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BY LAURIE KARNATZ

Citizen Staff

A new map developed to safeguard areas within Naval Air Station Key West's flight zones will have a definite impact on new development on Key Haven and Stock Island, Monroe County planning officials said Thursday.

Following a Thursday meeting with Navy officials, Monroe County Planning Director Marlene Conaway said it was clear the county would be required to make some changes in the type of development allowed in portions of the two communities.

But county staff will not be able to make a full assessment of the new map until next week, and perhaps longer, she said. A preliminary report on the AICUZ — an acronym for Air Installations Compatible Use Zone — is expected to be given to the County Commission, which meets Wednesday in Key West, said Growth Management Director Tim McGarry.

The AICUZ, the first new one since 1977, was developed by the Navy over the past two years. Based on noise levels and accident potential generated by base operations on Boca Chica Key, it is designed to discourage inappropriate land uses below the air space used by Navy flyers.

"It's a health, safety and welfare issue," said Conaway.

During the development process, the Navy solicited little input from county officials or residents, who didn't even know the map had been completed.

The county's growth management staff, along with some developers, were broadsided when they learned of the new map on Tuesday during a county Planning Commission meeting. At the meeting, a Navy spokesman expressed opposition to a proposed 43-unit residential development on Key Haven and the



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County officials were not given a copy of the new AICUZ until Thursday, said Conaway. A cursory review, along with discussions with Navy staff, indicated the compatible use zone had been significantly expanded to accommodate increased training at the base, she said.



Ultimately, the change is likely to affect existing, as well as new development within the map boundaries, said Conaway. It also could throw into "disarray" the Livable CommuniKeys Plan created for Stock Island, McGarry said earlier this week.

Monroe County Property Transfers Questions also have arisen over the possibility of lawsuits filed by land owners over lost or diminished property rights caused as a result of the expanded Naval operations.

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Navy spokesman Jim Brooks said the Navy has no authority to force the county to abide by its map. But present and future versions of the map already are included in county land-use rules, which prohibit the county from permitting certain types of construction within the compatible use zone.



That, said former county attorney Jim Hendrick, is a "huge hook. The 'takings' hook."



The county has in recent years paid millions of dollars in so-called takings claims, where property owners lose the use of their property because of county rules.

"You can already see what the Navy is saying: 'We have no regulatory authority,'" Hendrick said. "The regulatory authority is the county's, but at the same time, [the Navy is] saying they're adopting a map and expect the county to implement it."



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"There is no legal validity to the argument that whenever the Navy adopts as a map it becomes ipso facto a county regulation," he said. "The county cannot delegate its legislative authority to any other board or body."

County Mayor Dixie Spehar said she hopes to find a way to allow new development within the AICUZ boundary. She suggested that property owners and buyers sign waivers of any rights to sue the Navy — or the county — over noise or other hazard created by the Navy's operations.

_ Ikarnatz@keysnews.com

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