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75 cents

Urgency gone from half-cent tax?

■ County drops plans for special election to vote on tax benefitting St. Lucie Inlet

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STUART — The window has been widened for county leaders to craft a long-term solution for dredging the St. Lucie Inlet now that officials claim to have put together a package to pay for a short-term clearing of the channel.

There will be no call for a special election — expected to cost

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Leon Abood, chairman of the Rivers Coalition

\$117,000 — this year. County officials were considering a referendum that asks voters to extend an existing half-percent sales tax. The plan would shift the money from going for parks and conser-

vation land to dredging the inlet. But that doesn't mean efforts are being set aside to have local residents pick up all or some of the cost to maintain the inlet that has been under the Army Corps of

Engineers watch since the 1940s.

“I think it's foolish to depend on the federal government and the state government for something that is so localized,” said Leon Abood, chairman of the Rivers Coalition. “I think we need a plan that we can keep the inlet, that we can fund it for ourselves or can contribute to funding for the long-term. I don't think there is

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