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Venice housing project's demolition is back in motion

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The countdown is back on again for demolishing the vacant Grove Terrace housing project.

Bulldozers will roll in September -- a month later than originally expected. But a meeting Thursday helped clarify differences between the Venice Housing Authority and the office of Housing and Community Development in Sarasota County, which had threatened to bog down the project.

Donald Hadsell, director of Housing and Community Development in Sarasota County, agreed to remove the hold he had put on \$212,000 in federal stimulus money to pay for the demolition. Hadsell said he received the needed proof the demolition contractor had been hired legally and all funding requests had been properly made.

"I do not anticipate there will be any concerns with them being able to proceed once the money is available," Hadsell said. "We reviewed everything and found there's no issue. We're fine with where they're going."

George Barr, chairman of the Venice Housing Authority, said the meeting smoothed out miscommunications that had delayed the project.

"There's a process to go through for the funding," Barr said. "But we got the go-ahead to move on this, which is the big thing."

Cubacor Inc. of Tampa will soon begin removing all asbestos from Grove Terrace. Demolition will likely not begin until mid-September at the earliest.



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Bulldozers are scheduled to start demolishing the Grove Terrace housing project in Venice in September. The city plans a mix of new housing for the site, but has not lined up needed financing.

Developer Richard Cavalieri of Primerica Group One Inc. of Tampa said the meeting prevented an even longer delay.

"There was a potential we would have had to wait until November," Cavalieri said.

The demolition will clear the way for a mix of senior, market-rate and public housing on six acres across the Intracoastal Waterway from downtown Venice.

The next hurdle for the housing authority is qualifying for a 9 percent tax credit from the Florida Housing Finance Corp. to help pay for the redevelopment.

The housing authority has only lined up about \$500,000 of the \$10.3 million it will take to rebuild the first phase of what will now be known as Venetian Walk.

Competition for the credits statewide is intense.

Whether Venetian Walk qualifies should be known by Sept. 23, Cavalieri said.

Rebuilding will begin in April 2010, Cavalieri said.

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