

**ResnickLisa**

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**Subject:** 1/5/11 6b - Foundation Ad Hoc Clam Bay Committee Update

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From: MLMAssocAICP@aol.com  
To: sf@feldhauslaw.com, wrcjks@gmail.com, ronjr@naegelenet.com, rwuek7@gmail.com, essondoug@msn.com, jimh@pelicanbay.org, mikecoyne08@gmail.com, robpender@comcast.net, vbellnpls@yahoo.com  
CC: josiegeoff@aol.com, hunter.hansen@hilton.com, jbaron@watersideshops.com, jpcbac@comcast.net, hobodory@comcast.net, iaizzo@comcast.net, keithdallas@comcast.net, Teedup1@aol.com, mikelevy@embarqmail.com, tedraia@yahoo.com, nfn16799@naples.net, JOHNSUSANBOLAND@aol.com, hprice@price-law.com, kathyw@conservancy.org, georgiahiller@mac.com  
Sent: 12/16/2010 1:35:49 A.M. Eastern Standard Time  
Subj: Fwd: Recent developments regarding Clam Bay

Dear Steve, Jim and Members of the Pelican Bay Foundation Board,

With respect to the email updates of the past week . . . lack of response should not be interpreted as acquiescence, merely overload at a very busy time of year. There are very many outstanding issues and questions that need to be resolved by the Pelican Bay community itself, before any management agreement proposal is presented to the County. This cannot be accomplished within the timeframe laid out, which anticipates a meeting with County officials on January 6th to review a proposed management agreement.

I am taking the liberty of forwarding a commentary provided by John Domenie, whose perspective is informed by his lengthy experience on the PBSB Board, including as Chair of the Clam Bay Subcommittee during the ten years of the Restoration and Management Plan. He raises many legitimate questions about the implications of the management arrangement that is under development.

In addition to John, Marcia Cravens and Mary Bolen of the Mangrove Action Group have responded to the recent updates with in-depth commentaries raising serious issues that should be addressed, not dismissed as representing a "very few" dissenters.

it is very concerning that MAG has no inkling of what position the Foundation is advocating on the dredging issue--the issue where action is imminent. At our meeting in November, the Foundation and MAG were very far apart. We are wary of being kept in the dark until matters are essentially settled between the Foundation and the County. What about making sure the Foundation is representing the consensus of the PB community in its negotiating position? How can we be expected to "speak with one voice" otherwise?

We urge the Foundation to hold off on any meetings with the County about a management arrangement for Clam Bay until *all* of the options have been fully explored. This includes allowing our new Commissioner to call for an accounting of the manner in which the PBSB's oversight was removed. MAG would have much more confidence in a Foundation/PBSB management framework than any arrangement that essentially transfers day-to-day oversight to the Coastal Advisory Committee--a committee dominated by the marine industry and boating interests, which is structured in a way that minimizes Pelican Bay's participation. Protecting the preserve will be a never-ending battle.

Sincerely,

*Mary*

Mary McLean Johnson  
President  
Mangrove Action Group

Mary McLean Johnson  
6573 Marissa Loop #1501  
Naples, FL 34108

Tel: 239-566-7515  
Cell: 239-248-8546

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**From:** Johan Domenie [mailto:hobodory@comcast.net]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 14, 2010 12:34 PM  
**To:** ResnickLisa  
**Subject:** Fw: Recent developments regarding Clam Bay

**Here is the balance of the January 5th Agenda - received from Marcia Cravens**

Steve,

A few questions and comments are prompted by the email you sent out yesterday:

I've tried to be as brief as possible, but there are a number of items to be addressed. I'm writing this as someone who has spent the better part of my life for the past 3+ years advocating Pelican Bay's Stewardship over the Clam Bay estuarine preserve within the boundaries of our community. This outstanding mangroves ecosystem does not exist in Seagate or the city of Naples Parkshore/Moorings Bay community. They destroyed the mangrove ecosystem within their boundaries. This is a Quality of Life issue for our community. The residents of Pelican Bay could have purchased our homes anywhere along this coast. We could have bought in Naples beachfront developments, other golf course focus communities or waterfront homes with boat-docks and no natural shoreline anywhere in sight. We didn't do that. We bought in Pelican Bay because we were seduced by the beauty of the mangroves forest in our backyard and delight in the many beautiful birds and other wildlife that are here due to the mangrove ecosystem.

I'm not replying to the government recipients which you included in your email and I have to wonder why you sent such an email to include them? If it's transparency for "affected Stakeholders", why not show the same or hopefully better courtesy to the most affected Stakeholders (Pelican Bay residents)? Why not be more concerned with transparency to Ted Raia of the PBSB who has asked you to share information or Mary Johnson, President of the Mangrove Action Group, who has asked repeatedly for the CD of County response to latest FDEP Request for Additional Information which you assured all of us would be shared. It's been over a month now and you still haven't shared it with the organizations you claim are speaking with one voice.

Your emails, which include County government recipients, indicates "we" are in agreement with the County's response to FDEP and are poised to provide the County with a Foundation statement to that effect. How can that be when "we" (Pelican Bay organizations and residents) haven't seen the County response in order for your statement to the County to really be the "one voice of Pelican Bay"? Your email appears intent on persuading Pelican Bay persons in our organizations that County and Naples government won't "cede" or allow PBSB to be reestablished. You don't include advocacy on PBSB's behalf, especially on Clam Bay permits despite your knowledge that our new Commissioner (whom many of us worked hard to get elected) stated that she wants to review the legal basis for the PBSB role over Clam Bay and will advocate for the PBSB. You know that your advocacy would be helpful to her in restoring all of Pelican Bay's overall interests. Instead of advocacy for the PBSB, why are you leaning heavily in the other direction?!

You began acting as negotiator to uphold PB in its role established by the Quit Claim Deed, Covenants and Restrictions, and other documents too numerous to mention and to begin legal filings if you were unsuccessful in getting the County to recognize PB's role and ability to reject any activities within Clam Bay that are inconsistent with the Quit Claim Deed, Covenants and Restrictions establishing the entirety of the Clam Pass system to be preserved in perpetuity essentially in its natural condition as a conservation/ preservation area. However, you began deliberations with County staff under a precondition by them that you would be working towards a binding agreement that is not predicated on the Covenants and Restrictions (or presumably the full record of the Quit Claim Deed). You are very far away from where you started.

It is astounding that you appear to not advocate for our PBSB which is also our MSTBU that has contributed many millions of Pelican Bay dollars for water management and restoration projects in order to keep Clam Bay healthy in its essentially natural condition. The County and City government people you are "negotiating" with have attempted to

hijack stewardship away from PBSD largely through an attempt to obtain permits. Surely, you must recognize that they want the permits, not to continue Clam Bay works in the manner the PBSD has, but have demonstrated a great desire to significantly alter the Clam Pass system within Pelican Bay boundaries by falsely claiming that Moorings Bay, etc in the Doctors Pass system are all a part of the Clam Bay estuary. You know they are doing this in a scheme to get Federal dollars (WRDA funds) for "studies" to justify construction that will use the Clam Pass system to "flush" the dirty canals of Moorings Bay. It is reasonable to discern that if they fail to obtain permits, they are unable to hijack any real stewardship over Clam Bay. Your last email and the one prior are concerning due to your now assisting the other County interests ability to hijack Clam Bay permits away from Pelican Bay and generally trying to persuade others in Pelican Bay that the PBSD could not or should not hold Clam Bay permits.

Why are you putting such a negative spin on restoring the PBSD as permittee over Clam Bay? Do you want the Coastal Zone Manager/Coastal Advisory Committee to dictate what occurs in Clam Bay and be permittee on Clam Bay permits? Do you wish to tie the hands of our new Commissioner who is taking steps to prove that the CBAC ordinance was not legally sufficient to usurp the PBSD in making recommendations for the maintenance and management of Clam Bay? Why do you believe the City of Naples has an equal interest in Clam Bay when it has only contributed maybe \$ 2,500.00 one time towards WQ testing? That is not enough to establish that they have heavy investments in Clam Bay. How much has Seagate invested in Clam Bay to prove that they have a substantial investment in it? The expenditures of TDC funds in the last two years were done inappropriately and have wasted too much money on highly questionable contracts with the PBSJ firm that resulted in reports that many people consider without scientific merit.

You stated that the dredging of Clam Pass was paid for by TDC funds. It was only a TDC budget item to pay up-front for all of the dredging in Clam Pass for the 2007 dredge event. In prior years there was an agreement that the County would reimburse PBSD for costs of dredging that resulted in nourishment to the public beach areas adjacent to Clam Pass. They reimbursed PBSD only for dredging that resulted in renourishment benefit to the beach below the mean high water line. Additionally, there was an agreement that the County would annually reimburse the PBSD for the cost of maintaining administrative offices at the Sun Trust Bank building location. I believe sometimes these payments ended up being confused within the accounting records and may have showed up as just one payment to the PBSD in the form of a transfer of funds to the PBSD from Fund 111- which was originally a fund of the Natural Resources Department.

There can be no doubt that PBSD has paid many millions of dollars of investment directly related to Clam Bay. NO other County department/division/taxing unit comes anywhere close to our investment. You do not have consensus when you assert a position that Naples has equal standing over Clam Bay. They are being a bully and we shouldn't tolerate being bullied. It only invites more bullying. Some folks are so fed up with this situation (not upholding the Covenants or PB's role over Clam Bay) that they are talking about filing a Burt Harris type lawsuit against the County. No there is not consensus or acquiesce to others imposing their values and control over the Clam Pass/Clam Bay preserve.

This is not a matter of "the County" ceding anything to PBSD. The PBSD IS a part of the County. It is established as a District, Division, and Unit of Collier County government.

PBSD already has a purpose of surface water management that includes its role to monitor and ensure WQ is not degraded by our PUD. PBSD already has a purpose of maintenance of conservation or preserve areas. PBSD already has a purpose of restoration of the mangroves forest. PBSD already has the day to day operation of Clam Bay. These roles and purpose of the PBSD are already established by ordinances. Yes it is true that the BCC have an ex-officio, governing relationship with the PBSD Board, but they established the PBSD/MSTBU Board to make recommendations to them for decisions which affect we who pay ad valorem and additional non ad valorem taxes for certain benefits and responsibilities. The BCC cannot refuse the PBSD from doing that which it was created to do. Again, it is not a matter of "the County" ceding anything.

The Coastal Zone Manager tried to intimidate the PBSD into transferring the 1998 permit and was unsuccessful in that. He then went about interpreting a component of the Clam Bay Management Plan which he had no part in creating or authority to act under. He just bluffed it - first that the Coast Guard required red/green markers- when that was disproven, then that the FDEP required it- when that was disproven, then that the Corps required it and he got hold of someone at the Corps that didn't know what he was up to - who provided him with an email that took a long time for us

to prove that the Corps didn't state anything about requiring red/green markers. In fact the Corps could not make a statement that they require red/green markers because that would be inconsistent with the FDEP position and the FDEP is the lead agency for the Joint Coastal Permits by the FDEP and the Corps. There is now correspondence to Ted Raia of PBSB and also an email by Lucy Blair of FDEP to Ryan Snyder of FDEP with Cc to others whereby both clearly state the Corps doesn't require the red/green markers and it is the County that has made that interpretation.

The PBSB sent a letter to the Corps last year to remedy the problem of the CZM imposing his interpretation of the management plan option component on waterway markers, but Jeff Klatzkow, County Attorney then sent the Corps a letter that stated the PBSB was not a part of Collier County government and told the Corps to disregard the letter from the PBSB. This prompted the Corps to respond with a letter to the County telling them that all the different entities of the County need to work together. Frank Halas would have supported Klatzkow, but I seriously doubt that Klatzkow would send such a letter while Georgia is our Commissioner- he knows that she won't tolerate it.

Your business letter style of the last email that gives compliments before making criticisms and the email prior to it have been denigrating to the people and organizations within our community. How can you possibly be helping to restore or improve PB status with County government or any other entity when you espouse such a derogatory attitude about the people and organizations of Pelican Bay? I have been in support of your action which most of us felt had value in stalling or denying CZM on permit acquisitions. In truth, you were very successful in delaying them and helping to run the USCG permit out of time until our new Commissioner could take office. However, as time went on and your correspondence indicated to County and possibly regulatory agencies that you were speaking for all of Pelican Bay, it became rather more concerning that you were giving the impression to the County and the regulatory agencies that there was consensus within the PB organizations for any agreement you might arrive at with the County.

Consensus among the organizations of Pelican Bay is patently not true for you to assist CZM to achieve a dredging permit. The PBSB, MAG and PBPOA has strongly objected to the PBSJ erroneous reports that are meant to justify significant alterations to Clam Bay. The PBPOA has passed at least one resolution whereby they declared they want Clam Bay permits to be under the PBSB. The Mangrove Action Group has never wavered from its assertion that Clam Bay permits should be under the PBSB. Additionally, the Foundation Board sentiment seemed to also be opposed to CZM achieving approval of its permit applications. It would be very odd for the Foundation Board to be in opposition to the PBSB role over Clam Bay being restored wouldn't it?

Our new Commissioner has stated she will review the legal role of the PBSB for Clam Bay which must be considered in relation to any permits. I hope you will not take any further actions or issue any more correspondences that are derogatory to our people and organizations or that may hinder our new Commissioner from fully engaging in restoring and upholding our long-established role of stewardship over the Clam Bay estuarine ecosystem which cannot be divorced from the Clam Pass waterways.

The op-ed piece by David Brooks is trying to make a silk purse out of a sow's ear. Obama is already despised by Republican leadership. His "compromise" on Bush tax cuts has caused most of the Democrat leadership to lash out at him in a rare bout of their House majority unity. I hope you are not suggesting that PB follow in Obama's footprint. Shall we invite his problems on ourselves?

Marcia Cravens

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**From:** Johan Domenie [mailto:hobodory@comcast.net]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 14, 2010 12:32 PM  
**To:** ResnickLisa  
**Cc:** Bob Naegele  
**Subject:** January 5th Agenda

**I would like the following to be included in the January 5th Agenda - separately I am also sending what Marcia said.**

Thanks

John

----- Original Message -----

Steve:

Let me first state that I am not an attorney, and that this is a complex question. I have had opportunity to negotiate with customers, but find that PB's position at present appears to be one of Defense at all costs - instead of taking a pro-active position. You are renowned for your negotiation skills, and I sincerely hope that PB's position will prevail over the County's.

Many thanks for including so many people in your e-mail. You are of course aware that I can only respond to you with copy to four others - not including any members of the PBSB. Therefore I was rather surprised that you included County personnel - no doubt as they are party of the negotiations presently being conducted. But, you have also included the Commissioners - what has been their involvement in your talks with the CZM?

However as a member of the PBSB I find it strange that you are ready to state that "It (PBSB) did not distinguish itself over the red/green markers". And to tell the County and Commissioners that is your feeling - thus denigrating the work of the PBSB has successfully performed over a ten year period.

The PBSB had extensive discussions with the CZM regarding this matter, but we came to the conclusion that as an entity of the County we could not sue the County, or even hire an outside attorney to either sue the County or seek further legal help in the matter. In fact I was a strong proponent to ask the Foundation for help, as the Foundation had the financial ability to carry the fight forward.

NEVER - and I repeat NEVER - was it our intent to relinquish our say over Clam Bay. The CZM took it upon himself to get the CAC involved and then convinced the Commissioners to authorize the creation of a sub-committee to further his aims.

Further I do not believe that any member of the PBSB or the PBPOA would agree that we should share management of this precious estuary with the County - and that if there are disagreements to take the matter to arbitration. If the two parties can not agree on an arbitrator - then what? Please remember that for one year we were negotiating with the CZM regarding the "Peer Review". Every time we showed some flexibility the CZM went back to his original position - that is not negotiating!

And how do you then account for the fact that the PBSB has applied to continue with its maintenance work within the estuary? Will the Foundation and the County determine this work? What experience does the CZM have in managing the estuary? Who will do the work? I am confused.

Half way through your second paragraph that is exactly what you are saying "how can two PB entities sit at the table...?" It was my original impression that you entered the negotiations to assist the PBSB retain the responsibility it had for ten years in managing the estuary. This has now changed to have the Foundation and the County manage it - what will be the roll of the PBSB??? Will we still do the taxing and then turn the money over to you and the County? I do not see that the PBSB Board would go along with that. If the Foundation assumes sole responsibility then the Foundation will have to include the expenses in its budget.

Regarding water quality you state that you are doubtful that the County would CEDE water quality issues to the PBSB. How can you cede something that you never had? And therein lies one of the very basic problems. Not only does the County not have certain powers at the moment, but it is commencing its arguments by saying that they already have control and hence will not cede. What has the county done as far as water quality is concerned in the preserve?

I appreciate that negotiations may assure that the ebb-shoal will not be involved in any dredging - it protects Foundation property. But, for eight years the County was not really involved in the dredging of Clam Pass. The only dredging that was requested was for the health of the mangroves - we (PBSB) paid for the surveys and

BedTaxes were used for the actual dredging - although - if my memory serves me correctly - the initial dredging was funded by the PBSB and later refunded to us - but this is vague in my mind.

The City of Naples was never really interested in "CLAM BAY" - only lately were they convinced by the residents of Seagate to get involved - for NAVIGATION purposes! NEVER to protect the mangroves, benthic communities or water quality WITHIN the mangrove forest. The water quality issue has only been raised recently - especially when PBS&J "created" the new Clam Bay extending south beyond Doctors' Pass. The City of Naples has serious problems with their storm water run-off, and they should settle that before resorting to "solution by dilution".

Again you state that you do not know how the City would react to the PBSB controlling Clam Bay issues. Should we tell the City how to clean up their mess - would they agree to have us tell them what to do in the City? Yes, they did not re-act well to the red/green lateral marker issue. It would appear that you are listening to them. It was THEY who began the problem - not the PBSB. So you are telling us that we were wrong in our legitimate position, whereas the City was right? I do not buy that argument - and I doubt whether other members of the PBSB would.

I also do not believe the OP-Ed article in the NYTimes is a model for us. Pres Obama has never been in a position of weakness and has never been FORCED to negotiate. On the other hand you may say that he has negotiated without the full support of Democrats in Congress. You are negotiating without the full support of the Pelican Bay residents - very few of whom are aware of what is going on. (I know, few people attend meetings and fewer are concerned - as long as the view from their balconies remains "green")

Finally, the NRPA is a unique piece of real-estate which has been managed successfully by the PBSB for ten years. Let's negotiate from absolute strength. Again I do not see how the County, City and Foundation can manage this valuable resource. And, if a conflict arises to throw it in the hands of an arbitrator. Is our legal position that weak that we must give in to their demands.

No doubt some of my (and possibly others) frustration is that we are not aware of the detailed negotiations which are going on, and as you say, nothing has been put down on paper so far. Unfortunately my experience with the CZM is that when it comes down to putting something into writing that is when the real negotiations will commence.

You have dedicated tremendous effort and time in trying to reach an "accommodation" with the County and City. There are no doubt questions and problems beyond my immediate sphere, influencing these negotiations. I do feel that the PBSB has done an excellent job of managing its responsibilities. And the Foundation - if it agrees to the proposed Turrell, Hall & Assoc contract - will be helping the PBSB in locating (and possibly correcting) problem areas. Here the Foundation is taking a really proactive stance.

Thanks for all your efforts,

John

----- Original Message -----

**From:** [Feldhaus, Stephen](#)  
**To:** [Susan Boland](#) ; [Mary McLean Johnson \(MLMAssocAICP@aol.com\)](#) ; [Henry Price](#) ; [ochs\\_l](#) ; [ramsey\\_m](#) ; [McAlpinGary](#) ; [Fred Coyle](#) ; [Jim Coletta](#) ; [Donna Fiala](#) ; [Tom Henning](#) ; [Georgia Hiller](#) ; [John Sorey](#) ; [Bill Carpenter](#) ; [Bob Naegele](#) ; [Bob Uek](#) ; [Doug Esson](#) ; [Jim Hoppensteadt](#) ; [Mike Coyne](#) ; [Robert Pendergrass](#) ; [Ronnie Bellone](#) ; [Feldhaus, Stephen](#) ; [Geoffrey Scott Gibson](#) ; [Hunter Hansen](#) ; [John Baron](#) ; [John Chandler](#) ; [John Domenie](#) ; [John Iazzo](#) ; [Keith Dallas](#) ; [Mary Anne Womble](#) ; [Mike Levy](#) ; [Theodore Raia](#) ; [Tom Cravens](#)  
**Sent:** Saturday, December 11, 2010 2:24 PM  
**Subject:** Recent developments regarding Clam Bay

Dear All,

I am advised that the PBSB Board will be considering a motion at its January meeting to petition the BCC for the PBSB to regain control over certain Clam Bay matters. As we all know, the PBSB has done a stellar job over the years maintaining Clam Bay (although perhaps it is fair to say that it did not distinguish itself over the red and green marker issue), and one solution to handling Clam Bay issues clearly could be to put control in the hands of the PBSB. The PBSB has an institutional knowledge of Clam Bay issues and has the tax resources to be able to fund the studies and analysis that will be necessary to manage this resource going forward.

Before we as a community endorse this course of action, however, I would hope that we will carefully consider all its ramifications. The plan for the management of Clam Bay that is currently being negotiated with the County (admittedly, still to be reduced to writing, and subject to approval by the BCC and by the Foundation Board) involves the Foundation and the County having equal say on all Clam Bay matters, with a provision that if the parties cannot agree, the matter will be subject to arbitration. It is unclear to me whether the proposal for the PBSB to regain control over certain PBSB matters contemplates abandoning the management plan currently being negotiated with the county, but it would seem that it would, since it is unlikely that the county would place two Pelican Bay entities at the table with the power to direct day to day matters for Clam Bay. We also need to consider carefully what the control structure truly would be with the PBSB in control of Clam Bay and what matters would properly be under the jurisdiction of the PBSB. For example, it is unlikely that the county will cede water quality issues to the PBSB, since water quality issues may well be some of the most critical and potentially costly issues to be dealt with in Collier County in the years ahead.

It is also difficult to see the county ceding to the PBSB the control over the dredging of Clam Pass, which is paid for by funds from the Tourist Development Tax, not from Pelican Bay funds. Our negotiations with the county have resulted in an agreement regarding dredging that protects the ebb shoal, that protects our property at South Beach, and that gives the Foundation an equal say in when and where to dredge. I don't see the county allowing the PBSB to make those decisions.

I also note that the City of Naples has an interest in Clam Bay, both because part of Clam Bay is in the City of Naples, because Clam Bay is connected to Moorings Bay, and because Clam Bay and Moorings Bay are both within the same WBID. We have taken the considerations of the City of Naples into account in arriving at the currently proposed management structure for Clam Bay. It is not at all clear how the City of Naples would react to the PBSB controlling Clam Bay matters. They certainly did not react well to the way the PBSB handled the red and green marker issue.

And speaking of the red and green lateral navigational marker issue, I have previously reported that I am cautiously optimistic that we are going to be able to resolve this issue, and have asked for our community to temper down its often vitriolic approach to this sensitive and contentious issue.

In that regard, I am reminded of the excellent OpEd piece by David Brooks in Thursday's The New York Times. I am including it in its entirety below because I believe it is relevant to the handling of local as well as national issues.

My concern is that we need to put in place a procedure that will enable our community to have an effective voice in the ongoing long term management of Clam Bay, especially when difficult and controversial issues have to be handled. If the PBSB takes over day to day management of Clam Bay, final authority will always rest in the hands of the BCC, and even if we have the three BCC votes now to bring Clam Bay under the auspices of the PBSB, there is no guarantee we will have the necessary three votes to resolve thorny and potentially critically important issues down the road.

Again, I urge the PBSB Board, and our entire community, to give careful consideration to all the ramifications of what the PBSB Board is being asked to pursue. I am copying all of the interested parties on this email so that we can have a full and open dialogue about the available options for managing Clam Bay.

Best,

Steve Feldhaus

December 9, 2010

## Obama's Very Good Week

By [DAVID BROOKS](#)

Over the past week we've seen the big differences between cluster liberals and network liberals. Cluster liberals (like cluster conservatives) view politics as a battle between implacable opponents. As a result, they believe victory is achieved through maximum unity. Psychologically, they tend to value loyalty and solidarity. They tend to angle toward situations in which philosophical lines are clearly drawn and partisan might can be bluntly applied.

Network liberals share the same goals and emerge from the same movement. But they tend to believe — the nation being as diverse as it is and the Constitution saying what it does — that politics is a complex jockeying of ideas and interests. They believe progress is achieved by leaders savvy enough to build coalitions. Psychologically, network liberals are comfortable with weak ties; they are comfortable building relationships with people they disagree with.

This contrast is not between lefties and moderates. It's a contrast between different theories of how politics is done. Ted Kennedy was a network liberal, willing to stray from his preferences in negotiation with George W. Bush or John McCain. Most House Democrats, by contrast, are cluster liberals. They come from safe seats, have a poor feel for the wider electorate and work in an institution where politics is a war of all against all.

Barack Obama ran for president as a network liberal, and entranced a Facebook nation. But in office, Obama, like George W. Bush before him, narrowed his networks. To get things done quickly, he governed like a cluster liberal, relying on partisan leaders.

The results were predictable: insularity, alienation and defeat. So now we are headed toward divided government. But there is a whiff of coalition-building in the air. Dick Durbin and Tom Coburn boldly embraced the bipartisan fiscal commission process. Obama opened up a comprehensive set of negotiations with Republican leaders to handle the Bush tax cuts.

The big story of the week is that Obama is returning to first principles, re-establishing himself as a network liberal. This isn't a move to the center or triangulation. It's not the Clinton model or the Truman model or any of the other stale categories people are trying to impose on him. It's standing at one spot in the political universe and trying to build temporarily alliances with people at other spots in the political universe.

You don't have to abandon your principles to cut a deal. You just have to acknowledge that there are other people in the world and even a president doesn't get to stamp his foot and have his way.

Cluster liberals in the House and the commentariat are angry. They have no strategy for how Obama could have better played his weak hand — with a coming Republican majority, an expiring tax law and several Democratic senators from red states insisting on extending all the cuts. They just sense the waning of their moment and are howling in protest.

They believe nonliberals are blackmailers or hostage-takers or the concentrated repositories of human evil, so, of course, they see coalition-building as collaboration. They are also convinced that Democrats should never start a negotiation because they will always end up losing in the end. (Perhaps psychologists can explain the interesting combination: intellectual self-confidence alongside a political inferiority complex).

The fact is, Obama and the Democrats have had an excellent week. The White House negotiators did an outstanding job for their side. With little leverage, they got not only the unemployment insurance, but also an Earned Income Tax Credit provision, a college scholarship provision and other Democratic goodies. With little leverage, they got a package that could win grudging praise from big-name liberal groups like the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities and the Center for American Progress.

Moreover, Obama has put himself in a position to govern again. The package is popular. According to the most recent Gallup numbers, 67 percent of independents and 52 percent of Democrats support extending all the tax cuts. Higher numbers support extending the unemployment insurance. Obama is reminding independents why they liked him in the first place.



He only needs to work on two things. He needs to explain his method better than he did in his press conference. It is entirely consistent to support a policy and be willing to move off of it in exchange for a greater good or a necessary accommodation. That's called real life.

Then he's got to bring this networking style to the larger issues. It's easy to cut a deal that explodes deficits. It's harder to cut one that reduces them. But there are more networks waiting to be built: to reform the tax code; to reduce consumption and expand productivity; to reform entitlements.

Washington doesn't know how to handle coalition-building anymore; you can see consternation and confusion all around. But did anybody think changing the tone was going to be easy?