



Ken Keechl Commissioner – District 4

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March 25, 2008 "Green Space Protection" Vote

As you know, the protection of our dwindling green spaces was a campaign promise I made to each of you. And, as a result, I have led the charge on the Broward County Commission to protect our few remaining golf courses from residential conversions. As I also advised in my July 2007 article, "Making Campaign Promises A Reality," my colleagues and I unanimously voted last year to begin the process of amending Broward's Comprehensive Land Use Plan by forwarding appropriate amendatory language to all of Broward's municipalities for their review and comments.

The proposed language, if approved by the County Commission at two public hearings, would make it Broward County's official policy to "strongly discourage" the conversion of these few remaining open spaces to residential development. Moreover, any applicant who nevertheless decided to seek such a land use change would be required a) to specifically mitigate the loss of open space in the surrounding residential neighborhood and b) to provide a Phase I and Phase II environmental report documenting the absence of environmental contamination, a difficult endeavor due to the traditional use and build up of pesticides and arsenic-laden herbicides on Broward's golf courses.

A number of cities, including Cooper City, Pembroke Pines, Plantation, and Oakland Park, responded favorably to my proposal. However, a number of cities (backed by land speculators and powerful lobbyists) responded negatively and are actively campaigning against the land use amendment. These individuals are making untruthful and disingenuous arguments directly to my colleagues on the County Commission in private meetings. For example, rumor has it they are arguing that the proposal is a "takings" of their property. Obviously it's not an unconstitutional "takings" because the owners never had the legal right to build any homes on their golf courses. By analogy, can you demolish your home and build a commercial warehouse in its place? Of course not. I could go on with the ludicrous arguments, but you get the idea.

Florida's Sunshine Law prohibits me from personally talking to my colleagues about the importance of protecting Broward's golf courses and refuting these arguments. Unlike the lobbyists, I have to wait until the public hearing and hope it's not too late. Fortunately, Florida's Sunshine law doesn't prohibit *you* from personally lobbying my colleagues right now.

The first important Broward County Commission public hearing on this matter is currently scheduled for March 25, 2008. I encourage each of you to show up and show your support. But if you can't take off from work or you have to watch the kids, you can still help us protect Broward. You can email or call my colleagues right now and tell them that you are a voter and you support protecting our remaining golf courses from residential conversions. You can obtain contact information from Broward County's website at www.broward.org or by calling 954-357-7000. You can also call our office if you need contact information.

I will report back after March 25th, 2008. Until then, my best to you and your families.

Broward County Commissioner Ken Keechl