



890 NE Ocean Blvd
Stuart, FL 34996-1627
(772) 225-0505
FAX: (772) 225-4725

To: The Martin County Board of County Commissioners and the Community

Thursday, April 18, 2019

We are excited about our plans for the new Ocean EcoCenter at the Florida Oceanographic Coastal Center and what it will mean for the community. The Ocean EcoCenter will be home to five unique exhibit galleries, 30 new exhibits and displays, a science classroom, offices for staff, and an ocean deck for special events. These additions will provide our visitors (over 64,000 annually) with new and better experiences that will enhance their understanding of Florida's coastal ecosystems.

The original design for the Ocean EcoCenter included a small, 19 ft. x 21 ft. Observation Platform at one corner. We believe that this feature would have provided visitors with a unique view of ocean and river while giving them a better understanding of the interconnections among Hutchinson Island, the Indian River Lagoon and the Atlantic Ocean.

The Observation Platform itself was at 39 feet elevation. The elements that rose above 39 feet were the guardrails and a roof over the platform for safety. These elements would have required an exception to the Land Development Regulation (LDR), and we had requested that the County Commission explore this specific exception and follow it through the review process.

In the past few weeks, our request and the details surrounding it have raised the concern of some of our neighbors on Hutchinson Island. We believe that the exception we requested was consistent with the objectives of County regulations, but it does not serve the community or our Mission to debate with our neighbors over an exception to the LDRs.

It is best that we withdraw our request to explore an exception to the LDR maximum height standards for the Observation Platform. We will redesign the Ocean EcoCenter without an Observation Platform so it will meet current standards, and we will continue with our plans.

Our fight is not over this issue -- our fight is for the environment and clean water. The Ocean EcoCenter will be a cornerstone of our dedication to that fight and the people that call this community home.

Mark D. Perry
Executive Director
Florida Oceanographic Society

To inspire environmental stewardship of Florida's coastal ecosystems through education, research and advocacy.

