florida's construction scene, performing projects "from municipal and government, to commercial and residential." The documents listed several projects the company said it had completed, with photos of the finished work.

But our investigation reveals that Intersol had no such track record. A month before the \$4 million bid was submitted, Colon described Intersol as a "real estate" firm in financial statements he was required to file as a public official. Public records show the company had flipped a couple of residential homes.

Colon's name appeared in the bidding documents only once, on a form that identified him as company's president. The form shows the incorporation date as June 16, 2012, which is erroneous. State records show it was formed on June 16, 2015, just two years before the bid was submitted.

Intersol's bid also boasted of having a knowledgeable and experienced team, though it had no licensed contractor at the time of submission and listed only one "key personnel" member: a Romanian-born engineer named Vandin Lucien Calitu, project manager.

The 51-year-old Calitu was no stranger to the district, either. A former NSID board member, he too has previously won millions in district contracts. In his resume, Calitu wrote that he began working with Intersol in 2014, though the company wasn't formed until 2015. He also said that while employed with Intersol he worked on "countless projects throughout Broward, Miami-Dade, and Palm Beach counties."

But three of the four projects mentioned in the bid documents as having been done by Intersol were also listed in Calitu's resume under the name of a previous employer, Century Building Restoration USA.

One of them was a relatively minor \$300,000 NSID water tank modification that Intersol claimed was completed in 2014, a year prior to the company's formation. District records show the contract was awarded to Century in 2009. Calitu's resume says he began working for Century in 2012.

### **A "terrible" bidding process**

Intersol was up against two other companies for the \$4 million stormwater pump job. Calitu worked for both of those firms, as well.

According to board meeting minutes, Calitu also represented the second-ranked firm, Virtual Design Group, which just a few months before had been awarded a \$7.8 million contract to construct an "employee operations center."

Incredibly, state licensing records show that at the time, Calitu also was the engineer for the third-ranked company, Hallandale Beach-based Cornerstone Engineering Group. Contacted by phone, Cornerstone owner Joseph Ciurdad said Calitu "took the lead" on the NSID bid.

"Cornerstone was not involved with that ... it was done with [Calitu's] companies," Ciurdad said. "I'm not sure how you got Cornerstone involved with that. You should get in contact with Vandin (Calitu)."

Calitu refused to answer any questions when reached on the phone.

"I have nothing to say," he said before hanging up.

Calitu's involvement in all three bids is problematic, said Ben Wilcox, an ethics watchdog with the non-profit group Integrity Florida.

"That's terrible," said Wilcox. "He would have inside knowledge [about all three bidders]."

Colon meanwhile refused to answer follow-up questions about any of his company's dealings with the district, including the criticism he's received on social media.

"For myself, I'm not going to comment," he said. "I have filed a slander lawsuit and that's how I'm responding to it."

### **Colon sues Facebook critics**

Indeed, Colon and Calitu filed a pair of defamation lawsuits in October after an anonymous Facebook poster accused them of corruption.

On their behalf, attorney Douglas Reynolds of the Tripp Scott law firm filed a "John Doe" defamation lawsuit against the Facebook poster, whose pseudonym was "Ed Connely." It said the poster falsely accused Colon and Calitu of "criminal activity including orchestrating a bid-rigging scheme." A separate lawsuit targets a woman who shared and commented on the posts.

"I'm suing anybody who reposted it or anybody who commented on it," Colon told FLCGA News.

The lawsuit says defendant Eileen Maltese urged people to forward the Facebook posts to local government officials. Among the comments listed in the complaint:

"Rodney Colon and his gang should be in prison!!!"

"It's been rumored for years that he is corrupt ... I hope to see him in handcuffs soon!"

"They're liked [sic] a mafia stealing from the taxpayers and getting away with it year after year, after year, after year."

Maltese's husband is a former employee of NSID. She characterized the lawsuit as the "definition of a SLAPP suit." The acronym stands for Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation. Such suits are meant to harass people into staying silent. "I think it's ridiculous," she said.

Both lawsuits are pending.

### **Debt and a new development**

To pay for its many construction-related projects, NSID has issued tens of millions of dollars in tax-exempt municipal bonds in recent years. District records show the taxing district currently owes \$82 million on the bonds. To pay down the debt, NSID has levied special assessments on property owners – about \$4 million this year alone.

Colon, an avid bodybuilder whom sources say runs the district with an iron fist, has bigger plans. Under his command, NSID purchased the Heron Bay Golf Course for \$32 million with plans to sell 70 acres for commercial development. "We're hoping for a Mizner Park type of feel," he told the Parkland Talk news website last year.

The plan has prompted vocal protest in the affluent Heron Bay neighborhood. In November residents formed a group called Citizens Against Golf Course Redevelopment and sued NSID to try to stop a "sprawling 529,000 square-foot commercial complex" almost literally in their backyards.

They say Colon's plan violates a deed restriction that forbids commercial development until 2027.

"In November of 2020, NSID sought to buy 150 acres of the Heron Bay Golf Course for \$15 million to create a preserve, which is perfectly allowable," the group's attorney, Joseph Garrity, said in a press release. "Just four months later, in a backroom deal doubling the cost to taxpayers,

70 acres are added to the purchase for commercial development. The Florida Legislature did not grant the NSID the power to be a commercial developer.”

The group’s president, Robert Tankoos, said the lawsuit is about stopping "government organizations and officials from abusing their power and failing to represent their constituents.”

NSID claims the purchase of the land wipes away the deed covenant and is moving forward with the plan. On November 6, it approved a \$4.5 million contract for landscaping and other jobs on the golf course property. The recipient was a company called VLC One Inc The initials reflect those of its owner: Vandin Lucien Calitu, the former NSID board member who also worked for Colon’s company.

VLC One also received a \$500,000 contract to perform design services at the site, all of it to be funded by a \$5 million municipal bond sold by the district. The district is holding a meeting today at noon to name the Heron Bay project’s developer. A selection committee made up of Colon and two district employees has recommended East Coast Builders.

East Coast is a former subcontractor for Colon and Calitu and itself has been awarded millions of dollars in district contracts. In its initial proposal to build the Heron Bay project, the company identified Calitu as its project manager. Its most recent proposal lists another project manager.

Approving the deals has been NSID’s three-member elected board of directors. After a nine-minute meeting on January 5, FLCGA News asked board president Vincent Moretti if he believed it was legal for Colon’s company to receive millions in work from the district.

Moretti, who owns a plumbing business and has served on the board since 2008, looked at Colon, who tried to stop the questioning. The buffed-up, flat-topped Colon demanded that the reporter either leave the building or be arrested for trespassing.

"The meeting is over, you have to get off the property ... or you’re going to be arrested for trespassing,” Colon warned. A police officer echoed his words.

Reminded that he was a public official, Colon countered, "I’m not a public official.”

The only resident in the audience was Tankoos, the president of the citizen’s group suing the district. Tankoos said he’s often the sole person in attendance and that he has watched Colon’s power go seemingly unchecked.

Tankoos would like to see authorities investigate NSID’s dealings.

"There’s virtually no accountability,” he said. "The people who care about responsible government should be stepping in and looking at what’s going on, but they don’t seem to be doing a damn thing.”

## Article 2

Top public official has past business ties, other links to favored Heron Bay developer

Tue, May 31, 2022

By Bob Norman, FLCGA News

The young mother held her daughter in one arm and the mic in the other as she addressed public officials in a room packed with her unhappy neighbors.

"I am angry that they even gave the land to you so you even have the opportunity to ruin the place that I've worked so hard to live in," she said. "And you're gonna turn it into a mall? ... It's not your land to create some money!"

The crowd of more than 150 people erupted in thunderous applause, as it had for others who spoke against a plan to build a massive commercial development on a defunct golf course in Heron Bay, a neighborhood surrounded by nature preserves on the edge of the Everglades in northwest Broward County.

Presenting the development plan at the public meeting was Rod Colon, district manager of the North Springs Improvement District (NSID). The taxpayer-financed public utility supplies water and sewer services to 16,000 households in Parkland and Coral Springs. Now the public agency, under Colon's control, has jumped into the development game.

After purchasing the Heron Bay golf course for \$32 million last year, Colon is recommending to the NSID Board of Supervisors that a local construction company called East Coast Builders and Developers Corp. develop the project. East Coast's proposal entails a huge mall nearly a million square feet in total scope.

But what Colon didn't mention at the May 4 meeting is that he's had business ties of his own with East Coast, a financial relationship that might exceed ethical bounds.

As originally reported earlier this month by FLCGA News, Colon formed a makeshift company called Intersol LLC in his Plantation home and beginning in 2017 was awarded some \$16 million in contracts from his own agency, NSID, over a three-year period.

While that may appear to be blatant self-dealing on the public dime, Colon points to a little-known exemption in the Florida Ethics Code that allows public officials at special taxing districts like NSID to secure contracts with their own agencies.

Residents have filed multiple formal complaints about Colon's dealings at the district with both the Florida Attorney General and the Florida Ethics Commission, FLCGA News has learned.

Because Colon isn't a general contractor and Intersol was largely a company on paper, he had to find another company to do the actual work. For his first big NSID contract, a \$4 million stormwater pump station, Colon hired East Coast to complete the job, according to Broward County public records.



He did this despite a state ethics code that forbids public officials like Colon from having "any employment or contractual relationship" with any company that, like East Coast, does business with his own agency.

Colon didn't respond to a call for comment. East Coast's owner, Frank Anzalone, acknowledged he worked for Colon but said there've been no special favors.

"He hired my company to perform work," said Anzalone. "He wouldn't give me the job unless I was cheaper than everyone else."

But the record shows numerous connections, both professional and personal, between Colon and Anzalone that precipitated the recommendation of East Coast as the builder at Heron Bay.

Colon hired East Coast as a subcontractor for his makeshift construction company, Intersol LLC.

### **Ties that bind?**

Some known connections between Anzalone and NSID:

– According to county construction records, East Coast was engaged to do work not only on Colon's personal residence but also a driveway replacement at the home of Colon's assistant at NSID, Katherine Castro. Anzalone says his company never actually did any work on either property.

– Last summer NSID put Anzalone's then 19-year-old daughter on the public payroll. Anzalone said his daughter was hired as an assistant to the agency's engineering department. The younger Anzalone worked the temporary summer job for two and half months with a pay rate of \$20 an hour, according to NSID.

– The elected NSID board president, Vincent Moretti, owns a plumbing company that has served as a subcontractor for East Coast in the past. Moretti's Pro Bowl Plumbing did work for East Coast in Davie, specifically installing large bathrooms for the company at the Bergeron Rodeo Grounds, confirmed Anzalone. A vote for East Coast could raise ethical questions for Moretti, who was absent for the May 4 meeting and didn't return messages from FLCGA News.

– East Coast, dating back to early 2017, has won millions of dollars in contracts of its own from NSID, including one to build a "records facility" that now hosts the board meetings. In the year following the award, NSID approved "change orders" for the project that ballooned the cost to \$7.4 million, more than double the original contract.

– The relationship extends to social events. Photos posted on Facebook show Anzalone in attendance at a birthday party for Colon's wife, Katherine Coral, last year.

"I don't remember the occasion exactly, but if I'm there, I'm there," said Anzalone. "If you invited me to your birthday party, I would show up."

Anzalone was unwilling to explain the reason for his involvement in a complicated and secrecy-shrouded \$358,000 condominium purchase in March that also involved Colon, one of his business associates, and a former NSID board president.

The condo in Coral Springs was initially purchased on March 4 by a blind trust whose trustee was Stephen Cameron, an attorney for whom Colon has worked as an investigator. A week later Cameron deeded the property to Anzalone as trustee in a transaction that listed Colon as a witness.

Anzalone then deeded the property to Mark Capwell, a lawyer and former NSID board president who left the district in 2020. For that transaction, Colon again served as a witness, along with NSID clerk Brenda Richard. Notarizing the deed was Castro, Colon's assistant at NSID.

The original purchase appears to have been a cash deal and the buyer of the property is never identified in public documents. Anzalone, who is an attorney, refused to shed any light on the deal when asked if Colon was the buyer.

"I can't tell you legal stuff," he said. "I can't tell you attorney-client privilege. I was being hired as an attorney."

Capwell, the former NSID president, had a similar response when contacted by FLCGA News on the phone.

"You're going into areas of attorney-client privilege," said Capwell. "I can't talk about any of that. I'm still an attorney and I have to honor that."

When asked specifically if Colon was the owner, Capwell said, "I can't admit or deny that because the whole point of the trust is to not disclose that."

Capwell's very presence at NSID is testament to Colon's control over the district. Prior to his election to the NSID board, Capwell served as vice president for a now defunct company owned by Colon called R & A Asset Recovery, Inc. Capwell resigned his position at R & A in January 2016 and was soon elected to the NSID board, where he was installed as president just six months later.

When asked if he had any other financial connections to Colon or NSID, Capwell refused to answer the question.

Peter Hegedus, a member of the Heron Bay opposition group, said he finds the "intertwining interests" of East Coast and NSID "abhorrent."

"[Colon] should not have a business relationship with a company that he is supposed to be supervising [at NSID]," said Hegedus. "That's a total conflict of interest. It's against the most elementary rules of contracting and business, not just government."

### **Questioning the rap sheet**

Anzalone himself once had political ambitions. He ran for city commission in Cooper City back in 1998, when he was 32-years-old. But the campaign was tainted when the Sun-Sentinel reported on his criminal history.

In an article headlined, "Record doesn't deter bid," the newspaper detailed candidate Anzalone's "rap sheet," which included "arrests on charges ranging from use of a stolen credit card to grand theft and spans from 1985 to 1994."

Anzalone had been arrested four times with charges dropped in two of the cases, the newspaper reported, citing the Florida Department of Law Enforcement. In 1994, he pleaded no contest to fraudulent use of a credit card and grand theft and was sentenced to two days in jail that had already been served.

"According to the arrest report, a Burdines sales clerk was issuing fraudulent credit to the accounts of several people, including four accounts held by Anzalone," the Sentinel reported. "In one transaction, Anzalone purchased \$1,469 worth of luggage. He then left Burdines with the luggage. However, the receipt showed the transaction was recorded as a credit on his Visa card."

Anzalone was required to pay \$2,000 in restitution to Burdines. The newspaper also reported that Anzalone pleaded no contest in 1985 to grand larceny and using a stolen credit card. In that case he was sentenced to 18 months probation as well as \$120 in restitution.

Broward County court records also show a 1988 conspiracy to distribute cocaine charge for Anzalone. That case was dropped by prosecutors a few weeks after the arrest. Anzalone said he believes the arrest was a case of mistaken identity.

"That one they had the wrong people," he told FCLGA News. "They pulled over a truck that we were driving and I think they found it was the wrong people and they dropped everything."

He told the Sun-Sentinel in 1998 that his arrests were due to his lack of cooperation.

"Every one of these [arrests] could have been avoided," said Anzalone, who was a second year law student at the University of Miami at the time. "[Police officers] question you first and if you answer their questions you are dismissed. But I don't cooperate, I just don't."

Barring traffic infractions, Anzalone hasn't added to that rap sheet in the quarter century since. He graduated law school in 1999 and was soon working as a public defender in Broward County.

"I went to law school just so I could work at the Public Defender's Office and help indigent people," he said. "That's the kind of person I am. I passed up other jobs for more money so I could work with indigent people."

In 2002, Anzalone obtained his general contractor's license and formed East Coast. He acted as both a public defender and construction company operator until 2014, when he left the Public Defender's Office to focus full time on his construction company. He lists his construction company and law office at a mail drop at a UPS Store on University Boulevard in Davie.

As part of his proposal for the Heron Bay development, Anzalone boasted that East Coast had overseen more than \$100 million worth of demolition and construction projects. The three largest East Coast projects he listed as having completed were the Kendall Ice Arena, the Pines Ice Arena, and the Shoppes at Waterways in Aventura.

The problem: East Coast didn't build any of those projects. All of them were in fact completed years before the company was even founded. The completion dates provided in Anzalone's proposal were erroneous. In the case of the Pines Ice Arena, for instance, Anzalone wrote that the building was done at a cost of \$12 million in 2012, when in reality it was built in the late 1990s for \$6.6 million by another company.

When questioned about the discrepancies, Anzalone admitted that East Coast hadn't actually built them. He explained that the projects were completed by a Miami company called Nibor Enterprises, but he included them because he personally worked on the job sites as a "construction supervisor" back in his 20s.

He said he also listed the properties in part because Nibor Enterprises CEO Shlomo Epstein is on his development team for the Heron Bay project as "financial coordinator."

"We've done many projects together," said Anzalone of Epstein. "I was working for Nibor when we did Kendall and Pines Ice Arena."

NSID, under the leadership of Anzalone business associate Colon, either never identified the discrepancies in the East Coast proposal or didn't disclose them to the public.

Heron Bay resident Neil Bass, a leader of the anti-development group, said it sounded like "more smoke and mirrors."

"Everything I've heard is that East Coast hasn't done anything as substantial [as the Heron Bay project]," Bass said. "How is it that they are going to get this job?"

### **A \$28,000 Dog**

Often working with both Colon and Anzalone is a third man, Vandin Calitu, a state-licensed engineer and former NSID board member who has also been involved in millions of dollars worth of construction projects at the agency.

Calitu served as engineer and project manager for Colon's company, Intersol, and, as previously reported by FLCGA News, was deeply tied to all three bidders for Colon's first big \$4 million contract with the agency. Calitu's own company, VLC One Inc., recently won \$5 million in NSID contracts to conduct site work at Heron Bay.

Calitu's company has also served as a subcontractor for East Coast, most notably on the building of the records facility at the water plant that began in January 2020 as a \$3.25 million project, but soon grew to \$7.4 million.

District records show that just four months after East Coast was given the records facility contract, NSID awarded the company a change order to build a second floor, adding \$1.965 million to the bill. In December 2020, NSID handed East Coast another \$1.872 million change order for a roof replacement, the removal of load-bearing walls, a lab expansion, and the addition of "another locker room." Another \$300,000 was added a few months later to bring the total for the building to \$7.4 million.

In the same time period, NSID awarded East Coast more than \$3 million in additional contracts to bring its total to over \$10 million during a 14-month period.

In January 2021, photographs were posted on Facebook by Calitu's wife, Adriana, of Anzalone celebrating the 44th birthday of Colon's wife, Katherine Coral. A photo of Vandin Calitu, Colon and their respective wives was also posted. Anzalone said he occasionally socializes with Colon "if there's an event or something," but added "we don't hang out."

County records show that East Coast was lined up last November to install a paver driveway at the home of Castro, Colon's assistant. Anzalone admitted that a notice of commencement was filed for his company to do the work but says he never did it.

"Someone might have thought I would do something or help them," he said. "But there was no work done by East Coast Builders or Frank Anzalone on that job."

Another personal connection between the parties comes in a lawsuit filed by Adriana Calitu. Filed in October 2020, the suit alleges that when she attempted to buy a \$28,000 French bulldog (with "the most exotic and expensive" color), the dealer switched dogs on her. She claims to be owed a \$5,000 deposit she put down on the purchase. Adriana Calitu's attorney in the case? Frank Anzalone.

Calitu was initially listed as East Coast's project manager for the Heron Bay project in bid documents submitted last year. Another contractor, Upper Buena Vista Management of Miami, was chosen for the job last fall. Anzalone says that choice alone proves the fix wasn't in for his company.

"The track record is me not getting picked a majority of the time," he said.

But disagreements between NSID and Upper Buena Vista led to the latter's removal from the job and prompted a new round of proposals from three companies – the Falcone Group, Toll Brothers, and East Coast. Calitu was removed as project manager in the second East Coast proposal, though he was listed as a witness to Anzalone's signature in the document.

East Coast had by far the most commercial development in its plan and offered NSID just \$21 million for the land, \$11 million less than Toll Brothers, and \$17 million less than Falcone.

Despite that \$11 million deficit and its unpopular plan, East Coast was chosen by a three-member panel consisting of Colon and two of his underlings as the recommended firm to build at Heron Bay.

**"I don't trust them."**

Heron Bay residents, whose anti-development Facebook page numbers more than 570 members, mobilized to oppose the East Coast plan. While they prefer no development on the property, their clear favorite is Toll Brothers' plan, which involves 110 "luxury home sites" along with no more than 175,000 square feet of commercial space.

When Colon recommended East Coast at the May 4 meeting, those residents packed the meeting to protest the East Coast selection. The meeting began with a surprise, when board president Moretti, usually little more than a rubber stamp for Colon's directives, failed to show up. Attempts by FLCGA News to contact Moretti were unsuccessful.

That left two board members – Grace Solomon and Robert Payton – to make the decision regarding the recommendation. After hearing numerous residents criticize the East Coast plan, Solomon indicated she still backed it.

"Residents, myself included, are tired of driving to Boca or south of here in order to go to a nice restaurant or to meet friends for drinks and dinner," Solomon explained, "or to go to a nice spa or go shopping or do something fun with the kids and have a place to walk around and have a coffee or an ice cream."

Payton then both shocked and delighted the crowd when he essentially tabled the matter, saying the plans needed more vetting by the cities and county. The matter was delayed until the next meeting, which is scheduled for June 1.

"It's gonna be traffic, it's gonna be zoning, it's gonna be land use, it's gonna be a lot of things," Payton said. "... There's going to be a lot of obstacles in the way, so I think we just need to take a step back."

After the contentious meeting was over, Anzalone waited to meet with Colon.

When everybody got done talking to him, I asked [Colon], "What's happening?" said Anzalone. "He [explained what happened] at the board [meeting] I'm assuming I'm going back there in the next month. I have no idea."

Residents will fight East Coast's proposal as long as it takes, promised Heron Bay resident Bass.

"I think East Coast should be eliminated based on the ethical issues alone," he said.

NSID's published agenda for its next meeting indicates the board will again vote on East Coast on June 1. But on Friday the Parkland City Commission called an emergency meeting for June 8 to

discuss a plan to purchase the golf course property from NSID and let the city take the reins on any development that might take place. It's a welcome development for the residents.

"I hope Parkland buys the land," said Bass. "I want NSID out of the picture. I don't trust them."