



Local News

Commission rescinds Harbor Shores support

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Vote is symbolic, but commissioners make it clear they are teed off

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BENTON HARBOR - Contending the city is getting the shaft from the Harbor Shores golf, residential and retail project, city commissioners have withdrawn symbolic support.

"I don't think any good government would show their support when we've given much more than any other entity," Commissioner Duane L. Seats II said Monday after sponsoring a resolution rescinding support for the \$500 million project. "We're in a bad marriage."

The resolution is part of longstanding resentments of the project by some city residents who see the developers as carpetbaggers who've received millions in state tax breaks while not delivering promised jobs. Other residents were angered that the 18-hole Jack Nicklaus Signature Golf Course, scheduled to officially open in August, will include three holes on 21 acres of Jean Klock Park.

A rejected federal lawsuit filed by residents said federal agencies failed to properly assess environmental contamination in the 38 acres swapped for the 21-acre parcel in the park. A separate rejected suit residents filed in state courts challenged the right of the city to lease the parkland to Harbor Shores.

Seats said Harbor Shores developers - who couldn't be reached for comment Monday night - haven't employed enough city residents on the project and disrespected the city by mentioning St. Joseph but not Benton Harbor on a billboard promoting the project.

Commissioner Dennis Knowles said developers have tied into the city's water system and "we've not gotten paid."

Commissioner James Hightower, who voted against the resolution along with Commissioner Bryan Joseph, said commissioners should get legal advice before voting. But Commissioner Marcus Muhammad noted the vote, like the 2008 resolution supporting the project, was strictly symbolic.

Muhammad said the lease between Harbor Shores and the city states they are not "partners, fiduciaries or joint venturers."

While symbolic, Joseph said the vote sends a bad message, particularly when the nearly broke city is attempting to attract investors to raise revenue.

"We're talking negative press (and a) negative image," he said.

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