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Preliminary plat approved 4-1



Levy County Development Director Bill Hammond speaks to the County Commission as County Clerk Danny Shipp (left) observes.

Story and Photos By Jeff M. Hardison © May 4, 2017 at 7:57 a.m.

BRONSON -- An 80-acre development to be named Boyer's Lake received approval for the preliminary plat Tuesday morning (May 2) during the regular twice-monthly meeting of the Levy County Commission.

Levy County Development Director Bill Hammond said an advisory committee -- the Levy County Planning Commission -- voted 3-0 to approve it. Two of those members were absent when the matter was brought before them, he said.

The development was approved after a motion by County Commissioner Mike Joyner was seconded by County Commissioner Matt Brooks. Commission Chairman John Meeks and Commissioner Rock Meeks voted in favor of it. Commissioner Lilly Rooks voted "No."

This development will include eight 10-acre lots, Hammond said, in Section 2, Township 14 and Range 17 in Levy County. If houses are placed on the property, they will be served by septic tanks, drain-fields and wells.

One person at the meeting Tuesday spoke against approval. Sally Ann Collins lives in Steeplechase Farms, a subdivision adjoining the property in the Morristown area.

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Sally Ann Collins explains why she and her neighbors want the county to reject the proposal to allow one house on each 10 acres in this development.

Collins has lived on her property there since 1990, she said.

This piece of property, she said, is associated with the Goethe State Forest, where it also borders. This property is known for being an area that never goes dry – even in a drought as is being experienced this past month.

It is a marsh, Collins said, that provides a habitat for cranes and other wild animals.

“We thought that it would never be subdivided,” she said.

Runoff from this development, Collins said, will flow into Goethe State Forest and affect that area. She sees eight added septic tanks as being a detrimental addition to the area.

Collins was critical of the plans for ingress and egress into the small development.

At least 15 people from this area of Levy County appeared at the Planning Commission meeting, she said, and they all were against this development being approved. And yet, she added, the members of that advisory board said they welcomed input and would look into the questions posed by the people; however, they did not seek answers to the questions but instead voted to recommend approval.

“Please, please, look at that property,” Collins said. “Look at that surrounding area.

Collins said the property had been zoned for 20-acre parcels before, and that half of the property is under water when it rains.

Levy County Road Department Office Manager Alice LaLonde explained to the County Commission that access from Levy County Road 337 is via a private road.

“We have no jurisdiction over that easement,” LaLonde said. “The developer would have to work out an agreement with the landowners to obtain right-of-way.”

There is, however, an 80-foot easement that exists going through Steeplechase to provide access to this development, she said.

In regard to the water, Commissioner Joyner said the lake has been up to the road before in his lifetime.

Joyner asked if future buyers there would be calling the county and seeking new drainage ditches.

Chairman Meeks said property owners will buy flood insurance to help them overcome losses from water. Another point is that the Florida Department of Health will set requirements on

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development to help reduce the impact on water from septic tanks.

Commissioner Rock Meeks said there are flood maps that show elevations required for building.

He said the drain-field might have to be more than five feet off of the current ground level, because it is so close to a lake.

“Someone may very well buy three of them (those) lots together,” Chairman Meeks said, “just to keep the neighbors off of them. Whenever we start dealing with ‘What ifs’ and ‘Could bes’ and ‘It might happens,’ then we’re not doing our due diligence as a board (of County Commissioners).”

Chairman Meeks said he heard Collins’ concerns, and he understands that she cares about the environmental impact.

However, if the land was so valuable as a water recharge source, Meeks asked, or if it was so valuable to the state, “Then why didn’t they (the state of Florida) buy it when they bought the rest of Goethe (State Forest)?”

Chairman Meeks said the developer followed the rules set forth by the county government, and so the County Commission cannot arbitrarily and capriciously just tell the man that he cannot move forward with his plan for development.

Before the first septic tank is installed, though, there will be state guidelines that must be met.

Given the developer meets those requirements, then the preliminary plat will become a final plat, and then the construction there may begin.