

COVE

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much water would flow through the improved system, but failed to predict how these flows would affect the beach over time.

Residents near Bonita Lagoon criticized the Rogers Johnson report for not discussing in detail how increased runoff would affect the environmentally sensitive area.

The commissioners asked members of the planning and public works department how the illegal drainage system had gotten on the beach.

Members of public works and planning departments explained that when the commission originally approved the project, the drainage system hadn't been completely designed and the project was passed on the condition the drainage system would meet county standards.

Niebank today described the issue as a "disaster all the way around."

"It's a collective blame," she said. "There were many actors and many factors. When you have a situation like that, it's very hard to make sure nothing slipped between the cracks."

Commissioner Winfred Alexander pointed out that the commission approves many projects on the condition the drainage systems meet county requirements.

She recommended the commission consider paying closer attention to drainage system design in the future before giving its seal of approval.

Two commissioners voted against the appeal because they said the \$90,000 solution recommended by county planning staff was adequate.

Fourth District (South County) Commissioner Ed Hall said he wished people of Live

Oak would get over their "inferiority complex."

"I wish they'd come down to the fourth district some day," he said. "I don't think you're the only people in trouble. I haven't heard a positive thing said about where the money is going to come from. The county is broke."

Commissioner Denise Holbert said, "I just don't think the county has \$400,000 or \$500,000 to spend on this project. At some point you have to put these projects in priorities."

The environmental report called for by the commission could cost from \$15,000 to \$30,000, Niebank said.

The cost will have to be negotiated between the county and the two developers who would share the system, Asst. County Public Works Director Phil Sanfilippo said.

Any improvements to the existing system or costs of constructing a new system would also have to be negotiated between the three groups, he said.

"There are not readily available funds for even the cheapest (\$90,000) alternative," Sanfilippo said.

VOA representative Steve Mills said he was disappointed by the commission's decision, which he described as influenced more by the emotions of the neighbors than the facts of the case.

"I don't think anything's going to be gained by doing an EIR. I think all the serious levels of concern have been addressed by the Rogers-Johnson EIR," Mills said.

"It's really hard for me to justify spending more money on an EIR when it's not likely new useful information will be gained. I think what we're going to find is that in six months we're right back where we started."