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County, state to split cost of Boomer property

By CHAD GILLIS, cegillis@naplesnews.com
July 9, 2004

The shaky public purchase of a 100-acre Estero estate home took another turn Thursday when members of the county's Conservation 2020 program voted again to shell out money for what's known as the Boomer property.

This time, the plan is to split the \$14.5 million purchase between the county and the state's Florida Forever program.

"We were at the table ready to buy this ourselves," said member Mitch Hutchcraft. "The end result is that this is going to be protected. It's the direction we were all looking for originally."

The county has been "at the table" several times since the property was first nominated for public purchase in December.

State land managers, however, teetered between buying the entire Boomer property or splitting the land with Lee County.

The new deal still must be approved by county commissioners, but Conservation 2020 coordinator Lynda Riley said the state plans to start appraisals this week.

"When they got out of the management folks and into the money folks they thought their funds were stretched enough and that we should purchase it 50/50," Riley said, explaining the state's philosophical change. "Now all we need to do is for me to call them and tell them it's a go. They're ready to order the appraisals (today)."

One bonus for the county is that the state has agreed to pay for all management costs in the future. County officials will still have input on the development of a management plan for the property, Riley said.







The Boomer property represents the only Koreshan-built residence in existence and is located on the southwest corner of U.S. 41 and Broadway.

Under the current agreement, the state would get the Boomer home and land along the Estero River shoreline. It may then be added to the Koreshan State Historic Site.

Lee County would own the property's U.S. 41 frontage and adjacent lands to the west.

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Member Jake Slot was apprehensive about the recommendation, although he did vote in favor of sending the purchase to commissioners for final approval.

"I'm struggling with it, although I'd like to see it preserved," Slot said.

Splitting the purchase cost, both the county and state will receive half of the land's value, not acreage.

That scenario would likely lead to Lee County's receiving a smaller portion of land than the state because the U.S. 41 frontage will be appraised on its potential commercial value.

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