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February 1, 2023

Hon. Mayor Fred Jones
City of Sebastian
1225 Main St.
Sebastian, FL 32958

RE: Graves Brothers Annexation

Dear Mayor Jones:

On December 8, 2022, Jason Brown, then Indian River County Administrator, sent a letter to Paul Carlisle outlining the County's comments on the Graves Brothers annexation, which was initially proposed to be considered at the December 14, 2022 City of Sebastian City Council meeting. The matter was postponed until February 8, 2023. As the City Council prepares to consider this matter again, I am writing to reiterate some of the County's concerns based upon the most recent proposed annexation agreement published by the City of Sebastian on January 20, 2023.

The annexation of 2,044.3+/- acres into the City of Sebastian will have a significant impact on the County. Last Wednesday night, at the City Council workshop, the County and the public learned that the property could be developed with 10,771 homes under the proposed annexation agreement. The County will be expected to provide fire rescue services, water and sewer services, and evaluate County roadway capacities for the property. Since this property has been outside of the County's urban services boundary, the County has not planned for the infrastructure which will now be expected by the City and the property owner.

County Roadways

The County still believes it is critical that grid roadways, particularly at the collector and arterial level, be provided to a standard that ensures consistency with prevailing local engineering practices and guidelines. Therefore, the County would like to see Section 3.6(b)(1) amended to include the following: "...and roadways connecting to the County roadway network shall be designed and permitted in accordance with Indian River County Code of Ordinances, Chapter 312 – Rights-of-Way, Chapter 952 – Traffic, and consistent with Chapter 14-97, Florida Administrative Code." Additionally, add, "The City shall require the Owner/Developer to provide a conceptual roadway grid network plan showing proposed connections to County roadways as part of the overall master plan for the property for use in long range roadway network planning by the County."

In the interest of a coordinated approach, the County also suggests Section 3.6(b)(1) be amended to include the following language. "The Owner/Developer shall provide a Traffic Impact Study for each 400 acre Parcel PUD application, and the City will provide this study to the County in a timely manner."

Utilities

The proposed annexation agreement proposes a maximum of 10,771 residential units and a mix of commercial and industrial uses. The projected population would be over 21,000, based upon the average household size in the community. Essentially, the County is being asked to provide service to an additional community the size of the City of Vero Beach. County staff estimates that this level of development at build-out would result in demand for about 2.8-3.0 million gallons of water per day. While it is the County's intention to provide service to this community, we will need continued coordination with the property owner as development happens in the future to determine what will be required for the County to serve such a significant addition to the service area. This must be accomplished while not jeopardizing our ability to provide water and sewer services to other properties in the unincorporated area and the City of Sebastian, which we are already committed to serve. Please understand that there is not enough water in the County's consumptive use permit or even the County's pending application for a consumption use permit to serve this property. While we do not anticipate the property to fully develop for several years, the planning for water and wastewater services needs to happen well in advance of the actual development in order to ensure adequate resources and designate land where these resources would be located, once it becomes necessary.

As noted in December, the County understands that we are not a party to this proposed annexation agreement between the City and the Graves Brothers. Given that, section 3.5(c) discusses dedication of Facilities to the City or County, as directed by the City. This differs from the current process whereby water, wastewater, and reuse water utility assets are dedicated to the County. The County's intention would be to continue this process, as it is not in the best interest of the County's Department of Utility Services to operate and maintain infrastructure that is needed to provide services while that infrastructure is owned by another entity. As such, we do not believe that the proposed annexation agreement would be binding on the County as it relates to transfer of water, wastewater, and reuse water utility infrastructure.

Please understand that the County is not trying to interfere in negotiations between the City and the property owner. The most important point to note is that the County will need additional contributions from the property owner -- such as a dedicated utility plant site, property for fire station sites, and connections with the County roadway system -- in order to commit to and plan for the provision of services to the proposed annexation area.

We look forward to assisting you with making your project a successful one that will benefit all of Indian River County. By keeping an open line of communication between us, I have no doubt we can succeed.

Sincerely



Joseph H. Earman
Chairman, Board of County Commissioners

Cc: Michael C. Zito, Interim County Administrator
Dylan Reingold, County Attorney
Indian River County Board of County Commissioners