



UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

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25 September 2003

Dr. Charles Young
President, University of Florida
226 Tigert Hall
Gainesville, Florida 32611-3150

Dear President Young:

This letter is written to encourage you to resolve the current confusion in regards to the proposed donation of right-of-way (ROW) for an eastward, four-lane extension of SW 24th Avenue to Archer Road. To many, the University seems to be delaying the start of the Master Plan amendment process, which is needed to effect the donation, while allowing Alachua County to spend its money to design a road that depends on the donation occurring.

On 25 March 2003, you wrote the Alachua County Commission that the University would recommend through its Master Plan amendment process that ROW be provided for the extension. Because you only committed to *recommend* the donation, you may have suspected that the road could have unintended, negative consequences for the Conservation Element of the UF Master Plan and the academic programs of the departments and schools that use the Natural Area Teaching Laboratory (NATL). The Natural Area Advisory Committee (NAAC), which has guided the development of NATL since 1994, has worked to document these negative effects and have them weighed against the proposed benefits.

Late last Spring Semester, NAAC tried unsuccessfully to move the issues surrounding the donation of ROW into open consideration through action of the Faculty Senate. Early this Fall Semester, NAAC asked the Lakes, Vegetation and Landscaping Committee (LVL) to request that UF Administration proceed with the amendment process by the end of September. To bolster our request, 124 faculty members signed petitions to that effect. Nonetheless, at its 8 Sep 2003 meeting, LVL declined to request that the Administration start the amendment process but voted instead to oppose a road through NATL.

Here are three suggestions that you may care to consider:

(1) Proceed along the timeline that Vice President Poppell proposed in a 3 Sep 2003 letter to the MTPO, but advise the County that it should suspend spending to design SW 24th Avenue west of SW 34th Street until UF reaches its final decision on the donation, probably in June 2004.

(2) Start the amendment process immediately, and advise the County that UF will make its final decision by mid December 2003.

(3) Advise the County that you are withdrawing your commitment to recommend the ROW donation in order to give your successor the maximum flexibility in dealing with the proposed extension.

Until last week NAAC was promoting option (2), but our failure to make progress in that direction has led us to favor option (3).

We look forward to a satisfactory resolution of the uncertainty surrounding this issue.

Sincerely,

Thomas J. Walker
Chair, Natural Area Advisory Committee

xc: Vice President Poppell

Three enclosures:

NATL pamphlet (a list of NAAC members is on the back)

Review and update of UF's commitment to donate right-of-way
(prepared for September Senate meeting)

Petitions signed by 124 faculty members in 9 departments and schools, in 4 colleges