



**TOWN OF LOXAHATCHEE GROVES
TOWN COUNCIL QUASI-JUDICIAL WORKSHOP
MEETING MINUTES**

**TOWN HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS – 155 F. Road, Loxahatchee Groves, FL 33470
Tuesday, August 6, 2024**

CALL TO ORDER:

Mayor Kane called the meeting to order at 5:03 P.M.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE FOLLOWED BY A MOMENT OF SILENCE:

Mayor Kane led the Pledge of Allegiance followed by a moment of silence.

ROLL CALL:

Mayor Anita Kane, Vice Mayor Margaret Herzog, Councilmember Laura Danowski, Councilmember Phillis Maniglia (ABSENT), Councilmember Robert Shorr, Town Manager Francine Ramaglia, Town Attorney Tanya Earley, Public Works Director Richard Gallant and Town Clerk Valerie Oakes were present.

QUASI-JUDICIAL CONCEPTUAL DISCUSSION

1. Conceptual Discussion for a Rural Recreational Resort, Presented by Bove Company and JMorton Planning.

A RURAL RECREATIONAL RESORT ON A PARCEL OF LAND LOCATED AT THE SOUTHEAST CORNER OF THE COLLECTING CANAL AND "C" ROAD LOXAHATCHEE GROVES, FLORIDA CONSISTING OF FORTY-SEVEN ACRES MORE OR LESS.

Bove Company and JMorton Planning (The Developers) development team opened the presentation with gratitude, emphasizing their desire for an informal, collaborative dialogue with the council and community. They shared that after gathering feedback from town representatives and residents, their proposal had undergone significant revisions to better align with community expectations. A 3D video rendering was presented, showcasing the site's intended rural aesthetic, tree canopies, and green space preservation. Key features included a single-access paved entrance on C Road, a natural-themed welcome area, and an "Eco Greenway Trail" circling the property with benches, reforestation, and multi-use paths for biking, hiking, and horseback riding. They proposed dedicating approximately eight acres of preserved land to the town.

Visual buffers and privacy measures were detailed, including a berm and dense hedge planting to obscure Recreational Vehicle (RV) visibility. Lighting would be low-level and discreet, and architecture would reflect a rural design consistent with the town's character. The presenters clarified that this project targeted high-end, Class A motorcoach clientele, not permanent residents. They cited case studies (like Margaritaville RV Resort in Auburndale) to assert that well-executed RV parks do not diminish nearby property values—in fact, some increased in value. To ensure quality and safety, they outlined plans to deny permanent residency (no mailboxes or addresses), enforce a six-month stay limit, and conduct background checks on guests staying over 30 days.

They addressed concerns about crime, noting a low number of police and code enforcement calls at similar local facilities. Traffic impact would be minimal due to direct access from Southern Boulevard, and the developers expressed willingness to contribute land or funding for a traffic light or the extension of Tangerine Blvd. The anticipated number of daily RV arrivals/departures was low—approximately 12 each way. They also proposed community value-adds: dedicating an 8-acre Eco Trail to the town in perpetuity, constructing a two-acre town-exclusive retention pond, and possibly creating a farmers' market and educational community garden on-site. They reinforced that their project density was significantly lower than industry standards (six sites per acre versus the usual 12), and that the financial return to the town could reach up to \$180,000 annually through ad valorem and hospitality taxes. The zoning change request would be site-specific, strictly for an RV resort, not to allow future commercial development.

Following the presentation, they asked to engage the finance and planning committees prior to formal application submission (targeted for August 26), to ensure alignment. Town officials clarified that while staff conversations were allowed, no special permissions would be granted outside the normal application process, and all meetings must be paid for by the applicant.

Mayor Kane raised the critical issue of a long-term "Plan B" if the RV park failed years down the road.

Bove Company and JMorton Planning responded that they would not close on the land unless the plan was approved, but if the RV industry declined, they would bear the risk.

Mayor Kane urged them to develop a contingency plan and consider how covenant restrictions could prevent future undesirable use and thanked them for their comments.

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Public comment received via email from Lena Hendrickson.

Cynthia Screnci stated she recently purchased property on Collecting Canal and voiced strong opposition to the proposed RV park. She began by expressing skepticism that the developer had actually spoken with local residents and accused them of ignoring community input. She criticized the developer's presentation, calling it speculative and without substance. She mentioned that the developers would make a good car salesman as the presentation is lacking in substance. She emphasized that the presenter claimed the RV park would add value to nearby properties and stated this isn't "Margaritaville" and mentioned she paid over a million dollars for their property and plan to invest more than another million into it. With this she was looking for an explanation as to how placing an RV park with 280 spaces next to their property is supposed to increase its value. She highlighted concerns about traffic and safety, especially heavy Class A vehicles weighing over 30,000 pounds. She explained that Collecting Canal is already a dangerous situation and adding large vehicles, especially towing other vehicles, would be a hazard. She mentioned that vehicles will not be approaching from Okeechobee, as the horse show is in the opposite direction. Instead, they argue that traffic will come down Southern Boulevard and then attempt to access the RV park via B Road or C Road—meaning heavy traffic will end up on Collecting Canal. She questioned the project altogether and referenced an existing Kampgrounds of America (KOA) campground and why 280 additional RV spaces are needed if existing facilities aren't even full during peak season. She raised concerns about law enforcement demands stating the current facility had 21 police calls in one month, and asked what the number would look like for 280 RVs. She spoke about the lack of sufficient planning around the lack of on-site management and potential crime based off a past statement made by the developer. She mentioned Echo trails, a farmers' market, and a parking area at the end of C Road—that wouldn't be just an RV park, that is a complete enterprise. She stated everything they presented was a farce. She ended by stating, "I can tell you for one that I'll take it to court, and I know several other people that will." Mayor Kane thanked her for the comments.

Bianca Berkold began by acknowledging that she had spoken at a previous meeting and assumed that most people present already knew who she was. She reiterated her strong opposition to the proposed RV park, describing it as a terrible idea. She stated that, along with a few others, she made an effort to determine how the broader Loxahatchee community felt about the project. Explaining that most residents work full-time and lack the time to attend meetings, she took it upon herself to gather feedback. She personally collected approximately 90 signatures from residents who opposed the development, claiming that every person she spoke with—except one—expressed disapproval. She emphasized that the community does not want the RV park and repeated this sentiment for clarity. She further explained her concerns specifically regarding property values. She dismissed the notion that an RV park would increase property values, calling it "ridiculous" and questioned who would want to live next to such a facility, especially with horses nearby. She also referred to concerns about traffic, describing the anticipated increase as "ludicrous." By affirming that the town's residents had made their position clear through the signatures she had gathered, she physically presented the petition during the meeting and confirmed that a copy could be made. Mayor Kane thanked her for the comments.

Mayor Kane asked for a motion to receive and file.

**MOTION: COUNCILMEMBER DANOWSKI /VICE MAYOR HERZOG
MOVED TO RECEIVE AND FILE THE PETITION. MOTION
PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (4-0).**

Alysa Daly explained that she recently purchased her property just a year ago with the intention to build it and expressed that the proposed RV park development came as a complete shock and states it would have likely changed her decision to buy in that location. She mentioned the presentation presented is very aspirational and shows no proof as to what is going to happen. She questioned who will be staying at the RV park, suggesting it will primarily be groomsmen during the season and saying if there are at least two people per camper, that's 570 people, and if there are four per camper, that's 1,140 additional people being added to a very small area of the community. She says the proposed six campers coming and going daily, totaling 12 vehicle movements, is unrealistic, especially during the beginning and end of the season, which she predicts will be chaotic. Her concerns are about noise pollution, saying she does not want to hear parties and barbecues lasting until 1 a.m., especially since her property is so close to the proposed site. She also objects to light pollution, noting that installing lights 15 feet in the air is excessive and contrary to the rural, peaceful atmosphere that she and others moved there for. She challenged the claim that there is a community need for this development. She questions why people traveling with their campers would want to come to Loxahatchee Groves, stating, "no offense, it's a cute town," but suggesting people would prefer more popular destinations like West Palm Beach or Orlando, or to stay at Lion Country Safari. She concluded that she sees no real need or substantial benefit for development. While she compliments the farmers market idea, calling it "cute," she says she would prefer it not be located right across the street from her home, pointing out it would add even more traffic beyond that caused by the RV park. She also questions the usefulness of the proposed eight-mile eco trail, stating that she does not know anyone who would want to ride horses on concrete. The entire idea seems irrational and unnecessary based on what she's heard and observed. She references 150 signatures collected in opposition to the project, emphasizing that the community does not want it and expressing her belief that it will not add property value. She closed with a concern about crime, linking it to what she refers to as "wide open borders" and stating she is especially troubled that there will be no security or patrol on the property. She ended her comment by saying this is a huge concern, particularly because she lives so close to the proposed site. Mayor Kane thanked her for the comments.

Paul Coleman began by thanking the Mayor for texting and reaching out to him to arrange a meeting, which he was unable to attend because he was on vacation. He then expressed his concern about the presenter's claim that real estate values near Margaritaville had increased in three years and were not affected by the RV park in that area. Paul found that assertion to be questionable and compared it to a misleading radio ad that claims to be "#1 in Palm Beach County" but is only "#1 among men aged 65 to 85." Drawing from his own 10 years of experience in construction and building, Mr. Coleman stated that land values have generally increased over the last decade, except in cases where the area was "really trashy." He challenged the suggestion that the RV park did not negatively impact property values, noting that a \$100,000 increase over three years could have happened regardless of the RV park. He commented on the traffic concerns raised by others, agreeing that these were valid. He then discussed the cost comparison of renting RV lots versus houses, saying that although some people charge three times the rent for an RV lot near a barn, it's still less expensive than renting a house in Wellington during the season. He mentioned he knows people who move in with family and rent out their homes to cover a year's mortgage in just six months. Mr. Coleman stated his agreement with the previous female speakers, especially regarding the concern that most RV park residents would be grooms during equestrian season. He clarified he had nothing against grooms and joked that he couldn't afford one himself but would love to have one. He emphasized that the community faces the same process every time a developer or an entity wants to expand, and it always leads to these types of public concerns. He mocked the recurring strategy of developers adding features like trails as a bargaining chip, sarcastically stating, "Oh we're going to put a trail in, so we'll get approved." He said that putting in a trail does not guarantee approval, and that someone had mentioned this earlier — Councilmember Robert, whom he rarely agrees with — but in this case, he did. Mr. Coleman stressed that this was real estate speculation and that nothing obligates the town to approve the development just because money has been spent. He lamented not having the rest of his list of points with him but reiterated that many people spoke out at the last meeting and said clearly, they do not want this in their town. He said no offense to the gentlemen presenting the development or their company, but repeated, "we do not want this in our town." He referred to past projects like Publix and Solar Sport, saying not enough people opposed those at the time, and now the community is stuck with unintended consequences, like a retention pond that wasn't part of the original plan. He concluded by thanking the council and public works and stated that people are standing up now to voice their disapproval. He ended his remarks with, "I hope, sir—no offense—you get the message. Thank you and have a nice night." Mayor Kane thanked him for the comments.

Virginia Standish stated that her comments were not only specific to the proposed RV park project but also applied to development in general. She pointed out that she had not heard any mention of a wildlife report being completed for this project, though she acknowledged that it was still in a preliminary phase. She said that even for other large projects in the area, there had been no clear update on the status of such wildlife reports as part of the permit application process. She requested that the Town Council get an update from staff and the building official to determine whether a wildlife study was conducted. Virginia mentioned that this particular property contains gopher tortoises and referenced the proposed eco trail, sarcastically suggesting that if the town wants a trail, it should also “keep the gopher tortoises.” She explained that relocating them costs around \$6,000 each and that the animals typically try to return to their original habitat. She emphasized the need to ensure that wildlife status reports are part of every development plan. She then criticized the use of trails as a “carrot” being dangled to make developments more palatable to the public and officials, making a comparison to the Solar Sport project, implying that similar tactics had been used there. Ms. Standish commented that developers in Florida are good at what they do, which is buying land to bank it for future resale or different development, such as condos or apartments, if the current plan (e.g., an RV park) is not successful in 10 years. She discussed the sod farm of which is used as a loophole by having one bull on-site on January 1st to receive an agricultural exemption and later came back to the town admitting they “didn’t have to cut down all those trees,” but failed to manage the project properly. She stressed the need for strong management of every project brought before the Council. Regarding this specific project, she called attention to the C Road Bridge, which she said is currently being used by motorcycle traffic, even though it is supposed to be a horse trail. She recommended that a sign be posted stating “no motor traffic” and emphasized that horse trails should be prioritized before any more commercial development is approved in the town. She concluded by urging the Council to do something about the motorized traffic on the horse bridge and thanked them. Mayor Kane thanked her for the comments.

Jane Harding began her public comment by stating that she would read from her prepared remarks. She described the presentation given earlier as resembling a “Stepford Wives version of the country”, emphasizing that it did not reflect the true rural or country nature of the community. She pointed out that Margaritaville’s property values are in the \$100,000 to \$200,000 range, while their local values are over a million dollars, and asserted that the proposed RV park would not increase property values in her area. Ms. Harding expressed concern about traffic, explaining that it’s not only RVs entering and leaving the site, but also the personal vehicles of those staying in the RVs, estimating up to 285 vehicle trips daily. She referenced the existing farmers market, noting that people already complain about the traffic associated with it. She criticized the proposal for another farmers market as part of an agricultural tourism plan, saying that while it “sounds appealing”, the town already has that and doesn’t need more. She then addressed concerns about the maintenance costs for the proposed trail, stating that she had heard it would be an added expense, though she admitted she could be wrong. She acknowledged that while the RV market is a significant one, it’s not the only market, and she questioned the financial benefit to the town. She argued that the tax revenue from RV park guests would not be sufficient compared to that of a resident who owns five acres, and she guaranteed that it wouldn’t come close. Ms. Harding concluded her remarks by stating plainly that the RV park “is just not a good idea.” She clarified that her objection had “nothing to do with being equestrian,” but rather with her desire to preserve the town's rural character. She declared, “I want my trails. I want my place. I want this country. This ruralness. I don’t want”.

Ken Johnson began his remarks by describing the proposed RV development as “pie in the sky.” He repeated the phrase for emphasis and then addressed what he considered a central issue: traffic. He stated emphatically, “How do you spell traffic? Traffic and more traffic—that’s what they’re going to do to us. That’s what they want to do to us.” Johnson highlighted that Southern Boulevard and B Road are already congested, and stated there are problems now, even before any new development is added. He noted that with 250-plus RV parks already in place, the people staying in the new RV park would need to exit and travel west to places like Publix or Wawa or be forced to make U-turns to head east. He stressed again, “We’ve got problems now.” Ken then shifted to light pollution, stating that the development would create a “dome of light” over the area where he lives and questioned, “for what reason?” He said firmly, “We don’t need a dome of light.” Next, he addressed noise pollution, sarcastically asking if the park residents would “walk around and whisper” and answering his own question with “I don’t think so.” He warned that the result would be loud noise, “so loud on Collecting Canal Road and maybe even further in, depending on what they do.” Mr. Johnson then raised another concern he felt had not been addressed: food and dining for RV park residents. He asked rhetorically, “Where are these people going to eat?” He joked sarcastically, “They going to eat horse snakes? I don’t think so. Horses are too expensive.” He concluded that the RV residents would have to leave the park to get food and snacks, reiterating that the developer isn’t going to sell snacks. He ended his remarks abruptly and bluntly by stating, “So all in all, I wish you’d go bankrupt.” Mayor Kane thanked him for the comments.

Laura Cacioppo began by stating that she would likely be reiterating many of the points already shared but wanted to express her own feelings on the matter. She expressed that the proposed RV park project does not fit the aesthetic of the town and that, in her opinion, “this looks like, hey, we’ve seen a lot of RV ads, and they’re geared toward equestrians.” She acknowledged that RVs have various uses but emphasized that there is clearly a large equestrian use for RVs in the town. She raised a concern that the development seemed like taking money away from the people who already live in the town and giving it to someone else. While she acknowledged it’s “somebody else’s business,” she reminded the council that the town has zoning rules and regulations, and this proposed development is not part of the existing zoning. She stressed that there was a reason that land was not zoned for such a project, saying “that’s not really what we wanted to see there.” Ms. Cacioppo criticized what she described as “carrots being hung” in front of decision-makers to win approval, referencing incentives or trade-offs being offered to gain support. She opposed the notion of granting new approvals when there are existing RV spots that could be filled instead. She noted that using current property owners who already have RV accommodation would be more appropriate, even acknowledging that while it might cause saturation, it’s still preferable to building a new park. She suggested that the developers are targeting Loxahatchee Groves because Wellington would not approve of a similar development. She proposed that the project could be relocated to a different nearby town, as there is other land available, stating, “we’ve made mistakes in the past—let’s not repeat them.” Ms. Cacioppo reiterated that issues like traffic, crime, light pollution, and noise pollution continue to be problems raised by residents. She shared her belief that the town should instead create more grooms’ quarters rather than building an RV park, noting, “so we don’t have to have an RV park in the middle of our town which we don’t want.” She added humorously that she might be the “40,000th person” to say this, even if the town doesn’t have that many residents. She concluded by saying that she appreciated the presentation and had done her reading on the proposal, but that it might be better placed “somewhere else—not here.” Mayor Kane thanked her for the comments.

The Developers began by offering to meet with anyone in the community who felt they had not been contacted or heard from. He stated that their team is open to having additional conversations with community members and wants to pursue a “win-win” solution. He then addressed concerns about the management of the proposed RV park, assuring that there would be on-site management and approximately fifteen employees based on the property. These employees would be responsible for maintaining security, managing the well-being of residents, and ensuring the property is secure and well-maintained. He further stated that there would be rules and guidelines in place to regulate noise and social activities, emphasizing that they have internal residents to care for as well. Addressing comments made about property values, he clarified that they had not found any instances where property values decreased as a result of similar projects, and he apologized if he had previously given the impression that property values would increase.

He clarified they were only trying to demonstrate there was no found negative impact on property values. Regarding the trail component of the development, the speaker clarified that the trail would not be made of concrete. Instead, it would be a gravel trail or surfaced in a way suitable for equestrian use or other necessary functions. He reiterated that the trail was intended to be multi-use, supporting walking, biking (especially off-road bicycles), and equestrian use. He emphasized agreement with residents in not wanting any motorized vehicles on the trail. He also stated that the trail would be open to the broader community for use and that the developer would also utilize it, seeing it as a mutual benefit. Concerning wildlife preservation, the speaker explained that a wildlife scientist had been hired to conduct an independent study. The findings from this report would be included in their submission to the planning department. He stated that, according to the study, no gopher tortoises had been found on the property. However, if any are found in the future, the appropriate and required relocation actions will be taken. He then addressed traffic concerns, stating that the previously mentioned estimate of 12 turning movements per day referred to the number of motorhomes or travel trailers entering and exiting the park—not the total number of vehicle trips. He clarified that individual guests in those RVs would still have their own cars and would be making their own trips. He closed by thanking the council for their time.

Mayor Kane thanked him for the comments.

ADJOURNMENT:

Mayor Kane adjourned the Quasi-Judicial Workshop meeting at 6:10 p.m.

TOWN OF LOXAHATCHEE GROVES,
FLORIDA

ATTEST:

Signed by:
Valerie Oakes
Town Clerk

Signed by:
Anita Kane
Mayor Anita Kane, Seat 3

Signed by:
Margaret Herzog
Vice Mayor Margaret Herzog, Seat 5

Signed by:
Phillis Maniglia
Councilmember Phillis Maniglia, Seat 1

Councilmember Laura Danowski, Seat 2

Councilmember Robert Shorr, Seat 4