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Road closure denied



Alice LaLonde shows the subdivision map to the County Commission.

Story and Photos By Jeff M. Hardison © Oct. 5, 2016 @ 4:57 p.m.

BRONSON -- A subdivision somewhat near to Goethe State Park is becoming horse-oriented, according to information shared at the Levy County Board of County Commissioners' meeting on Tuesday (Oct. 4), but one horse owner's request to close a road was overcome by the weight of what the County Commission deemed best for all people.

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Alice LaLonde prepares to pass the big diagram to members of the public in the audience.

Alice LaLonde, administrative office manager of the Levy County Road Department, is leading the Road Department since former director Bruce Greenlee went to work for the Levy County School Board.

LaLonde presented a request from Larry Myers that was seeking the adoption of a resolution to approve or deny a petition to vacate, abandon and close a portion of Southeast 110th Terrace and Southeast Fourth Street in the Levy Ranchettes Subdivision.

The County Commission unanimously denied the request to close the road, but not until after hearing from Myers, his son Mike Myers, a few neighbors and from LaLonde during the public hearing, which provided an opportunity for anyone to share their thoughts on this request.

Commissioners were also provided with several pieces of correspondence from property owners in the area.

After a question from County Commissioner Lilly Rooks, it was noted that no one was in favor of the road closure except the petitioner who sought to have it closed.

LaLonde brought a big portable diagram to exhibit the platted subdivision with its roads and parcels. She showed the County Commission the diagram and Commission Chairman John Meeks allowed that document to be shared with the public, as it was passed around the full meeting room.

The Plat Review Committee, LaLonde said, recommended denial of the request to close the road. The road superintendents, she added, concurred with the committee as they all recommended denial of the road closure request.

The committee, LaLonde said, was concerned about the probable disruption of the continuous traffic flow pattern that would result if the road closure was approved.

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Another possible issue, she said, would occur when emergency responders using GPS would come down the road that would now be closed, when it had been open. Chairman Meeks said he believes GPS maps can have notations added through submission to the emergency dispatch system to show a recently closed road.

County Attorney Anne Bast Brown told the County Commission that although Myers owns an affected parcel now, if the county closed the road per his request, then that action would create a landlocked parcel (10961) with no road access.



County Clerk Danny Shipp (left) and Alice LaLonde listen to Larry Myers (back to camera) as he explains why he wants the road closed. The County Commission (not pictured) also were listening to the petitioner.

County Commissioner Mike Joyner has been out to look at the road in question. He mentioned that there is a sandy spot, which could be improved by adding rock and lime rock to it.

Larry Myers said people get stuck in the sand and use blankets to get traction, and then they leave those blankets and other items, which he must dispose of. Larry Myers said a couple of times that he is too old to be continually picking up and hauling discarded tires, which are being dumped on his property, or the blankets that people use for traction on that corner.

Joyner said the county could add material to shore up that one sandy corner.

Mike Myers, Larry's son, said rocks would hurt his horse's feet. He owns one horse.

Joyner said that is why people put shoes on horses. Myers said some people choose against shoeing their horses.

Larry Myers complained that people have put tires on his property, and if this road was closed that might reduce that type of activity. He said none of the neighbors had offered to take those tires to the dump.

During the public comment part of the public hearing, Edward Suor spoke against the petition to close the road.

His wife Suzanne Suor spoke about an incident she had with an encounter in regard

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to the tires that Larry Myers said had been dumped on his property.

After eight weeks in the hospital, a neighbor came home last night (Monday night), Suzanne Suor said. Suor and other neighbors had been taking care of their neighbor's animals while that person was hospitalized, she said.

On Monday night, Ms. Suor had been on her way to this neighbor's house to prepare dinner for her. Suor encountered the tires and a tree that had been blown down during the recent hurricane.

She spoke to Mike Myers. She told him, as she moved a tire out of the way so she could pass, that she would help by removing that debris from the road.

Not only did Mike Myers not want help removing the tire blocking the road, she said, but he did not want anyone driving on his property to get around the fallen tree, she said.

Instead of debating the issue with him, Ms. Suor backed up and took a longer route to get where she needed to be.

Edward Suor let the County Commission know that he is of the belief that rights-of-way are interests in common for the whole subdivision, and that the Myers family may perceive the road in front of their house as being theirs, but it is actually for the public to use.

"You cannot unilaterally exclude the others' interests in favor of your own," Suor said as he helped everyone understand the concept of road "ownership" in front of one's property.

Another neighbor mentioned that she has a disabled child who uses that road to take safe walks.

That neighbor added that there are people who come from other parts of the county to congregate in this neighborhood, before they all ride to the Goethe State Forest to use horse trails there together.

"It's a neighborhood," she said. "If you start cutting off access to your neighbors, it's not a good thing."

Mike Myers said he sought to vacate the road to make more area for his horse to graze.

County Commissioner Rock Meeks tried to help Myers understand that if the road is closed, then people will not have access through the subdivision as they did before it was closed.

Myers told Commissioner Meeks that if he puts a sign that says "Dead End," then people will know it is a dead end road.

County Commissioner Danny Stevens said that for years and years, when people developed plats of subdivisions in Levy County, there was a requirement that there had to be a convenient traffic circulation pattern.

By changing the plat as requested via closing that road, Stevens said he sees that convenient traffic circulation pattern would no longer be effective.

"I would just add that in there to the conversation," Stevens said.

On a motion by Joyner, seconded by Rooks, the County Commission voted 5-0 to reject the petition to vacate and close the road. The road will remain open for all to use, just as it has been since it was platted and approved.

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(from left) County Commission Chairman John Meeks, Commissioner Lilly Rooks and Commissioner Mike Joyner; and



County Commissioner Rock Meeks and County Commissioner Danny Stevens listen to details about the road.