

## SCOTT SAWYER

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**Former councillor Steve Robinson says he may have changed his mind about supporting Sekisui House's Yaroomba Beach proposal had he known council officers were considering recommending a refusal.**

The ex-Division 9 councillor, who retired at last year's election, was the local representative whose electorate bordered the controversial site of the application.

A recent 3435-page Right to Information release published by Sunshine Coast Council showed officers had been preparing to recommend a refusal of the proposal on several planning grounds, in the weeks leading up to a crucial council meeting.

But other staff said there were strong enough economic and public benefits to support an approval and the officer's report presented to councillors and the public weeks later recommended approval, with conditions and an extensive Infrastructure Agreement.

Councillors voted 6-5 at a special meeting on June 21, 2018 to approve the proposal, triggering a long-running legal battle as community groups fought against the decision.

Mr Robinson told the *Daily* on Thursday he had no knowledge of planners considering a refusal.

"No, not at all," he said, when asked whether or not he'd been aware.

"I just let the assessment guys do their own stuff."

Mr Robinson said he relied on the report and detailed officer's summary presented on the day to make his decision.

He said had he have known officers were weighing up a refusal it might've been cause for further consideration.

"It certainly would've given me something else to think about," Mr Robinson said.

He said councillors, himself included, put a "lot of weight" on the officers' opinions.

When asked whether or not he might've changed his decision had he known of the refusal consideration, he said he "couldn't say for sure, but it may have".

Mr Robinson had committed during a community forum in the lead up to the 2016 council elections to uphold the town plan, but after the vote in June, 2018, explained there had been "exceptional circumstances" presented in the Yaroomba Beach proposal, which had prompted his support.

Four other former councillors who voted on the proposal this week also reflected on the lead-up to the decision for what remained the region's most controversial planning application.

It sparked more than 12,000 submissions during the public feedback stage leading up to the vote.

Former councillors Tim Dwyer and John Connolly said they would not have changed their vote had they known a refusal had been considered as part of the assessment process, as they believed the public benefits were great enough to outweigh the issues raised.

Mr Robinson said he was now a lifetime away from council matters, enjoying a change of pace operating a farm stay, cattle and horse business on an acreage property in the Mary Valley.

He said he now spent his days on a slasher, maintaining the property, and was "completely out of the council world".

"I'm enjoying the change," Mr Robinson said.