

3 Minute BOCC Speech 9/5/2024

I am David Michael Pearson. I live in the Tarpon Woods subdivision in unincorporated Pinellas County. I have been a resident of, property owner in, and citizen of Pinellas county for 25 years.

I am addressing you to express my grave concerns about an anonymous developer's proposed project to destroy the golf course that has been an integral part of Tarpon Woods for 50 years. It would replace it forever with a privately owned locked and fenced piece of land transformed by massive dredging and filling of habitat/dirt/water in the Brooker Creek flood plain.

This project is called the Brooker Creek Mitigation Bank - Tarpon Wood (DRM-24-00066). I opened DRM-24-00106 to ask questions about it. I am in ongoing and positive contact with Development Project Manager Guy Shoemaker of BDRS.

After attending the first public meeting with agents of the developer (August 28) I have many more questions. The existence of this project came as a complete surprise to our community in early August. I am in catch up mode. The developer's expectation of 1 year for this project left me dumbfounded given the extent of the changes, their effect on so many aspects of community, county, state, and federal agencies and departments, rules, regulations and laws.

I live on the 16th fairway of the Tarpon Woods golf course. I love the friendly stable family community, the tranquil, natural, green environment, towering oak and pine trees, open view onto the golf course which has for all these years provided a safe habitat for my family and the deer, turkeys, and birds and endangered species. It is an oasis in a very densely developed county. It is a stable community with the original developer's extended family among the long term residents. I am sure many county employees are also residents. Brooker Creek flows through it providing drainage for Pinellas and Hillsboro county and valuable fresh water for Lake Tarpon, Tampa Bay and the aquifer. The creek and the golf course is the continuity between the near by public recreation centers: Brooker Creek Preserve, John Chestnut Park, Pinellas trail and Lake Tarpon. This is a highly developed and recreation centric part of Pinellas County that needs to conserve and grow public accessible green spaces.

Bottom line: the County and the Community need to raise and resolve if possible all concerns before considering approval

End of 3 Minutes

Some of my personal concerns

What this means to me is significant loss in property value (\$50K-100K). A fence in my back yard. An intermittent pond/swamp/marsh/algae bed/mud/dead fish near my back yard. Loss of access to nature. A view of brown weeds and scrub brush. Increased traffic. Increased risk of mosquito born diseases, forest fire, invasive species, vagrants, crime refuge. No assurance or insurance that the developer will do what they say in the long run.

Some red flags

The conceptual plan to date is half baked has no specifics and contains a lot of blanks. There has been no community input to agents of the developer until August 28's highly emotional, full house, televised meeting in the golf course club house. The community had become aware of its existence only on August 9 and swiftly mobilized thanks to SaveTarponWoods.com. The developer is unknown hasn't been disclosed and prefers not to be disclosed. His agents admitted that they have never done this before - never placed a mitigation bank in this close proximity to a settled community. What happens if it goes bad? How do we know the management will be competent and a good neighbor? What management is planned and is it credible? How do we know the LLC will stay around for perpetuity. If it defaults, who all are left holding the bag (community, County, SWFWMD, FDEP, Army Corps of Engineers ..? What and how is it managed? For example, ponds near development require management: aeration, depth control, flood control, insect control, algae control. Community flood and storm control use existing ponds and the streets and storm sewers. What is the new flood and storm control for this property? Is it credible?

Background

I am a husband, father, grandfather, great grandfather. I am an electrical engineer with Bachelor of Science, Master of Science and Electrical Engineer diplomas from MIT. I am retired now after 55 years of practice as a private contractor for companies de signing, developing, evaluating, testing and selling complex systems for federal agencies as well as providing in house technical assistance to federal agencies evaluating and purchasing complex systems.