

## The Daily Commercial

# School Board does create construction jobs

In his "My View" piece Don Magruder quoted one sentence in a Daily Commercial story about a school board meeting and claimed it represented my views on the economy and jobs -- even though he was not present when my comments were made. Among other things, I stated that the school board creates jobs as a by-product of fulfilling its primary responsibility to educate students and construct needed student stations. In fact, three school construction projects are currently pumping more than \$140 million into Lake's economy and employing hundreds of workers, the same projects Mr. Magruder has previously railed against. To carp about the school board and job creation without mentioning these jobs is disingenuous. Possible motives include that the lumber company Mr. Magruder works for would profit from increased residential construction and therefore school construction jobs don't matter. Or, maybe it's because he and his employer are funding an opponent in my 2010 Florida House campaign.

Mr. Magruder wants school impact fees eliminated but offers no funding alternative. That's no mystery. School impact fees require those benefiting from residential growth to bridge the existing gap in school construction funding made worse by the impact of residential growth. The school impact fee addresses that funding gap and allows our school district to meet the need for student stations caused by residential growth without raising property taxes on those already living here. Consistent with these principles, I support the school impact fee. And, last summer, I voted twice against raising property taxes, despite concerted pressure to do otherwise.

Incredibly, Mr. Magruder blames two School Board members for an increase in the number of homeless and other students eligible under federal law to receive subsidized meals. The School Board educates and feeds such students and, through a grant, is expanding outreach efforts. However, eliminating the school impact fee will not remedy their underlying economic and social circumstances.

Seeking a reasonable solution, I suggested deferring payment of school impact fees until issuance of the certificate of occupancy rather than the building permit. This proposal, dismissed by Mr. Magruder, would be fair to builders since they would not have to come out of pocket until their homes are complete, which is closer in time to their sale date. Such a change would more closely align receipt of school impact fees with the arrival of students (i.e., the impact) without significantly compromising the School Board's primary responsibility.

Larry Metz

Lake County School Board Member, District 1

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