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## Delegates to meet on Poinciana incorporation

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After months of impassioned debate over whether Poinciana should be incorporated into a city, those who will decide whether to push the issue onto the ballot in 2010 will have a chance to hear residents' opinions in a public forum.

The Osceola and Polk county legislative delegates will meet Tuesday in the Liberty High School auditorium at 6 p.m. The special joint legislative meeting will allow the local Florida senators and representatives to hear from the public before making a final decision in their respective county delegation meetings held later this year.

Representative Mike Horner, chairman of the Osceola County delegation, said that while he knows the legislators can't make an official decision Tuesday, he'd like the group to at least make their position clear.

"I'm going to let the residents know where I stand, after I've had a chance to evaluate it. I'd rather deal with this the Poinciana public, as opposed to a later, separate delegation," he told the News-Gazette this week.

Members of the University of Central Florida team that put together the incorporation feasibility study will be on hand to answer questions, as well as a legislative committee staff member from Tallahassee, who is an expert on incorporation matters. Horner said his goal is to bring everyone to the table at once.

"One thing I wanted to avoid is unanswered questions hanging in the air that would push it back to the legislative delegation," he said. "I'd rather not have to put it off and respect the citizens' time, so they don't have to drive to Kissimmee during work hours to address this issue later."

Horner said he's talked to dozens of residents already about incorporation.

"They're passionate on both sides of the issue. Frankly, if I lived in Poinciana, I don't think I would support incorporation," Horner said. "Having reviewed the plan, my opinion is that now is not the time to incorporate."

However, he said that he thought everyone deserved a fair hearing and that his role was not to decide the issue for the people of Poinciana.

"I'm being asked whether or not it should go on the ballot. That's the decision I've been asked to make," he said.

In order for the issue to be put on the ballot in August 2010, a bill must be first proposed by the local delegates and then pushed through the 2010 regular legislative session.

All the legislators representing Osceola and Polk counties will have to come to a consensus on the issue of incorporation, if it is to go forward. However, the four that specifically represent the Poinciana area are expected to have more sway.

In the Florida Senate, Senator Paula Dockery represents the vast majority of what would become the city of Poinciana.

In the Florida House of Representatives, two other delegates speak for would-be Poinciana residents other than Horner, whose district covers the area east of Pleasant Hill Road, including Cypress Cove and The Wilderness, as well as a portion in the easternmost side of the Poinciana Villages. Representative Steve Precourt's district covers the rest of the Osceola County side of the would-be city, west of Pleasant Hill Road. Representative John Wood speaks for the Polk County side of Poinciana, including Solivita.

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While it's possible that the separate Polk and Osceola delegations could come to opposite decisions on incorporation, Horner said he didn't anticipate that scenario, given the overlap of legislatures that represent parts of both counties, including himself and Dockery.

“Frankly, I'm hopeful that we're going to reach some type of consensus on this issue,” he said.

What all sides have agreed upon is the great impact Tuesday's meeting could have on the future of Poinciana.

“We really want to encourage people that have an interest in this matter to come out,” Horner said. “This is their chance to be heard.”