



## Planning Commission Rejects 'Low Speed Vehicle' Rentals

COTI President Mike Miller recently wrote to you about an application pending before the Sanibel Planning Commission for a permit to open a rental agency on Sanibel for certain low speed vehicles similar to golf carts but with gasoline engines. His message urged commissioners to deny the application.

These vehicles are considered "street legal" under preemptive state and federal law, so their use can't be prohibited by the City unless they are found to be unsafe by the City Council. However, even if their use cannot currently be prohibited, the City is not obligated to allow businesses to open on the island where they can be stored and rented.

The main problem we see is that under federal regulations these gasoline powered golf carts have a maximum permitted speed of 25 mph. That's lower than the posted speed limit on Sanibel's thoroughfares. That's why COTI opposed the permit. We're already saddled with too many cars on our roads, especially during season – cars that aren't speed restricted. As we see it, even a small fleet of slow moving golf carts intended for sightseeing by tourists would just exacerbate the traffic problem, a problem whose solution is not close at hand.



by Larry Schopp, Chair, COTI  
Land Use Planning  
Committee

**COTI Board Members Testify**

The hearing on the application took place on Tuesday, November 22. Three COTI board members, David Bath, Joe Salatino and Larry Schopp were sworn in and testified in opposition, pointing out that the transportation element of the Sanibel Plan has as one of its main objectives a reduction in auto ridership and auto travel on Sanibel. We argued that the establishment of a rental agency for a fleet of slow moving vehicles would run counter to that objective. To be clear, no conditional use may be approved unless it is in accord with the Sanibel Plan.

The important issue of safety was also addressed by the COTI witnesses. Back ups caused by slow moving vehicles not only lead to frustration, they invite passing – which on Sanibel's two lane roads can be hazardous if distances and speeds are miscalculated.

It became clear during the discussion that several commissioners had misgivings about the application, particularly the safety issue. We are happy to report that after a nearly two hour hearing they voted 5 - 1, with one abstention, to deny the permit for a conditional use. The applicant has a right of appeal to the City Council.

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