



## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Equestrian Preserve Committee

**From:** Michael O'Dell

**Date:** November 19, 2020

**Subject:** Equestrian Element – Responses to Comments from the EPC's November 4, 2020 Meeting

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Below are responses and proposed changes to the Equestrian Element of the Comprehensive Plan based on the Equestrian Preserve Committee's comments provided at the November 4, 2020 meeting.

### 1.) Emergency Evacuation Planning

The Committee discussed emergency evacuation planning for equine in the EPA and considered the need to develop plans and policies that could be included in the Village's *Emergency Management Plan*.

Emergency Management Planning tries to consider each of the factors that affect the target evacuation area. In the case of the Equestrian Preserve, planning and impact factors change seasonally and will change based on the size of the impact area. South Florida's most prevalent risk (or hazard) is hurricanes, which are seasonal and can have multi-state impacts. Smaller scale risks are usually associated with localized flooding. The responses to these events are different based upon intensity, impact area, and characteristics.

As a starting point, the State of Florida's *Emergency Management Policy* is to shelter in place. Evacuations typically apply to coastal low-lying areas where storm surge and flooding represent an immediate life safety threat.

Emergency Management in almost all jurisdictions is conducted using the standardized National Incident Management System (NIMS). Under NIMS, emergency events are called "*Incidents*" and responses are scalable.

Large area events such as hurricanes require coordination with state and federal agencies and there are generally far fewer resources available during and immediately after the *Incident*. All planning for region-wide events calls for local self-sufficiency during the *Incident* and its immediate aftermath. An example of that self-sufficiency within the equestrian community was the water distribution points set up in the Equestrian Preserve during hurricanes Francis and Jeanne.

Viruses and medical events are potential localized incidents that have previously been guided by the State Health Department, and the Village has been in a supporting role. In summary, the driver to an evacuation order is the State or Palm Beach County; Wellington's role would be to support a county or state emergency order.

**Recommendation:**

Add a policy to Goal EQ 1:

**Policy EQ 1.1.3**

**Incident Management Coordination**

Coordinate with State and County emergency managers to provide support to the equestrian community within the EPA if impacted by area wide incidents.

**2.) Schools in the EPA**

The committee discussed the opportunities and potential for educational facilities including primary and secondary schools in the EPA. The general direction is that educational uses are well suited and should be allowed within the EPA. For information, equestrian instruction within the Equestrian Preserve is a use by right and does not require supplemental approval.

**Recommendation:**

Add #4 to Policy EQ 1.1.1:

4) Provide for primary and secondary schools that also provide educational programs supporting the equestrian industry. The proposed addition to the policy will be implemented by an amendment to the Land Development Regulations, particularly the use table of the EOZD to allow primary and secondary schools as a conditional use with supplemental standards that include providing educational programs supporting the equestrian industry.

**3.) Water Quality and Quantity Education**

The EPC discussed the importance and need for educating the equestrian community and property owners on the issues and importance of protecting the Village's water quality and addressing quantity issues through conservation. These subjects are addressed in the comprehensive plan in the Public Facilities and Conservation, Sustainability & Resiliency Elements on a village-wide basis. However, targeted educational programming can be developed for the equestrian area and its associated issues.

**Recommendation:**

Educate homeowners and builders on subjects like water quality and quantity through Wellington Public Service Announcements and website, and through distribution of existing documents such as the FDACS BMP Manual.

#### **4.) Competitive Component**

The equestrian industry continues to expand outward from Wellington. This expansion is fueled in part by the build-out of the EPA and the leveling of Wellington's growth. Land values are and always will be a factor in growing and expanding most agricultural activities. Locally, Polo is probably the most susceptible to increases in land values, due to the sport's need for twenty plus of acres of land for competitions.

The proposed draft of the Equestrian Element recommends Goal EQ 1 – "Preserve the Equestrian Lifestyle in Wellington." If this is the number one goal, then is the Comprehensive Plan a tool for the expansion of competitive equestrian venues and events? Alternatively, should the goal be designed to provide an appropriate foundation for the "PRESERVATION" of an equestrian lifestyle within Wellington? In other words, are we writing a document designed to expand commercial equestrian activities, or are we preparing a document that is designed to "Protect and Preserve" an equestrian lifestyle? Or both?

Wellington's equestrian competitions have transformed the lifestyle from what was once a recreational lifestyle to one that is integrally part of the competition circuit. Equestrian competitions have also influenced the market place, and equestrian competitions have created a brand and a demand.

In addition, equestrian designated land within Wellington is finite; there has always been a limitation on the size of the equestrian footprint. Five-acre lots are generally the minimum size. With the exception of a few large land holdings, there are few remaining lands available to be developed as PUD's and the necessary infrastructure is not readily available to support an increase in development intensity.

Over the last two decades, the competitive venues have supported the equestrian lifestyle. As the Committee considers the progression of equestrian sports within Wellington and if the intent is to place the emphasis on the growth of the venues please consider there has been an ebb and flow to the competitive venues, but what has remained are the "Individual Farms". Perhaps the principle of ensuring that the competitive venues support the farms rather than the reverse should guide us more. Additionally, venues beyond Wellington, but within Palm Beach County could expand to meet future demand. A second response could be that the existing venues within Wellington expand either in area or in time to meet demand. Thirdly, new venues are created beyond the limits of Palm Beach County, which causes a shift in the equine industry and the Wellington venues accept a leveling of participants, which in-turn expanding equestrian properties level off as well. Based on the committee's discussion a policy could be added.

#### **Recommendation:**

Add a policy to Goal EQ 3.2:

### **Policy 3.2.2**

#### **Equestrian Venues**

Maintain Wellington's world-class equine status by adapting to and accommodating venue modifications that arise from market conditions or which contribute to the increase of the numbers of competitors and equine within Wellington.

#### **5.) Formation of a County Equine Association**

The committee discussed the idea of developing and working with an equine association here in Palm Beach County to address issues that are affecting the equestrian community. The thought being as Wellington moves closer to build-out; the industry is continuing to grow beyond the Village's borders. If the industry had a voice, it could develop strategies and policies that could foresee challenges and influence the industry's growth. One such organization that exists is Palm Beach County Horseman's Association, which has served the equestrian community since 1968. Other organizations that could be of assistance are the Chambers of Commerce. A countywide equestrian association is a private sector venture, not a public domain policy question, and certainly not one that should be addressed in Wellington's Comprehensive Plan.

#### **Recommendation:**

No recommended action required at this time.

#### **6.) Include the EPC in the Element**

The inclusion of the EPC as part of the Land Development Regulations (LDR) review process is contained in Article 5 of the LDR. In addition, Village Resolution No. 2000-36 created an Equestrian Preserve Committee and outlined the committee's policies, procedures, purpose, powers, and duties. There is no reason to duplicate what is already contained within the Code of Ordinances or LDR. No other board or committee is referenced in the Comprehensive Plan.

#### **Recommendation:**

No recommended action required at this time.