

# West Boca Community Council hears residents out; asks for feedback

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Controlling panhandling, putting more deputies on patrol in Sandalfoot Cove and traffic came up as priorities at the traditional January goal-setting meeting of the West Boca Community Council.

Vice president Ellen Winikoff passed out writing tablets at round tables filled with residents, but none were shy about speaking their minds at the first meeting of the year on Jan. 13. The council is an umbrella organization of more than 200 condo and homeowner associations and meets monthly at 7:30 p.m. the second Tuesday at Boca Lago Country Club.

"Traffic's bad and we already know that," said council president Sheri Scarborough. "We don't know all the answers and most are not county roads. Our problems are on the state roads like State Road 7, Palmetto Park and Glades Road. We want an interchange to alleviate traffic."

She hesitated to address the growing panhandling problem because of the county firefighters' annual boot drive, but finally called them and said "it's all or nothing at all," Palm Beach County Commissioner Mary Lou Berger told the crowd. In mid-December, Berger asked county staff to draft a law banning panhandlers from medians. "It should come back to the county in March meetings," she said.

There's no reason for people in need to be begging. "Palm Beach County has a homeless coalition and a shelter and teams reach out to speak to people who are really homeless to give them food and help them find jobs," she said. With a more stringent law on the books in the city of Boca, "some have come here from Broward County," Berger said.

"It's a public safety issue," she added. "It's dangerous for drivers and panhandlers themselves and people who have to cross the road." Panhandlers are even working on the Glades Road ramp to Florida's Turnpike, and "you can see them walking up down" the traffic lanes from Glades Road.

Homeless outreach teams will come to West Boca at the end of the month to work with Palm Beach County Sheriff's Deputies to count the homeless here and bring them services, added Capt. Matt Eisenberg, commander of the District 7 at U.S. Highway 441 and Clint Moore Road.

"What are your concerns and what can we help you with?" Scarborough said. "This meeting helps us get going in the right direction."

Members also mentioned the condition of county roads, insurance costs and unsightly medians on Yamato Road and crime at Sandalfoot Cove.

Cyndi Shendell, an invited guest who runs the Drop In Action Sports Complex in Loggers Run Park, asked the coalition to help her have a sign posted on U.S. Highway 441 to let people the skate boarding and BMX facility is there.

"We're a nonprofit," she said.