

TOWN OF JUPITER ISLAND

2 BRIDGE ROAD

HOBE SOUND, FLORIDA 33455

TELEPHONE
(772) 545-0100

FAX
(772) 545-0188

August 22, 2011

The Honorable Edward Ciampi, Chairman
Martin County Board of County Commissioners
2401 S.E. Monterey Road
Stuart, Florida 34996

Dear Chairman Ciampi:

Re: Martin County Board of County Commissioners Meeting, August 30, 2011 - Comprehensive Plan Amendments 2010-09, Canopus Sound LLC, a Text Amendment to Facilitate a Future Change to the Future Land Use Designation; and Comprehensive Plan Amendments 2011-01 and 2011-02, Groves 14 (the Hobe Sound Polo Club), a Text Amendment and a Future Land Use Map Amendment

Please accept this letter on behalf of the Town of Jupiter Island's (Town) Commission. The Town Commission would like to express its objections to the above-referenced Comprehensive Plan Amendments (the Amendments), and would appreciate your distribution of this letter to your fellow Commissioners, and its inclusion as part of the record of the public hearing wherein the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) will consider its transmittal of the Amendments to the state.

The Town's staff and its consultants have reviewed the Amendments; and based on their review, I am summarizing the Town's concerns here. The fundamental concerns are: (1) the proposed increases in density for Canopus Sound and Hobe Sound Polo Club and the reduction in residential lot sizes within these two properties are very likely to lead to a "domino effect" whereby other property owners in western Hobe Sound will also seek increased densities; and (2) the adverse consequences for the County's agricultural or rural lands which will result from the Canopus precedent of trading increased densities on properties for land dedication.

With respect to this "domino effect," the Town has a reasonable concern that density increases for Canopus Sound and Hobe Sound Polo Club will merely be a precursor for even greater density increases for other properties east of I-95. Of concern is that these increased densities for these two large tracts of land may well establish the character of development in western Hobe Sound. Even at one unit per five acres, it is reasonable to expect that properties which are now agricultural or rural in character will be replaced by large lot subdivisions such as Caloosa and other platted subdivisions existing in northern Palm Beach County. Once awarded these increased density entitlements of one unit per five acres, we can expect applications for further increases in density for properties in western Hobe Sound leading to densities which would accommodate a more suburban character of development, including estate homes, as has also been the case in northern Palm Beach County. The Town notes that any further increases in the

density to accommodate estate homes and large lot subdivisions may also result in the properties in western Hobe Sound becoming prematurely eligible for inclusion in the Secondary Urban Service District thereby being entitled to the extension of water and wastewater services. The Town is concerned that density increase in the western Hobe Sound area will then lead to the premature request to have the South Martin Regional Utility (SMRU) provide this area, which is within the SMRU service area, with water and wastewater facilities and services. Of course, extending SMRU's facilities and services into the area east of I-95 will increase the pressure on SMRU to provide utilities west of I-95. Thus, the domino effect. In accordance with the objectives and policies of the Intergovernmental Coordination Element of the Town's and County's respective Comprehensive Plans, the Town requests that the BCC consider its concerns which are legitimized by the experiences in Broward and Palm Beach counties to the south.

With specific reference to the Canopus Sound amendment, the Town agrees with the planning analysis of Principal Planner Harry W. King that this amendment does not meet the two criteria contained in Policy 4.13A.1(2)(a) and (b) of the Future Land Use Element. Given Canopus' failure to meet the two criteria of this Policy, its transmittal is not justified. Even if Canopus could demonstrate it meets the policy of the County's Comprehensive Plan, the proposed "trade-off" of a density increase for the set-aside of acreage is a dangerous precedent. It is reasonable to expect that if Canopus is successful with this type of deal other property owners will soon follow creating another type of domino effect. From a planning perspective, the practical effect may well be a "patch work quilt" of large lot subdivisions and "preservation areas" which are not interconnected so as to actually be of any environmental value. With each trade, the County will receive less and less value; however, the property owners will substantially increase the value of their properties. And, as noted above, further density increase will lead to the demise of the rural and agricultural lands of Martin County, which are important for both economic and environmental reasons.

As you are no doubt aware, the City of Stuart and the Town adopted Resolutions on August 2nd expressing a "thank you" to the BCC for its stewardship in maintaining the urban service boundaries of the Comprehensive Plan and urging the BCC to remain vigilant in adhering to the boundaries of the current Urban Services Districts. As explained above, it is also important to remain vigilant against piecemeal density increases through plan amendments such as those proposed by Hobe Sound Polo Club and Canopus. On behalf of the Town Commission, I urge the BCC to continue to maintain the integrity of the current Comprehensive Plan, and to avoid the temptation to approve the Amendments and others which request density increases in western Hobe Sound, both east and west of I-95. The Town respectfully requests that the BCC not transmit these Amendments to the state land planning agency. By doing so, the BCC will demonstrate its continued commitment to good growth management. More importantly, by resisting the temptation to open up rural and agricultural lands to suburban development, the BCC will demonstrate its support to Martin County's municipalities and the County's community redevelopment areas to focus development on properties which have yet to be developed, or have the potential to be redeveloped within both the eastern Urban Service District and the Indiantown Urban Service District. This is vitally important to the County's economic vitality and even more intimately to the existing property owners within these urban service districts. This is demonstrated by the data contained in the County's Comprehensive Plan. In particular, Table 4-6 of the Comprehensive Plan demonstrates that there is more than sufficient

capacity for residential development in the Eastern and Indiantown Urban Service Districts without increasing densities on existing unincorporated rural or agricultural lands elsewhere in the County for the next 15 years.

Please also consider what has been going on in the stock market lately. It seems to me it reflects a loss of faith in our policy makers to make the right decisions for the future of America. It is becoming clear to all that we are in for at least 10 years of substantial government budget reductions starting at the federal level and making their way down to the County. This means another long-term loss in aggregate demand in the economy and housing. In the words of Patrick Hayes in his thoughtful op-ed piece on the proposed "twin cities," what is the rush to develop! Let's see what directions the new economy takes before committing to the irrevocable loss of more of our agricultural and rural lands west of the existing urban services boundary.

Finally, when I look at the prospective development map along Bridge Road starting at the west end near Kanner Highway, I am worried for Hobe Sound, Jupiter Island, and Martin County. It reminds me of Sherman's March to the Sea, but in the context of development. Starting with St. Lucie Partners in the west, which has already been approved for 600 homes, I can easily visualize bulldozers ripping up the proposed 16,000 acres of Martin County's rural and agricultural lands along Bridge Road as development moves east constructing Martin County's version of Indiantown Road until it reaches the sleepy Hobe Sound, Jupiter Island, and the sea at the small, public beach at the end of Bridge Road. This is not a pretty picture in what used to be a picturesque ride to I-95 along Bridge Road. I hope this will not be the legacy of the Mayor who served Jupiter Island in 2011-2012.

I thank you for the thoughtful consideration I know that you, and your fellow Commissioners will give to the Town's concerns. Please contact me directly if you would like to discuss the Town's concerns, or should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "H. Charlston", written over a horizontal line.

Harry Charlston
Mayor

cc: Town of Jupiter Island, Vice-Mayor and Commissioners
Gene A. Rauth, Town Manager
Taryn Kryzda, Martin County Administrator