

POLK GROUP

Issue: 06-11

VOTE NO ON 3 November 7

Citizen initiatives are important to Floridians because our legislature cannot always be trusted to do what the people really want. Large-industry lobbying groups and even larger corporations have the inside track on influencing our elected officials and the little guy is forever shut out. Have you ever gotten a call-back from a Florida legislator? The only way that frustrated voters can address an issue that their legislators have chosen to ignore is to amend the State constitution. Some of the more important amendments passed by the voters in this manner have been the fishnet ban, the ban on indoor smoking, the limit on class size, the hike in the minimum wage, mandatory term limits, and the cap on homestead property taxes. Even the pregnant pig amendment has served us well by keeping factory hog farms out of Florida! These issues never saw the light of day in the Florida legislature. The promoters of Amendment 3 such as U.S.Sugar, Lykes Brothers, the Florida Chamber of Commerce and The National Association of Home Builders want the rules changed so that future amendments will require 60 percent of the popular vote for approval rather than the current simple majority. This super majority would make passage of any citizen initiative extremely difficult if not impossible. Therefore, its main purpose would be to protect the jobs of fat cat lobbyists in Tallahassee. If this passes, Florida would be the only State in the union requiring a 60 percent voter approval for constitutional amendments.

Strictly speaking, this is not a purely environmental issue but, by affecting our use of the initiative remedy, it would have serious environmental consequences.

Opposition to this amendment is wide spread with both Democrats and Republicans strongly objecting. Don't let the fat cats fool you, vote no on Amendment 3 and tell all your friends to do the same.Chuck Geanangel

NEW PROGRAM

Using the new power point capability, Bob Taylor has created a program for all groups interested in a presentation on wood ducks and nesting boxes - plus an update on the Kissimmee Restoration. Call Bob at 439-2251 to schedule your organization.



SIERRA
CLUB
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NOVEMBER 2006 NEWSLETTER

serving DeSoto, Hardee, Highlands and Polk County

PROGRAM FOR NOVEMBER 9, 2006

Ever wonder why some developments get approved and others don't? There is a rationale. Join us in analyzing an application (probably the **Hatchineha/Firetower Road** one) and see why and how decisions are made.

LET'S PLAY PLANNING COMMISSION !!

Come to the November meeting and evaluate the information that goes into a development approval. Learn the terminology and the parameters that Planning Commissioners and County Commissioners are supposed to use when reviewing a development proposal. Participate in analyzing the application for a real development application and use what you learned to justify your decision. Hopefully, you can walk away from this exercise armed with tools to address growth management issues in your community.

Background Information

Following a legislative mandate, counties and cities in Florida developed their own individual versions of how to control growth. Depending on how you view growth management, the state Growth Management Act and the resulting growth management plans either don't work or work too well. Uncontrolled growth impacts everyone. Taxes are increased to pay for infrastructure costs including roads, water and sewer systems, schools, parks, etc. Natural systems and wildlife habitats are impacted; air and water quality can sink like the Titanic. Although every owner has property rights, the system is often manipulated to benefit developers who complain all the way to the bank.

This article hasn't been written to tell you how to save Florida or how to manipulate the system. It is to inform you about some of the issues we face in making decisions about development and growth. I agree that the system needs to change if we want to get a handle on growth, but that's another article.

Private property rights in very simple terms allow property owners to extract an economic benefit from their land. That's where Growth Management comes in. First and foremost is the open debate on using tax dollars to provide services for various land uses. Local governments must determine, in a public forum, the capital investment that they are willing to make so that a private owner can estimate to what level they can extract the economic benefit. It is a dance between public and private interests. Second, our natural resources including wildlife habitat, water quality and quantity, wetlands and floodplains and in some cases air quality should be addressed by providing some level of protection from growth. In most cases, natural resource impacts are given minor consideration or none at all. Third is quality of life, which is the hardest factor to define, but most planning commissions and county commissions try to address it most often. The term most frequently used in referring to quality of life is **compatibility**.

Here are a few of the most common terms used by growth management agencies that you will need to know:

Comprehensive Plan Amendment: Includes the general types of land uses allowed in specific areas of a County or City. RL, RM, RH means

(Continued on page 2)

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Residential Low, Medium and High density which could mean a low of 1 unit per acre to as high as 15 or 20 units per acre or even more with other incentives given to government by development (like parks or roads, etc.). A/RR agriculture/ Rural Residential means 1 unit per 5 acres but under certain specific circumstances much higher but not by right. Then there is Industrial (IND), Institutional (INST) [government buildings, and essential services which serve growth like water plants though they may be private] and Commercial (stores, etc). These are the general categories and each has sub-classifications.

Land Development Code (LDC, or UDC [Unified

Development Code]): These are the specific ordinances that are applied to each land use above and they may determine, with more specificity, the uses (such as, are multi-family structures allowed and what the development standards will be).

Planned Development (PD): These are developments that, generally speaking, get greater density by providing amenities that support the residents. Instead of government providing those services the developer reduces the costs by clustering the density on a portion of the property. This reduces the cost of infrastructure for the developer and the cost to government to maintain the infrastructure.

....John Ryan

RUSTLE THE LEAF™

BY PONCE & WRIGHT

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OUTINGS/ACTIVITIES

If you have suggestions for outings or if you wish to lead an outing, call our Outings Coordinator, Gail Bagley at 683-3334. For more activities/events, please visit our web site at <http://florida.sierraclub.org/polk/>

Nov. 18 Tour the MacKay Estate. The Heartland Native Plant Society is sponsoring a leisurely hike through the Preserve on the shore of Lake Rochelle in Lake Alfred. Participants will see mature sandhill grading into closed canopy hammock, cutthroat seep and bay swamp. Call Frances at 956-3771 to sign up.

In order to participate in one of the Sierra Club's outings, you will need to sign a liability waiver which will be furnished at the beginning of the outing. If you would like to read a copy of the waiver prior to the outing, please see <http://www.sierraclub.org/outings/chapter/forms/> or call 415-977-5528. In the interests of facilitating the logistics of some outings, it is customary that participants make carpooling arrangements. The Sierra Club does not have insurance for carpooling arrangements and assumes no liability for them. Carpooling, ride sharing or anything similar is strictly a private arrangement among the participants. Participants assume the risks associated with this travel. Please note that some of the above listed activities are events that we think you will find interesting and fun, but they are not official outings.

OCTOBER OUTING



Photo by Herman Moulden

In near perfect weather 18 Sierrans hiked the marsh loop and lake trails while marveling at an impressive number of wading birds feeding in the 500 acre Banana Creek Marsh at Circle B Bar.Chuck Geanangel



GONE BATTY?



Photos by Frances H. Coleman

Cyndi Marks of the Florida Bat Conservancy showed several bats to a large enthralled audience at our October meeting while George Marks explained echolocation.



Attention Election Committee



2007 Sierra Club, Polk Group Ballot

Be sure to write a 1 or 2 in this box to record the number of people in your household voting.



**2007 Election Committee
 Polk Group of the Sierra Club
 (c/o Gail Bond)
 P. O. Box 7544
 Winter Haven, FL 33883**

----- FOLD ADDRESS PANEL OUTWARD -----

**Polk Group Executive Committee
 Elections for 2007**

Voting Instructions:

This ballot has been designed to insure secrecy while minimizing election costs. You may vote for the listed nominees or write in candidates. Indicate your choices by filling in the boxes for each position. Please detach this page and fold it as a self-mailer envelope (see illustration on right.) Then tape or staple the ballot *both top and bottom*. Use the box in the upper left corner of the return address to indicate how many household members are voting. (1 for individual membership, 2 for joint membership.)

Once we receive your ballot, we'll verify that there is a membership mailing label on the reverse side of the address panel. We'll do this by removing the tape or staple that holds the address panel closed. The presence of the computer generated label will demonstrate it came from a member. We'll also verify that your claimed membership status (individual or joint) matches our records, then we'll mark the unopened lower portion with the number of voters to expect, and remove and discard the flap with your mailing address. Another group of the election committee will then remove the remaining staple or tape to expose your ballot and record your vote(s).

Fold in thirds with return address showing.

Staple or tape upper and lower edges. Add postage and postmark by Dec. 8th.

----- FOLD BALLOT UP TO COVER DIRECTIONS ALONG THIS LINE ----- MAIL BY DEC. 8, 2006 -----

Polk Group Elections 2007 Executive Committee Ballot

The Executive Committee is the official decision making body of our local group. The terms of office are staggered.

EXCOM Positions	NOMINEE	WRITE-IN	For 2nd Voter/Joint Membership only	
			NOMINEE	WRITE-IN
<u>Two-Year Terms</u>				
Member-at-Large	<input type="checkbox"/> Gail Bagley	<input type="checkbox"/> _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Gail Bagley	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
Member-at-Large	<input type="checkbox"/> Robert A. Crabbs	<input type="checkbox"/> _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Robert A. Crabbs	<input type="checkbox"/> _____



**Sierra Club
Polk Group - Florida Chapter**

P.O. Box 7544
Winter Haven, FL 33883

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Members should send **changes of address** to: Sierra Club, P.O. Box 52968, Boulder, CO 80322-2968
or address.changes@sierraclub.org

NOVEMBER MEETING
Thursday, November 9, 2006

PROGRAM:

**Demystifying the Development
Approval Process**

By

**John Ryan
Polk Planning Commissioner**

*General Meeting and Executive Committee Meeting Run
Concurrently*

Join us for our pot-luck suppers at 6:30 p.m. on the second Thursday of every month. Bring a dish to share, a drink and your utensils. Dress is casual. **The meeting will start around 7:15 p.m.**

Meetings are held at the Audubon Nature Center, 115 Lameraux Rd., Winter Haven. From the traffic light at the intersection of Hwy. 540 (Cypress Gardens Blvd.) and Cypress Gardens Road (look for the Shell station and Blockbuster Video) - Turn east onto C.G. Road and follow around sharp right hand turn & then sharp left hand turn. After left hand turn, Lameraux is fourth road on left, two blocks west of Garden Grove Elementary School. Distance from the light to the Nature Center is about 2.3 miles. (Phone 324-7304)

Web Site: <http://florida.sierraclub.org/polk/>

Sierra Membership Application

Name _____

Street Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (optional): () _____ F94Q W3311 1

- | | | |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <i>Check One</i> | Individual | Joint |
| Introductory | <input type="checkbox"/> \$25 | |
| Regular | <input type="checkbox"/> \$39 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$47 |
| Senior | <input type="checkbox"/> \$24 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$32 |
| Student | <input type="checkbox"/> \$24 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$32 |



Annual dues include subscription to Sierra (\$7.50) and chapter publications (\$1). Dues are not tax-deductible.

Please mail your check and this form to:
Sierra Club, PO Box 52968, Boulder, Colorado, 80322-2968

2006 POLK SIERRA GROUP

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vacant

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