

The Honorable Mayor Richard Dunlop
7707-3 US Highway 1
Vero Beach, FL 32967

April 15, 2011

Dear Mayor Dunlop,

As you know, we at Marsh Island have been very interested in being annexed by the Town of Orchid. Not only would there be tax savings as a result of the efficient manner in which the Town is run but we have felt all along that to be part of a prestigious and attractive community like Orchid would be of great value to our residents. We have common interests, common visions for our communities, common socio-economic backgrounds and common desires to create and maintain high quality, successfully run, beautiful communities for our residents to live in. To us, merging the two communities would have been a win/win for residents of both Marsh Island and Orchid.

Our level of genuine interest should be clear from the large number of Marsh Island property owners who gave their consent for the annexation, from the amount of time that several of us have been willing to spend to see the annexation come about and from the expense that our property owners were willing to incur in order to meet the requirements of the law and in order to provide Council members with the information they needed to be able to do all of their due diligence.

Likewise, we would like to commend the Town Council members for taking the time to study the pros and cons of the annexation to make sure that your judgments would be as informed as possible and based on carefully researched facts, not hearsay or innuendo. The easy thing would have been for Council members to quickly dismiss it and not take the time necessary to get all the facts that are required in a complicated process like this. This is especially true in light of the fact that several Orchid residents have been openly opposed to annexation from the beginning.

Unfortunately, the process turned out to be much more difficult and complicated than any of us imagined. For reasons unknown to us several Orchid residents are vehemently opposed to the annexation---so much so that much misinformation has been disseminated and scare tactics used in an effort to alarm Orchid residents about the potential impact of annexation on Orchid residents even though that impact with respect to most issues raised is small or nonexistent. Even the media has been used to slander and malign our community and misrepresent facts without regard to the untold damage that it could do to our image, our reputation and future property sales. This is especially disturbing in view of the fact that many of us have worked so very hard to clear up past misconceptions about Marsh Island and make changes that were necessary to ensure the future success of our development.

Finally, as you know, those who are opposed to annexation used their influence with the Orchid Island Club and the Orchid Island Community Association to have a poll conducted that in our opinion was fraught with bias. Instead of allowing residents to vote based on the objective, balanced and carefully crafted white paper that the Council worked so hard to prepare, those opposed decided to write their own letter which was biased and had many inaccuracies and incorrect assumptions concerning the impact of annexation on the Town. After reading that letter, even I might have been persuaded to oppose the annexation if I wasn't so familiar with all of the facts.

It has become increasingly clear to us that this biased and hostile environment will make it very difficult for Council members to vote based on their own assessments of the merits of

annexation rather than the views of a few who have succeeded in influencing public opinion in their favor.

In view of these conditions, the Board of Directors of the Marsh Island Homeowners' Association has concluded that even if Council members determine that annexation is good for the Town of Orchid and have the courage to vote accordingly, it would not be in the best interests of Marsh Island residents to be annexed in a climate such as the one that currently exists. If we align ourselves with another community we would want it to be with people who appreciate the value and quality that Marsh Island can bring to them. As a result, we would like to request that the Town Council at this time withdraw the annexation request.

We apologize for any inconvenience this turn of events may cause the Town Council and Staff. We thank you, the other Council Members, and the Town staff members for the incredible amount of time and effort you all have put into this and for doing what we think is an outstanding job in the face of very trying and difficult circumstances. And we want to express our heartfelt sympathy for the personal sacrifice you and your families have had to endure as a result of the hostile environment in which you have had to work.

Sincerely,

John Von Hagen
President, Marsh Island Homeowners Association

C.c. Ms. Deb Branwell, Town Manager