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Contact: Mark Spiegel - (678) 472-0259

SIESTA KEY COALITION CALLS FOR BIG PICTURE APPROACH

Impact of All Proposed Hotels Should be Reviewed Collectively, Not Separately

The Siesta Key (SK) Coalition is calling on the Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners (BCC) to take the initiative to study the collective adverse impact of all pending hotel development projects on or near Siesta Key, rather than dealing with these precedent-setting applications one at a time. This request is motivated by the prospect of three new projects: (1) the proposed 120-room hotel and parking garage in the Stickney Point Area, (2) the 170-room Siesta Key Village Hotel, and (3) the 170-room re-development of the Siesta Key Beach Resort. Given the approved 120-room hotel at Siesta Promenade, these hotels will collectively add 460 rooms with the prospect of an additional 1,000-plus transient guests spilling onto Siesta Key roads and beaches in high season.

This collective “bigger picture” approach proposed should include a review of the 1999 Siesta Key Community Plan that led to the formation of the Siesta Key Overlay District (SKOD) and the Sarasota Future Land Use (FLU) policies. That plan was crafted by a unique collaboration between private citizens, County Planning staff, and County Commissioners, and is more relevant today than in 1999. Our appointed and elected representatives have a responsibility, one they took seriously in the 1999 process, to understand the implications and legal precedents that the proposed developments would have on our barrier island, as follows:

- To allow developers to revise and customize the policies and regulations enacted in the Comprehensive Plan, for their purposes, will set a legal precedent for the other 30+ acres of commercially zoned property on Siesta Key. Of special concern is that the developers of the Stickney Point Area hotel and the Siesta Key Village Hotel have recently asked the BCC to allow planning staff to review of two privately initiated amendments of the Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Policy 2.9.1, **out of cycle**. These requests will be considered by the BCC on January 26th. This is not an approval of a change in the Comprehensive Plan but rather to an attempt by the developers to accelerate a review of potential changes. The Comprehensive Plan changes could remove density and intensity restrictions on Transient Accommodations for all three of the proposed Siesta Key hotels.
- The Planning Commissioners and BCC have a legal obligation to evaluate all requests for Special Exceptions beyond the “by right” zoning limitations based on whether they satisfy multiple standards specified in Chapter 124, Article 5, Section 124-43 of the Uniform Development Code (Siesta Key Overlay District). Specially concerning is that the proposed Village and Stickney Point development plans are both requesting Special Exceptions for significant transient use and height limits. Any reasonable review of their projects will clearly show that they fail many of these required standards.
- There has never been a comprehensive vehicular and pedestrian traffic study for all of Siesta Key, especially one contemplating the impact of multiple large-scale hotels, together with the Promenade mixed-use development. The FDOT graded congested road segments near both these proposed hotels as a poor “E and F” back in the 1999 Plan, one factor that led to the density and intensity development restrictions in the FLU. But now decisions will be made based on reviewing the limited traffic studies done by the developers’ hired consultants?
- The proposed SK hotel developers have no logical answer to how their collective 1,000+ transient guests would practically or safely get to the beaches. Both the SK Village hotel and the Stickney Point hotel are across from two of the Key’s busiest intersections, and across from public beach access points that lead to privately-owned beach areas.

Our Sarasota County representatives need to listen to the overwhelming concerns of those that call Siesta Key their home. We need those representatives to lead, bring solutions to traffic and beach challenges, find answers within existing regulations and codes, not open the floodgates to high-rise, transient accommodations that will put at risk what makes our barrier island such an attractive destination.

For further information on the SK Coalition, go to the www.siestakeyassociation.com/projects/sk-coalition/ or email us at SKCoalition@gmail.com.