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CURRENT NEWS



Navy's new map shocks county

BY LAURIE KARNATZ

Citizen Staff

County officials and community leaders were stunned Tuesday to learn that property owners in Key Haven and portions of Stock Island could be prohibited from undertaking any new residential construction.

The news came during a public hearing before the Monroe County Planning Commission on a request to build 43 new homes on the southern edge of Key Haven and the adjacent Enchanted Island.

The proposal, made by Key Haven Estates, a partnership of Wayne Lujan and Ed Swift, received overwhelming support from Key Haven residents. It also appeared to receive cautious support — with caveats — from county planners.

But Jim Brooks, public affairs officer for Naval Air Station Key West, said the Navy opposed "the development of any housing in these areas."

Brooks cited the Navy's AICUZ — an acronym for Air Installations Compatible Use Zone — map for the area. The map is developed based on noise levels and accident potential generated by base operations.

Brooks' bombshell appeared to be a shock to everyone at the Tuesday meeting, causing a 20-minute recess while county staff and representatives of the developers regrouped.

Once the dust settled, it was revealed that county officials have not yet been given copies of a new AICUZ map developed by the Navy in 2003. County planners and consulting firm The Craig Company, which represents Key Haven Estates, were relying upon a previous map, originally created in 1977.

The new map has been approved in Washington and is working its way down the chain of command, said Brooks. It should be

Wed, Jan 12, 2005

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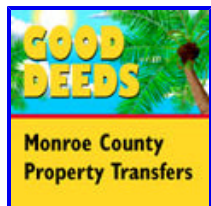
available for release in the near future.

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Based on the Navy's objection to the proposed Key Haven development, the item was continued until the Planning Commission's Feb. 9 meeting to give planners and the developer time to assess the ramifications of the new map, which could be huge, said Growth Management Director Tim McGarry.

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McGarry said the new map, which expands the AICUZ boundary westward, could put the Stock Island CommuniKeys plan in "disarray" with its impacts on redevelopment of the island, as well as creating a prohibition on any new development on Key Haven.



Brooks said the Navy has no authority to force the county to abide by its map. However, the map — past, present or future versions — is part of the county's land-use rules, which prohibit the county from permitting certain types of construction within the AICUZ boundary.

Daily news for Key West and the Florida Keys

"We're caught between a rock and a hard place," said McGarry. "If we don't support the Navy, we're going to have problems with both the state and the Navy. We could compromise that Naval facility."



McGarry and Planning Director Marlene Conaway said the full effect of the map change can't be assessed until it, and accompanying standards for development, which also have been changed, have been carefully reviewed.



"We have not looked at the new standards, but we believe there have been changes in the way they address these strategies," McGarry said.

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