



## Officials delay vote on project - Palmer Place developer told to make changes

Sarasota Herald-Tribune (FL) - April 10, 2008

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It looks like developer Billy Springer will have to retool his proposed 600-home Palmer Place project yet again.

For the fourth time since last August, county commissioners voted Wednesday to delay a final vote on the project and asked the developer to make several changes to his bid to build on a 412-acre site two miles east of I-75.

It has been a tough seven months for the project, which at one point called for 1,488 homes and a commitment to sell half of the homes at prices that would make Palmer Place perhaps the biggest affordable housing project in the state.

But neighbors, particularly the Bee Ridge Neighborhoods Committee, turned out to be unusually well organized in its opposition, going so far as to hire consultants to dispute the developer's estimates.

Among neighbors' concerns were traffic, future school construction and claims that the affordable homes were priced too high.

The project was delayed again at a hearing in December, when Springer agreed to cut the total number of new homes to 600, with 300 of them affordable.

Despite the 60 percent cut in the project's size, neighbors still overwhelmingly oppose the plan.

A motion to kill the project failed when only two commissioners -- Jon Thaxton and Joe Barbetta -- supported it.

Instead, Springer was asked to agree to new conditions, which include financing for road improvements in the semi-rural area, extending Iona Road around the north end of the property so it could possibly be extended to Fruitville Road, and adding bike lanes and sidewalks.

Instead of killing the project, the commission voted to hear it again May 28.

If the developer agrees to sweeten the deal, it appears Palmer Place can still win approval.

"There's a strong likelihood this is going to be approved," Thaxton said.

**Caption:** MAP  
HERALD-TRIBUNE ARCHIVE  
Palmer Place  
Total number of homes: 600  
(Map available on microfilm)

**Edition:** SARASOTA  
**Section:** B SECTION  
**Page:** BS1  
**Dateline:** SARASOTA COUNTY  
**Record Number:** 0804100441  
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