

New industrial park drawing interest from companies

As chairman of the Griffin-Spalding Development Authority I wish to take the following opportunity to address your readers and to help clarify an abundance of speculation and misinformation that has been recently observed in both social media and in some of the citizen comments at the recent Board of County Commissioners meeting. It is apparent that the development of the Lakes at Green Valley Industrial Park has become a subject of conversation within the many discussions related to the possible relocation of the Griffin airport. The common inference is that the Lakes at Green Valley is in some way a "build it and they will come" lolly as opposed to the well-planned and logical extension which it is, to the multiple, fully occupied, industrial developments located along Arthur Bolton Parkway.

As we prepared for the 2008 SPLOST, which funded the development of the Lakes at Green Valley, we took what we felt had been a clear mandate of the voters, based upon earlier failed SPLOST attempts, as to where they desired to see additional industrial development, the previously mentioned area adjoining the existing industrial parks, and we sought the approval of the voters for SPLOST funding.

A common misstatement is that nothing is going on with the Lakes at Green Valley development. The reality is the park has been in its marketable condition for approximately 24 months. During that time we have responded to roughly 40 requests for information, or RFI(s), which is the initial method by which a locating company evaluates site suitability. Of those, we have had at least 12 companies who have shown sufficient interest that we have gone to the stage of actually assisting them with the rudimentary engineering of siting a proposed building on a specific site, for more in-depth suitability analysis. Of those we are currently very actively engaged with three separate international companies who have made repeated site visits and have specific sites

within the park on their "short list" of locations. We are very confident that we will be in a position to announce one of these shortly, and feel strongly of our prospects with the other two.

A second misstatement has been that the development is only partially complete and as such not marketable or attractive to prospects. In truth there is remaining infrastructure to be installed in the park. This was all a part of the original plan and disclosed in the many SPLOST presentations prior to the 2008 vote. Only a portion of the park's total projected costs were funded through bonds issued on the front end. These proceeds were used to acquire the land and to install the basic infrastructure of streets and pad-ready building sites. The remaining items of sewer and water lines, other utilities, and signage were presented as "pay as you go" items, meaning that they would be installed as required based upon proceeds from later SPLOST collections and land sales. This is still the case and careful cash flow planning has been done to assure that as sites are sold, and these infrastructure items needed, cash will be on hand to cover the costs.

A final item of discussion has been the presence of the fencing and gates surrounding the entrances to the park. This is a necessary security measure. Until such time as the first owner begins construction within the park, the roadways will be maintained under the ownership of the Development Authority. Once occupancy of the park begins, those streets will be dedicated to Spalding County and subject to patrol, as are all other public roads in our community.

Thank you for allowing me to address these concerns. Meetings of the Griffin-Spalding Development Authority are open to the public and are scheduled to take place on the second Thursday of each month at 8 a.m. I would encourage anyone who has any questions or concerns about the actions of the authority, or who would like to learn more about its efforts, to please attend our meetings.

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Chairman
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Enforcing Islamic law at Brandeis

When Brandeis University withdrew an honorary degree for Ayaan Hirsi Ali after a student-professor firestorm branded her an "Islamophobe," the campus in effect declared itself an outpost of Islamic law, American-style. Officially, Brandeis is now a place where critics of Islam — "blasphemers" and "apostates," according to Islamic law — are scorned and rejected.



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Not that Brandeis put it that way in its unsigned announcement about Hirsi Ali's dis-invitation, which notes: "She is a compelling public figure and advocate for women's rights, and we respect and appreciate her work to protect and defend the rights of women and girls throughout the world. That said, we cannot overlook ... her past statements that are inconsistent with Brandeis University's core values."

Translation: Hirsi Ali's advocacy on behalf of brutalized women is good, but Hirsi Ali's "past statements" — advocacy that connects such violence to Islamic teachings — are bad, or, in faddish twaddle, "Islamophobia." As a dhimmi (non-Muslims under Islamic law) institution, Brandeis cannot possibly honor the infidel.

Islamic blasphemy laws sanction the death penalty for exactly the kind of criticism of Islam that ex-Muslim Hirsi Ali has engaged in: hence, the innumerable death threats she has received for over a decade; and hence, the ritual Islamic slaughter of Hirsi Ali's co-producer, Theo van Gogh, for "Submission," their short film about specifically Islamic violence and repression of women. In the U.S. (so far), punishment for such "transgressions" against Islam usually resembles an aggressive form of blackballing. There are horrifying exceptions,

however, including the decision to prosecute and incarcerate Nakoula Basseley Nakoula, producer of "Innocence of Muslims," for "parole violations." To be sure, when it comes to participating in the 21st-century public square — in this case, donning academic robes and making valedictory remarks — "Islamophobes" need not apply.

This has long been the case. But we have reached a new nadir when a courageous figure of Hirsi Ali's stature is publicly lashed for expressing herself about the perils that Islamic teachings pose to women's rights, and, more generally, human rights. Brandeis, however, deems such opinions "hate speech" — exactly the phrase used in an online student petition against Hirsi Ali. After all, name-calling is so much simpler than having to mount an argument. And so much more effective as a political weapon.

In our post-Orwellian time, "hate speech" means publicly reviled speech. A "hate-speaker" thus becomes fair game for public humiliation — exactly what Brandeis chose to inflict on Hirsi Ali. The humiliation, however, is Brandeis' alone.

For what "core values" is Brandeis protecting? Denial. Orthodoxy. Cant. Lori Lowenthal Marcus, writing in *The Jewish Press*, excerpted Facebook comments by Bernadette Brooten, a Brandeis professor of Near Eastern and Judaic Studies, in which Brooten described the anti-Hirsi-Ali letter she and 85 other Brandeis professors signed. "We stressed that we recognize the harm of female genital cutting, forced marriages, and honor killings, but that this selection obscures the violence against women that happens among non-Muslims, including on our own campus." Brooten

wrote. "I recognize the harm of gendered violence wherever it occurs, and I applaud the hard, effective work of many Muslims who are working to oppose it in their own communities."

Whether Brandeis counts as a hotbed of "gendered violence" aside (let alone the predominantly Islamic phenomena of female genital mutilation, forced marriages and honor killings), Brooten has underscored the source of animus against Hirsi Ali. Her "selection" for university honors "obscures" non-Muslim violence against women, Brooten writes, but what I think disturbs the professors more is what Hirsi Ali has done — what her whole life experience signifies — to highlight the violence against women and children that is legitimized and inspired by specifically and authoritatively Islamic sources. Thanks in part to Brandeis, such sources are increasingly relegated to the list of post-9/11 taboos.

Never say Islam has anything to do with terrorism. Don't ever, ever draw a cartoon of Mohammed. Oppose "gendered violence" (there's no such thing as Islamic-rooted violence against women). Ostracize or humiliate "apostates" like Hirsi Ali (at least until real Islamic apostasy law becomes applicable here). In other words, protect, coddle and swathe Islam from the barbs and scrutiny that all other religions receive — or else. Or else what? Citizens might decide to halt Islamic immigration or "refugee resettlement" because it brings Islamic law to the West.

Then again, those laws are already here — and in force at Brandeis.

Diana West's new book is "American Betrayal: The Secret Assault on Our Nation's Character" from St. Martin's Press. She blogs at dianawest.net, and she can be contacted via dianawest@verizon.net. Follow her on Twitter @diana_west_.

Folly: Recognizing Kerry's efforts for what they are

After his spectacular, but predictable, failure to move forward the "peace process" between Israel and the Palestinian side, Secretary of State John Kerry says the United States will now "evaluate" its role in the Middle East.

Let me help: The peace process in the Middle East isn't working and it can't work when one side — that would be the Palestinian leadership — has no intention of settling for anything less than their ultimate goal of removing the Jewish people from the region.

Kerry's cynical ploy suggesting that convicted Israeli spy Jonathan Pollard could be released from prison in exchange for even more Israeli concessions was another indication

Palestinian side seeks. It is the destruction of Israel, which they believe is their divine mandate. Diplomacy has yet to be developed that



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can overcome an edict from "God" who commands the eradication of his "enemies." How do American and Israeli diplomats, who are regarded by fundamentalist Muslims as

"infidels," negotiate with such a mindset? Duplicity is an ancient tradition in the Middle East. The history of the region is full of examples of Arabs and Muslims saying one thing to the West and something quite different to their own people.

The latest example of this doublespeak comes by way of the Middle East Media

is a personal right. No country, authority, organization, or even Abu Mazen (Abbas's other name) or (other) leaders can deny anyone of his right."

So the question becomes: If Abbas does not have the authority to deny the "right of return" of Palestinians in a flood-tide that would demographically overwhelm Israel, why are we negotiating with him? In fact, since according to Abbas no one has that right, why are we negotiating at all?

What about that vaunted "two-state solution" Kerry and those who have gone before him think is the holy grail of Middle East peace? The Palestinian side pays lip service to the notion when speaking to the West, but tells its own people it favors a one-state solution without Israel. On Jerusalem,

agreement, but would have two municipalities with an appropriate coordinating body."

To Palestinians, however, Abbas promised: "Occupied Jerusalem is the capital of Palestine, since without it there will be no solution. No one is authorized to sign (such an agreement)." He added, "Without East Jerusalem as Palestine's capital there will be no peace between us and Israel."

There are many more examples of such doublespeak, so many they could fill a book, but you get the point. Too bad Secretary Kerry, President Obama and numerous presidents and secretaries of state who have gone before, don't.

Cal Thomas' latest book is "What Works: Common Sense Solutions for America