

Village vote allows private road to stay open in Grafton

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GRAFTON - Grafton Mayor Tom Thompson's vote broke a tie at last night's village board meeting to keep private access roads and alleys opened.

The roads and alleys in question are currently owned by Grafton resident and **Aeries Winery** owner **Jeff Lorton**. They are located near **Grove's Memorial Park**. Lorton said the roads were called into question by **Grafton Village Board Member Jeff Bauersach**, whom Lorton said targeted his property due to Lorton's support for Thompson. Lorton and Thompson described the move as "vindictive."

Lorton said two board members besides Bauersach voted for the closure of his private access roads and alleys, but three voted against. Mayor Thompson broke that tie in favor of Lorton. Lorton also said Bauersach has delayed a TIF payment to Lorton, which

amounted to nearly \$27,000 for an estimated \$2 million project Lorton has been working towards for six years - to continue building villas in the village.

"I'm not real sure why this is happening," Lorton said Wednesday. "I think they just wanted to be vindictive. I guess they don't like me. The reason is, they're against anything Mayor Thompson does, and I'm a big supporter of Tommy Thompson. They were trying to put me in line."

Traffic going through there was another issue Lorton said the three board members for the closure stated. He also said the three board members were against his future plans to build an office in that area.

"I'm just glad it's over," Lorton said. "What it does is, it shows Grafton has a little sense. Three folks were trying to be vindictive, and the other three had a little sense."

Mayor Thompson said he cast the tie-breaking vote in favor of Lorton because he believes Lorton owns the roads, and he disagreed with the three members about their reasoning to close them.

"There's a couple of those board members who have been vindictive toward their approach to Jeff , and have done anything they can do to shut him down," Thompson said. "I didn't agree with these three members on their votes. We're elected to be public servants, not witch-hunters."

Bauersach said the item was placed on the agenda to ensure free use of the road during floods. He said part of the road is owned by the village and part of it is owned by Lorton, who Bauersach claimed did not allow free use of it during floods. He said Lorton chooses who may use it when it is needed.

"We have another flood road on the west end of town owned by a Dave Roth, who allows free use of it during floods," he said. "We have a very different situation, with one person being very cooperative, and another not so much."

Bauersach said he moved for the closure in an attempt to allow an engineer to check its structural integrity as well.