

Harbor commission approves new RV park

November 14, 2021



Renewable Energy Capital, the same company that brought solar panels to the harbor in 2020, received approval for its subsidiary, South Beach RV Resort, LLC, to develop vacant property at Starfish Way and Anchor Way into a 14-space RV park.

The project was approved in a 4-1 vote after nearly an hour and a half of discussion that included a five minute recess for security to escort one naysayer outside after he accused the Crescent City Board of Harbor Commissioners of backroom negotiations.

The matter was the first item to be discussed on the new business agenda, but quickly turned contentious after one member of the public took to the podium and accused the commissioners of discussing the project amongst themselves and with the developer before taking it to the public.

In August, Alex Lemus with REC presented a plan to the commissioners that included developing the 39,139-square-foot vacant overflow lot, but also stated that he would like to redevelop the old Spotty's Car Wash and Oil Change site, as well as the former Englund Marine building as part of a larger, \$2 million to

\$2.5 million project. During that same August meeting, some of the Bayside and Redwood RV park residents expressed concern about possible displacement.

“Mr. Lemus, you’ve already stated that you want all or nothing for the harbor lease, and you still just want the lease for the small overflow property, is that correct?” Leonard Franklin asked.

“I don’t believe I said that, but that is our goal,” Lemus responded.

“I’m absolutely sure you did, I have it in my notes,” Franklin responded. “Do you have information that you were going to get these leases from information not discussed in the public meeting?”

Lemus attempted to answer, but Franklin interjected with “Alex, have you seen how unethically these evil people in front of me have treated us?” asked Franklin, referring to the commissioners.

“Ok, you are going to get kicked out if you continue,” responded Brian Stone, president of the harbor commission.

Franklin said down, but he and Stone continued to talk back and forth, leading Stone to request the security officer already at the meeting to escort Franklin outside.

Following a short recess, local resident Annie Nehmer stood up and asked about the same issue.

“Alex did discuss the last time I heard him that he would not be able to move forward on the small RV lease unless the other two leases were part of it,” Nehmer said. “So, from the outside looking in, it does appear there’s been a sidebar.”

CEO/Harbormaster of the Crescent City Harbor District Timothy Petrick clarified that the item before the board had only to do with the vacant overflow lot, adding that Lemus has a “reasonable expectation that he will have more lease area in the harbor district” due to the request for proposal process and discussions that began in December 2020.

Petrick added that lease negotiations - while not open to the public - are forwarded to the harbor commission four days prior to a meeting in the form of an agenda item that includes publicly- released staff documentation.

“I’d like to clarify for the public that one - nothing has been done behind the public’s back,” Stone said.

“Two - we have gone through, for the last five years that I have been on this board, we have gone through a master plan, and gone through the redevelopment, finding our development partners, a coastal planning process and we have gone through all these different things with workshops for everyone to see.”

According to the Nov. 2 meeting staff report, the project in the overflow lot includes creating 14 spaces for RV parking, landscaping, trenching, grading patios and fences. Once developed, it is anticipated that the tourism destination will bring in \$4,163 a month, or \$49,956 annually to the port.

“With all the issues to be determined with Bayside and Redwood (the two RV parks that sit nearby), I did listen to the commissioners and decided to use the existing Redwood overflow lot,” Lemus said. “Our goal is

to increase revenue because the harbor has suffered chronic losses.”

Lemus added that “we are going to start with this one first and show the commissioners and the community what our intentions are,” he said. “We intend to invest a fair amount of money and we’re willing to take on all of the risks.”

There is a possibility that the project will include a small retail store for snacks and gift items, but if that should exceed \$10,000 as an improvement or alteration, it will need to go back before the commission for approval. Lemus also stated that new public restrooms will be included in the development.

Prior to taking the vote, modifications were made to the proposed lease terms that included shortening the lease from 25 years to 15 years with options to extend, and adjustments to future rent payments will depend on the cost of living index and will range from two to five percent, instead of a fixed rate of two percent.

Construction is not expected to begin for several months, due to soil testing requirements prior to breaking ground, according to Petrick. Lemus added that he hopes to include more solar panels as part of the development.

Commissioner Harry Adams was the only no vote for the project.

“I’m totally against the whole project,” he said. “We don’t need another RV park in the harbor. The harbor is doing pretty good financially, and I don’t think a 14-space, high-rated RV park is gonna help us that much.”