



PLANNING COMMISSION TO AGAIN CONSIDER ALLOWING ON-ISLAND RENTAL OF "LOW SPEED VEHICLES"

The May 22nd meeting of the Sanibel Planning Commission is scheduled to include consideration of an application for a conditional use permit to allow the establishment on Sanibel of a business that would rent seven "Low Speed Vehicles."

Readers may recall that a similar application was considered by the Commission in late 2016. COTI opposed that application on several grounds focusing primarily on concerns regarding adverse impact on the City's existing traffic congestion.

The term "Low Speed Vehicle" is a technical term that describes an open-air vehicle, similar to a golf cart, that is allowed under federal and state law to operate on public streets without having the full range of safety devices that would generally be required for a conventional automobile. In order to qualify for this provision, the vehicle's maximum speed must be mechanically limited to 25 miles per hour.

In this case, the vehicles to be rented would be environmentally friendly, powered by an electric motor and have a solar panel to recharge the vehicle's batteries.

The Commission denied the 2016 application principally on technical issues pertaining to the rotation and parking of inventoried vehicles. The current application does not involve these same issues, so the previous denial will not be a precedent for a decision on this application.



Rental of low speed vehicles like this one goes before Planning Commission for consideration.

COTI will be present at the Commission meeting and will oppose the application for several reasons.

First, section 126-82(1) of Sanibel's Land Development Code mandates that the Commission authorize a conditional use only if the proposed use will not "... adversely affect the traffic flow to a significantly greater extent than permitted uses." The application includes a traffic study that compares the expected traffic to and from the proposed rental location on Palm Ridge as compared to a permitted use of the same location. But the study does not adequately consider the effect of the utilization of the City's streets and roads as a recreational venue for the vehicles once they are rented and in use. It is this incremental use of our already congested roadways that would violate the ordinance.

Second, the applicable Sanibel ordinance also requires that the conditional use being requested "... shall be inherently beneficial to the community or reasonably necessary to its convenience." There is no competent evidence to suggest that the rental of these street-legal carts will inherently benefit the Sanibel community or be reasonably necessary for its convenience.

Third, and most important of all, under our law the conditional use requested must be in accord with the Sanibel Plan. In specific terms, section 3.3.3 of the Plan sets forth the objective of reducing auto (vehicle) ridership; establishing an on-island operation that rents vehicles for recreational use of the City's roadways would undermine that objective.

For all of the above reasons, the conditional use application should be rejected by the Planning Commission.

Commission meetings are open to the public and interested COTI members are encouraged to attend. The meeting will be held at City Hall on Tuesday, May 22nd at 9:00 AM.

Write to us at coti@coti.org if you have any questions or comments.

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