

I am writing in strong support of the permanent preservation of the South Pond Wetlands as a nature area and wildlife sanctuary. This is a critical issue for Ann Arbor, Michigan and indeed the entire USA. I would like to make a couple of points that I would have made at your meeting to be held on 21 January had I been able to attend.

First, I lived in Ann Arbor from 1984 to 1990 and have worked at the University of Michigan as a faculty member in the Biology Department (now MCDB Department) also since 1984. I witnessed phenomenal growth in the population in that time, and changes in land use in the area. From 1990 to the present I have lived in two areas of Brighton, Michigan. Livingston County had the highest level of growth and building of any county in the USA for a few years. During that growth there was significant long-term planning, but a number of significant issues and a couple absolute disasters. The disasters could have been avoided by proper local government planning and oversight, and the consequences of this poor planning are still being felt.

Second, I would like to offer two anecdotes that exemplify the disastrous consequences that resulted to our environment as a result of poor planning in the hope that they may help direct you to make the proper and obvious decision regarding the long-standing South Pond Wetlands. First, my wife and I built a home in 1989 and moved in during 1990 on Pepperidge Drive in the Ravenswood subdivision of Brighton Township, near the corner of Old US 23 and Hilton Roads. This information may help you in verifying my story. At that time the end of Pepperidge was a cul-de-sac that abutted hundreds of acres of protected wetlands, including many ponds and forest areas. In that area were deer, skunk, raccoons, and many species of birds and a few reptiles and amphibians. We were assured by our builder and real estate agents that no building could ever happen in those wetlands because they were protected by the state of Michigan. Our neighbors got identical assurances, and some in writing. Within a couple years Mitch Harris began construction of the Deer Creek subdivision against strong objections by our subdivision members and others in the area. These debates got rather heated, and our arguments included the protection by the State of the wetlands. The short story is that the State and local governments permitted the building permits to be issued for the entire construction. Rather than preserving the ponds, 5 were totally filled in and the animals that lived in them either died or were displaced. The agreement was for other areas to be designated as replacement wetlands, but they were never completed. A drive through that subdivision, or a look using Google Maps, will verify there are no replacement ponds. In addition, some plats had negative perc tests as a result of filling in the ponds, resulting in no homes there and the requirement for abutting property owners to purchase those lots. The area had a substantial reduction in all wildlife, destruction of protected ponds and forests, and little regard for the environment in the interest of financial reward for the Builder. Those resources will never be replaced.

A second incident is the Dominion subdivision of Brighton, on Spencer Road. The area was old growth pines and hardwoods and rolling hills. Pulte Homes obtained permits for very large and expensive homes to be built against local objections, which were discounted. Before long in the initial construction phase a good part of land was clear-cut and stripped of trees and hills were removed. It was a tragic picture that saddened

anyone who drive by. The stories in the local papers bear testament to the outcry. The entire community was shocked and the construction process was halted until the local planners could review the permits, the builders plans and the local furor appropriately. The building process was eventually allowed to proceed, but Brighton Township needed to enact new rules and legislation to prevent that kind of wanton destruction of precious wildlife and forest area ever again. Those old trees hills, and all the displaced and dead wildlife will never be replaced.

As a Biologist and long-standing member of the Ann Arbor and Brighton communities I have serious reservations about permitting any, any, construction or alteration associated with the South Ponds Wetlands. Please do not make the mistakes of the Planning Commissions in Brighton by permitting land developers to influence you with promises they will not keep and destruction of natural wetlands as has been the trend in the state and in the USA for many years, in the name of development. The decision to make at the meeting and afterward will affect the habitats of many species of animals and plants forever, and we as a society cannot and should not permit that to happen. I do advocate building and development, but not at the expense of resources that simply cannot be replaced.

Respectfully submitted,

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