

My name is Peter Conze, and I serve as President of the Guardians of Martin County, a 501-c-3 entity committed to educating residents about the value of balancing natural and man-made resources to enrich our quality of life, what we call preserving our “Martin County Difference.”

The package under consideration today is loosely referred to as the Rural Lifestyle Zoning Amendments, or “RLZ Amendments” consisting of the text Amendment to our Martin County’s Comprehensive Growth Management Plan, its related Future Land Use Map Amendment and the accompanying Planned Unit Development arrangement, all as they apply to the proposed Atlantic Fields development.

Last Friday the Guardians issued a Position Statement in which we declared our opposition to the RLZ Amendments, as currently proposed, for a variety of reasons. We urge the Commission not to adopt the RLZ Amendments today, principally for the reasons I will outline as I continue.

The simple fact is that we see no necessity to abandon the current designation for agricultural land under the Comp Plan for the sake of one developer, since the developer can apply for approval on his own, rather than have the County create a new land designation for the entire agricultural area just to accommodate such a development.

Citizens have not been informed definitively of the full extent of the land area to which the RLZ will apply. Practically speaking, we note the lack of planning for appropriate corridors, the lack of fully disclosed housing requirements and plans for workers, staff and ancillary support facilities, as well as the lack of forecasts of traffic and highway use and impacts on other levels of county services like beaches, native habitats and wildlife, and technically, the proposal requires full determination of advanced water treatment systems, water quality monitoring and control of discharges, as well as possible potential impacts on the adjoining agricultural areas due to more proximate development in contiguous domains.

While we understand many of the issues can be explained, and, to the extent they may represent future problems which should be anticipated, probably solved in discussions with the developer and the County Administrative Staff, we also maintain that Martin County citizens are fully entitled to explore all these aspects of the proposed RLZ Amendments, and we realize that this process takes time, to which our citizens are also entitled. So, we recommend, first, that a moratorium be declared on all other pending Comp Plan Amendments in the agricultural zone until all the relevant issues relating to Atlantic Fields can be fully identified, discussed and settled, by second, a dedicated Task Force, appointed by the Commission, of members of the public, including recognized experts in related fields, and Administrative staff.

Finally, we wish to suggest to the Commission that all of these activities become salient parts of a new Martin County Environmental Initiative, to be embraced by the Commission as the means by which all related aspects of the Comp Plan can be supported, with plans for the allocation of County funds to purchase environmentally sensitive areas for conservation and protection, just like the private undertaking The Loxa-Lucie Headwaters Initiative bought its conservation acreage along Bridge Road in Hobe Sound with private funds from very concerned citizens. A public-private partnership is even a possibility. Thank you,

Peter Conze

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