

CDD SEPTEMBER UPDATE

The July meeting was, to say the least, an interesting meeting. The good news was that almost 90 residents showed up and we had a lively, informative discussion. Actually, in my years as a resident and as a member of the Board of Supervisors I've never seen so many people at a meeting or hear so many voices airing their concerns on an issue impacting the community. When there are concerns on the part of JCP CDD residents concerning the development, recreation facilities, maintenance etc. the place to air these concerns is at a Board meeting where we can have a frank discussion.

The other good news is that the Board heard the resident's voices and a good, "give and take" exchange of information took place and, I believe, the meeting ended with everyone having a better understanding of each others concerns. After some frank comments from Chairperson Susan Beaugrand, Attorney Jonathan Johnson, and other Board members explaining the duties and responsibilities of the CDD, residents in attendance learned more of CDD Board functions and also why the board didn't make an announcement of Horton's plan.

The meeting was anything but routine, although the Board did handle all the necessary routine business – including holding a public hearing to discuss the Fiscal 2006 budget. The budget was approved and we then addressed the major issue on the minds of the majority of residents attending the meeting.

Residents felt the silence of the Board and the fact I didn't mention anything in my JCP Press articles concerning Horton's plans to build townhomes on parcel 50 meant we were withholding information from CDD residents – specifically residents of Whispering Pines and Silver Creek. The fact the CDD and D.R. Horton were both shown on a Notice of Proposed Change (NOPC) was interpreted to mean the CDD was party to the D. R. Horton plan and not acting in the best interests of the community.

Specifically, there was/is major concern about D.R. Horton's plan to build approximately 48 townhomes on Parcel 50. This parcel is presently zoned Recreation therefore rezoning requires a major modification before townhomes or any other type home can be built. Rezoning requires several steps including public meetings for the developer to present their plans to the residents followed by an action on the part of the Planning and Zoning Agency (PZA) to accept or reject the proposal, and finally an action by the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) to accept, reject, or amend the developer's request.

As a result of this meeting and the expressed concerns of the residents, D.R. Horton has announced a meeting on August 31st to discuss their plans, take questions and address resident concerns. In addition, the PZA has now scheduled a hearing on September 15th at the County Auditorium in St. Augustine. At this writing the BCC has not yet established a meeting date.

The most critically important action for all concerned residents who are opposed to the D.R. Horton plan for high density townhomes on Parcel 50 is to attend both the PZA and BCC meetings to demonstrate your interest in the issue and “speak up” to the PZA and BCC. Without a packed house(s) at the County Auditorium when this development issue is addressed by the PZA and BCC you can probably guess what action these boards might take if there appears to be no public interest.

Perhaps the community action demonstrated in the August CDD meeting when residents responded vigorously, voicing their concerns is a turning point wherein more of us will be more aware of issues affecting our neighborhoods and be willing to take action.

There are numerous other, important matters affecting Northwest St. Johns County residents need to be aware of - the most important being the FDOT proposed new bridge at PoPo Point, near S.R. 13. This bridge routes major amounts of automobile traffic from Clay County through St. Johns and onto our local roads and you need to know more about this project. Visit www.sjrbridge.com or call Phyllis Abbatiello for more information, 287-5577. Of course, continued development of residential communities adds to traffic congestion and the need for new roads, schools, recreation facilities, etc.

On August 16th the CDD held a workshop wherein a brief presentation was made by design firm, Basham and Lucas, and the floor was opened to residents to state their preferences, concerns, and comments on the design and amenities they would like see offered. Susan Beaugrand did a really wonderful job in moderating the discussion and answering all relevant questions and concerns. All resident input was welcome and along with notes taken and recorded meeting minutes the Board will make every effort to incorporate resident ideas and concerns in the new recreation facility – budget permitting.

We now have website up and running at www.jcpcdd.org . This website is still a work in progress as new content is being added on regular basis. The website allows for resident e-mail input directly to a specific Supervisor or just addressing the Board in general. Included in the site are meeting minutes from the past 8 or 10 meetings. AND, we’ve added pictures (renderings) of the planned recreation facility showing the expected layout of the main building, pools, tennis courts, and Skate Park – take a look and feel free to comment.

See you at the next meeting on September 13th, at the library. We expect discussing a change of management companies (Severn Trent now provides these services CDD). We like having company and want to hear from you.

Al Abbatiello

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