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Audit criticizes Pinellas County's marina purchase

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An audit released Thursday slammed Pinellas County's decision to purchase one marina, and said that while the purchase of a second marina was OK, the second marina could make more money.

The audit was conducted by Hector Collazo, director of audit services at the Clerk of the Circuit Court's office.

The county spent \$3.575 million to buy the Belle Harbour Marina, according to a report released by the clerk's office. Since the marina rents only 133 racks and slips as boat storage spaces, a miniscule percentage of Pinellas County taxpayers benefit from the purchase, so it constitutes an "ineffective use of county resources."

In the end, the marina may never become self-supporting, and it is already losing potential revenue because of boat storage spaces occupied by derelict boats, the audit states.

Repairs haven't been made to the marina either, creating safety hazards for patrons and employees alike and exposing the county to liability, the audit said.

The county spent \$3.81 million to buy the Sutherland Bayou Boat ramp. While this purchase represented an "effective use of county resources," the staff there is not taking advantage of opportunities to make money, the audit said.

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