



Reps rail against Amendment 4

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By Robyn Sidersky
Guest Reporter

Seminole County held its first "mayors and managers" meeting Sept. 16 to discuss four main issues in the county with several of the state's House representatives.

The mayors of six of the seven cities in the county, along with city managers, school board members and other officials from Seminole County's cities, presented their views to the representatives, who in turn responded with their perspectives.

State Sen. Lee Constantine was in attendance, as well as Rep. Scott Plakon, Rep. Chris Dorworth, Rep. Sandy Adams, Rep. Stephen Precourt and Rep. Kurt Kelly. There were also representatives sent from other house members' offices.

Casselberry Mayor Charlene Glancy led the meeting. For each of the four issues, five minutes of explanation were allowed to discuss the pros and cons of the legislation.

Altamonte Springs Mayor Pat Bates led the discussion of the TABOR (Taxpayer Bill of Rights) Act & Home Rule. The legislation places a "one-size-fits-all" requirement on state and local governments to cap revenue to a defined base amount. The amendment would limit the collection of revenues by state and local government, according to the document passed out to participants at the meeting.

"We would like you all to trust us with what we do at home and we hope we can count on all of you to protect our home rule powers," Bates said to the representatives.

The House representatives vehemently opposed Amendment 4, aka the "hometown democracy" bill.

"It will prohibit comprehensive planning in favor of hundreds of disjointed amendments," Rep. Scott Plakon said. "The chaos it will surely cause will lead to massive inefficiency by stalling efforts to improve our infrastructure, it will not prevent urban sprawl, it will not protect our natural areas and will be a detriment to the quality of life here in Florida. I will work to defeat this anti-growth, job killing scheme that runs the risk of making Florida's current economic downturn permanent."

Kelly said he'd also fight against the bill.

"Hometown democracy is a reactionary response to people who feel we are not governing properly," he said. "You need to fight this with virtually everything you've got."

Winter Springs Mayor John Bush spoke about Senate Bill 360 — the state mandate that requires cities to ensure that public facilities are in place concurrent with the impacts of new development.

Bush said the main concern for the bill is that it will become a poster child for Amendment Four.

Adams told the meeting that the bill will probably go through more changes and more discussion and become amended before it goes anywhere.

Longwood Mayor Butch Bundy made a case for the Commuter Rail — telling of the benefits it would bring to Longwood.

The House representatives all expressed their approval of the passage of the Commuter Rail. In the past, it's passed in the House but not the Senate. They said they think this time it will go through both. Constantine said he thought it would pass as well.

The fourth issue brought up was the one-cent sales tax for the Seminole County School Board to use for Operational Costs vs. Capital Improvements.

Seminole County Superintendent of Schools Bill Vogel presented it but met an unoptimistic response.

The representatives said it would probably go through several changes and fail before finding success.

The representatives all made a point of praising the officials of Seminole County for their close positive relationships with each other.

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