

# Taxpayers' Cost For Project Is Aired

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The Myakka Estates project in North Port would cost county taxpayers \$315,000 a year for law enforcement and crowd schools and roads, witnesses for Sarasota County said Wednesday.

Sarasota County Sheriff Jim Hardcastle said the Myakka Estates project will require the addition of a new patrol zone to southern Sarasota County when the project's population reaches 10,000.

He said the Myakka Estates will require him to place additional deputies in the Englewood area when a population level of 4,000 is reached.

HARDCASTLE TESTIFIED that adding a complete zone would cost in excess of \$315,000 a year. It would require hiring 11 deputies plus additional support personnel.

The cost of the additional deputies and support personnel needed when the population of Myakka Estates reaches 4,000, Hardcastle testified, would be approximately \$118,000 a year.

Dr. Kenneth R. Stevenson, a planner with the Sarasota County School Board, testified that General Development Corp.'s (GDC) project would burden already crowded schools.

THE FIRST PHASE of the project, about 2,000 acres, would have a school-age population of approximately 1,958 students, he testified.

The nearest elementary schools are located in Englewood and Venice Gardens, he said. The Englewood School is five miles away from the project, and the Venice Gardens school 10 miles away.

The junior and senior high students would attend Lemon Bay Junior and Senior High School in Englewood about seven miles away, he said.

BOTH SARASOTA County elementary schools are overcrowded, he said. Lemon Bay Junior and Senior High School, located

in Charlotte County, is also overcrowded, Dr. Stevenson said he has been told.

It costs \$4 million to build an elementary school, \$9 million for a junior high and \$18 million for a senior high, he testified.

The county's greatest need for new schools is east of the city of Sarasota, he said.

A RECENT study indicates the county will have \$60 million worth of new-school needs during the next five years. He said the county can only expect to get about \$10 million from the state to meet these needs.

Robert Longfield, a consultant on road needs, testified that the 8,100 acre project could cost Sarasota County up to \$10 million for road improvements.

Longfield said the first phase of the project would generate enough traffic to require widening State Road 777 to four lanes. The building of 1,700 homes in the project would require four lanes on the road, he testified.

A GDC EXPERT testified earlier in the hearing that most of the traffic from the project would flow through internal roads into Charlotte County.

He estimated the project would not require widening State Road 777.

Longfield testified that the GDC study ignored the Venice and Englewood area as a place residents of Myakka Estates would drive to for shopping and employment.

THE GDC STUDY, he said, assumed that the residents of this new community, located with North Port, would travel to Port Charlotte for their basic needs. He said Venice is a mile closer than Port Charlotte shopping areas.

HARDCASTLE, on cross examination, testified that he considered State Road 777 to be the route all the residents of Myakka Estates would use when they leave their home. He told GDC attorney Kenneth Lipman that if a large number of the residents of Myakka Estates drove into Charlotte County to work, shop, seek entertainment and see doctors it would cut law enforcement costs.

Hardcastle testified on cross examination that he figures the sheriff's department manpower needs on a basis of 1.2 deputies per 1,000 people. He said this need is figured on a countywide basis. The sheriff is ultimately responsible for law enforcement in the entire county, including the cities, he testified.

BECAUSE ALL THE residents of Myakka Estates will be driving onto State Road 777 to get to and from their homes, there will be a need for 11 additional deputies when the population reaches 10,000, he testified.

If the project were located near the present municipal heart of North Port, he said, the additional expense to the county would be about \$35,000 a year. He said most people living in the heart of North Port look to Charlotte County to supply their needs.

Although Myakka Estates is within North Port's borders, it is located closer to Englewood than the populated area of the city. By road, it is nine miles from downtown North Port to the proposed entrance to the community. It is necessary to leave the city to drive to Myakka Estates.

HARDCASTLE ALSO testified that GDC-built roads in North Port are used by drug smugglers as runways. In addition,

he said, these isolated streets in uninhabited portions of the 68-square-mile city attract crowds of drag racers.

On cross examination, Hardcastle said the road network in North Port is a convenient place for smugglers to land. It is equally convenient for those who unload the airplane and haul away the marijuana and cocaine.

He estimated that two flights a week land on the 800 miles of empty roads in North Port.

STATE HEARING officer Robert Benton recessed the Myakka Estates hearing Wednesday until sometime in May. He had to return to Tallahassee to conduct another hearing beginning tomorrow.

Sarasota County Attorney Richard Nelson estimated it would take about a week to present the rest of case of those opposed to the project.

Benton rejected a request by Sarasota County to permit environmental experts Jeff Lincer and Russell Klier to testify.

GDC ATTORNEY Parker Thompson objected to the two men being added to the witness list after the developer's case had been presented. Benton agreed.

Thompson did not object to having Sarasota County Commissioner John M. Saba Jr. added to the witness list. Benton said he will permit Saba to testify.

The hearing is on an appeal to a 1975 order issued by the city of North Port which permits GDC to begin developing the first phase of the project.

THE APPEAL was taken by Sarasota County, the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council, the state Division of Planning, the Englewood Water District and the Englewood Community Organizations.

The hearing officer makes recommendations to the Florida Cabinet which has final approval authority.