



October 24, 2009

Ex-Fla. representative from Fort Myers says Amendment 4 should be deep-sixed

*By Tim Engstrom
tengstrom@news-press.com*

Florida business leaders need to loudly oppose a proposed constitutional amendment requiring a public vote to change local growth plans, a former state legislator said Friday.

Carole Green, a former state representative from Fort Myers and a current Tallahassee lobbyist, urged members of a local economic development advisory board to fight Amendment 4.

Amendment 4, which will be on the ballot in November 2010, would require a local referendum on changes to city and county comprehensive plans.

The amendment is supported by a New Smyrna Beach group called Hometown Democracy Inc.

Some people are using that name for the amendment and that is part of the problem, Green said.

"It's a great name, but a bad idea," said Green, who stressed she was speaking Friday as a volunteer for Floridians for Smarter Growth, a group opposed to the amendment.

Speaking to the Horizon Council, a public/private advisory board to the county commission, Green said the amendment could force hundreds of public votes each year in Lee County, up to a year after they were sought.

"It would mean a vote for things as simple as roadway improvements," she said.

The Horizon Council took no vote or formal action after Green's comments, but several members spoke in opposition to the amendment.

Tom Hoolihan, chairman of the Industrial Development Authority, said many members of the Horizon Council wouldn't have been present Friday if the supporters of the amendment had their way years ago.

"FGCU would not be here and many of our schools and businesses would not be here," he said.

No one at the meeting spoke in favor of the amendment but, reached through the group's headquarters, Hometown Democracy founder Lesley Blackner said the arguments against the amendments amount to "scare tactics."

"Construction has already come to a halt in Florida and Amendment 4 is still a year away from a vote," Blackner said. "Irresponsible, speculative greed played a large role in destroying our economy

and now they want to do it again.”

Blackner contends that growth plans across Florida have “tons of growth” built in already.

But, Randy Henderson, Fort Myers’ mayor-elect, said the amendment could stall development large and small statewide if citizens have to vote every time a plan must be changed.

“You as citizens don’t want to be bothered with that,” he said.
