

External Affairs Committee Update May 2013

Bonita East Stakeholders Position on Potential Rezoning of 3,600 Acres of City DRGR Land

The Executive Committee of the Bonita East Stakeholders representing the Chairpersons or Vice Chairpersons of External Affairs Committees of Hunters Ridge, Worthington, Palmira, San Remo and Village Walk met on Monday, May 13th and have agreed on the following major points of serious concerns about the potential rezoning of approximately 3,600 acres of the City's Density Reduction Groundwater Resource (DRGR) land which is the subject of the May 22nd, 2013 Workshop. The BES Executive Committee is not opposed to quality developments and can visualize some beautiful and picturesque developments on some of the DRGR land in the 3,600 acres being studied; however, the potential rezoning of this large tract of DRGR land brings into focus some major issues which must be satisfactorily addressed before any approval of rezoning is brought forward.

The following issues are outlined below for consideration of the planning firm retained by the City of Bonita Springs to study the pros and cons of the potential rezoning of 3,600 acres of DRGR land.

Prior to the City Council voting to rezone either all or part of the 3,600 acres of DRGR or all of the DRGR in Bonita Springs, a separate flood and storm water management flood mitigation study needs to be conducted by a independent flood mitigation and storm water management firm similar to the computerized model developed for SFWMD.

This firm should utilize the results of the SFWMD 2009 Southern Lee County Flood Mitigation Study and the Bonita Springs Storm Water Management Study of 2010, utilizing the latest Southern Lee County GIS topographical data including locating in the computerized model all the recently constructed sound walls and visual screen walls along I-75, and major screen walls like the Worthington wall along Bonita Beach Road which divert storm water from its normal flow path. This study should also assume various development densities ranging from 30% to 60%, assume the most stringent storm water management design criteria which would be considerably more stringent than the City and County storm water management design criteria, and then make computerized model analysis of the effects of a 50 and 100 year deign storm to determine if the development of these 3,600 acres will aggravate storm water flooding of the DRGR and the land and roads immediately surrounding the DRGR such as Bonita Beach Road, Bonita Grande and also communities such as Quail West, Worthington, Palmira, Manna Christian Trailer Park, Cedar Creek, Hawthorne and Citrus Park. This study, according to a firm who has done this type of work, should not cost more than \$10,000 to \$25,000. If development of the 3,600 acres of DRGR land aggravates flooding based on the results of the computerized analysis, then rezoning of this DRGR land should not be pursued. The City has already expended approximately \$400,000 or more in studying development of the DRGR plus approximately \$75,000 in this current study.

Therefore to not run a computerized flooding analysis on the DRGR and the surrounding area potentially affected by development of the DRGR land is not getting results on the most critical aspect of any DRGR development.

IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT THIS STUDY BE COMPLETED PRIOR TO APPROVAL OF RE-ZONING.

If re-zoning is done prior to this study and followed by development and flooding is aggravated, the window to fixing the problem has closed and severe property damage would surely occur.

We are enclosing with this position paper copies of the Commentary contained in May 1st, 2013 article in the SW Spotlight on re-zoning the DRGR as background. Also included with this BES Position on Re-zoning 3,600 acres of DRGR land is a copy of a memorandum dated April 13th (revised April 15th, 2013) presented to the City Manager and Deputy Mayor.

TRANSPORTATION ISSUES

BES is seriously concerned about the following transportation issues which may be further aggravated by development of DRGR lands:

Currently in the event of sheet flow flooding or any other road closing of Bonita Beach Road from Bonita Grande going east, our residents have no access to food supplies, emergency services or basic other services. This could be cured by the Logan Blvd. extension or the indefinitely postponed extension of St. Rd. 951.

Increases in trips, especially in an emergency evacuation, will overload the I-75 on-ramps at Bonita Beach Road.

Infrastructure must be upgraded to accommodate the increase in residential trips.

We visualize 5,000 to 6,000 residential building sites in the DRGR, as well as the previously approved 2,000 to 3,000 building sites as yet to be completed on Bonita Beach Road east of I-75.

If DRGR re-zoning is approved, BES would expect to partner in solving these growth issues.

BES is also very interested in maximizing the percolation of storm water into the aquifer under the DRGR and surrounding lands, as opposed to diverting excess flood waters into the gulf. Just one foot of storm water diverted into the gulf from the 3,600 acres of DRGR land would cause us to lose approx. 1.2 billion gallons of much needed water going into our aquifer. Ground water has become a critically important resource, especially if our city is to continue to expand.

Philosophically BES believes that it will be just a matter of time before land owners of the other thousands of acres of City DRGR land not included in this 3,600 acre rezoning study be granted similar rezoning for their parcels based on equal treatment, what you did for one DRGR land owners is what we all are entitled to. Therefore, BES urges the City if they are inclined to rezone the 3,600 acres currently being studied that the City utilize land planners to master plan the rezoning of the entire City DRGR land.

Finally, it will also be a matter of time before adjoining county DRGR land owners will want to be annexed into the City so as to avoid the stringent Lee County Land Development Code pertaining to developing county DRGR land. Annexation of County DRGR land into the City would likely result in a gradual erosion of the county DRGR.

The Executive Committee of BES thanks City Council and the planning firm for hosting this workshop.