

Indian River County to pursue permit for delayed Oslo boat ramp project | POLL

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VERO BEACH — “The battle is still on,” Richard Baker, head of the Pelican Island Audubon Society said Tuesday afternoon.

The Indian River County Commission had just voted 3-2 to continue pursuing an Army Corps of Engineers permit for the controversial Oslo Road boat ramp project, despite having voted in October to delay the project for three to five years.

Baker said he and the other project opponents, who have been fighting against the project for several years, will focus their energies on keeping the county from getting the permit.

“When the commission meets, anything can happen,” he said, adding he doesn’t think the three- to five-year delay is safe.

Project opponents recently learned Michael D. Nixon, the county’s roadway production manager, told the corps the project is still active and asked the agency to approve the permit.

County Administrator Joe Baird said pursuing the permit was his decision.

“Right or wrong,” Baird said, he thought the commission wanted him to get the permit and “put it on the shelf” until the project comes up for consideration in three to five years.

The county has already spent more than \$5,000 on permit applications, he told the commissioners and about 20 project opponents, and he didn’t want to waste the money since all the work for the corps permit had been done.

In fact, the county paid \$5,050 to the St. Johns Water Management District for processing its permit on the project. That permit was issued last August. The part of the permit for on-land work lasts five years; the part for in-water work expires in August. The money is non-refundable.

The county hasn't paid any money toward its Army Corps permit. If it's approved, the county will pay a \$100 nonrefundable processing fee.

Commissioner Tim Zorc asked the board to redirect staff to stop all action on the ramp. Zorc said he and the project opponents thought when the project was delayed, all work on it would stop.

Commissioner Peter O'Bryan said Zorc and the others were mistaking "tabled or delayed" with "killed."

Zorc's motion failed with Commissioner Joe Flescher voting with him. O'Bryan, Wesley Davis and Bob Solari, who moved for the delay in October, voted to continue seeking the permit.

"It won't go any further than that," Baird said.

MAPS, VIDEO: More on the Oslo boat ramp project (http://www.tcpalm.com/the-lowdown-on-the-oslo-road-boat-ramp-project_77849973)

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