

New Smyrna Beach City Commission Meeting – June 14, 2022

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Multiple residents presented traffic and safety concerns about Saxon Drive to City Commissioners and asked them to lower its 35mph speed limit by 5mph. Officials responded by directing their staff to do a new speed study on the road so they'll have current information when they reconsider the issue.

City Manager Khalid Resheidat advised the Commission that prior traffic studies didn't show reducing the speed on Saxon Drive was warranted. However, he recommended performing a new speed study to develop current data on the matter since the last review was done quite a while ago.

In May, the city received a petition signed by 165 people who sought to have the Saxon Drive speed limit lowered by 5mph. Commissioners recently approved a 110-space parking lot at the northwest corner of Matthews and South Atlantic avenues. Residents believe the new lot would funnel traffic onto Saxon. Also, an upcoming townhouse development on Saxon south of Publix, will put more vehicles on the road.

Most of the Commission said they were sympathetic to reducing the speed limit along Saxon if needed, but they pointed out the city has a manual with an established procedure to do so.

Mayor Russ Owen countered that just lowering the speed limit isn't going to instantly modify the behavior of people who regularly speed down Saxon Drive or generally drive in an unsafe manner. He felt that will require additional traffic-calming measures, and said he wanted to see what new information an updated traffic study could reveal.

Commissioners Randy Hartman and Michael Kolody said they also supported following the city's established traffic manual and policies to deal with the issues on Saxon Drive, along with a new speed study.

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City Commissioners voted 4-1, with Commissioner Sachs dissenting, to approve an ordinance calling for the city to amend its Comprehensive Plan by adding a Commercial Space Industry Opportunity Overlay as a new goal in the plan's Future Land Use Element.

The cities of Edgewater and Oak Hill are planning to implement the same Space Overlay district, and Volusia County has done so, too, according to the city's staff. It's anticipated the city would *"identify suitable lands within the city's Industrial Park and Light Industrial District zoning categories, and coordinate with private landowners as to the availability of these lands, to develop targeted commercial aerospace- related businesses."*

In addition, the overlay zone ordinance says the city will *"establish an expedited review process that emphasizes coordination with regional, state and federal authorities to minimize delay and costs for targeted space industries. The city shall strive to approve certain commercial aerospace industry projects within 8 months or less."*

Commissioner Sachs took issue with the fact that the space overlay district would not be confined to properties in the city's Airport Industrial Park, but would affect other light industrial zones throughout New Smyrna Beach.

"It's very short on specifics," he cautioned his colleagues. "The original consideration was for the Industrial Park in the airport. I would strongly support it at the airport. Now that we're considering a few other areas ... we really don't know what we're getting into ... Without those definitions it's very hard for me to say yes..."

Mayor Owen noted "this says if someone comes in with a viable use that's in this exploration and commercial trade for space, we're going to work with them and have an expedited review. But if it doesn't work for the city ... we're not committing to it. We're not binding the hands of this or some future Commission."

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City Commissioners voted unanimously to approve amending the city's Land Development Regulations to allow schools as a use by special exception in the B-3, (Highway Service Business District). The June 14 vote was the first of two required readings and public hearings for the amendment. The second reading and public hearing are set for June 28.

Staff members proposed several requirements for the special exception use:

- Any proposed outdoor play area or recreation area must be surrounded by a six-foot-high fence.
- Parking lots must meet the required landscape buffer for the B-3 zoning district and have the required number of spaces for their use.
- The school's maximum number of students shall be 250. The requested use will not impair the character of surrounding or adjoining districts, nor be detrimental to the public health, morals or welfare.
- Adequate utilities, access roads, drainage, sanitation, and/or other necessary services and facilities are, or will be, available or provided for the proposed use.

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