

'Homeless shelter' not needed here

What's happening to our area? First, there was the moving of the jail to Lecanto. Second was Cypress Creek, a facility for troubled teen-agers. That should be more than expected for any community to maintain a reasonably happy, safe and harmonious quality of life.

Not long ago, however, our local decision-makers recommended approval for the Brown Schools.

OPINIONS INVITED

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Groups or individuals are invited to express their opinions in a letter to the editor. Persons wishing to address the editorial board, which meets weekly, should call Charlie Brennan at (352) 563-5660.

All letters must be signed and include a phone number. Names will be printed. Phone numbers won't be published or given out. We reserve the right to edit letters for length, libel, fairness or good taste. Letters more than 350 words long may be returned to sender. Send letters to: The Editor, 1624 N. Meadowcrest Blvd., Crystal River, FL 34429. Or, fax to (352) 563-3280; or e-mail to chronedi@citrus.infl.net.

How many of us were in favor of that? Did anyone bother to find out? Now it looks like a so-called "residential spiritual treatment center," a.k.a. "homeless shelter," might be rammed down our throats, too. This translates to a facility for Florida's psychologically and/or criminally inclined, dysfunctional individuals. This spells trouble in any language.

In the Monday, June 12, issue of the Chronicle, Jim Hunter's article indicated the county planning staff has recommended approval. Did anyone on that staff or Community Development Director Chuck Dixon talk to any of the residents in the area before recommending the approval? Isn't this a democracy where the majority prevails?

At least one petition has been signed by many people who object to another such facility in our area. It is on file in the planning office.

Is there a petition signed by area residents who "desire" another of this type facility?

This facility will not be secured. It will be unlocked.

Of those interviewed, ALL are opposed to this encroachment on our lives.

That should count for something.

Andrew Alesi
Beverly Swanson
Arthur Swanson
Mildred Jeralds
Derek Thome
Ardell Varing
Mrs. and Mrs. Anthony DeMaio
Suzanne Panarisi
Mary Bevers
Robert Bevers
Kelly Zoncha
Don Zoncha
Theresa Grilkowski

Show compassion for other humans

This letter is in reference to the opinions expressed by the 13 people who feel that the jail, Cypress Creek, the Brown Schools and now a "homeless shelter" are being rammed down their throats.

I am ashamed to have neighbors with such little compassion for others in need. I am glad for them that they live in a happy world with no family or friends who have struggled with being anything other than normal, but they need to get real.

If every community declined to provide help for those who need rehabilitation for being "psychologically and/or criminally inclined, dysfunctional" or in need of a meal or shelter, then where would those people go for help?

God tells us that a neighbor is one who has mercy on another. He did not say our neighborhoods would always have a "happy, safe and harmonious quality of life."

I bet not one of those people who wrote that letter have ever worked with a troubled teen-ager or given a meal to a person who is truly hungry.

Donna Nelson

Support is needed to build shelter

We have recently been made aware of rumors surrounding the building of our shelter here in Citrus County. We would like to address them as quickly as possible.

We have, for some time now, been trying to build or open a shelter that will house people for long periods of time and allow them to study the Bible, go to church, learn new skills and break habits that are destructive.

Most people know that Citrus County is very limited in this area. Since it looks like we will build this building from scratch, it will be a concrete block building, approximately 9,000 square feet with a mobile for supervision, that will serve a dual purpose of being very strong against hurricanes and help the general public in emergencies.

The proposed site is in Lecanto, in between Southern Street and the Catholic Church. We will be in front of the planning commission on June 15 at 9 a.m. to get permission to build under a "conditional use." Anyone wishing to speak at that time is welcome and will get three minutes to address the issue.

The need is overwhelming. We do not know *specifically* who we will minister to in our building. That is up to God. The need can be anything from your house burning down to a person getting out of jail who wants to change their ways, to a single mother who cannot pay her rent anymore.

If you wish to know more, please call me at 341-0551 and help stop the rumors. We wish to help people in whatever way we can. The Lord bless you.

DuWayne Sipper
Executive Director
The Path of Citrus County

Planning board rejects religious center

By JIM ROSS
Times Staff Writer

LECANTO — A Christian group hoping to build a spiritual treatment center suffered a major setback Thursday.

The Path of Citrus County needed county approval to build its 30-bed center off Menasha Street in central Citrus. But the Planning and Development Review Board, after hearing substantial public comment, voted 5-1 to deny.

"I'm taking everything in stride. It was wonderful how both sides were calm and

peaceful," said DuWayne Sipper, executive director of the project.

The Path is a non-profit, interdenominational group. It has spent several years trying to establish this kind of facility, including one failed effort to turn the old jail in downtown Inverness into a shelter for the poor and homeless.

The most promising prospect emerged several months ago, when the Path arranged an option to buy 20 acres off Menasha, which is west of County Road 490 and south of State Road 44.

Leaders hoped that land could be the site of their center, which would be a comfortable residence where people could receive intensive, Bible-based, Christian spiritual care.

Before exercising that option, the group wanted to see what the planning board would do.

The land is zoned for low-density residential development. A treatment center is a permitted use in such areas, but only if the board would agree that the project was compatible with the neighborhood and

met other criteria.

Some residents told the board Thursday that the center would not be welcome because it would attract criminals and other unsavory characters.

Even more important, some property owners along Menasha said they would deny permission to pave Menasha, a private road that they control. The county would require the Path to accomplish that task so that emergency vehicles could

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access the treatment center.

County staffers, who have recommended approval of the plan, agreed to help the Path find other potential sites for the facility.

But "No matter where we build, we're going to be around people," Sipper pointed out after the board hearing.

The Path's board of directors is scheduled to meet Saturday. "I'm pretty sure we're going to move on" and stop pursuing the Menasha site, Sipper said.

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U.S. Open



Tiger Woods shot a record first-day score of 6-under-par 65 to take the lead after the first round of the U.S. Open Thursday at Pebble Beach. **1B**

Planners: Tradewinds yes, shelter no

By Jim Hunter
Staff writer

Though the county's zoning board voted to allow the redevelopment of the Tradewinds Mobile Home Park in Homosassa Thursday, residents who will be displaced may have gotten a glimmer of hope in their predicament.

The owner wants to amend the development plan to allow for 75 single-family homes and condominium units. Presently there are 80 units.

The predicament for many of the residents is that they either live on limited fixed incomes and have no money to relocate, or their mobile homes are so old they wouldn't be allowed under county codes to relocate them — even if they could afford to.

Many are elderly and some have special medical needs, said Carl Bertoch, an

The law includes a provision that owners of parks ... have to pay for relocation of residents' homes or buy them out.

attorney representing a number of the residents. He called approval of the plan "the first step in an eviction hearing."

The county Planning and Development Review Board has found itself facing two issues as Donna Acree, the 30-year owner of the park, wants to redevelop the property that her attorney said has been failing financially for a number of years.

The first issue is the zoning in relation

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Homeless shelter plan nixed for lack of pavement

By Robert Arrieta
Staff writer

A handful of Lecanto residents got their wish Thursday when the county's Planning and Development Review Board denied the first step necessary to build a homeless shelter in their neighborhood.

Most of the neighbors said they did not want the risk of what they consider unseemly types being near their homes and a school.

The shelter would have been built

near Central Catholic School on Homosassa Trail, which serves preschool to eighth-grade students.

Some residents said they feared for their children's safety with a homeless shelter nearby.

"I've lived their for 10 years and I have two children at home," Angie Carnahan said. "It is not going to be safe for my children to be outside if they build this shelter here. There is a need for this in our community but it is not in a rural, resident neighborhood."

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SHELTER

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The plan of the Path of Citrus County, a Christian group led by Duwayne Sipper, sought to build a shelter that would house 30 people in a wooded area along Menasha Street.

To meet the county's requirements, the Path would have had to pave Menasha Street to make it passable to emergency vehicles. The street, however, is not county owned, but instead is owned by about six residents who live on the street. To pave it, the Path would have to have their permission.

"I don't see them getting the permission to do the work," PDRB member J.J. Bard said of officials with the Path. "The whole case is moot. Without the road, we can't approve it and I don't see them

being able to get permission to get the road done."

The shelter would have met a growing need in the area, according to Sipper.

Despite Sipper's assurance that the facility would be well staffed and that the residents of the shelter would go through a screening process, most of the neighbors said they were uncomfortable with the proposal, citing safety concerns.

"We have to inform people of what kind of people will be in the shelter," Sipper said. "This is a Christian shelter with rules. Most perpetrators do not come there."

Some of the rules the shelter would mandate on clients are: They must either have a job or be looking for one, attend Bible study several times a week, attend church once a week and attend substance-abuse counseling if needed.

In addition to the rules, Sipper said a curfew would be enforced.

"The main reason we're here is to help people, not hurt anyone," Sipper said.

Before the board voted on Sipper's request, he opened up an offer to accept alternatives.

"I'll put myself out on a limb and for the next 30 days, if somebody can show me some land for \$100,000 or less, I'll be there," Sipper said.

Taking him up on his challenge was PDRB member James Kellner and Chuck Dixon, director of community development.

"We told the applicant that we recognize a real need here and I will work with Mr. Sipper to locate sites," Dixon said.

Later Thursday, Sipper said he was encouraged the acknowledgment of the need for a shelter and urged anyone willing to help to call him at 341-0551.