



Alpha Dressage Association, Inc.

September 6, 2024

Re: City of Venice, Proposed Rezone 24-11RZ, Proposed Ordinance 2024-15
VIA EMAIL TO CITY CLERK

Dear Mayor and Members of City Council of the City of Venice:

On behalf of the Alpha Dressage Association, Inc., I am writing to you in support of some of the concerns and issues raised by Fox Lea Farm in opposition to the proposed rezone. I am the current Vice-President of the Alpha Dressage Association, which is a not-for-profit organization in Sarasota County that has been promoting dressage as an affiliate organization with the United States Dressage Federation (USDF) for over fifty years. Our members, including myself and the over 80 current members as well as hundreds of members over the years, have shown at and held many shows at Fox Lea Farm. This show venue is an important part of our local horse industry as well as in the State of Florida. I know that this letter is coming to you late in your process, but I hope that you will consider the facts presented in your deliberations and will strengthen the stipulations to protect the safety and welfare of horses and riders at Fox Lea Farm should you decide to approve this rezone.

I listened to much of the prior hearing on August 27, 2024, and felt compelled to speak on behalf of our members and our board in support of needed protections for the horses and riders that show at Fox Lea. Many statements by the applicant indicated to me that there is a serious misunderstanding of horses, horse shows, and the business of Fox Lea Farm. The horse industry is a difficult one to survive in at any levels, including hosting shows. Should the process of development on lands near Fox Lea cause accidents, disrupt the shows, impair the arena footing, or create discomfort for the horses during just one show season or even just one show, exhibitors will go elsewhere and will spread the bad news across the horse world, with little chance for Fox Lea to ever recover those clients.

Even in the best of circumstances, horses are easily startled by unexpected or unusual views or sounds. Most horses at a show have been trailered onto the show site as recently as the morning of the show or may have arrived 2-4 days before the show begins. This means that they are on unfamiliar land along with the excitement of being at a show. Horses at show grounds are in a very different and much more stressful environment than their home stable. Although I appreciate the sound analysis presented by one of the applicant's consultants, it is my understanding that he simply analyzed the

decibel level or noisiness of the sounds. I do not know the scientific details on how sounds are processed by horses and how it differs from human hearing, but I do know how many of my horses have reacted to sights and sounds over my 55 plus years with them. For example, even when at their home farms, my horses have all been very upset by sudden noises such as the loud staccato firing of a nail gun or the loud bang made when a dump truck bounces the bed and tail gate to empty the last of its load. I experienced some very challenging moments when riding a horse that spotted a crane in the process of maneuvering palm trees suspended in the air at a house ½ mile away from my property. This was despite substantial buffering by mature live oak trees. These are just a few examples to show that what horses react to can be very different and somewhat unpredictable. Their perceptions are not the same as ours and must be respected. When an existing business such as Fox Lea Farm involves horses, the characteristics of the horses must and should be accommodated by those that later choose to locate nearby. I suggest that construction, clearing/landscaping, and dumping activities be limited to specified hours during weekdays and not occur at all on show days to minimize the very real dangers created for horses and riders.

Another example of a lack of understanding of the business of Fox Lea Farm is when the owner of the proposed development showed a document listing 10 “Equestrian Centers Near Residential Developments”. He seemed to believe that this list disposed of any compatibility issues and concerns raised by Fox Lea. I looked up each of the listed equestrian centers on the internet and discovered that of the ten: 1 is now out of business, 8 of the remaining 9 are boarding facilities, and one is Wellington International which is a very dense show grounds with surrounding horse farms and residences. The eight properties that are boarding facilities are completely different businesses than the show grounds run by Fox Lea Farm. Most of them are small operations with maybe dozens of horses rather than the hundreds of horses that come to Fox Lea. Most of boarding facilities will have resident populations of horses that can become accustomed to operations on neighboring lands – most of which are still agriculture uses with some scattered residential development. To equate Fox Lea Farm’s horse business to smaller horse businesses limited to boarding/training/lessons indicates a basic misunderstanding of Fox Lea Farm’s business and provides no useful comparison.

I hope that this information is helpful in your deliberations. Alpha Dressage Association has volunteered this letter on behalf of its current and past members and in recognition of the value to our horse community of the Fox Lea Farm show venue. I hope that whatever development occurs is done with sensitivity to and accommodation of the wonderful horses that are part of our lives.

Sincerely,



Susan Schoettle, Vice-President
Alpha Dressage Association, Inc.

From: [Diana](#)
To: [City Council](#)
Cc: [Board and Council Messages](#)
Subject: Fox Lea Farm
Date: Saturday, September 7, 2024 6:22:35 PM

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Please don't jeopardize Fox Lea Farm as it is a special gem in Venice. To destroy an existing business with overdevelopment is the reason we need a new city council that believes in saving the best of Venice. Please hear the voters. Sincerely, Diana Watters

Sent from my iPhone