

# Permit Move Riles Island Restaurants

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Siesta Key Village business owners are frustrated by the county's move to end temporary-use permits for bars and restaurants on the key, at least for now.

The county had traditionally issued the permits for the establishments, which allowed them to take food and beverage offerings outdoors for a day or so.

But there was nothing in the zoning code that specifically permitted the practice.

County staff tried to remedy that by adding a rule that allowed four such permits for each establishment. But commissioners shot down the language for the Siesta Key Overlay District, which is all of Siesta Key. They said the language was too vague and might result in too many events and disturb nearby residents.

Commissioners plan to revisit the issue at an upcoming meeting. "When we get a grasp on the history of it, maybe we could put it back in place with something resembling a legal limit," said Nora Patterson at a recent commission meeting.

Business owners attending the October meeting of the Village Association say they were left out of any discussion of the move.

"This went right under the radar," said Rick Munroe, owner of the Sun Garden Cafe.

He and others say commissioners' fears of never ending outdoor events are unfounded.

"You would think there's some festival every weekend," said Troy Syprett, owner of the Daiquiri Deck.

The merchants say the history of such permits will show that the events are few and help them accommodate the public at some of the busiest times for the village.

In 2007 and so far in 2008, the village has seen 24 temporary-use permits issued by the county. Eight were sidewalk sales, which are still permitted because there is no food or drink involved.

The permits amount to 74 total days with outdoor events, of which 47 days were for sidewalk sales.

**In other business:**

Siesta Fiesta, the association's annual fundraiser, will take place April 25, just after completion of the village renovation.

Members talked about using the timing to their advantage both for bringing more people to the event and to pitch the village as a dining, entertainment and shopping hot spot.

"It will be a great time for the village to show off," said Syprett.

Bryan Eible, founder of the Siesta Farmer's Market, said the first go at the weekly, Sunday morning market was a success and drew about 2,500 people. Some vendors sold out of goods and had to close early.

Eible and county officials agree that the rule that allows the market will have to be tweaked to allow some of the vendors to continue to operate, since they offer organic products but not food. The market is limited to selling food.

The association is writing a letter to county officials supporting the changes.

Association President Mark H. Smith, owner of Smith Architects, said merchants are meeting with county officials today to discuss proposed amendments to the parking ordinance for the village.

The merchants want to go with one parking space for every 50 square feet of serving area for bars and restaurants. Other provisions allow parking space credits for bike racks and motorcycle spaces.

The association is hosting Safe Treats again this Halloween from 3 to 6 p.m. in the village. Participating merchants will have balloons at their doors and offer candy to youngsters.

Dennis DePeters, project manager for Halfacre Construction, which is doing the village renovation, reported that the company hopes to be as far as Canal Street by Christmas.

"It's something that we are trying to achieve," DePeters said.