May 21, 2017

Dear County Commissioners

I am writing to tell you how concerned I am regarding (1) the proposed use of county land near the celery fields off of Palmer Blvd in East Sarasota County for industrial use and (2) use of this land for a Waste Processing Facility.

Developers have asked you to approve industrializing a total of about 23 acres at the intersection of Apex and Palmer Boulevard. Two promising, sensitive areas lie near these lots -- The Celery Fields just east of Apex, and the adopted Fruitville Initiative Plan north of Palmer:

The county apparently acquired this land about 1994. At that time there were only about 130 houses east of the Celery Fields that used Palmer as their primary access to the neighborhood.  That is when the county decided to designate the land along I-75 for light industrial use. The current zoning is ”Open Use Rural” which allows no commercial use and requires 10 acres for one house.

Since 1994, the County has allowed over 1,050 houses to be constructed along Palmer. (not including the Founder's Club, Laurel Oak, and Laurel Lake). Also approved is another 770 lots at the corner of Palmer and Iona Road - Artistry Development - that are in the process of development right now.

The **Celery Fields** began as a regional stormwater project -- it cleanses water, protects against major floods, and manages our stormwater runoff before releasing it to Phillippi Creek and  Roberts Bay. Over time, this public property has evolved into a much loved and used park and recreational facility, and a bird sanctuary listed on the Great Florida Birding Trail, in national and international eco-tourism brochures and tours.

The public properties proposed for industrial use at Apex and Palmer are at the edge of the Celery Fields. They should be held to a much higher level of public input and vision. And right nearby, you have a regionally significant example of this higher level of vision in the Plan for the public lands that contain the Fruitville Library. Years of effort on the part of the County, property owners and homeowners resulted in the Fruitville Initiative.

The celery fields, Audubon Center and the huge number of people who engage in bird watching provide opportunities for our county residents and many visitors to have a really significant environmental experience. The industrial use of this area is no longer compatible with the existing uses of this land.

Fast forward to 2017- close to 1,200 households and an elementary school and the Audubon Center and the park users use Palmer as the primary access. NOW the vacant land serves as a welcome gateway to a large community.

I am especially upset and absolutely against the use of this land for a Waste Processing Facility. Mr. James Gabbert owns the company that is applying to build the industrial recycling plant or “Waste Processing Facility” by the celery fields. As you know, he is an elected member of the Charter Review Board in Sarasota County. (And, he already owns a waste processing facility on Fruitville Road in East Sarasota County).

There are major issues with authorizing a Waste Processing Facility

1. **Noise!**The facility will be permitted to CRUSH CONCRETE 6 days a week from 7 am to 5 pm. If you've never heard the machines that do this, they are loud!
2. **Pollution!** Get ready for 35-foot piles of heavy construction materials, yard waste and miscellaneous debris blowing into the air and leaching into our groundwater. There will also be towering smoke stacks.
3. **Traffic!**They estimate up to 100 trucks daily will be dropping off construction waste from around the county. Palmer Boulevard is NOT going to support this kind of heavy additional congestion without seriously degrading the quality of life for all living things around it.
4. **Environmental!** The diesel engine emissions from trucks staged to unload along the roads will impact humans and wildlife over time. You don't generally turn the engines off while waiting to unload. Also, unless they own all of the trucks hauling material, they will not be able to control what drivers do in their downtime in regard to parking, mandated rest time off the road, running their engines, etc.
5. **Property values!** People have invested heavily in their homes around this beautiful park and pay their fair share of property taxes. This is NOT the right place to build this facility!

Commissioners, please do not approve the request for a Waste Processing Plant on this land. We count on you to protect the best interests of all of us as citizens of Sarasota County and trust that you will do so in this case.

Thank you in advance.

Sincerely,

Name

Address

Neighborhood

Telephone number

Email address