

Walton County Board of Commissioners

Bill Chapman, District 1

Cecilia Jones, District 2

Bill Imfield, District 3

Sara Commander, District 4

Cindy Meadows, District 5

Ladies & Gentlemen,

As a concerned citizen, whose qualifications include a degree in civil engineering from Princeton University, I am writing to call on you to reject the proposed extension of Pompano Street east of South Orange Street in Inlet Beach.

Clearly it is not in the public interest to construct a new road and drainage ditches. This would benefit only the subdivision owner, not the people of Walton County. An extended road would result in environmental damage and constitute an unwarranted taking of land from the neighbors, in order to benefit a private developer, Joseph Steffen.

There is a simpler solution available to Mr. Steffen, which is far superior for the County. Access to his subdivision can be provided via the existing road, West Park Place Avenue, which runs along the south of his property. A new road along the north is simply not needed.

Per the minutes of its July 14, 2015 meeting, the Planning Commission apparently accepted without question, analysis, debate or full consideration an assertion made by Mr. Dean Burgis, representing Emerald Coast Associates, Inc (the applicant) that the new road is needed "because of the park and traffic on Park Place". This assertion by the developer is vaguely dubious, clearly self-serving and without any scientific merit.

From engineering and environmental perspectives, it is both feasible and preferable to vacate the easement along the north and re-design the subdivision for access only from Park Place. Please consider the fact that this parcel of land already is accessible via driveways in the area along the south side of Park Place. Drainage issues can be addressed both on the property and nearby without the environmental impact of a new road. Such an option obviously is better for the neighborhood and for the public (if not for the profitability of the developer).

Because the Planning Commission failed to challenge the developer on this point, it is up to you, the Commissioners of Walton County, to reject this proposed road.

Please protect the public interest and natural environment of Inlet Beach, by rejecting the proposed new road. Send this development back to the drawing boards. Extending Pompano Street road would only help the property owner maximize profits and the intensity or density of his subdivision. Rejecting the proposal, and requiring the developer to revise or downsize plans for the property, is in the interests of the community, of Walton County and of the public.

Respectfully submitted,
Mark S. Barry