



Public peeks at Fishery's future

By **STEVE REILLY**

STAFF WRITER

PLACIDA — Jay Feinberg saw a positive public response Wednesday to his redevelopment plans for the 18-acre Fishery property in Placida.

If those plans come to fruition, the Fishery will become the Village and Marina of Boca Grande.

Feinberg's wife Cookie Potter-Feinberg convinced him to consider redeveloping the Fishery. On May 1, the Feinbergs, who are Boca Grande residents, closed on the property as they bought out the previous developer, the Sarasota-based Potomac Group. Potomac had publicized plans to build three, six-story condominium buildings on the property.

"The first thing we did was to throw out their plans," Feinberg told the more than 125 people who attended a public meeting Wednesday at the Rotonda West Association community center.



Jay Feinberg unveiled his plans to the public for a boutique hotel and other amenities on the 18-acre Fishery property in Placida. No building, he said, will be taller than three stories over parking.

SUN PHOTO BY STEVE REILLY

He drew scattered applause from the audience. The Potomac Group had seen an uprising of objections from a contingent of Cape Haze residents over six-story buildings at the site.

"We are trying to create something that is in keeping with the character of the community," Feinberg said. He met with Boca Grande and other Placida residents to hear what they felt was needed and what would work.

Instead of pushing for height and greater density, Feinberg — who is experienced with developing upscale resorts — envisions a boutique hotel with a ballroom to accommodate 200 guests, a large open area for weddings

and other events, and a two-story building. He noted how the Gasparilla Inn in Boca Grande now has an 18-month waiting list for destination weddings.

The hotel will include a pool, spa and fitness room among its amenities.

Plans call for 60, 55-andolder condominium units with two and three bedrooms. The condo owners will have availability to all the hotel services. The existing zoning allows for 23 residential units.

To do what he wants, Feinberg will have to purchase 37 development units from other properties in West County and transfer them onto the Fishery property. The transfer of density unit (TDU) concept allows a property owner to buy units of residential density from one property and transfer that density to another property, to maximize development.

Feinberg plans for a twostory building with a new restaurant on the ground floor and a second-floor meeting room that will be a dedicated home for the Boca Grande Bridge Club — a must-have amenity for his wife, Feinberg said.

“The truth be known, I’ve been tasked with how to build a hotel to support the bridge club,” he quipped. Cookie’s hope eventually is to stage bridge tournaments at the Village.

Feinberg wants to replace the Fishery’s rotting wooden docks with concrete docks, but the 44-slip marina will remain the same, open to the public.

The Fishery docks on Coral Creek will be devoted to kayaks and paddleboards. The halfsunken shrimping boat will be removed.

Unlike the Potomac Group, Feinberg wants all the structures to be under 40 feet and with parking beneath the buildings. Charlotte County’s height limit is 35 feet, but he said the three-story buildings may exceed that limit — no more than four feet — due to water table levels and elevation requirements.

Feinberg made it clear that the various cottages, which were once homes for commercial anglers, and other buildings on the property are in poor condition and too dilapidated to save. He also said septic systems are failing.

“The infrastructure is gone,” he said.

Feinberg was asked what will happen to the art galleries and other businesses now at the Fishery. Besides the restaurant, the plan does call for 4,000 square feet for a hotel gift shop and other retail space, but they will not be rented as cheaply as Fishery businesses now enjoy.

While nothing is definite, those businesses may be able to stay — if they can afford the rent and want to be there, Feinberg suggested.

He was also asked about the traffic impacts. A traffic study is underway, but the redevelopment shouldn’t have significant impacts on the roadways.

A previous traffic study determined the Potomac redevelopment plan was far more intense and didn’t degrade the level of service on the roadways, said Todd Rebol of Banks Engineering. Rebol worked for the Potomac Group and was hired by the Feinbergs to be their engineer.

Feinberg expects to spend a year or more garnering all the permits he needs before construction can begin.

But in August, his attorney, Robert Berntsson, expects to bring the redevelopment plans before Charlotte County's advisory Planning and Zoning Board and then before county commissioners for final approvals in September.

Email: reilly@sun-herald.com



Boca Grande residents Jay Feinberg and his wife, Cookie Potter-Feinberg, want to transform the Fishery in Placida into the Village and Marina of Boca Grande. The couple is adopting an old Florida style of architecture in keeping with the ambiance of Placida.

PROVIDED BY JAY FEINBERG



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