

Hernando County
Environmentally Sensitive Lands Committee

December 4, 2007
Minutes

The Environmentally Sensitive Lands Committee (ESLC) met on December 4, 2007, for its fifth meeting of the calendar year. The advertised meeting was conducted in the Planning Department's Conference Room, 20 N. Main Street, Room 262, Brooksville, Florida.

The following members were present at the meeting:

Bill Korn, Chair, Forester
George Foster, Vice Chair, Geologist
Paul Furman, Botanist
Leland McKeown, Layperson
Linda Prescott, Layperson
Marilyn Bates, Realtor
Michael Liberton, Layperson
Richard Poling, Engineer
Jim Clayton, Geologist

The following members were absent:

J. Forrest Bennett, Layperson
Gene Kelly

The following staff members were present:

Ronald F. Pianta, AICP, Planning Director
Dawn Velsor, Lead Environmental Planner
Jackie Hartley, Environmental Planner II
Jim King, Conservation Lands Specialist
Mary Elwin, Planning Operations Assistant

Others present:

Richard Stauffer
Frank Trama
Julie Wert
Mary Dowdell
Lucille Lane, Hernando Audobon Society
Debbie McEvitt, Hernando Audobon Society, Native Plant Society
Joe Murphy, Hernando Audobon Society

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS

Mr. Korn, Chair, called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm and introductions were made.

REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR APPOINTMENTS TO THE ESLC

Mr. Korn reviewed the membership requirements of the ESLC per the adopted By-laws.

He noted that the terms of four positions expire on December 31, 2007; two of the memberships are laypersons, one (1) membership is a botanist, and one (1) membership is a realtor. He announced that one of the founding members, Marilyn Bates, has decided to not apply for re-appointment to the Committee. Mr. Korn noted that Ms. Bates has served on the ESLC for 18 years. Mr. Korn presented a plaque in appreciation and recognition of her years of service to the citizens of Hernando County as an original member of the Committee.

[It was noted for the record that Ms. Prescott arrived at the meeting at this time.]

Mr. Furman has applied for re-appointment as a Botanist to the Committee. The other vacancy is the position of realtor, previously held by Mrs. Bates. Mr. Korn noted that Forrest Bennett is a realtor in the County and is currently serving as a layperson. The Committee may want to consider appointing Mr. Bennett into the realtor position.

Motion - Ms. Prescott moved to recommend the Board of County Commissioners appoint Mr. Bennett in the position of the Realtor on the ESLC. Mrs. Bates seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously.

Ms. Velsor clarified that there are now three layperson positions open and one Botanist/Natural Science position.

At this time, the applicants provided a review to the Committee of their background and credentials. After review, the ESLC members ranked the members and recommended to the Board of Commissioners the following appointments:

1. Paul Furman, current member - Botanist
2. Michael Liberton, current member - Layperson
3. Linda Prescott, current member - Layperson
4. Francesco B. Trama - Layperson

UPDATE ON THE PURCHASE OF BLOOMINGDALE PROPERTY

The Board of County Commissioners approved the purchase of the Bloomingdale property on November 27, 2007. A copy of the agenda item was sent to the members. Mrs. Velsor reviewed the status of the purchase. She indicated that a survey and environmental assessment would be completed. The purchase will result in approximately \$2.8 million remaining in the Sensitive Lands Fund for acquisition purposes. Some of the grant money from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) grant for Peck Sink will get reimbursed and then go into construction. Mr. Clayton inquired as to the owner of the property to the west of the Bloomingdale property. Mrs. Velsor replied that the Liax family owns the property.

STATUS OF MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Conservation Lands Specialist, Jim King, provided the following synopsis of management activities on-going at the acquired environmentally sensitive lands properties.

Cypress Lake Preserve:

- Deck removed; trees removed, yard area cleaned.
- Plans for completion of the house and kiosk are underway.
- The photo reference points for the FCT were re-done due to vandalism.
- The Stewardship report to the FCT was completed in September.
- The Florida Scenic Trail is being marked with assistance from representatives of the Florida National Trails organization.
- Clean-up day was September 22, 2007; three pick-up truck loads were removed. Next clean-up day is January 26, 2008.
- Renewing contract for control burns and wildlife surveys.

Fickett Hammock Preserve:

- November 3 was the scheduled clean-up day at Fickett Hammock and Mr. King noted that it was a successful day. He stated that Mr. Liberton assisted in the effort as well as Planning Department employees David Miles and Omar DePablo.
- Need to get boundaries marked; fences built.

Peck Sink Preserve:

- Staff is working on Bloomingdale purchase; getting surveys done.
- Phase I environmental site assessment is completed.
- Eastern boundary has been marked and access provided.
- Site security work is on-going.
- Division of Forestry will do a timber harvest.
- Planted pines need to be thinned so the rest of them can mature. Ken McLaughlin and Butch Mallett have been working with staff with this endeavor.
- Staff is drafting a scope for water quality issues.

Mr. Furman inquired as to whether a sign will be provided at the entrance way at Fickett Hammock Preserve. Mr. King stated that currently Cypress Lakes Preserve is a top priority followed by Peck Sink and its grant constraints. Mr. Korn commented that [work program] priorities need to be discussed perhaps once a year. Mr. Korn suggested that signage on the acquired properties be similar to those that are used for County parks and that a logo should be a point of discussion at the next meeting.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – AUGUST 9, 2007

The minutes of the August 9, 2007, meeting of the ESLC were presented for action.

Motion - Mr. McKeown moved for approval of the August 9, 2007, meeting minutes. Mr. Poling seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Lane inquired as to the next acquisition project of the Committee. Mrs. Velsor indicated that after Peck, staff will move onto the Little Withlacoochee Riverine project. Mr. Korn stated that it may be time for Committee input on direction for property acquisition. Mrs. Velsor stated that staff will be reviewing properties for stormwater

management issues and that she and Jackie Hartley, Environmental Planner II, have been looking at some other strategy for the Withlacoochee State Forest Connector issue. She stated that there are other strategies under consideration.

Mr. Stauffer, citizen, suggested additional funding for the program be reviewed such as the one for Pasco County called "Penny for Pasco." Mr. Korn stated that a presentation was made earlier in the year to the Board of County Commissioners outlining the program and funding alternatives.

Mr. Trama commented that a strong education program would be needed for the public on a funding initiative. Mr. McKeown felt that Bayport being developed would be one of the biggest assets to the environmentally sensitive lands program.

COMMITTEE MEMBER AND STAFF ISSUES

Mr. Korn stated that Government Broadcasting has asked the ESLC to do a focus program. Mr. Liberton noted that he spoke to Rick Foti in Government Broadcasting on the possibility of doing a program segment on each of the acquired properties. Mr. Korn stated that some video would be done; 4 or 5 minutes on each; accompanied by narration. It is scheduled to be recorded on December 13, 2007, between 2-4:00 pm.

Mr. Korn announced that the Brooksville Parade has changed its route as it will now traverse down Howell Avenue to US 41; and then down to Bell Avenue.

SCHEDULE AND FOCUS OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for Thursday, February 7, 2008.

ADJOURNMENT

Being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 7:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

***Mary Elwin
Planning Operations Assistant***

The ESLC unanimously approved these Minutes on May 28, 2008.