

Eagle Nest Discussion –Pines Boulevard, Pembroke Pines

September 9, 2009

FM# 4216571

ATTENDEES:

Joe McLaughlin, City of Pembroke Pines; Doug Young, South Florida Audubon; Sharon Williams, Pembroke Pines; Ken Schneider, PP Eagle Steering Committee; David Bogardus, FDOT; Ann Broadwell, FDOT; Maria Connolly, FDOT; Thomas Reynolds, FDOT

MEETING MINUTES:

The Florida Department of Transportation, District 4 (Department or FDOT) stated that it does not wish to facilitate any pedestrian gathering on the south side of Pines Blvd due to safety concerns. Instead protective measures would focus on restricting pedestrians to the north side of Pines Blvd. where there is a sidewalk.

FDOT recommended that the City approach the School and Post Office to see if safe parking off of Pines Blvd. could be secured. Difficulties were raised with this option as neither is ideal for location (walking distance) and that considerable parking demand already exist with the school and other activities. It was mentioned that the agriculture parcel across the street, when developed, could possibly provide future parking.

The land where the eagle nest is located is owned by the City. The land to the west and south is owned by the SFWMD. Future plans appear to exist for protecting the eagle nest and associated environment. The City land is predominately a Melaleuca-Australian Pine forest, while the SFWMD land has been treated to control exotics and includes dead melaleuca snags and wetlands.

It was stated that the eagle pair has been seen within the last month and that it is anticipated that they would utilize the nest again.

FDOT signage would be corrected to face oncoming traffic and additional signage would also be added including – “No Pedestrians” and “No Parking” on the south side of the road.

FDOT does not wish to accommodate or encourage parking on its right of way a long Pines Blvd due to safety concerns.

It is the City's responsibility to enforce parking regulations. FDOT does not want to encourage a potentially dangerous situation on the south side of Pines Blvd. and within close proximity of the eagle's nest.

The Department does not have law enforcement capability. Signage can be placed... but must be enforced by the City.

The Department will post signs on the corner of 209th Avenue stating pedestrians must cross Pines Blvd. on 208th Avenue. No crosswalk exists on 209th Avenue.

Ken Schneider highlighted his experience with visitors to the site. He mentioned the difficulty of finding parking, speed limit violations, the crossing of Pines Blvd by pedestrians, and how children and pets are present.

It was suggested that the Department place a barrier on the south side to protect pedestrians. However, the Department stated that placing a barrier in the right of way is a clear zone issue and was more of a hazard than a benefit as vehicles on the road would not have the ability to break should the need occur.

It was mentioned that FDOT does not own "Jersey" barriers that these are instead provided by contractors for specific projects.

The Department also feels that a barrier would encourage pedestrian traffic on the south side of Pines Blvd. The Department does not wish to encourage the gathering of people on the south side of Pines Blvd. due to safety issues. If activity is to be addressed it should be on the north side of Pines Blvd where a sidewalk exists.

The City has erected a fence to keep people from approaching the nest tree. However, the view near the fence is not ideal due to the dense forest. Instead people back up towards Pines Blvd. and the road island where the view is better, but dangerous to vehicle traffic. FDOT Planning and Environmental Management will coordinate with the design Project Manager, Henry Oaikhena to see if some type of viewing platform/elevated sidewalk can be incorporated into his Pines Blvd resurfacing project (construction is scheduled to begin in June 2011).

In terms of speed limits, Pines Blvd. has newly created school zone and traffic lights. The speed limit has been reduced to 45 miles per hour. FDOT does not see any further action as the Department believes the main issue is parking/access related.

A pedestrian sidewalk is planned for the south side of Pines Blvd. from US 27th to 208th Ave. The project timeframe is June 2011, depending on approval of environmental concerns (wetland & eagle) with the agencies (SFWMD, USFWS, and FWC).

The Department's plans for the sidewalk should be re-evaluated to see if any opportunities exist in terms of the eagles and pedestrian safety.

It was stated that some vehicle parking and truck loading occurs on the south side of Pines Blvd where a small incomplete turnoff exists (209th Avenue). FDOT would place signage to prevent this.

A road exists on the south side (continuation of 208th Avenue) but it appears that it is not an official road meaning that the City does not own it. People do park in this area. FDOT does not support people accessing the south side of Pines Blvd.

South Florida Audubon mentioned how they are developing a remote camera system so that people could watch the eagles on-line rather than coming out to the potential dangerous site.