

# Miami Herald

## NONPROFIT GROUP TO TAKE CONTROL OF LABOR CAMP

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May 29, 1982

Metro commissioners have agreed to turn the reins of the financially troubled Everglades Migrant Labor Camp over to a 15-member nonprofit corporation controlled by farmworkers. The management plan accepted last week was a blend of proposals forwarded by rival camp factions who recently have smoothed out their differences. The compromise came just in time to rescue the camp from the commission's threat to padlock the gate Tuesday unless a management plan was approved.

Under the plan, the new corporation will lease the 70-acre camp site and its 420 mobile homes from Metro for \$1 a year, said Bill Hampton, an assistant county manager. He headed a 13-member task force the commission appointed to oversee transfer of the camp to new management. The corporation also will take over responsibility for repaying the \$2-million federal loan Metro obtained last year to buy 200 new mobile homes. Annual payments come to nearly \$250,000.

The 200 new mobile homes will be sold to farmworker families through a cooperative, said Hampton. Farmworkers who buy into the cooperative may remain in the camp year-round. The remaining mobile homes will remain empty during the summer months, said Hampton. The corporation also will manage 66 recently constructed apartments adjacent to the camp. Farmworkers who occupy the apartments are eligible for federal rent subsidies.

"I'm very pleased the commissioners have accepted this proposal," said Cipriano Garza, a task force member whose subcommittee bridged differences between the rival camp factions. "The consequences of the commissioners not accepting this would have been for the them to lock the gate and displace over 100 families who live at the camp," he said. Garza said farmworkers at the camp would elect five members to the corporation's board of directors. He anticipates elections before the end of July. Those elected would assist Garza's subcommittee in appointing three more board members from farmworker service organizations and seven more from the South Dade farm community.

Commissioners decided last summer to stop subsidizing the camp's operation Jan. 1 after making up a \$350,000 revenue shortfall. Rents on the camp's mobile homes went from \$30 to \$50 a week in January to offset the cutoff of Metro's financial assistance. The task force briefly considered turning the camp over to South Dade farmers to manage. But the idea was abandoned due to strong opposition from the farmworkers. The Homestead Housing Authority also considered taking over the camp, but ultimately rejected the idea as financially impractical.