

**Here are comments Councilman Paul Tisdale during a City Council meeting on Tuesday, March 21, 2017. During the meeting, the council voted 5-2 to approve zoning that would open the door to the Belle La Vie project.**

When the Belle La Vie development began to move forward about a month ago, bringing us to where we are today, I made the decision to attend any meetings I was invited to on the matter, listen attentively, and to speak with those who were critical of this development... as well as others who might want to speak with me on the matter.

I wanted to cast an informed vote after careful reflection... considering what I heard... weighing the concerns of Woolmarket residents against the concerns of those families who might consider living here... and doing what's best for Biloxi.

Some in Woolmarket have no problem with Belle La Vie.

Some acknowledge that there are trade-offs if Biloxi is to grow.

Some realize growth is coming and want well-planned and managed growth.

Some don't want any more people moving to Woolmarket, period...

They moved there to get away from the rest of the world in the first place!



After Hurricane Katrina, people moved to higher ground and available housing in west Biloxi and north of Biloxi Bay. Where else could you go if you wanted to remain in Biloxi?

Nothing better illustrates this fact than the current ward lines; significantly altered when compared to what they were before! Wards 1, 2 and 3 are stretched to the west; the bulk of Ward 4 moved north of the bay; Ward 5 shrank; Ward 6 has the remainder over the bay and south of I-10; and Ward 7 is everything north of I-10 and Eagle Point, south of I-10.

And, the state Supreme Court has noted that Hurricane Katrina shifted the growth of Harrison County from south of I-10 to north of I-10.



We've seen increased housing and shopping opportunities in D'Iberville because it is north of the interstate highway, where land is more affordable and insurance costs are lower.

Where is there land available to build south of Biloxi Bay?

East Biloxi remains bare because of:

1. The speculative price of land
2. The cost of insurance
3. The North Project infrastructure
4. The South Project, soon to be bid and begun

West Biloxi, except for an undeveloped lot here and there, is already built out.

Available land between Biloxi Bay and I-10 is scarce.

There is really no place left to develop residential housing but north of Interstate 10... Woolmarket!

That's where growth is occurring *and will continue to occur* ... particularly if folks want to live in a new house or new subdivision where their children have other children with which to play.

The fact that a number of subdivisions have been proposed, built, and occupied in Ward 7 during the last few years speaks to the fact.

|    | <b>Subdivision</b>           | <b>Area</b>     |
|----|------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1. | Mill Creek                   | Wash Fayard Rd  |
| 2. | Rock Creek                   | Lorraine Rd     |
| 3. | Nature's Trail               | John Lee Rd     |
| 4. | Willow Bend                  | Lorraine Rd     |
| 5. | Jordan Subdivision           | Old Highway 67  |
| 6. | Emerald Lake Estates I       | Hudson Krohn Rd |
| 7. | Emerald Lake Estates II, III | Hudson Krohn Rd |
| 8. | Smith Subdivision            | Old Highway 67  |
| 9. | Hidden Springs               |                 |

I've heard several times in the past 4-5 weeks that "retail follows residential".

I also heard from my friend, the gentleman representing Ward 7, that residential development alone will not pay for itself... and I believe he's correct.

That there must be a commercial and retail mix in this development is unquestioned. The additional revenue they bring helps defray the cost of installing and maintaining infrastructure in the years to come.



I've spoken with a number of you from Woolmarket and read and acknowledged every e-mail or letter that I've received on this matter from north Biloxi residents.

I'm sensitive to the comments that relatively little's been done in Woolmarket since the annexation. I don't believe anyone on this council was serving when the annexation occurred.

But we're now almost twenty years after the event and I know this administration and council continues to make an earnest effort to improve services in that part of the city.



I believe this issue is as much about Change as it is the proposed Belle La Vie development. That is, *What might change in north Biloxi if this development moves forward?*



**More apartments**... and the possibility that they can be flipped to Section 42 subsidized housing. As we heard in the Public Hearing some weeks ago, the likelihood of this happening can be reduced by the Developer voluntarily including a statement in the covenants that prohibit such an occurrence. In fact, it's to his advantage to include such a statement because prospective residents moving to Belle La Vie don't want to live close to subsidized housing any more than those now voicing that concern.

The units in the Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC) will be owned, i.e., "Life Estates". Some of those employed in this planned community will want to live close to where they work. RM-20 and RM-30 will contain some rental apartments but most will be built for sale as townhouses or condominiums. Only the Preliminary Plat, subject to Planning Commission and Council approval, will yield the number of each.

**Drainage...** A Drainage Master Plan is underway by the city. A local realtor was kind enough to spend several hours driving me through several new subdivisions while noting the topography. Some new homeowners had quite a number of steps to walk down when they left through their back door to walk in their back yard... there was a significant drop in elevation from their front yard to their back yard because of grading or lack thereof.

A number of drainage improvements have been made in north Biloxi, some are still underway, and more will be coming. As one resident stated at the last council meeting: *I've lived out here for a lot of years and still don't have city water and sewer!* That's embarrassing to me... but it illustrates the point that it's costly to provide such utilities when households are spread out.

**Transitional zoning...** Belle La Vie clearly exhibits transitional zoning...less dense at its perimeter and more at its core.

Again, with a residential project this size, a retail-residential mix is desirable to sustain support of the infrastructure *as well as* the convenience retail and commercial point of sales offer to prospective residents. *Retail follows residential.*

**Finish Hidden Springs...** Critics of this development, in some instances, have fought hard to stop it. In retrospect, and five of us weren't on the council at that time, it would have been a positive step for the developer to meet with residents in the area and thoroughly discuss the proposed development, determining common ground where plans could be tweaked to resolve as many issues as possible on the front end of the process.

I've heard a meeting of this sort was conducted 5 or 6 years ago.

If one was, and it was similar to the one conducted on February 1, concerning Belle La Vie, there was quite a bit of heat generated, but very little light shed on the proposed development.

*Why should the property owner listen to any critics about what he or she wants to do with his/her property?*  
Well, it's about being a Good Neighbor. I've seen this happen twice in my ward; it takes a little more time up front, but on both occasions there were fewer headaches on the back end. It helps build trust. And, communication is a matter of trust.

Why should neighbors be so concerned about what's being built next door?

*Because they live there!*

How then is this issue to be resolved?

That's the purpose of Land Development Ordinances and the Planning Commission, an independent objective body with two representatives from each ward, which offers a recommendation to the Council, another independent body with a representative from each ward.

I believe Hidden Springs is only relevant to the discussion because future performance is being closely scrutinized and gauged based on past performance.

#### Hidden Springs Timeline

(Source: Executive Summary, Phil Frisby)

Oct 2010 – Feb 2011 **Hidden Springs Rezoning approved**

Mar 2011 – Oct 2012 **Zoning Appeal filed by resident because of Council's approval**

Sept 2012 – Jan 2014 **City provides water and sewer to Hidden Springs**

Feb 2013 – **May 2013** Hidden Springs Westside Preliminary Plat processed by the City  
Feb 2014 – Jan 2015 Financing/Funds secured  
Feb 2015 – **Mar 2015** Engineering firm #1 terminated; #2 hired... Civil Plans produced  
Mar 2015 – **Feb 2016** City Engineering Department approves Phase 1 plans  
Soil cement approval through City Engineering Department

May 2015 – **May 2015** City issues Grading Permit  
Jun 2015 – Apr 2016 Development grading delayed by weather and city Engineering Dept.  
Oct 2015 – Nov 2015 City required developer to prove it was not "Mining" on the property  
Aug 2016 – Nov 2016 Engineering agreement for rest of Hidden Springs  
Sep 2016 – Dec 2016 Financing/Funds raised for Phase 2 and Phase 3

May 2015 – Jan 2017 **Total work days, Phase 1 progress = 175** (good weather)

My understanding is that subject to approval of the Final Plat, expected to come before the Planning Commission in the next several weeks, construction in Sub-Phase 1 is anticipated to begin in May of this year.

### **Schools...**

As the student population grows in Ward 7 whether Belle La Vie is approved or, in the alternative, a series of smaller developments, the Harrison County School District will plan responsibly... as they have done in the past Typically, the time to plan and construct a new school is 18-24 months. Since affordable land to build a subdivision of any size in the city limits can only be found in Ward 7, the only question about school construction is "When?"

### **Roads and traffic...**

Who pays for the roads within Belle La Vie?

The developer agrees to donate the land for roads at no charge to the city.

The city, in return, agrees to build the roads.

That Belle La Vie is being developed in phases makes road construction costs more manageable.

Will some roads have to be improved if this large development moves forward?

Without a doubt... based on traffic counts.

Traffic will only increase over time as more families move to Ward 7.

The only question about road construction and improvements is "When?"



### **In summary...**

Clearly, the intent of the annexation settlement was for residential development.

Both Planning Commission representatives from Ward 7 voted to approve Belle La Vie.

It seems to me that a Master Planned Community addresses a concern, expressed several times in north Biloxi, that development in that area be planned and managed... for growth is coming!

What will our message be to future developers?

Recall that the 626 acres comprising Belle La Vie became part of Biloxi in 2014... as part of an annexation settlement. It was known at that time that this land would be used for residential and/or mixed use development.

After all the energy, time, and money spent on this topic by the developer, residents, and city administration, I believe we should vote the development up or down today.