

WEKIVA BASIN IS FILLING UP PLANNING BOARD OKAYS MINE, 2 SUBDIVISIONS

[LAKE Edition]

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Lake County planning officials approved a proposed sand mine and two proposed housing developments in the Wekiva River basin Wednesday.

Toward the end of its daylong meeting, the county planning and zoning commission approved Maury Carter's request to dig an 80-acre sand mine on a tract that adjoins a 40-acre sand mine.

Carter said he wants the 120-acre sand mine to become a lake amid more than 6,000 acres he plans to be a subdivision. His property spans Black Water Creek and is bordered on the east by the Wekiva River. The Department of Natural Resources has slated the wilderness area as a top priority for purchase in its conservation program.

The commission also approved Wekiva Park Estates, a proposed subdivision of 179 homes on 1,099 acres that abuts the river. The planning and zoning commission's preliminary approval of the subdivision plans is the last before the matter goes before county commissioners.

The commission also approved plans for a portion of another proposed subdivision, Emerald Springs. Represented by Westhampton Realty in Winter Park, the development site is 750 acres spanning state roads 46 and 46A and zoned for about one home per acre.

Westhampton submitted plans for a first phase of nearly 200 homes. That was approved by the planning and zoning commission and must be reviewed by county commissioners.

The 120 square miles of the Wekiva River basin have been slated for extra protection by state law. Urban expansion from Orlando has boosted interest in development along the spring-fed river.

At the same time, conservationists have fought to preserve the corridor of wilderness that follows the river toward the Ocala National Forest.

Earlier this year, the Lake County Commission approved an amendment to the county comprehensive land-use plan.

The amendment, being reviewed by state officials, will rule out rezoning for dense subdivisions in most cases.

The planning and zoning commission's vote Wednesday on the sand mine was divided; three of the nine members opposed the request.

Though several members were eager to end the long day, Greg Homan demanded a tight schedule for reclaiming land torn up by the sand mine.

Just before voting to oppose the mine, Homan said Lake County has done little to control sand mines.

"If you can operate a mine in the environmentally sensitive area of the Wekiva River, you can operate one anywhere," he said. "In three or four years how many more acres used for sand mines are we going to have?"

The Wekiva Park Estates developer has been before county officials for more than a year seeking permission to build on his riverside property.

Lots in the development are to be 300 feet by 750 feet, or about 5 acres each, as allowed by the agricultural zoning.

Officials of the proposed subdivision have not decided whether to build homes or invite outside builders.

They estimate a lot and home will cost at least \$250,000.

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Abstract (Document Summary)

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