



Florida Native Plant Society

Serenoa Chapter: Serving Manatee, Sarasota, Hardee and Desoto

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June 5, 2013

Mr. Larry Bustle, Chairman
Manatee County Commission
P.O. Box 1000
Bradenton, FL 34206-1000

Dear Manatee County Commissioners:

The Florida Native Plant Society would like to see the comprehensive plan for Longbar Pointe remain as was approved by our county commissioners in 2008.

It seems once again certain interests are pushing to change the rules that most of us thought were not changeable. Much time and effort went into developing a good comprehensive plan for Manatee County, and now a few special interest groups want to change that plan for their benefit, not the public good.

Development is somewhat inevitable and can be good for business but at what cost? Cost such as increased traffic, increased demand on public services and additional degradation of our water, coasts and the bay. The very things that attract newcomers to our beautiful county are slowly being eroded away.

We object to the developer's request to build a marina by dredging a canal through existing seagrass beds and clearing up to 40 acres of mangrove forest. Sarasota Bay is a productive natural area, its shallow coastline being prime nursery grounds for many species of fish. The mangrove forests buffer the uplands from erosion from wind and water, are important nesting habitats for many species of birds and provide the basis of the food chain in Sarasota Bay feeding small animals that become food for our game fish such as snook and redfish. The impact of changing the comprehensive plan would impact the seagrass beds and mangrove forests, and will have a negative effect on the businesses that rely on the bay for their income. If more and more coastline is allowed to be destroyed bit by bit, the health of the bay will decline, just when it is recovering from past misuse.

The Florida Native Plant Society encourages the Manatee County Commissioners to take a lead in helping to restore Sarasota Bay and the surrounding lands closer to what they once were rather than allowing certain interests to further degrade the land and water. We can have good development but let us not destroy the very thing that brings that development here in the first place.

Sincerely,

Tom Heitzman
President Serenoa Chapter