

Joe Catigano
Oak Hill City Commissioner Seat #3

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– The Right Leader Now –



January 9, 2026

Hi Everyone,

I hope you are all healthy and happy as we journey into the New Year and that your Christmas season was a wonderful one, full of prayer, love and fellowship.



Citizen turnout at our commission meetings has been amazing, thank you all for supporting our city. Your participation is essential to its health and well-being, and it's having an impact

Something Very Important is happening in our city.

On March 10, 2024, Garden Street Communities Southeast, LLC, filed [a lawsuit](#) against the City of Oak Hill. **The reason the city is being sued is because they got themselves into a situation when they violated the rights of concerned citizens.** Back in 2020 the city held a meeting of the PLDRC board during which they tabled an agenda item – Garden Street Communities' (formally Esplanade) application for concurrent review of a

zoning change and preliminary development plan.

After tabling the item until the next meeting and informing the public that the item would not be discussed, all citizens in attendance of that meeting left. The PLDRC board went on and discussed the agenda item for about 13 minutes. As a result, the affected citizens filed a lawsuit against the city for this violation.

Shortly after the 2024 election, the City of Oak Hill filed a notice that they did not disagree with the citizen's facts, and then consented to the judgement. In that document the city stated that they did not dispute the allegations the citizens made in their complaint and would no longer defend themselves in the case. This resulted in the court issuing and [Agreed Final Judgement. Click here](#) to view the lawfully ordered and adjudged Agreed Final Judgement.

In this document the court writes - *The defendant, City of Oak Hill has consented to entry of a judicial default and that the defendant has further stipulated to the entry of this final judgement.* It goes on to say: *the parties agree that the Oak Hill Planning and Land Development Regulation Commission (PLDRC) considered aspects of the proposed development which is the subject of this action, and which was approved per [Oak Hill Ordinance 2021-02](#), outside of the view of the public, contrary to [FL Statute § 286.011\(1\)](#).*

What this means is that the city said that they in-fact did what the citizens complained about in their lawsuit which was to violate the rights granted to them in the Florida Statute. In December of 2024, the City Commission voted unanimously to allow this motion because **they wanted to right a wrong.**

Now, certain City Commissioners want to vote to allow the city to violate the citizen's rights again. At the December 10, 2025 Oak Hill City Commission meeting, City Attorney J. Michael Kelly asked if the commission would vote to allow him to file a formal objection to the [citizens motion to intervene](#) in a lawsuit that the developer has filed against the city.

The City Attorney told the commission that, *to allow an independent party to intervene in Garden Street's lawsuit against the city, would stand to undermine democracy.* [Click here](#) to view a short video clip of the attorney's assessment. The attorney goes on to say that *this action is **required** in order to pursue a resolution to the lawsuit.* [Here's a video](#) clip of that statement.

He says that *there will be no settlement unless we take a formal position against the motion to intervene*; which of course would be taking a formal position against all citizens of Oak Hill who are concerned or affected by the outcome of Garden Street's lawsuit against the City of Oak Hill. [Watch the lawyer](#) as he attempts to parlay this misnomer into an attack against the citizens of Oak Hill. He does this by convincing the City Commission that in order to settle a lawsuit, the commission must first stab their electorate in the back.

If the city commission, through its attorney, votes to disavow its own citizens effort to right another wrong that the city has perpetrated upon them, they will be once again interfering in their right to participate in a civic process. The city will be attempting to suppress the citizens right to be heard. It's important to keep in mind that the citizenry of Oak Hill is The City of Oak Hill. The City Commission is elected to represent its citizens, and city staff are hired to serve the citizens. The reason I point out the obvious is because historically, these folks, be they elected or hired, have a poor track record in this regard.

If the city commission allows the city attorney to negotiate a backroom deal with the developer over a matter that has already been decided by the court, ([click here](#) see the Agreed Final Judgement,) they would be standing in opposition to the lawful court order that they agreed to. The Agreed Final Judgement says: "*The court finds and declares that as between the parties to this action, Oak Hill ordinance 2021-02 is null and void ab initio.*" [Oak Hill ordinance 2021](#) changes the zoning of parcel 9505-00-00-0710 from R-1 to RPUD. If the ordinance is made "*null and void*" by the judge's ruling and the city of Oak Hill is a party to this action, the zoning for that parcel is R-1. Keep in mind that all parties, including Garden Street, who itself had filed a motion to intervene in the case, were present at the hearing when the Judge made his ruling. **No party appealed the judge's ruling.**

At the 12/10/25 Commision meeting, the city attorney told the commision that as a condition to negotiate a settlement with the developer the City Commission must give its blessing to the attorney to file a formal objection to the citizen's motion to intervene. That stands in stark contrast to the judge's ruling. The commission would once again be violating the rights of its citizens. This action would be an effort to circumvent that ruling and bypass the process set forth in state law, local ordinances, and our city's comprehensive

plan. The review of a zoning change and development plan is a clearly defined process. Part of that process is in-fact a series public hearings, open to the public at all times, State Law, [fs. 286.011](#), says: "*no resolution, rule, or formal action shall be considered binding except as taken or made at such meeting.*" The same law also requires that citizens are to receive notice of the meeting and that minutes must be taken. The lawyer's negotiation of a backroom deal would both deny the citizens the opportunity to be heard and ignore a lawful order from the judge because the consideration of a zoning change requires public hearings.

The action that the City Commission will be considering at the January 12, 2026, City Commission meeting, will once again leave the city vulnerable to a slew of new lawsuits. **This action, if approved by the commission, stands to serve the developer and deny the rights of its citizens.** Where have you heard this before? "Meet the New Boss, Same as the old boss." The hope of the voters in the 2024 election was to choose candidates who represent their views and their interest. I campaigned on this promise in 2022 and Mayor Taylor and Commissioner Drollinger both campaigned on the same promise in 2024. The voters trusted the promises and issued a mandate when they voted overwhelmingly to put these two in office. Both of the 2024 candidates campaigned with promises of transparency and accountability. [Click here](#) to view the Mayor Taylor's campaign flyer and [click here](#) to view Commissioner Drollinger's flyer.

The reason citizens from Oak Hill filed their motion to intervene in the first place is because back in 10/14/2022, the City of Oak Hill and Garden Street [Communities Southeast, LLC](#), entered into a contract that "*releases the city from any and all liability for damages incurred by the Owner/Applicant in pursuing the review, approval and construction of the development in the event that the zoning approval is overturned or otherwise invalidated.*" In return for this consideration the city agreed to "*proceed with the review of the development and if approved the issuance of necessary permits unless otherwise ordered by the court.*" [Click here](#) to view that document.

On March 10, 2025, less than a month after the court's ruling on the sunshine law case, Garden Street Communities Southeast, LLC, did in-fact file a lawsuit against the city. This lawsuit stands as a breach of the [contract](#) they entered into with the city in 2022. [Click here](#) to view that document. To date, neither the City of Oak Hill or its attorney has presented the—release from liability contract—to the court in seeking a summary judgement in the Garden Street

lawsuit against the city. The citizens waited patiently for six months as the city failed to take action and protect their interests. To this day, the failure continues.

Despite the unwarranted remarks of the city attorney at the December 10, 2025 Commission meeting, Oak Hill citizens have every right to watch out for themselves and their interests; **especially when you consider the city's dismal track record of supporting the interests of developers over the interests of its citizens.** The citizens motion to intervene is not an effort to subvert the judicial system or undermine democracy as the city attorney suggests. Had the commission and city attorney acted timely and in the interest of their electorate, the citizens would not have had to act on their own, at their own expense, to hire an attorney to intervene in this case.

Garden Street Communities Southeast, LLC, agreed in their contract with the city that the *“zoning approval could be overturned by either of the pending court proceedings, that if zoning approval is overturned the owner/applicant may not be able to complete the proposed development as approved and all expenditures incurred...may be lost.”* Additionally, the contract goes on to say *“Furthermore, if ultimate approval is obtained and construction activity begins prior to final completion of all the pending litigation, all construction improvements may have to be removed from subject property if the zoning is overturned.”*

If it is Garden Street's wish to negotiate with the city, they could do so by reapplying for a zoning change to the property. Asking the city commission to disavow the legal actions of its citizens for the privilege to negotiate a settlement for something that has already been settled seems surreal. Adding to this aura is that the City Attorney and City Commission seem willing to entertain such a notion. Ask yourself, are your elected officials acting in your best interest?

Please come to Monday's meeting and ask that question to your elected officials and staff. An honest answer may surprise you. If they really don't understand the consequences of their vote, that would be bad. If they do understand and vote for lawyer's request, that's even worse. If you can't make it to the meeting you can email your commissioners at: Mayor Ricky Taylor - TaylorR@OakHillFL.gov, Commissioner Linda Hyatt - HyattL@OakHillFL.gov, Commissioner Carrie Werning - WerningC@OakHillFL.gov, Vice Mayor Joe Catigano - CatiganoJ@OakHillFL.gov, Commissioner Mark Drollinger -

DrollingerM@OakHillFL.gov.

The First Amendment to the Constitution of The United States of America says: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to [petition the Government for a redress of grievances](#).”



The next Oak Hill City Commissioner’s meeting is, **January 12, 2026** at city hall. The time is 6:00 PM. [click here](#) for the agenda and [here](#) for the agenda pack.

Please come and let your voice be heard. Your presence and participation are how we hold our commission to account.

As always, it’s my pleasure to serve you, I appreciate your support. Please let me know what I can do to help. I’m here to represent you...

Thanks again,

Joe Catigano
Oak Hill City Commissioner
Seat 3

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January 10

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