

County decides not to lease west Boynton park land to nursery

By **SAMANTHA FRANK**

Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

Palm Beach County officials won't move forward with plans to lease 52 acres west of Boynton Beach to a plant nursery, according to County Commissioner Burt Aaronson.

The land sits southeast of the intersection of Boynton Beach Boulevard and Lyons Road, near Sunset Palms Elementary School, a few residential communities and the 200,000-square-foot Canyon Town Center shopping plaza.

In 2002, developer GL Homes gave the land to the county specifically for a regional park. But the economic times led county officials to put the \$12 million park project on hold and look at temporary options.

The county went out to bid to lease the park land more than a year ago, and in the end, received one response. Floral Acres Nursery proposed leasing the land for seven years without any extensions for about \$13,000 a year.

"The people have indicated very strongly that they don't want a nursery there," Aaronson said. "And the small amount of dollars the county would make is not worth impacting the neighborhood," he said.

Aaronson said he spoke with the county real estate department and, after the talk, the proposal was taken off the table. He said the county will most likely cut back on maintaining the vacant land to save money.

"So when you see the grass growing higher, don't call the county complaining," Aaronson said.

It's a victory for the Coalition of Boynton West Residential Associations, which represents 89 communities west of Boynton Beach. Many members of the coalition have spoken against leasing the land to a nursery, for fear that it would set a precedent and they would never see a park there.

"I'm pleased that we don't have to worry about tying up the property for seven years," said Ken Lassiter, president of COBWRA.

But he wants to make sure the county helps suburban Boynton Beach residents while they wait for a park. He said he will push for the completion of a second soccer field and two baseball fields near the park land.