

## Committees meet to discuss land use in rural south Lee County

By CHARLIE WHITEHEAD

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The consultant heading the \$1.4 million effort to re-plan southeast Lee County faced two county committees Wednesday that will be watching his every move.

Planner Victor Dover, partner in the Coral Gables firm Dover Kohl & Partners, laid out the process for the Smart Growth Committee and the Density Reduction/Groundwater Resource (DR/GR) Committee. One's been working for years to improve the way the county plans for growth. The other was created after county commissioners imposed a moratorium on mining permits in the DR/GR area in November.

Dover said he's getting a crash course in the 83,000-acre DR/GR, where clashes between mines and residents and development plans and environmentalist have occurred for years. He met with major landowners on Tuesday and flew over the area in a helicopter Wednesday.

Various committee members told him their concerns, from groundwater quality to mine truck traffic and property rights to community planning.

Dover was warned against so-called advocacy science — science tweaked to support a particular point of view, said DR/GR Committee member Peggy Apgar-Schmitt. He was also warned that whatever recommendations he and the committee craft, and whatever action commissioners take, is likely to spark another fight.

"Regardless of which way the county goes, there are going to be people who feel their land use rights have been trampled," said Richard Friday, a mining manager who works in the DRGR.

The mining-permit moratorium lasts through November. Dover said he expects to be discussing possible plans with the committee in July.

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