

External Affairs Committee Update – September 10, 2013

The threat of development in the DR/GR, Density Reduction Groundwater Resource, is a city-wide threat. We must do what we can to stop the eventual rezoning of the DR/GR. The Workshop on the rezoning of the DR/GR is rapidly coming up on September 10th, which is next week. We need to develop a united front so we can speak for the most part from the same points at the public hearing on 9/10/2013 at 5:30 PM at city hall.

Even though those of us who live in Hunters Ridge will only be inconvenienced by flooding like we had in 1995 and 2005, which occurred outside of our gates, meaning our homes will not flood, just some roads like Bonita Beach Rd., Bonita Grande, and Terry St. We need to understand that there is a much larger picture of the overall effects of rezoning the DR/GR. Others properties surrounding the DRGR will flood and suffer damage. For example, our YMCA may well have water inside the facility. More important properties not now required to buy flood insurance will be required by FEMA to purchase prohibitively expensive flood insurance because the flood maps will be redrawn at some time in the near future. There will be a large demand for the flooding situation to be corrected. The developers will have likely dissolved their Limited Liability Corporations. So who will "foot the bill"? You and I, the taxpayers of the City.

We were all inconvenienced by Bonita Beach Road, Bonita Grande and Terry Street flooding in the 2005 flood. The 2005 flood was not as bad as the 1995 flood because the amount of rain during that storm was not as great. These floods were not anywhere close to a 100 year storm. Please remember, SFWMD experts, after completing their Flood Mitigation Study for all of Southern Lee County, concluded: "there is no economically feasible solution to reducing flooding in Bonita Springs". My personal concern is four fold about increasing the intensity of development in the DR/GR from 1 home per 10 acres to a lesser amount:

1. Prior to granting any type of rezoning or approving an increase in intensity of use from the current 1 home/10 acres; the City should first through SFWMD authorize a study to determine the impact on flooding caused by the potential options for developing the DR/GR. In addition determine what type of increase is needed in storm water management design criteria to reduce or prevent an increase in flooding by developing the DR/GR. For example, it would appear the current design criteria should be increased by 300% to minimize flooding if the DR/GR would be developed.
2. Part of the development requirement, especially since the DR/GR is in the FEMA Flood plain or in some cases the Floodway, is that the building floor must be built 1-2 ft. above flood level. Development in the DR/GR more than the 1 house/10 acres will force storm water into adjoining areas which currently are not flooding or flooding very little. Eventually FEMA will

redraw the Flood Maps and as a result of the latest FEMA Maps, there will be properties which didn't require the owner to purchase flood insurance that would then fall within the flood zone.

3. Development is done these days with limited liability corporations (LLC's) which the current property owner may or may not have an interest in. They are setup to limit the liability of the investors. More important, if after the development is completed, a major storm causes flooding, who is going to pay to solve the flooding issues and also pay for the uninsured damages and to offset the higher costs to surrounding property owners. Who, when FEMA redraws the Flood Maps, must now purchase flood insurance? More than likely the LLC's will have been dissolved or will be of little assistance since development has been completed or nearly completed. The answer to the question is you and I, the taxpayers, will be paying for trying to fix the situation which per SFWMD's 2009 study will not be "economically feasible".

4. Another much debated point deals with ground water and how water flows into the DRGR which percolates into the precious aquifers. Getting increased water flow to the gulf as a major part of the solution of reducing flooding, or making it no worse than it is now, will deprive the aquifers below the DR/GR and to the east and southeast of billions and billions of storm water which does slowly, but surely percolate into the ground and make its way into the various aquifers. Some portion of these billions of gallons of storm water does help recharge our wells that BSU gets 100% of our water from. More development will increase the demand for water from BSU. If this area of Florida under the regulatory control of SFWMD has plenty of water with the current amount of development, why, during the dry seasons of the previous years, did SFWMD impose a water curtailment on our residents including pumping from privately owned wells used to irrigate farms, golf courses, etc.?

As you can tell, this proposed rezoning has many layers and could affect our community in more than one way. Please plan to attend this very important work shop and let your voice be heard, for or against this proposed rezoning. If you cannot attend this meeting, there will be another opportunity for your voice to be heard when the City Council has its final vote on this subject. We will need a large turnout on the day of the final vote. We will let you know when this meeting is scheduled so you can attend, or at least send emails stating your personal position to each City Council member.

Fred Forbes, Chairperson – External Affairs Committee