

***Testimony Before Lake Park, FL Commission 7/15/2026 Public Comment on Pre-scripted
Testimonies Supporting Forest Development -- Michael Steinhauer, 435 Greenbriar Dr.
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Advancement of Civic Engagement***

Mayor and Commissioners,

I want to address a troubling pattern that I have observed during recent public comment periods and that has been validated by others.

Over a few meetings, several speakers supporting Forest Development have delivered testimony that is nearly identical — not just in opinion, but in wording, structure, and even specific phrases. It has become increasingly apparent that these comments are not independently prepared statements, but rather a script that has been written in advance and distributed to supporters.

Certainly, every resident has the right to endorse or oppose a project. I respect that right completely. What concerns me is when public testimony becomes mass-produced advocacy instead of genuine individual subjective participation.

One purpose of public comments before you are to encourage authentic thoughts, experiences, and concerns of residents. When the same prepared language is repeated a few times, it creates the illusion of broad, independent support when the commission *really* is hearing a message orchestrated and staged. That's dishonest and unethical.

And, it does not strengthen public discourse; it weakens it. It discourages critical thinking and reduces citizens to repetitive parrot-like talking points rather than speaking in their own voices.

I am not asking this commission to limit anyone's speech. I am asking that we recognize the difference between organic public input and arranged conspiratory testimony. The quality of our decision-making depends on hearing a diversity of viewpoints but expressed honestly and independently.

If a development is truly beneficial, it should be able to withstand thoughtful scrutiny and be supported or objected to by residents who can explain, in their own words, why they believe it serves the community or not. I can pledge to you I am only aware of residents speaking for themselves, or the same for people who may be testifying on behalf of the engagement society. They speak their own mind in their own way.

I urge the commission to continue evaluating every project based on facts, evidence, planning standards, and the genuine interests of the town — not on the number of people lined up in a chorus, spoon-fed the same prepared script. Residents are monitoring occurrences carefully.

Thank you for your consideration.

Exhibit C