

To: Sarasota County Board of County Commissioners
From: Laurel Schiller, representing the Friends of Oscar Scherer Park, Inc.

RE: Request to reference Unit Management Plan for Oscar Scherer State Park in all materials concerning Amendment 2010-02-E to allow a Major Employment and Commercial Center across from Oscar Scherer State Park. Request to require an environmental impact analysis to assess potential environmental degradations to Oscar Scherer State Park.

Dear Commissioners:

We appreciate your efforts to insure that park management goals -- as outlined in Oscar Scherer State Park's Unit Management Plan -- are referenced in any and all land use changes associated with Amendment 2010-02-E. Please also require that an environmental impact analysis to determine pre/during/post construction environmental changes to air, noise, light, water etc. quality within park lands from major land use changes accompanying Amendment 2010-02-E be an essential component of any and all land use changes across SR 681 from the Park.

Both of the above requests were approved unanimously by the Planning Commission as part of Commissioner Marianne Riley's stipulation regarding Oscar Scherer State Park protections but were not included in your package of materials on Amendment 2010-02-E.

On Monday morning Matt Osterhault, Manager, Natural Resource Protection Services for Sarasota County, met with Oscar Scherer's manager John Roche, Park District Biologist Sally Braem and myself, representing the Friends of Oscar Scherer Park, Inc. to discuss Amendment 2010-02-E -- a possible major land use change to allow a Major Employment and Commercial Center across from the Park.

This meeting, held two days ago, was our first invitation as local representatives of the park to meet with a county official to address our concerns regarding this County-initiated amendment to our 2006 Comprehensive Plan.

Thus, at this late date, having had the opportunity to look at only an unfinished draft of County language regarding measures to address potential incompatibility issues, we request that you honor our planning commission's unanimous vote that all future planning requirements regarding Amendment 2010-02-E reference Oscar Scherer State Park's Unit Management Plan and the park management goals outlined within it. And that there be an environmental land use plan for this land use change based on an environmental impact analysis that summarizes data and analysis of current environmental conditions i.e. air, water, noise and dark sky conditions within the park. This baseline data will insure that any future detrimental

environmental changes associated with placing a major employment and commercial center across from a state park are mitigated for. It is important that the environmental impact analysis continue throughout the development of this parcel and for years afterward.

We also request that you thoughtfully read through Comprehensive Plan ENV Policy 4.5.17 below and, as our representatives, ask yourselves if allowing a major land use change to Major Employment and Commercial Center across from a 50 year old award winning state park is a compatible land use change.

ENV Policy 4.5.17. Protect the natural diversity, processes and functions of natural communities in the public resource lands including Myakka River and Oscar Scherer State Parks, and Myakka State Forest. Coordinate with other government agencies to maintain and enhance soils, groundwater, surface and subsurface waters, shorelines, vegetative communities and wildlife habitats within these management areas.

Why? Because children and their families will be swimming in Lake Osprey, just down stream from this proposed MEC and Commercial Center.

Because young and old alike will be fishing in South Creek downstream from this proposed MEC and Commercial Center.

Because families will be camping in over a hundred campsites just south of South Creek across SR 681 from this proposed MEC and Commercial Center. Will they still see the stars at night? Will it be quiet?

Because families will be hiking on trails across SR 681 from this proposed MEC and Commercial Center. Will it remain a contemplative opportunity to visit with nature? What about the din of increased traffic?

Perhaps, most importantly of all, because you have a responsibility to protect the rare and common wildlife and their habitats in this "Crown Jewel" of a state park so close to our coast. This includes a responsibility to address wildlife migration in and out of the park. Wildlife is not confined by political boundaries. Will habitat connectivity to 125,000 acres of land in the eastern end of our county be planned for? Will we isolate the park in a sea of development?

Please answer the above and make a commitment to our Comp Plan policy to protect the integrity of Oscar Scherer State Park before you vote to support a major land use change to allow a major employment and commercial center across SR 681 from Oscar Scherer State Park.

The Friends of Oscar Scherer Park, Inc. is an award-winning support organization working side by side with park management to insure that Oscar Scherer remains the "crown jewel" of scrub jay preservation on the west

coast of Florida. Efforts to protect the scrub jay also protect over 300 other species of the scrubby flatwoods, a threatened plant community. Conservation efforts draw almost 120,000 visitors from around the world each year and fill our campgrounds year round. The Park generates \$6.1 million in tourist revenues each year and provides 108 jobs in the community.

Recent Oscar Scherer State Park awards include:

1996 An ADA award for the Lester Finley Trail, which is wheelchair accessible.

2003 Natalie Steves named Youth Volunteer of the Year by the Florida Park Service.

2004 The Park was listed in the top 100 campgrounds in the USA.

2004 It was honored as Best of the Best in Sarasota Magazine.

2005 Project of the Year award from the Florida Park Service.

2006 Project of the Year award from the Florida Park Service. Bobby Stanbaugh, Florida Park Service Youth Volunteer of the Year.

2007 Outstanding Volunteer Team and Citizen Support Organization of the Year by the Florida Park Service.

2007 Reserve America's Annual National Awards named Oscar Scherer a leading park to visit with fishing spots (in the top 25), canoeing (in the top 25) kid friendly park (in the top 10), hiking trails (in the top 25), and bird watching (in the top 20).

2008 Oscar Scherer named one of the top 100 campgrounds in the USA.

2009 Russ Delaney, Volunteer of the Year by the Florida Park Service. Katie Allen, Youth Volunteer of the Year by the Florida Park Service.

Sincerely,

Russ Delaney, President, Friends of Oscar Scherer State Park

Laurel Schiller, Conservation Chair, Friends of Oscar Scherer State Park

Fran Palmeri, Friend of Oscar Scherer State Park