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Cape must wait for new downtown building rules

New regulations will permit mixed-use structures

By JEFF CULL, jcull@news-press.com

The Cape Coral Community Redevelopment Agency got some bad news Tuesday — it will take at least a year before new building regulations can go into effect downtown.

That wait could affect some developers who are working on plans to build commercial and residential mixed-use buildings in the CRA area, said executive director Chet Hunt.

"This is a long process," said Bill Nolan, a city planner who told the agency of the expected delay.

Nolan added the city staff is swamped with large, complex projects such as a new land development code and the Pine Island Road master plan. "Everybody can't be first," he said.

The new building rules are intended to make developing in downtown less restrictive and less bureaucratic. It takes out a layer of bureaucracy and makes the permit process quicker.

It also allows for buildings such as combination commercial and residential structures that are not allowed currently by city zoning laws.

Waiting another year for the new codes could be costly, said board member Carolyn Conant.

She suggested hiring outside legal council to review the codes, but the board chose to wait until the new codes are completed in a month or two to decide.

However, the CRA does have a Band-Aid plan to deal with the delay.

It has asked city council to approve a special zoning category in the downtown area that would allow for multiuse buildings until the new codes can be approved.

Council is expected to approve the measure within the next three weeks.

In other business, the Cape Coral Community Redevelopment Agency board on Tuesday:

- Approved giving \$7,500 to Sal's Pizza Parlor as part of its storefront renovation program. The Cape Coral Parkway pizzeria is getting a nearly \$100,000 facelift that will include new inside and outside dining areas.
- Reviewed a feasibility study for building parking structures downtown. The CRA would consider a parking garage if enough new buildings could be built downtown to pay for the project.

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