

Beruff Gets Told “No”

August 15, 2017



Mr. Beruff does not usually get “no” for an answer. He has money and power and the governor’s ear. So we celebrate the actions of the Manatee County planning staff for recommending denial to his building project which does not follow the rules. And for a reason.

Let us hope the Manatee County commissioners have the guts to do the same and make this man follow the rules that others must follow. Let’s not just write Florida off as already a development disaster, and try to keep a little of what is left.

The Beruffs of the state are trying hard to pave it over from

Pensacola to Key West, but let us resist. We do not need more developments in Florida. Why do we need more houses, cities, roads and Walmarts? Pastures and trees and clean water are more valuable and necessary to a viable and happy life than more roads, liquor stores, restaurants and freeways. We have enough businesses, cities and money. We do not need more, thank you very much.

If you live anywhere in the area, please go to the commissioners' meeting Wednesday, August 16, and ask the commissioners to do the right thing.

Comments by OSFR historian Jim Tatum.

-A river is like a life: once taken, it cannot be brought back-

Manatee County planning staff now says 'no' to Aqua by the Bay

By Richard Dymond

rdymond@bradenton.com

August 13, 2017 2:47 PM

MANATEE

Carlos Beruff's proposed Aqua by the Bay development at Long Bar Pointe was delivered another blow over the weekend when the Manatee County planning staff changed course, recommending a denial in its report to the county commission.

The report came three months after the planning staff had recommended approval, and three days after the Manatee County Planning Commission also recommended denial of the proposed project.

It was welcome news to those who had rallied against the project Saturday morning at the corner of Cortez Road and 75th Street West, including Florida Institute for Saltwater Heritage spokeswoman Jane von Hahmann.

“I didn’t expect a change in the staff recommendation because they were recommending it (previously),” von Hahmann said Sunday. “But given what the Planning Commission did and some of the questions asked of staff members, it may have triggered them to go back and take a closer look.”

The planning staff reached a conclusion that Beruff’s building height plans and density for 2,894 homes on 529 acres between El Conquistador Parkway and Sarasota Bay, just to the south of 53rd Avenue West, including 2,384 multi-family condo units, are not consistent with the Manatee County Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Code.

The report states: “Denial of the request for buildings exceeding 35 feet in height as the request does not satisfy the requirements of the Land Development Code.”

At 9 a.m. Wednesday, Beruff’s request for a rezone and general development plan approval for the project will be back in the hands of the ultimate decision makers, the Manatee County Commissioners, who had referred the controversial development back to the planning commission because they wanted exact information about how many buildings would exceed the maximum height of 35 feet allowed.

What commissioners will learn from the planning staff’s dig for numbers is that Beruff’s team has proposed 12 buildings with a

maximum height of 95 feet on the central part of the site, four with a maximum height of 145 feet also on the central part and others between 36 and 75 feet tall, which would be limited by the approved number of dwelling units in the general development plan, according to the developer's staff.

"After building 16 buildings, the four that are 145 feet and the 12 that are 95 feet, it still seems to show the need for 20 additional buildings to accommodate 2,384 condo units," von Hahmann said. "We don't have anything like that on our coastline."

Commissioner Robin DiSabatino refrained from getting into the discussion Sunday.

"Since it is an ongoing public hearing, I'm not at liberty to discuss anything," DiSabatino said Sunday. "But I did see that (the planning staff denial) and do have an appointment on Monday to go over it with them."

The office of Ed Vogler, the attorney representing the project, was closed Sunday, and a message left there was not immediately returned.

'He has a right to build his property'

Von Hahmann, who was a county commissioner in 2004, said on Sunday that while Beruff's current proposal is just too intense for Manatee County, he should come up with a more conservative plan.

"He has a right to build his property," von Hahmann said. "Personally, I think he should go back to the drawing board. He just has to follow code when he does it."

"The biggest question mark for me is the number of buildings it

would take to accommodate all the units they are proposing,” von Hahmann added. “That would be an obnoxious amount of concrete on the water. You can’t put that many buildings on the water and not have it look like a wall of concrete. I hope they see it is much too dense.”

Richard Dymond: [941-745-7072](tel:941-745-7072), [@RichardDymond](https://www.instagram.com/RichardDymond)