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Thomas J. Baird

Shareholder

Florida Bar Board Certified
City, County and Local Government Attorney



Contact

tbaird@jonesfoster.com
561 650 8233

Location

4741 Military Trail
Suite 200
Jupiter
Florida 33458

Education

M.P.A., Florida Atlantic University

J.D., Nova University

B.A., Heidelberg University

Admissions

The Florida Bar
U.S. Supreme Court
U.S. District Court, Southern District of Florida

Tom Baird, Land Use & Governmental Practice Group Co-Chair, is a Florida Bar Board Certified specialist in City, County and Local Government and is certified as a Professional Planner by the American Institute of Certified Planners.

As a lawyer and a planner, Tom brings a unique depth and scope of knowledge to his practice. His 30 years of legal experience in complex land use, planning, zoning, and municipal law benefit his clients who range from municipalities and public entities to corporate businesses, real estate developers, and individual property owners. Tom handles all aspects of permitting; zoning and code enforcement matters; comprehensive plans, including drafting land use policy; property rights; and constitutional takings. He defends his governmental clients' interests in state and federal courts in matters involving zoning appeals and disputes, property rights, constitutional takings claims, eminent domain and inverse condemnation actions.

Tom is highly respected by municipal government leaders, working closely with the planning and zoning departments of numerous local governments since the 1990s to manage large-scale development of regional impact projects (DRIs), smaller-scale development and Planned Unit Development projects, and community redevelopment projects. He also counsels municipal elected officials, their staff, and other governmental agencies on a variety of legal issues, including employment law issues and the enforcement of laws by police and code enforcement officers.

Tom currently serves as the Town Attorney for the Towns of Jupiter and Lake Park, and also provides legal counsel to the Firm's other municipal client, the Town of Palm Beach. He has previously served as town attorney for the Towns of Jupiter Island and Sewall's Point in Martin County and the City of Palm Beach Gardens and the Village of Palm Springs in Palm Beach County.

Tom serves as general counsel to three community redevelopment agencies: the Westgate/Belvedere Homes Community Redevelopment Agency and the Jupiter and Lake Park community redevelopment agencies.

Tom has been retained as special land use counsel for numerous municipalities throughout Palm Beach County, including, the City of Boynton Beach, the Town of Juno Beach, the Village of North Palm Beach, the City of Riviera Beach, the Town of Manalapan, and the Village of Golf.

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Tom has served as a Code Enforcement Special Magistrate for Palm Beach County and the municipalities of Boca Raton, Pahokee, Palm Springs, and the Village of North Palm Beach in Palm Beach County, and the City of Stuart in Martin County. He has served as a Special Master/Mediator in Bert Harris Act property rights cases.

Tom's professional experience in land planning also included employment as an adjunct professor at the Florida Institute of Technology and Florida Atlantic University teaching land planning and legal courses in land use, zoning, and administrative law.

Prior to his legal career, Tom was employed by the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council as a Regional Planner, responsible for reviewing comprehensive plans and large-scale development projects known as Development of Regional Impacts, including the expansion of PBIA, PGA National, The Gardens Mall, and multiple large scale residential and mixed-use Planned Unit Developments in Martin, St. Lucie, and Indian River counties.

Experience Highlights

The following representative cases involve the representation of municipalities, condemning authorities, individuals, property owners, and developers.

Land Use & Zoning

Statewide Zoning for Multinational E-Commerce Company
Retained by a global internet commerce corporation to represent in regard to the interpretation and application of zoning codes associated with the location of warehouse/distribution facilities in multiple cities and counties in Florida.

Residential Subdivision & Mixed-Use Development Zoning
Represented a local developer to obtain Martin County zoning approvals for residential and mixed-use development projects.

Martin County Land Holdings and 6,0000 Acre Development of Regional Impact (DRI)
Advised Fortune 500 company on planning issues associated with the development of its vast landholdings in southern Martin County and Hutchinson Island.

Land Use & Zoning in Large-Scale Palm Beach County Development of Regional Impact (DRI) Projects
Served as Regional Planner responsible for the review of numerous DRIs in Palm Beach County, including the expansion of Palm Beach International Airport, the Gardens Mall, Motorola, the Palm Beach Park of Commerce, PGA National, and the Vista Center.

Implementation of Redevelopment Master Plans for Community Redevelopment Agencies
Continuing representation of three community redevelopment agencies in the implementation of their redevelopment master plans. This continuing representation requires the review of planning documents and the creation of zoning regulations to facilitate the development of mixed use districts, and to encourage infill residential development, and incentives for economic development.

Comprehensive Planning Land Development Regulations and Zoning Codes for Municipality

Provided counsel to planning and zoning staff and consultants on several ambitious amendments of the Town of Jupiter's Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Regulations for Abacoa, Indiantown Road, U.S. Highway One/Intracoastal Waterway, and the Scripps Florida Bio-Science Overlay Zoning Plans. Developed in conjunction with the Town's planners, a form-based mixed-use code and two Development Order for the Abacoa DRI, and mixed-use land development regulations for the Jupiter Inlet Village.

Municipal Review of Utility Sale

Document review on behalf of the City of Clewiston, who as part of a municipal consortium of cities, approved the proposed sale of the City of Vero Beach's electric utility to Florida Power & Light.

Code Enforcement Proceedings

Code Enforcement Defense and Fine Reduction

Represent private clients in resolving municipal code enforcement matters, including defending alleged violations, negotiating and securing reductions of assessed fines, and handling code lien foreclosure disputes when enforcement escalates. Leverage significant insight from prior service as a Code Enforcement Special Magistrate for Palm Beach County and the municipalities of Boca Raton, Pahokee, Palm Springs, the Village of North Palm Beach, and the City of Stuart in Martin County.

FLUEDRA Land Use / Environmental Disputes

High-Stakes Land Use Conflict Resolution Under FLUEDRA

Represent property owners and other municipalities in proceedings under Florida's Land Use and Environmental Dispute Resolution Act (FLUEDRA), including matters involving development proposals and preservation interests. Also serves as a Special Magistrate in FLUEDRA matters, conducting administrative hearings and facilitating the mediation of claims. Example: Representation of the Town of Jupiter in the Suni Sands dispute involving competing priorities between preservation of a 5,000-year-old Native American burial site and a proposed waterfront hospitality and commercial development.

Eminent Domain – Condemnation Authorities

South Florida Port District Condemnation

Representation of the Port of Palm Beach District in the Skypass condemnation, a project to unite Port property east and west of U.S. Highway One, permitting safer and faster rail and road connections to the Port.

Eminent Domain Proceedings in FDOT Expansion Project

Representation of the Town of Jupiter, a defendant in multiple eminent domain proceedings, as the result of FDOT-initiated taking of properties for the expansion of the Indiantown Road bridge and improvements to U.S. Highway One and Coastal Way.

Representation of the Palm Beach County School District Condemnation Matter

Representation of the Palm Beach County School District, the Port of Palm Beach District, and the Westgate/Belvedere Homes Community Redevelopment Agency in matters relating to the condemnation of properties for public usage.

Inverse Condemnation

Successful Defense Against Zoning and Inverse Condemnation Claims by Car Dealership

Defense of the Town of Jupiter in regard to the Town's Indiantown Road Overlay Zoning District which prohibits, among uses, auto dealerships. All told, two property owners challenged the Town in six different cases in federal and state courts and administrative law proceedings. The Town prevailed in all of these cases.

Successful Defense of Municipality in DRI Zoning and Land Use Dispute

Representation of the Town of Jupiter in a 52-count Complaint in federal court by developer involving constitutional challenges of takings, equal protection and due process seeking damages, a consistency action, and zoning claims of arbitrary and capriciousness. The Town prevailed on a Summary Judgment, subsequently affirmed by the 11th Circuit Court of appeals.

Defense of Municipality in Landowner Taking Claim

Representation of the Town of Jupiter in state court against a landowner's claim of a temporary taking of a 12-acre spoil island in the Jupiter River due to the Town's refusal to timely issue a clearing permit for the island. A trial court held in favor of the Town; however, the Fourth District reversed and remanded the case for further determination as to elements of the taking claim. On remand, the Circuit Court found a taking; however, on appeal, the 4th District Court of Appeal reversed the trial court's order finding a temporary taking and remanded the case for entry of a final judgment in favor of the Town.

Successful Representation of Landowner Against Water Control District

Representation of large landowner in dispute against water control district concerning the existence of an easement over client's property for recreation trails and canal maintenance. Obtained summary judgment in favor of client, in which the court concluded that a Special Act of the Florida Legislature could not be applied retroactively against landowner, preventing the water control district and municipality from acquiring an easement over client's property.

Planning & Zoning | State Circuit Court Cases and Administrative Proceedings

Successful Representation of Municipality in Fire Department Dispute

Obtained summary judgment for municipality in dispute with union-backed political action committee in which the PAC sought to block the creation of a municipal fire department.

Municipality Prevailed in Adult Entertainment Business Closure

Successful representation of the Village of North Palm Beach in a two-count complaint seeking injunctive and declaratory relief prohibiting the operation of an adult entertainment business. A counterclaim was filed seeking a declaratory judgment declaring the Village's adult entertainment regulation unconstitutional. The trial court held that reasonable avenues for communication for adult entertainment were available under the Village' regulations. The court entered a Final Judgment upholding the constitutionality of the Village's regulations and requiring the business to immediately cease operation as an adult dancing business within the Village. The Fourth District Court of Appeal affirmed the trial court's Final Judgment.

Municipality Prevails in Zoning Challenge

Representation of Palm Beach County following a zoning approval for a mini-

warehouse facility, after which an adjacent property owner challenged the approval as being inconsistent with the County's Comprehensive Plan. The County prevailed at trial and on appeal to the Fourth District Court of Appeal.

County Prevails in District Court Appeal over Zoning Challenge
Representation of Palm Beach County in property owner appeal in the Circuit Court following denial of rezoning from residential to commercial. The Court reversed the County Commission's denial of the rezoning. The County appealed and the Fourth District Court of Appeal reversed the Circuit Court. An appeal of the Fourth District Court of Appeal's opinion was taken to the Florida Supreme Court and the County prevailed.

District Court Affirms Town Council Authority to Rehear Appeal
Representation of a Town Council in a matter involving a resident's permitting request. The Town Council considered a resident's appeal of a determination by the Town's Community Development Director that the resident's construction of a boat canopy was a major amendment to the Planned Unit Development which included a marina. The Town Council initially disagreed with the Director's decision, which meant that a building permit had to be issued for construction of the boat canopy. Upon being presented with further information, the Council elected to conduct a rehearing. Before a date for the rehearing was set, and a Final Order was entered by the Council, the property owner filed suit alleging in his Writ of Prohibition that the Town was prohibited from reconsidering its decision. The Trial Court determined the Council had the authority to rehear the appeal and the Fourth District Court of Appeal affirmed.

Honors & Distinctions

The Best Lawyers in America
Land Use and Zoning Law, 2022-Present
Litigation - Land Use and Zoning, 2027
Litigation - Municipal, 2027
Municipal Law, 2022-Present

Palm Beach Illustrated
Top Lawyers, Land Use and Zoning Law, 2022-Present
Top Lawyers, Municipal Law, 2024, 2025

The Boca Raton Observer
Top Lawyers, Government and Administrative Law, 2026

Martindale-Hubbell, AV® Peer Review Rated

Affiliations

The Florida Bar
City, County and Local Government Law Section, 1986-Present
Environmental & Land Use Law Section, 1986-Present

Palm Beach County Bar Association
Member, 1993-Present
North County Section, Member, 1996-Present

American Planning Association Florida Chapter
Member, 1996-Present

American Institute of Certified Planners
Member, 2000-Present

Palm Beach County League of Cities
Member

Palm Beach County Planning Congress
Member

State Attorney Addiction Recovery Task Force
Member, 2016-Present

Roger Dean Stadium
Advisory Board, 1988-Present

American Planning Association Treasure Coast Section
President / Vice President / Board of Directors, 1996-2002

Third Federal Savings and Loan Association of Cleveland MLTC and TFS Corporation
Director, 2005-2010
Compensation Committee, Vice-Chair, 2005-2010

Treasure Coast Region Planning Council
Appointed by Governor Chiles, 1993-1996

Leadership Palm Beach County
Graduate, 1998