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## Residents to be forced out of trailer park

**By Deborah Ball**

*Sun staff writer*

It's been described as a big, fat mess.

And at the center of it are the residents of Buck Bay mobile home park, who are counting down the months until eviction day.

Nearly 200 residents crowded around Buck Bay's new owner, Edwin Dix of Edix Properties, on Saturday, demanding answers as to why they are being forced to leave. The park is off State Road 121, north of U.S. 441.

Residents said the park's previous management, Buck Bay Ltd., which is operated by Tom and Susie Spain and two other families, had said the park, which is home to many low-income working families, was not for sale and wasn't going to close down.

"A person who buys property can do what they want with it," Dix said. "I'm trying to work with the people as much as I can. We don't want to just dump people out."

Residents, such as Kathleen and Michael Morabito, also voiced their frustration and anger over discrepancies in the stories from the Spains and Dix.

"This whole thing has been a well-choreographed dance of lies," said Kathleen Morabito. Morabito said she and her husband, who is wheel-chair bound, are struggling making ends meet.

According to Spain, Dix made an unsolicited \$3.3 million offer to buy the 144-lot property in June and put down an initial deposit.

When residents received a letter from Dix in November telling them he was closing the park to build new, single-family homes in the mid- to upper \$100,000s, they were shocked — and angry. Residents say they had been told by Buck Bay that no changes in their residential status would be made before September 2008.

At Saturday's meeting, Dix announced that the first evictions would begin in January 2008, drawing ire from the crowd. But later in the afternoon, Dix said he will give all residents until September 2008 to move out.

Residents weren't the only ones who said they've felt misled.

Gainesville City Commissioner Rick Bryant, who attended Saturday's meeting, said a zoning

**EXHIBIT**

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application presented to the city's Planning Board by Tom Spain in August was "misrepresented" as being an enhancement to the property. The Planning Board approved the application, which outlined a plan for adding affordable, modular housing to vacant lots and gradually to other lots as they became available.

But now that residents are getting the boot, Bryant said he plans on bringing the matter up for review at the City Commission's meeting on Monday.

Spain, who did not attend Saturday's meeting, told The Sun that he sat down face-to-face with Dix in July and agreed to the sale on the condition that Dix would not make any changes to any resident's status before September 2008. When residents on Saturday asked Dix if he had ever agreed to such a condition, he said no. The investors shook hands on the deal, but it was never put in writing, Spain said.

"Clearly, looking back, it should've been in writing," Spain said. "But I wouldn't have done anything differently. That's the nature of this business."

The operations remarks of a Multiple Listing Service, or MLS, entry for Buck Bay listed on Nov. 1 (when Dix formally closed on the property) lists as the buyer's intent: to construct homes on the lots and to cease Buck Bay's operations as a mobile home park. Mike Ryals, a senior vice president with Bosshardt Realty and consultant for the Spains, said he did not know the original time frame Dix had in mind.

Spain said he was never informed by Ryals or Dix about the plans to close the park. While residents say they're not sure who they can trust, one thing appears likely: They'll be packing up and moving out.

"No one knows what to do, but we're going to stick together," said Nola Touche, who has lived in Buck Bay since 1983. "No one has any answers."

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