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## Commissioners agree to keep lots; hope to make room for needs

By Justin St. Clair And Jamie Page  
jstclair@news-press.com Jpage@news-press.com  
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Lee County commissioners agreed Monday to hold off on selling 84 lots the county owns in Lehigh Acres.

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Planners hope the lots can be traded and consolidated to make room for schools, parks or other needs.

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County Lands Director Karen Forsyth told commissioners the county could bring in an estimated \$250,000 a year in additional taxes if the lots were sold and built upon.

But some Lehigh residents want the county to hold on to the lots, at least until the Lehigh Acres Community Planning Corp. finishes a growth plan that could include how the lots should be used.

Lehigh resident Robert Anderson, 38, has been active with the planning group since it formed in mid-2004. He attended Monday's management and planning committee meeting and said commissioners did the right thing.

The East County Water Control District has also asked the county to try swapping lots to make more room for the planned Eco Park at Lee Boulevard and Xelda Avenue.

But county staff told commissioners that may not be the best use for the lots.

"The county got out of the neighborhood park business years ago," County Manager Don Stillwell said. "Why would we want to subsidize someone else doing it?"

In 2004, the County Lands Department tried to acquire more than 20,000 tax-delinquent lots in Lehigh to be used to make room for schools, commercial space, green space and public use.

When property owners were notified, however, they paid their back taxes or the tax certificates were snatched up because of rising property values.

Most of the 84 lots the county owns were tax delinquent, Forsyth said.