

When I ran for county council, I ran on a pro-conservation platform. During the council meeting on Jan. 8, however, my votes on a couple of zoning issues raised some eyebrows.



I don't intend to write often about my decisions. But in this case – because it was the first real council meeting, and because these two votes were, for lack of a better term, counterintuitive, I wanted to state my case.

The first issue involved the rezoning of a parcel on Springfield Road, on Lady's Island. It was voted down. I, and a few others, voted in favor of it.

This was my understanding of the situation: For all intents and purposes, it was two parcels. Beaufort County had already established two discrete 911 system addresses on the property, 46 Springfield Road and 48 Springfield Road. Two septic tank permits were already in place.

Before he bought the property, the owner made the calculations and knew that to make the numbers work, he needed to be able to build houses at both addresses, then sell one of them. When he asked some Beaufort County employees about this, they indicated that splitting it into two parcels would be just a formality.

Turns out it wasn't so easy.

The county is not out-and-out opposed to the idea; they would just like the gentleman to defer his request until November, when they expect the area's planning process to be complete.

Unfortunately, the rural home loan the man got to finance these houses expires in November.
Where does this leave him?

If he had tons of money, he could go right ahead and build two houses at these two addresses, and rent one of them out. Or he could build a McMansion with a four-car garage and pesticide-dependent landscaping.

But he doesn't have tons of money. So if he keeps the property, he'll probably end up plunking down a couple of dilapidated doublewides on it. As if, to contribute to its rural character, Beaufort County needs yet more rusty trailers.

The adjective "Kafkaesque" comes to mind.

You can look on the bright side, though – it's one more step toward solving our affordable housing problem.

The other issue involved a rezoning as well. I was the only one who voted in favor, and I did it because I have known the property owners all my life. I can't help but look at it from their perspective.

Imagine being these people who have lived on Meridian Road for over 50 years. They have experienced an unbelievable level of change.

For example, there's a big, busy concrete bridge to Beaufort where there once was a tiny wooden one (I've been told it was as charming to look at as it was frightening to drive over.)

Then came the Yacht Club, and then houses were built up and down the length of Meridian Road, and even more houses were stuffed into various culs de sac.

Meridian Road got way busy, and it got way worse – it became a through street when the McTeer Bridge was built.

The road now connects two important highways that carry a lot of wealthy people to houses that were built on barrier islands and in floodplains where structures never should have

been built.

So you want to tell these folks on Meridian Road that they can't rezone their little parcel because we don't want anything to change?

"Kafkaesque" comes to mind yet again.

If this was a situation in which Centex Homes was wanting to pave over Clarendon Plantation, I would be absolutely against it.

But in this particular case, with these particular people, it's different.

Finally, I want to make an appeal to county residents. If you feel strongly about something, let council know.

In the Springfield Road case, supposedly there were 25 neighbors who were in favor of the rezoning. I didn't get any letters or calls or emails. During the public comment periods, not a single person came forward to say anything, for or against.

In the Meridian Road case, I understand there were dozens of people who opposed the rezoning. Yet, again, I didn't get any letters or calls or emails. During the public comment periods, not a single person came forward to say anything, for or against.

Let your voice be heard. Especially before the vote is cast.