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Parents leery of changes

Standards

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someone shouted from the audience after Mary Jane Tappen, deputy chancellor of the state Education Department, and district Assistant Superintendent Keith Oswald began answering questions.

"The only thing they can do is scrap it," said Lynne Sherrer, one of the organizers of Parents Against Common Core Palm Beach County.

The Common Core standards were developed by governors and state school officials and are being promoted by the Obama administration as part of an effort to raise the bar for U.S. students in science, math and communications in order to compete in a global marketplace.

Florida is among 45 states that have been phasing in the standards in recent years, with the new national system set to fully replace the state's own system in the 2014-2015 school year.

The move is being battered by tea party groups and parent organizations who say it undermines local control of schools.

Abruzzo, who rep-

resents the Wellington area, said he brought in Tappen and Oswald to try to answer questions about the standards. And for more than two hours, they attempted to do just that, as he read some of the 150 questions submitted by audience members.

But the answers did little to soothe the anger from opponents, who responded that they didn't believe what they were being told.

"This is bad. Please look at the textbooks," said Wellington parent Julie Mauck. "It is bad, trust me."

But Oswald told Mauck and others that teachers have the freedom to design their own classroom curricula.

Mauck, who has four children at Equestrian Trails Elementary and Wellington High School, disputed that and said teachers have told her "twice" they are not at liberty to change anything.

Tappen told parents the Common Core standards, which deal with only math and English, were developed by studying other states and nations whose students perform better on tests than Florida. They attempt to focus teaching on critical thinking and problem-solving more than the current Next Generation Sunshine State Standards, she said.

Still, parents disputed the research that went in-



Wellington parent Julie Mauck speaks at the meeting on Common Core. "It is bad, trust me," she said of the new education standards scheduled to kick in for the 2014-15 school year.

RICHARD GRAULICH/
THE PALM BEACH POST

WHAT IS COMMON CORE?

■ The standards, which deal only with math and language arts, are a set of skills taught at each grade level so students are either college- or career-ready after high school. They are uniform with standards in every state that participates.

■ The state Department of Education says on its website that local school districts have the flexibility to design their own curriculum, though opponents dispute this.

■ Florida adopted the standards in 2010, followed by 40 more states in 2011.

to developing Common Core, and called it biased. "How do we know they work?" asked Marie Lynch, a mother from Boca Raton.

Lake Worth parent Shannon Armstrong told Tappen she wanted to see examples of where Common Core has worked in the United States, not

other countries.

"You're experimenting on our kids," Armstrong said.

Tappen told parents that one of the biggest concerns voiced by Common Core opponents nationwide is that the federal government will gather personal data on students.

act the measure, which allows residents to use deadly force to protect themselves.

Before the new law, Floridians who felt threatened outside their homes were required to flee an attacker if they could before using force to defend themselves.

Rep. Dennis Baxley, R-Ocala, sponsored the 2005 law, approved unanimously by the Florida Senate and in an overwhelming 94-20 vote in the House. Speaking at a Tallahassee Republican club last month, Baxley criticized President Barack Obama and others for using the measure to rally opposition against Republicans.

Baxley said Republicans are not going to be pressured into overturning a law that he said has heightened public safety. Like Baxley, House Speaker Will Weatherford, R-Wesley Chapel, sees little need to change the stand your ground law.

Weatherford, though, has ordered the House Criminal Justice Committee to hold a hearing soon on the law, mostly to hear testimony from law enforcement authorities about any difficulties they've faced with the measure.

"We're not afraid to have discussions," Baxley said. "But we're going to be very cautious in the House about where we go with this."

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Protesters to return to Capitol

Gun law

continued from A1

manslaughter charges in July in the 2012 shooting death of unarmed, 17-year-old Trayvon Martin in the Central Florida city of Sanford.

Zimmerman, a neighborhood watch volunteer, confronted Martin, who was walking in a gated community he was visiting with his father.

While Sanford Police initially cited the stand your ground law in not charging Zimmerman, who claimed self-defense, the standard was not used by his attorneys in last summer's trial. It did, however, shape jury instructions given by Circuit Judge Debra Nelson to the six women who acquitted Zimmerman.

The legislation going before lawmakers this week would require sheriffs or city police departments to issue guidelines for neighborhood watch groups.

It would also prohibit volunteers from attempting to confront or catch someone thought to be acting improperly.

The bills also clarify for law enforcement agencies that they should fully investigate incidents in which force is used and not feel restricted by the stand your ground measure.

Smith, however, also wants lawmakers to more strictly define circumstances where the law can be used.

He wants to prohibit someone from taking aggressive action — perhaps like Zimmerman confronting Martin — and using deadly force when



Trayvon Martin

George Zimmerman (right) and his wife Shellie talk with Seminole court services investigator Rob Hemmert in Seminole Circuit Court in Sanford in July. Zimmerman was acquitted of second-degree murder for the 2012 shooting death of Trayvon Martin. The "stand your ground" law shaped the judge's instructions to the jury. JOE BURBANK/ORLANDO SENTINEL/MCT

they turn from aggressor to victim in an encounter.

Smith said gang members, angry neighbors and others have been shielded from prosecution by using the stand your ground law.

Confrontations started, and the last person standing is the only one offering a version of what happened, Smith said.

Three days after the July verdict in the Zimmerman trial, the activist group Dream Defenders began a sit-in at the Capitol demanding a special session to repeal the law.

Gov. Rick Scott and legislative leaders refused and the sit-in spanned 31 days, drawing dozens of protesters, the Rev. Jesse Jackson and other civil rights leaders.

Dream Defenders plan

to be back at the Capitol this week.

"We plan to maintain consistent pressure until this law is repealed," said Steve Pargett, a Dream Defenders spokesman. "This issue is not going to fade away because we intend to keep it on the forefront of the scene."

Such Democratic-allied organizations as Florida New Majority, the Miami Workers' Center and several labor unions have sought to position the Martin shooting and call for repeal of stand your ground as a vote-driver for next year's elections.

U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder criticized the self-defense law at an NAACP convention in Orlando during the summer. Florida was the first of two dozen states to en-

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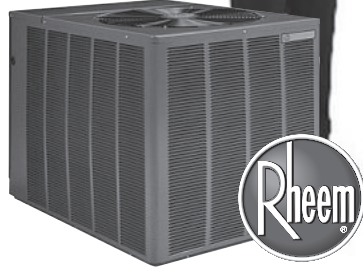
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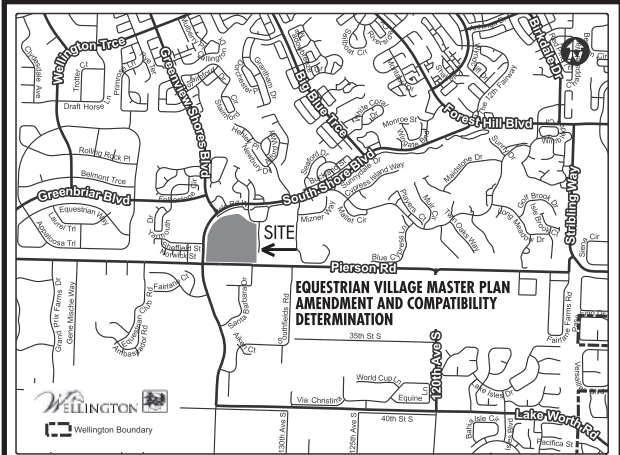
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WELLINGTON COUNCIL NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that a public hearing will be held on the adoption of the Resolutions described below:

A RESOLUTION OF WELLINGTON, FLORIDA'S COUNCIL, APPROVING THE MASTER PLAN AMENDMENT FOR PETITION 2013-040 MPA2, ALSO KNOWN AS EQUESTRIAN VILLAGE, LOCATED ON THE NORTHEAST CORNER OF SOUTH SHORE BOULEVARD AND PIERSON ROAD, TO MODIFY THE WELLINGTON PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT FOR THE 59.3 ACRE PORTION OF TRACT 30C, TO BE KNOWN AS 30C-2, LABELING THE PROPOSED TRACT 30C-2 "COMMERCIAL RECREATION", AND ESTABLISHING ONE (1) ACCESS POINT ALONG THE NORTH SIDE OF PIERSON ROAD; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING FOR REPEAL OF LAWS IN CONFLICT; PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

A RESOLUTION OF WELLINGTON, FLORIDA'S COUNCIL, APPROVING A COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION FOR A COMMERCIAL EQUESTRIAN ARENA FOR PETITION 2013-040 CD, ALSO KNOWN AS EQUESTRIAN VILLAGE, LOCATED ON THE NORTHEAST CORNER OF SOUTH SHORE BOULEVARD AND PIERSON ROAD, TO ALLOW A COMMERCIAL EQUESTRIAN ARENA IN THE URBAN SERVICE AREA WITH RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS TO MITIGATE POTENTIAL INCOMPATIBILITY ISSUES AND PROVIDING STANDARDS; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING FOR REPEAL OF LAWS IN CONFLICT; PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

This public hearing will be conducted before the Wellington Council as follows:
Location: Village Hall, 12300 Forest Hill Boulevard, Wellington, Florida.

Date: October 22, 2013 at 7:00 P.M. or as soon thereafter as may be heard in the orderly course of business. The hearing of the request may be continued from time to time as may be found necessary.

The file relating to these Petitions may be inspected at Wellington's Planning and Zoning Division, located at 12300 Forest Hill Boulevard, Wellington, Florida 33414, Monday through Thursday between the hours of 7:00 A.M. and 6:00 P.M.

Appeals: If a person decides to appeal any decision with respect to any matter considered at such hearing, he/she will need a record of the proceedings and for such purpose may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made which includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based. All appeals must be filed in accordance with the applicable provisions of Wellington Land Development Regulations.

Pursuant to the provisions of the Americans With Disabilities Act, any person requiring special accommodations to participate in this hearing, because of a disability or physical impairment, should contact Wellington at (561) 791-4000 at least five calendar days prior to the Hearing.

Date: October 1, 2013.

Publish: The Palm Beach Post, October 7, 2013