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## **Volusia approves borrow pit over neighbors' objections - Vote unanimous despite objections from group of neighbors**

By Chris Graham, The Daytona Beach News-Journal  
5:45 p.m., May 21, 2015

DELAND — Volusia County Council members Thursday unanimously approved an excavation pit for Southeast Volusia despite opposition from residents who fear the project will erode their rural way of life.

The borrow pit, which will total 44.7 acres, will be used to provide dirt for public and private projects throughout the region. Residents worry, however, that the operation will disturb the country neighborhood, citing concerns about noise from dump trucks and possible contaminations to the water table.

It was the second time the council had considered approving the operation after remanding the issue to the Planning & Land Development Regulation Commission, which recommended the project for approval on both occasions.

The borrow pit will be about 1.5 miles south of the intersection of State Road 415 and State Road 44. Attorney Glenn Storch said Orlando-based landowner Maury L. Carter Associates has done everything necessary to address concerns from residents.

"Many people have a fear of status quo changing," he said.

Along with nearly 20 other conditions required, the pit will only operate for five years and receive no extensions; use earthen berms to minimize sound from the property; and operate only between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m.

When finished the pit will be turned into a 30-acre lake, Storch said.

"There are great benefits to this," he said. "It's a perfect location for a lake in this area."

Several residents disagreed.

Joanne Woods, who lives on Rasley Road near the project, said residents were ignored when the county allowed for the construction of a trash dump, which she referred to as "Mt. Trashmore."

"I think you all were elected for the people, not the special interests," she said.



Rick Bordignon presented a photo of a lake left over from a similar borrow pit project in St. Cloud that is surrounded by abandoned homes and bordered by steep cliffs. He also argued that traffic on the two-lane country road would cause dangerous conditions. A traffic study estimates the project would generate about 100 truck trips a day as well as about 10 employee trips.

Some people spoke in support of the project including one business owner who said dirt is needed for projects in the area.

“Nobody wants anything done in their backyard, but we need it,” said Robert Weaver, part owner of New Smyrna Beachbased Weaver Construction Inc.

Councilwoman Deb Denys said she understands residents’ concerns but had to take emotion out of the equation.

“We have to base it on facts, not fear and supposition,” she said.

Councilman Josh Wagner said he believed the county had put in as many safeguards as possible to mitigate the disruption.

“My apologies in advance if there is any inconvenience,” he said.

In other news, Volusia officials honored Charlene Weaver, who retired after 30 years with the county. Weaver began her career in 1985 as a management and budget analyst. Four years later, she was the first woman appointed as assistant county manager and most recently served as Volusia’s chief financial officer and deputy county manager.

The council appointed a successor in Donna de Peyster, who has been the county’s accounting director since 2006. The council also appointed George Recktenwald, director of public protection, to succeed deputy county manager Mary Anne Connors, who is retiring in the near future. And Jeffrey Bumb was confirmed as the division director of veteran services, succeeding Mike White, who joined the county’s staff in 2003.

Also, the council Thursday unanimously approved \$2.89 million in ECHO funding for 11 projects including expansion and renovations to the Atlantic Center of the Arts’ Cultural Venues Complex as well as improvements to Smyrna Dunes Park and an off-beach parking lot at Hiles Boulevard in New Smyrna Beach.

The council also recommended that the ECHO board reconsider an application for \$164,500 to purchase one of Daytona Beach’s oldest homes known as the Abbey, which was built in 1875 and has connections to some of the city’s founders. Members of the Abbey Trust say an offer to buy the building will expire after July 1.