

Dunedin drafting advice on vote

By [Drew Harwell](#), Times Staff Writer

Published Friday, March 19, 2010

DUNEDIN — The amendment known as Hometown Democracy has few fans in Dunedin City Hall.

City commissioners dislike Amendment 4 so much they have asked for a resolution urging residents to "consider the apparent negative consequences" before voting on it in November.

The amendment to the state Constitution, which would allow voters to veto government-approved land use changes, was labeled a "major mistake" by Mayor Dave Eggers.

"I feel very strongly about it," Eggers said, before asking to change the phrase "consider the positives and negatives."

"I definitely want to take the (word) 'positives' out. I know of none."

Only Vice Mayor Julie Scales spoke out against the resolution.

"I just don't think that it's the role of the commission to be telling voters how they should vote," Scales said.

The amendment would mark a major power shift on how a city changes its comprehensive plan, a map of growth and development that the state has required of each local government for 25 years. Each change would require a referendum and voter approval.

Supporters say it would allow voters direct input into what gets built in their city. Opponents call it a "vote for everything" disaster that would send election costs skyrocketing.

The resolution, drafted by City Attorney John Hubbard, said the amendment would expose "policy decisions to ... potentially misleading and inflammatory media campaigns," lead to "unnecessary expenditure of public monies" and "place an additional economic burden on the citizens of Dunedin."

Agenda attachments provided by commissioners support the resolution's strong language. Among them: a Vote No on 4 news release, a *Sarasota Herald-Tribune* guest editorial that says the amendment "would pour gasoline on the already raging fire of unemployment," and a report from a Tampa law firm called "Unintended Consequences" that said its passage would encourage "a general climate of failure."

The 33-page report says special interest lawyers, the Sierra Club, "adult entertainment interests (and) population control advocates" are funding the amendment. Opponents have cited Joe Redner, the outspoken owner of Tampa's Mons Venus strip club who has donated \$37,000 to the amendment group, as a sign that supporters' motives may be suspect.

Eggers, pointing to the report's map of Florida, said cities like Carrabelle and Frostproof passed hundreds of land changes in previous years, potentially drowning the cities' elections in complicated new votes if the amendment were to pass.

Yet he failed to mention that Dunedin last year saw only three plan changes, all of which related to homeowners asking for annexation. Commissioners suggested they add an estimate to the resolution for how the amendment would increase election costs.

No estimate has yet been calculated.

If the revised resolution passes next month, the city would join Largo, Safety Harbor, the Florida League of Cities and local governments across the state in opposition.

"People have elected me for a reason. They've elected me to study issues that could affect them as citizens, that could affect the city," Eggers said Friday. "I feel somewhat responsible to say this is how I feel."

Drew Harwell can be reached at dharwell@sptimes.com or (727) 869-6244.

© 2010 • All Rights Reserved • St. Petersburg Times
490 First Avenue South • St. Petersburg, FL 33701 • 727-893-8111
[Contact Us](#) | [Join Us](#) | [Advertise with Us](#) | [Subscribe to the St. Petersburg Times](#)
[Privacy Policy](#) | [Standard of Accuracy](#) | [Terms, Conditions & Copyright](#)