



City of Flagler Beach

P.O. Box 70 • 105 South Second Street
Flagler Beach, Florida 32136

Phone (386) 517-2000 • Fax (386) 517-2016

May 3, 2016

Ms. Noranne Downs, P.E.
District Five Secretary of Transportation
719 S. Woodland Blvd.
DeLand, FL 32720

Re: SR A1A Scenic and Historical Coastal Byway Wayfinding Signs in City of Flagler Beach

Dear Secretary Downs:

On behalf of what appears to be the majority opinion of the citizens of the City of Flagler Beach, I would like to draw your attention to their opposition to the proposed installation of large and obtrusive Wayfinding signs on our beachfront Oceanshore Boulevard, designated SR A1A Scenic and Historical Coastal Byway in 2002.

As the newly hired City Manager, I was unaware of the Wayfinding Plan Project, implemented by the nonprofit organization *Friends of A1A*, until an observant city employee noticed an increase in the number of Sunstate "locate" requests. When it was learned that installation of these Wayfinding signs was imminent, I requested they refrain until it could be discussed with the City Commission.

Despite my request to cease and desist on the installation of the signs until the matter could be delved into further, phones at City Hall started ringing when contractors were seen on-site, digging into the dune with the intent of installing 8' deep footings (east of the Coastal Construction Control Line and without an FDEP permit). On our stretch of SR A1A, the road lies on top of our primary frontal dune, offering a scenic view of the ocean unparalleled by much of Florida's Atlantic coastline, but also exposing this fragile ecosystem to environmental hazards.

I have since learned that *Friends of A1A* did appear before our City Commission in 2010, but the directive from the Commissioners at that time was to reduce the number of signs, their size, and not to place them in our Downtown Core area. Between then and now, no formal communication or agreement was made between the City and *Friends of A1A* regarding the signs. Based on a review of the design specifications shared with us recently, all of the City Commission's instructions from 2010 were ignored.

On Tuesday, April 26, a workshop was held at City Hall for three hours, during which time the public was invited to view photos of the proposed signage, their sizes, and their proposed locations. Comment cards were issued, and 231 responded. To the question "Do you like the proposed wayfinding signs?" 218 replied "no." Variations on this question produced similar results. There were 210 "yes" responses to whether the size of the signs should be reduced, and of the 190 who responded to the question "do you like the sign but not its location?" 185 said "no." (A summary list of citizen responses is attached.)

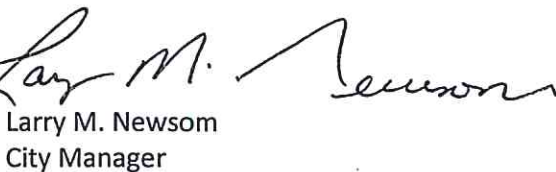
There was also a place on the card for "General Comments." Handwritten notes from most of our residents who attended the workshop were of a single theme, namely that there are already too many signs cluttering up the roadside, interfering with the scenic beauty so unique to Flagler Beach. But there was another new and stronger argument, too, one that recognizes today's technology. The reality is that a mere five years ago, when applications for grants and approvals were being sought for this project, most people did not have easy access to smart phones, MapQuest, GPS locators in their cars, or similar devices. That is no longer the case. Gone are the days when it was necessary to find a gas station to ask directions to a local park. Signs are still necessary, of course, and there are some in our city limits. We just do not need an overabundance of signs at the expense of our seascape. (And speaking of expense, surely there is a better way to spend \$499,999, the amount of the accepted bid for the project in St. Johns and Flagler Counties.)

We hope to continue a fruitful partnership with *Friends of A1A* and want to acknowledge the many good works of their fine volunteers over the years. They have been good stewards of the environment and are well known for their participation in International Coastal Cleanup Day, the ever-popular 72-mile annual garage sale, the creation of hiking trails, purchase and placement of recycling waste cans, bird watching bicycle tours, and educational opportunities for youth, to name just a few. This letter is not intended to disparage them in any way, but to respectfully disagree with their intention to impose additional signage in our City.

Please consider the request of our citizens and commissioners not to place any Wayfinding signs designated for Flagler Beach.

If you have any questions, please feel free to call me on my personal cell phone at 386.225.9000. Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Larry M. Newsom
City Manager

cc: FDOT State Secretary Jim Boxold, 605 Suwannee St., Tallahassee, FL 32399
Flagler Beach Elected Officials, 105 S. Second St., Flagler Beach, FL 32136

Attch: Comment Summary