



Joho Properties, LLC

Variance
(P24-108)

Planning and Zoning Board – September 5, 2024
Marissa Da Breo-Latchman, Environmental Planner II

Variance Request

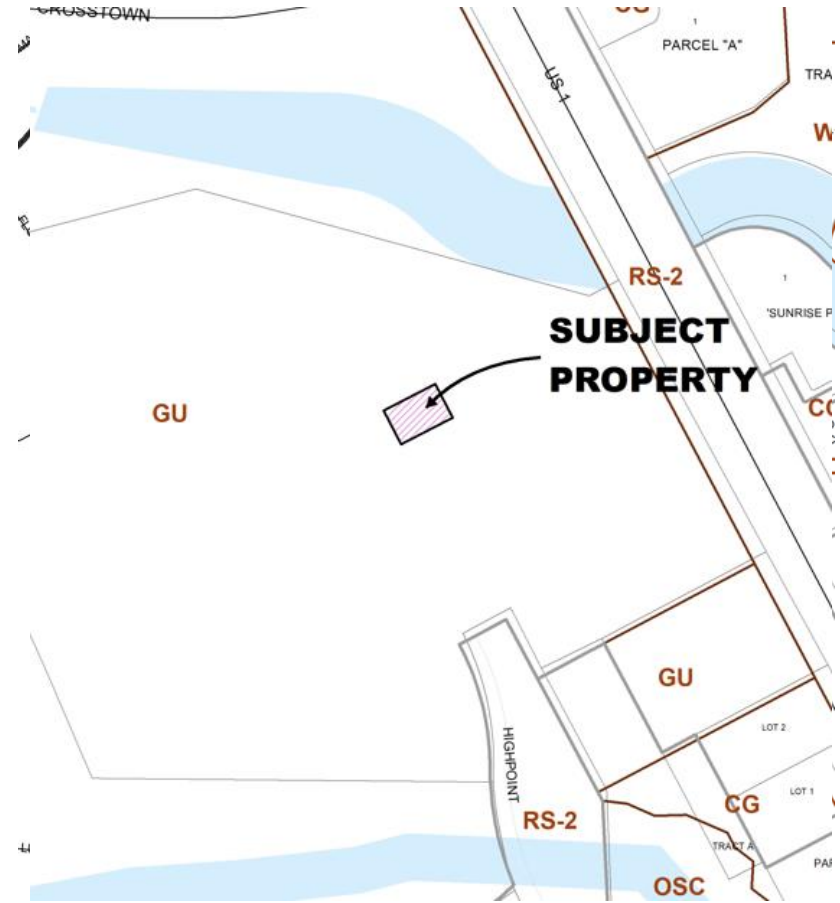
- A variance request to Section 158.060(E)(2) of the Zoning Code to allow for the development of a property with a lot size of 10,018.8 square feet and a width of 80 feet in a General Use Zoning District (GU).
- Section 158.060(E)(2) of the Zoning Code requires a minimum lot size of 20,000 SF and a minimum lot width of 100 feet for all permitted and special exception uses in a General Use Zoning District and a minimum size of 10 acres and a minimum width of 330 linear feet for a single-family dwelling in a a General Use Zoning District.

Applicant and Property Owner

Applicant:	Jeff Laughren
Property Owner:	Joho Properties, LLC
Proposed Use:	Camping
Location:	West side of S US Highway 1 in Savannas Preserve State Park.

Location Map

Direction	Future Land Use	Zoning	Existing Use
North	OSC	GU	Savannas Preserve State Park, Crosstown Parkway
South	OSC	GU	Savannas Preserve State Park
East	OSC	GU	Savannas Preserve State Park, US Hwy 1
West	OSC	GU	Savannas Preserve State Park, FPL substation



Project Description

- The subject property is an existing privately owned parcel that is located adjacent to and surrounded by the portion of Savannas Preserve State Park that is located on the west side of U.S. 1 along the North Fork of the St. Lucie River and south of Crosstown Parkway. Park amenities include a kayak launch and parking area.
- The request is to allow for the subject property to be development as a ±10,018 square foot lot with a width of 80 feet under the GU zoning district.
- The request would result in a variance of ±9,981 sq ft to the minimum lot size requirement and a variance of 20 linear feet to the minimum lot width requirement.



**SUBJECT
PROPERTY**

Project Background

- The subject property was formerly owned and used by American Telephone and Telegraph Company (AT&T). The building onsite housed their equipment. An AT&T easement occupies the western portion of the property.
- The parcel was sold to the Wren family, via warranty deed, in 1991.
- In 1993, Mr. Leo Cueto purchased the property via a tax deed sale. Mr. Cueto remained the owner until 2013 when the property was conveyed to Ms. Sheila Cueto pursuant to probate proceedings.
- The property was then sold to Joho Properties LLC, the current owner, and applicant, in 2019.

Project Background Cont'd

- A zoning map from 1977 shows the property, along with the surrounding area, being zoned Planned Unit Development (PUD), however, a PUD could not be located in the City records.
- For reasons unknown by City staff, the property was not acquired when the Savannas Preserve State Park was created in 1977.
- The City of Port St. Lucie changed its zoning classifications in 1984 and the park, including the lot that is the subject of this variance, was reclassified as GU (General Use).

General Use Zoning District

- The General Use zoning district (GU) is intended to apply to those areas of the City which are presently undeveloped and where the future use is either uncertain, or which the arrangement or boundaries of future uses cannot be clearly defined, and for which any other zoning would be premature or unreasonable.
- Permitted uses: agriculture; park or playground, or other public recreation; publicly owned or operated building or use; a Single-family dwelling (with a minimum lot size of 10 acres); camping area (public or non-profit); and stable and horse-riding academy.
- Requires a minimum lot size of 20,000 SF and a minimum lot width of 100 feet all permitted and special exception uses and a minimum of 10 acres and a minimum width of 330 linear feet for single-family dwelling

Staff Findings

- The SFWMD and the Florida DEP have expressed concerns with the proposed and do not support the granting of this variance.



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

December 13, 2024

Mary F. Savage-Dunham
Planning & Zoning Director
City of Port St. Lucie Planning and Zoning Board
121 SW Port St., Building B
Port St. Lucie, Florida 34984


Dear Ms. Savage-Dunham:

On behalf of South Florida Water Management District (District), I am writing to reaffirm the position the District expressed during the September 5, 2024 zoning variance hearing where, Joho Properties, LLC., requested the City of Port St. Lucie to grant a variance of the Zoning Code to allow for the development of the applicant's property, located inside and surrounded by the Savannas Preserve State Park. The District remains concerned about the compatibility of infrastructure associated with the use being proposed by the applicant with the preserve's purpose and ecological integrity.

Since the hearing, we have had the opportunity to meet with the applicant to discuss their proposed project. While we appreciate the opportunity to engage in dialogue and gain a better understanding of their plans, our concerns remain unchanged. We believe that such infrastructure poses significant risks to the preserve's intended function and could undermine its environmental and conservation goals.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We remain available to provide additional information or to participate in further discussions as needed.

Sincerely,


Jennifer Reynolds
Division Director, Ecosystem Restoration

Since the hearing, we have had the opportunity to meet with the applicant to discuss their proposed project. While we appreciate the opportunity to engage in dialogue and gain a better understanding of their plans, our concerns remain unchanged. We believe that such infrastructure poses significant risks to the preserve's intended function and could undermine its environmental and conservation goals.

The proposed development of the subject property poses a net negative impact on the surrounding ecosystem in the park. The subject parcel is located within the scrubby flatwoods natural community, which is state and globally ranked as imperiled. In addition, the Division has documented gopher tortoises, bald eagle, and other listed species located in the surrounding park property. The state of Florida has made significant investments to preserve and restore the ecosystem in this area. The Division would not support any activity that would adversely impact the area's environment.



**FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF
Environmental Protection**

Marjory Stoneman Douglas Building
3900 Commonwealth Boulevard
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Ron DeSantis
Governor

Joanette Huffer
Lt. Governor

Alexis A. Lambert
Secretary

Dec. 3, 2024

Mary F. Savage-Dunham
Director, Planning & Zoning Department
City of Port St. Lucie
121 SW Port St. Lucie Blvd.
Port St. Lucie, Florida 34984

Dear Ms. Savage-Dunham:

Thank you for the opportunity to share our concerns regarding the requested variance before the city of Port St. Lucie Planning and Zoning Board. By way of the planning and zoning board meeting on Sept. 5, 2024, the Department of Environmental Protection's Division of Recreation and Parks (Division) became aware of the intended plans of the landowner to construct and operate a private campground on the subject property (proposed development). This proposal raises a number of environmental and operational concerns directly affecting the park.

As you are aware, the subject property is an inholding located within Savannas Preserve State Park. The land that makes up the park, which surrounds this parcel, was acquired in 1988 and is jointly owned by the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund and the South Florida Water Management District.


The proposed development of the subject property poses a net negative impact on the surrounding ecosystem in the park. The subject parcel is located within the scrubby flatwoods natural community, which is state and globally ranked as imperiled. In addition, the Division has documented gopher tortoises, bald eagle, and other listed species located in the surrounding park property. The state of Florida has made significant investments to preserve and restore the ecosystem in this area. The Division would not support any activity that would adversely impact the area's environment.

Classified as a preserve, the park currently supports low-intensity recreation for day-use visitors, and overnight accommodations are not contemplated in the current unit management plan for the park. Moreover, the change in use to a private campground on an inholding within a state park that was previously undeveloped would require additional staffing for potential security and resource protection risks to park property that the Division cannot support.

Dec. 3, 2024
Page Two

The Division appreciates the opportunity to express these concerns, and respectfully requests that a variance not be granted to allow for the proposed development in this environmentally sensitive area.

Sincerely,


Chuck Hatcher
Director, Florida Park Service

Staff Findings Cont'd

- All properties zoned General Use (GU) are required to meet the minimum size requirements as stated in Section 158.060(E)(2).
- Typical uses of existing GU parcels in the City include water retention ponds, parks, public schools and open space.
- Any development on the property would require connection to water and sewer per Policy 1.1.3.5 of the Future Land Use Element of the City's Comprehensive Plan.
- Per the submittal packet, the intended use is camping. The application does not include any written correspondence with the state park.
- This property is not developable without this variance.
- Staff does not support the granting of this variance.

Planning & Zoning Board Action Options

- Make a motion to approve the variance to allow a minimum lot size of 10,018.8 square feet and a minimum lot width of 80 feet where a minimum lot size of 20,000 square feet and a minimum lot width of 100 feet is required in a General Use Zoning District excluding a single-family residential unit.
- Make a motion to approve with conditions.
- Make a motion to deny.
- Make a motion to table.