

NEWS:

SEMINOLE GROUNDS WALMART DRONE DELIVERY TALKS

CITY COUNCIL MAJORITY DECLINES TO PURSUE DEVELOPMENT AGREEMENT AMENDMENT

/BY: **Carlos Moncada**

SEMINOLE—Drone deliveries won't be taking off from the Walmart Supercenter in Bay Pines — at least not anytime soon.

During a May 12 workshop, a consensus of Seminole City Council members opted against directing staff to negotiate changes to an existing development agreement for a proposed "drone nesting area" at the

this workshop is by consensus whether you would like us to negotiate to amend an existing development agreement at that location or not," Toney-Deal said.

A brief discussion among council members focused on lingering concerns about the proposal and the information provided by the applicant.

Council member Thom Barnhorn asked

effectively halting the proposal.

Waters told the applicants the city would not pursue the matter further "at this point," leaving open the possibility the issue could return later with additional information or revisions.

Walmart plans to offer drone deliveries for groceries and other store items from 150 stores in several states, mostly in the Southeast, by the end of 2026.

The Arkansas-based retailer provides aerial delivery service in central Florida — including Tampa and Orlando — as well as in Texas and the Atlanta metropolitan area through its partnership with Wing, owned by Google parent company Alphabet Inc. Among the most frequently requested products, often delivered within 30 minutes, are fruits, eggs, pet food, over-the-counter medications, even ice cream, the retailer says.

Walmart has said it plans to expand the service to 270 U.S. locations by the end of 2027. It operates more than 4,600 stores nationwide.



Walmart has said it plans to expand drone delivery services to 270 U.S. locations by the end of 2027. Photo courtesy of Walmart.

Walmart at 10237 Bay Pines Blvd., across from the Bay Pines VA Medical Center.

The request came from CPH Consulting on behalf of the KE Bay Pines properties, a large mixed-use development that includes Walmart, the Cove at Bay Pines, Holiday Inn Express, Texas Roadhouse, Village Inn, the Shops at Bay Pines and Fire Station 74.

City Manager Ann Toney-Deal noted that council members previously received a detailed presentation on Walmart's drone delivery proposal. The retail giant, along with drone operator Wing, has promoted the service as a way to speed up small-package deliveries while reducing vehicle trips.

Council members were not being asked whether to approve drone deliveries outright. Instead, they were directed to decide whether staff should begin negotiating possible changes to the development agreement that could pave the way for customers to receive some orders by air.

"The direction we would be asking in

about the noise the drones produce, which has been described as a distant, high-pitched hum or buzz.

"I think that the noise — they told us it would just blend in with the rest of the traffic that's out there," Mayor Leslie Waters said.

Council member Trish Springer supported allowing negotiations to continue, saying she was confident city staff would protect neighborhood character and aesthetics during any future talks.

But council member and Vice Mayor Chris Burke said he was not comfortable moving forward based on the information presented.

"We've received the information — or lack thereof — of the applicant and also the information provided by the city attorney in this situation," Burke said. "In my opinion, I do not wish to amend the development agreement."

Burke then requested a consensus poll from the council. Four members indicated opposition to moving forward with negotiations,



Seminole Mayor Leslie Waters left open the possibility of the issue returning before council at a later date. Photo from City of Seminole.

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