

Attn: Matt Martin, Valdosta City Planner

Reference: "Deannexation Request by Uvalde Land Company, File #: VA-2021-16".

Commissioners & City Council Members,

My name is Ashley LeFiles Hart. I am a fourth-generation Valdostan and I live with my husband and young son at 1055 Ridge Rd., Cherry Creek Subdivision. Our back property boundary abuts the Cherry Creek Wetlands Mitigation Bank (CCMB) and I am writing you to request that you vote against the deannexation of this land to Lowndes County as requested by Mr. James Warren of Uvalde Land Company.

Mr. Warren cites "conservation, wildlife management, and recreation" (i.e. discharge of firearms/hunting) as the reasons for his request. I feel hunting by firearm would be extremely unsafe, considering that our pool, where my son swims almost daily, is less than 50 yards from the property boundary we share. In addition, the county is lacking a noise ordinance. Despite my personal objections, under section 70-6 of the Valdosta Code of Ordinances, Mr. Warren may already request permission from the city to hunt with firearms on the property. This begs the question, if he doesn't need it deannexed to hunt, what is his unstated intent?

The CCMB was formed to compensate for ecological and habitat destruction in the wetlands abutting Cherry Creek Hills at the damming of Lake Cleve. The sole purpose of CCMB is environmental restoration and conservation. This tract of land houses endangered woodstorks, Indigo snakes, and gopher tortoises, and many other federally and state endangered or threatened species of animals, plants, insects, and invertebrates.

Mr. Warren's current business dealings revolve around activities associated with destruction of natural resources (utilities, sand excavation, development) rather than conservation. I feel it would be optimistically naive to believe that Mr. Warren has no plans to attempt to exploit this land for profit. He may intend to harvest trees or excavate sand from the property. Either of these activities would have detrimental impacts on the ecosystems, erosion and flood control, the health of the river, species dependent upon the habitat, and abutting or adjacent property values.

As no zoning exists or has been proposed for this property if deannexed to the county, Mr. Warren could effectively take advantage of the opportunity to clear cut, excavate, or exploit the land as he pleases with no oversight or little resistance from the county.

As I understand it, the CCMB was slated for conservation, across time and ownership, as dictated in the CCMB Final Instrument (Lowndes County deed book 1981, pg 271) by the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). The CCMB's Final Instrument is legally bound to the land through deeds (Lowndes book 3953, pg 67 & book 6653, pg 715). This instrument strictly governs the use of the land and is explicit in its covenants & restrictions. Being under their jurisdiction, any future activities or projects involving this land can only be initiated with prior approval from the USACE Interagency Review Team.

The continued existence of this land in its current natural state is paramount to our local ecosystems, wildlife, and the quality of life of the city and county residents surrounding it.

I thank you for your time. I hope that you will take all of this into consideration in your recommendation or vote on this matter.

Respectfully & Appreciatively,

Ashley LeFiles Hart 7.23.2021
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