

**From:** [Missy Connery](#)  
**To:** [Planning Commission](#)  
**Cc:** [Board and Council Messages](#)  
**Subject:** 0 BORDER ROAD  
**Date:** Tuesday, June 18, 2024 11:42:36 AM

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Attn: Venice FL Planning Commission

We are residents of unincorporated Sarasota County, living in Venice Acres directly off North Auburn Road. These comments apply to the petition to re-zone the property located at 0 Border Road, on the corner of North Auburn and Border Road.

As residents living in close proximity to the aforementioned property, we have grave concerns about it's proposed use and zoning change.

1. An attempt was made at zoning for approximately 85 single family sites, and rejected in 2019. Why waste the committee's time in asking for even more sites? And without any kind of site plan with any detail? I travel his intersection daily. It is essentially a blind intersection. For proper visibility to make a turn onto Border Road, you have to almost place your vehicle in the path of oncoming traffic. This intersection is consistently not navigated well by many drivers as it is. How many entrances might this project have and where would they be? How could you make a decision not knowing that? Will this be city sewer and water? And how might that affect the neighbors with septic systems? It almost feels ridiculous to ask these questions....that one would actually have to raise a concern about a proposed development with zero specifics.

2. Venice is already well on it's way to being over built, many say it already is. The sales market has come to an all but crashing halt. Many properties are sitting for months and longer. Again, without the knowledge of exactly how many units, how could you accept this proposal? Insufficient staff/facilities at the new SMH Venice campus is highly visible during season, comments are not difficult to find about patients who have had to wait and wait and wait for urgent medical care.

3. Fox Lea Horse Farm is directly adjacent to this proposed development. There are multiple large vehicles pulling even larger trailers and equipment into this property on at least a weekly basis. How would this noise, lighting and larger vehicle traffic affect this development? How would the development affect the farm? You don't have to be knowledgeable about horses to know that construction noise will impact their behavior. Wouldn't that be dangerous to the riders? I can almost see it now, they will build new homes and then complain about the horse farm that was there FIRST, just like they do about the airport on the Island.

Sincerely,

Brad and Missy Connery  
2810 Hermitage Blvd  
Venice FL 34292  
608-695-1435

Dear Esteemed Commission Members and Concerned Citizens:

First, please permit me the courtesy to introduce myself. I am the recently retired 30 year horseback riding professor at The Ohio State University. During this time, my husband and I owned a 130-stall farm that hosted all of the university's riding programs. Under our guidance, we developed the student participation into a 300 lesson per week business and grew the competitive collegiate equestrian team from 8 members to over 100. We also founded and hosted Franklin County's largest equestrian 4-H club and areas largest IEA and IHSA programs. We are passionate about the equine industry.

Twelve years ago, our family decided to purchase acreage in East Venice, located within the county to relocate our 65-horse stallion station and broodmare operation. This decision was entirely based upon the land's proximity to Fox Lea Farm. With an economic impact of approximately \$100M annually to Venice and Sarasota County, piggy-backing off Fox Lea's presence and their exhibitors made appropriate business sense. What that does for us, is insure a steady rotation of horse buyers from across the country year-round.

Let me go on record as stating, we are not anti-development and respect an owner's right to sell or appropriately develop their land. We must remain mindful and responsible that contiguous development within our community must be compatible to adjacent neighbors. As a regular patron at Fox Lea, horses produce dust and smells while horse shows produce noise and late nights under bright lights. Additionally, the subject property of this hearing has freeway exposure giving it a commercial aspect. Typically, commercial dollars are the most valuable to the city and county.

Please allow me to give you a visual of the Florida Equestrian landscape relating to horse shows. World Equestrian Center "WEC" in Ocala is the largest equine facility of its type in the country, making Ocala the second fastest growing city in the US. The owners of WEC initially constructed a 248-room hotel on their property to host horse showing guests, but quickly outgrew the facility and have recently completed a second hotel with 390 rooms. These luxurious properties offer over 600 hotel rooms dedicated to participants at the Equestrian Center.

The second prominent equestrian community in Florida is Wellington with their billionaire row of farms and stables. The third prominent equestrian community is Sarasota County, thanks to the area's original show facility, Fox Lea Farm. What this layout does is create a triangle of sorts within the state to spread the opportunities for equestrians and all three venues are thriving! Some of you ask, why we don't simply move our breeding business to Ocala. Simple. The area is saturated with competition. My buyers prefer to take a "Showcation" at Fox Lea to enjoy the seaside community amenities while shopping for their new horse. We have five major airports within approximately a one-hour radius to bring buyers and equestrians to our town. This is the reason why Fox Lea is critical to our economic structure. They sell 40,000 hotel nights per year alone. Staggering!

Where there is wealth, there are horses. Sarasota County enjoys world class Polo and horse showing. This season alone, there have been 3 Olympians participating at Fox Lea, an Olympic horse, and a rider on the Olympic shortlist. I cannot emphasize enough how each of the established communities in Florida, play an overall role in the 12.8-billion-dollar Florida equestrian community. Of that total, only approximately one-fourth of that figure is attributed to horse racing.

Developing a 60+ home community adjacent to a major horse show facility is probably not in the community's best interest. What you are creating are 60+ reasons why Fox Lea should not be their

neighbor, even though Fox Lea came first and is more important economically long term. What makes more sense is to create a compatible plan for the property. The first thing that comes to mind is a hotel. The clapback will be that we already have sufficient hotel rooms within the community. If you poll regular horse show patrons, they will all say that Venice lacks a modern upscale luxury resort style hotel with conference facility amenities. Our equestrian community attracts everything from professional athletes, super models and major business owners. Horse show professionals and their clientele like a one stop shop after a busy day of showing including meeting room access, fine dining and bar, a great pool, pet friendly and tranquility in their surroundings. Most of all, they want proximity, proximity, proximity to their show. When I planned my daughter's wedding a few years ago, we were unable to locate a sufficient venue in Venice. While there is a conference type hotel, it is aging and in a very commercial setting. What the subject property does provide is one side on an interstate, and one side on an increasingly burgeoning Border Road. There would be the ability to tuck the hotel on the freeway side, and develop the surrounding acreage into a beautiful park like setting for the upscale hotel we desperately need. This would offer a natural buffer to the residents of Auburn Road. Access would be the 193 exit by way of Jacaranda and Border Roads, minimizing the existing Auburn Road communities' exposure to increased traffic. My guess is that the hotel would remain at capacity with 42 weeks of shows.

60 homes = 60x the headaches with the potential for resident complaints mentioned previously. This creates a secondary problem for the city who would handle those complaints. As someone who owned a large equestrian complex, new neighbors = complaints. I would challenge a prospective developer and ask if they would even disclose the perils a horse show complex might pose to their future residents.

Please keep in mind that there are two other facilities of similar economic impact in our community. Nathan Benderson Park with its water activities and Ed Smith Stadium, home to the Orioles. Fox Lea is exclusive as to what they offer.

Be careful what you wish for. Diversity is what makes a community great. Fox Lea is one of those forces. So many of the non-equestrian residents of Venice and the surrounding county properties know of Fox Lea, and are extremely proud of it. There is no better date night than to spend a Friday evening at one of Fox Lea's famous grand prix events. Fox Lea also made national headlines when they hosted all of the area's hurricane stranded horses at their farm until people could return to their barns. This was in excess of 100 horses. They donated both stall space and use of their property to manage much needed supplies for horses and cattle. Fox Lea are great stewards of our community and also offer an unparalleled green space to our area.

I took the time to challenge Kim Farrell as to why she doesn't sell Fox Lea; divide the wealth amongst family members, and live happily ever after? Her answer was point blank; I have a passion for this. With a third generation of her family now making their name as a highly successful national competitor, the equestrian future is safe with this community treasure. We also share a passion for Fox Lea Farm and Venice requires the diversity of activities and ongoing economic impact. Please vote responsibly when developing this proposed property.

Sincerely,  
Leigh Ann Griffith  
248 Inverness Rd.  
Venice, FL 34292  
614-648-8594/lagsgec@sbcglobal.net

**From:** [Daila Lybarger](#)  
**To:** [Planning Commission](#)  
**Cc:** [Board and Council Messages](#)  
**Subject:** Re-zoning mtg. 39.82 acres Auburn Road  
**Date:** Tuesday, June 18, 2024 12:26:42 PM  
**Attachments:** [Commision Mtg Re Auburn Road Property Rezoning.docx](#)

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Respectfully,

Daila Lybarger

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PATH Intl. Equine Specialist in Mental Health & Learning  
Member of AQHA Professional Horsemen  
**941-539-1000 mobile**

----- Forwarded Message -----

**From:** Daila Lybarger <dailarobin@verizon.net>  
**To:** [planningcommission@venice.gov](mailto:planningcommission@venice.gov) <[planningcommission@venice.gov](mailto:planningcommission@venice.gov)>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, June 18, 2024 at 11:57:06 AM EDT  
**Subject:** Re-zoning mtg. 39.82 acres Auburn Road

I am a concerned citizen who would like the opportunity to be heard regarding the planned re-zoning of the 39.82 acres on Auburn Road. Please include the attached correspondence at the meeting to be held on June 18, 2024, regarding this matter

Respectfully,

Daila Lybarger

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PATH Intl. Equine Specialist in Mental Health & Learning  
Member of AQHA Professional Horsemen  
**941-539-1000 mobile**

Dear Esteemed Commission Members and Concerned Citizens,

My name is Daila Lybarger, and I am the owner/operator of a small horse farm here in Venice. I have lived and worked as an equine professional in Sarasota County for the past 26 years. I am a member of the American Quarter Horse Association's Professional Horseman's Association, and I hold a certification as an Equine Specialist in Mental Health and Learning from PATH Intl. I am proud to say I have a decades-long professional relationship with Kim and Clay Farrel and Fox Lea Farm.

Not only does Fox Lea Farm attract tens of thousands of people to our county each year to participate in equestrian events, but they also serve our community in numerous ways. They have opened their doors to our local community by way of their show jumping events and by providing shelter and relief help to horses and humans immediately following Hurricane Ian, and for years they have partnered with and supported dozens of non-profits in Sarasota County. In addition to those good works, Fox Lea Farm has also been a place that hundreds of people from horse trainers and veterinarians to farriers and various vendors have been able to work out of to make a living for themselves. Sarasota County, especially South County, is very blessed to have Fox Lea Farm in our community.

My career as an equine professional is diverse and has included training polo horses in the Sarasota and other polo clubs across the United States, developing and providing equine therapy to veterans and trauma-survivors in partnership with several Sarasota nonprofit organizations, working as the Director of Programs and Services at InStride Therapy in Nokomis, and owning and operating my own horse training, riding lesson, and Equine Assisted Learning program right here in Venice.

I feel it important to tell you about my background, so you understand my opinions are based on decades of experience and knowledge gained in many settings. Due to the inherent nature of horses as prey animals, they can be very re-active to loud noise, strange/unidentifiable sounds, and nearby activity that are foreign to them. These types of distractions can result in unpredictable behaviors which can be dangerous to the people handling the horses, as well as to the horses themselves.

The proposed re-zoning and potential development of the 39.82 acres to the North of Fox Lea Farm has the potential to negatively impact the events at Fox Lea Farm in a way that could eventually lead to devastating consequences. Unless a large enough buffer is established between this property and Fox Lea Farm, as well as an intelligent plan put in place that will limit the noise and activity that takes place on this property, there could be an increased risk to the safety of the horses and riders that are participating in events at Fox Lea Farm. There are already certain inherent risks to riding and showing horses, and as

professionals, we do everything we can to keep our horses and students safe. However, when there are things happening outside of our gates that are causing our horses to behave unpredictably, there is very little we can do to control what happens.

There are very few places left in Sarasota County, especially in South County, for people to go to enjoy equestrian activities. Large properties are being sold and developed, and those of us who own smaller horse farms feel that we are slowly being encroached upon by development. This encroachment has impacted me directly by making it more difficult to provide lessons in a safe atmosphere at my barn. The increase in traffic on the roads that border my property has resulted in numerous close calls for some of my riders, and I am no longer confident that I can keep them safe while riding on my property. It is sad to see the negative impact that the development and growth in our community has had on so many of my peers in the horse industry and has prevented many children and adults from experiencing the positive benefits from being involved in equestrian sports and recreation.

I respectfully ask that this commission, and those making the decisions regarding the rezoning and potential development of the 39.82 acres to the North of Fox Lea Farm, please do everything in their power to protect Fox Lea Farm and their exhibitors. It is my hope and my prayer that we all strive to work together to create a plan that works for everyone and promotes unity and a sense of community.

Sincerely,

Daila Lybarger

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Venice, FL 34292

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