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Developer drops request for impact fee deferral

By Mike Wright

An affordable-housing apartment development in Beverly Hills will seek financing as planned but without financial help from the county.

Diamond Housing Partners LLC, a Melbourne developer, rescinded its request Tuesday for the Citrus County Commission to defer payment of \$80,000 in impact fees for 50 years.

Instead the board voted 4-1 to help Diamond with its financing application before the Florida Housing Financing Corp. by signing several statements of fact, such as that the property is properly zoned and the county has a site-plan review process should the project receive financing.

Diamond planned to build an 80-unit apartment affordable housing complex. To placate community leaders in Beverly Hills who opposed the project, Diamond offered to build a senior citizens apartment complex.

Renee Sandell, principal of the Diamond Housing Partners, said the project would not benefit in its attempt for financing with a seniors complex because there are no walk-in medical clinics nearby.

Diamond estimated its total impact fee payout at more than \$500,000. It asked that \$80,000 be deferred for 50 years as a way to earn points for the government financing.

Assistant County Attorney Peter Aare said the county has no mechanism to defer impact fee payments unless it also deferred issuing a certificate of occupancy for 50 years.

Even with Diamond dropping its request for the impact fee deferral, Commissioner Dennis Damato voted no. Damato said that because the property is zoned for apartments, by agreeing to help Diamond with the financing application, it opened the door for Diamond's project without community input.

Also Tuesday, commissioners voted 5-0 to a memorandum of understanding and interlocal agreement with the city of Crystal River. The agreements, which were approved Monday night by the city council, allow the city to annex the Crystal River Airport and Bicentennial Park as part of the city's attempts to annex commercial property south of the city.

Also, the city will extend sewer service to 600 homes and businesses near the Plantation Resort without requiring annexation. The sewer service is contingent on the city receiving a state grant that will pay for 85 percent of the project.

Commissioner Gary Bartell strongly opposed the annexation agreement because it will allow the city to annex undeveloped property to the east of the planned Primerica shopping center on U.S. 19 at Venable Drive .

Bartell said he supported the motion only because the annexation was tied to the sewer agreement and he didn't want to stand in the way of that project.

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