

Strip Club Fight Fought In Court

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PLANT CITY - The city fought the first round this week in a legal battle to stop an adult business from opening at U.S. 92 and County Line Road.

But it will have to wait a while for the decision.

Taurus Property Ventures wants to open a club that could offer nude entertainment in a former truck repair shop at 4350 E. U.S. 92.

The city denied the application because an existing ordinance banned adult businesses within 1,000 feet of each other. The proposed club's site is about 650 feet from Showgirls Men's Club at 4210 E. U.S. 92.

The city has since revised its adult-entertainment ordinance, tightening regulations and spelling out more clearly where and under what conditions adult entertainment might be permitted.

Public hearings on the new ordinance attracted hundreds of residents who clamored for the toughest possible restrictions against that type of entertainment in Plant City.

Speakers included neighbors of Showgirls who claimed the "bikini bar" is a haven for sex, drugs and crime.

In federal court Tuesday, Magistrate Mark Pizzo heard a request from Taurus Property Ventures to:

- * Declare the city's former adult entertainment ordinance unconstitutional
- * Issue a temporary injunction forcing the city to approve the club's application
- * Assess financial damages caused by the application's denial.

Tom Scarritt, a Tampa attorney who represents the city, argued that the first two claims were invalid because they referred to an ordinance that no longer exists.

And he disputed the claim for damages, arguing that Taurus knowingly leased the proposed club site after denial of its application to open the business.

Pizzo withheld judgment on the company's claims.

An attorney for Taurus couldn't be reached for comment.

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