

# An Old Miakka timeline



## Your Turn

Becky Ayech  
Guest columnist

“Dagnet” was the show that made the phrase, “Just the facts, ma’am” famous. The facts are getting lost in the discussion of CPA-2019-C, the comprehensive plan amendment which strives to Keep the Country...Country; Rural Heritage Not Urban Sprawl.

The Old Miakka community participated not only in the 2050 RMA comprehensive plan amendment, but previous comprehensive plans as well. Documents and testimony, over and over again, said the community should remain rural and agricultural. In the 2050 discussions, the County sold the hamlet idea as 50 to 150 houses, surrounded by open space.

Our community never supported hamlets.

In an effort to support the wishes of the community to preserve Old Miakka, Sarasota County authorized its staff to work with us on a neighborhood plan, and paid for the process. All property owners were invited to participate, whether they lived in Old Miakka or were land speculators. This was done in an open and transparent manner.

The resulting plan set boundaries for the community of Cow Pen Slough to the west, Manatee County to the north and east and Myakka River State Park to the south. The document called for keeping Old Miakka rural, with a maximum density ultimately being one home per five acres and no commercial zoning unless it was agriculturally related – plant nurseries or beekeeping, for example.

County Commissioner Jon Thaxton’s email on Aug. 5, 2005, said the purpose of this process was to ensure that 2050 development is consistent with the neighborhood plan. And in 2007, the county commission accepted the Old Miakka Neighborhood Plan, by Resolution 2007-042. The community of Old Miakka believed it was preserved and protected.

But in 2015, the first hamlet was ap-

proved in northeast Sarasota County. It allows 400 houses on less than one-acre lots, with 15 pits – also known as storm-water ponds. The location is currently a hay field. Why do so many pits need to be mined? The subdivision east of this hamlet, after building house pads, mined the dirt and moved it to Palmer Road and west of the Fruitville Library.

The Community of Old Miakka asked, “How could this happen? We have a neighborhood plan, and 2050 development is supposed to be consistent with the neighborhood plan.”

As it turns out, the answer is that our plan was “accepted” by the commission, but never “adopted.” We only found this out in 2015.

So this new amendment to the comprehensive plan is an attempt to codify what the Miakka Community thought we already had.

The Miakka Community Club attempted to pay the \$5,000 fee that developers pay to file such an amendment. But we learned from the county’s planning department that we were only required by ordinance to gather 20 signatures of registered county voters. Originally, 75 signatures were submitted, and 45 were verified. Since then, over 750 signatures have been submitted in support of CPA-2019-C.

A staff review of the proposed amendment found that the 6,000-plus acres it would affect are no longer needed for the 2050 Plan to function, and reducing the number of residential units would not necessarily be counter to 2050 policy.

The staff report also noted that intrusion into these important watersheds should be minimized. Reducing the number of dwelling units will inherently reduce the impact on the environmental systems, and a rural heritage designation would be less impactful on water and energy consumption.

Old Miakka’s proposed rural heritage designation would allow for 80% open space in this part of the county. Hamlets require 60% open space.

Old Miakka is a 170-year-old rural community – the only remaining rural community in Sarasota.

These are just the facts.

*Becky Ayech is a 40-year resident of Old Miakka and president of the Miakka Community Club.*