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REPORT

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Sarasota County Changes Zoning To Allow 'Straight' Program Branch

By DAVID SCHEEN

The Sarasota County Commission Tuesday approved two amendments to the county's zoning code.

One change allows professional buildings under industrial, light and warehouse (ILW) zones and in planned industrial districts (PID). The revision was for consistency, because certain commercial offices are included in ILW and PID.

The commission, in the other amendment, created a new zoning use, rehabilitative clinic, as a special exception in six zoning districts, office, professional and institutional (OPI), commercial general, commercial intensive, ILW, industrial and PID.

Straight Inc. of St. Petersburg, a drug rehabilitation program for youth and young adults, sought the amendment to establish a Sarasota branch.

Straight representatives said nothing could be found under OPI and that the only possibilities were two properties under ILW. The facility would be licensed by the state as a day-care center with a foster home component and would not provide overnight housing.

Straight has already filed for a special exception to ILW zoning for a 1.8-acre tract east of Cattlemen Road and 300 feet south of Porter Road, set for hearing Aug. 7 before the Sarasota County Planning Commission.

The commissioners split 3 to 2 in denying a rezoning and special exception for an 0.8-acre parcel, northeast of U.S. 41 and Vamo Way, from RMF-1, residential multiple family, six units per acre, to commercial general to allow retail plant nursery sales.

Ed Gau, owner of Ed's Sod & Landscaping, 2021 Vamo Way, wanted the rezoning because the nearby site has better visibility for sales.

Commission Chairman Larry Rhodes argued for the zoning change as an extension of an 11-year-old family-run business. He and Commissioner Andrew Sandegren were in the minority on the vote.

Commissioner John Saba said the rezoning would constitute strip zoning on U.S. 41 and that the existing sod and landscaping

business was a nonconforming use.

He also said rezoning would open the property to any commercial general use.

Commissioner Clay pointed out the smaller tract was separated by two large parcels from the present business acreage.

Commissioner James Neville joined Mrs. Clay and Saba in the turnout.

The Sorrento Utilities hearing on increased water and sewer rates ended with the submission of a report on complaints of odors from the utilities sewage treatment plant.

The rate case was referred to County Commission committee for consideration. The hearing was left open to allow the report become part of the record.

In another matter, the board lifted the weight limit set in January on Manasota Key Road.

At that time, the commission imposed an 11,000-pound per axle limit on trucks using the road after County Engineer Charles Goode reported on road damage done by trucks hauling dirt to construction sites at the south end of the key in Charlotte County.

The day after the board took that action, an Englewood development group filed suit against the county, saying that it denied them access to their property.

The state Department of Transportation put a similar ban on trucks which closed the old wooden "Killer Bridge" between Englewood and Englewood Beach so a new bridge could be built.

But the board Tuesday lifted its January ban at Goode's recommendation. According to his memo dated July 15, the bridge at the south end of the key is now open to general traffic.

The memo said that most of the heavy construction traffic serving sites in the Charlotte County portion of the key are therefore using the new bridge for access.

Goode said that continuation of the load limitation "would serve no real purpose and continue to be an inconvenience to those citizens of Sarasota County served by that portion of the road."