

**PINELLAS COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL WORKGROUP
THURSDAY, MARCH 11, 2004
MEETING SUMMARY**

ATTENDEES:

Environmental Work Group: Bill Showalter, Dave Baras, Jake Zimmerman, Barbara Hoffman, Dianne Wheatley Giliotti, Mary Berglund, Ellen Pfau, Joyce King, Holly Greening

Pinellas County Staff: Brian Smith, Gordon Beardslee, Liz Freeman, Samantha Shorr-Zigante, Andy Squires

Welcome & Introductions

- Brian K. Smith, Pinellas County Planning Department Director and Gordon Beardslee, Pinellas County Planning Department Administrator welcomed everyone and began introductions.

Overview of the Pinellas County Comprehensive Plan

- Brian said that the County is reaching an interesting time of buildout; our goal is to work on keeping communities stable. Currently there is only 5% of vacant, developable land throughout the County.
- The Pinellas County Comprehensive Plan is a policy plan. It must be kept current, as staff, including the Board of County Commissioners, uses it daily.
- Gordon reviewed the Evaluation and Appraisal Report schedule with the workgroup. He also explained that the County updates its population projections every three years, as they are the foundation of much of the Comprehensive Plan. It is anticipated that population projections will be completed by May.

Purpose of the Workgroup

- Pinellas County Planning Department staff will facilitate meetings, provide meeting notes, etc. However, the Workgroup will identify major environmental issues, assess the County's environmental policies, and participate in the development of new or modified goals, objectives and policies for consideration by the Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners.
- The Comprehensive Plan is comprised of the following elements: Planning to Stay, Future Land Use, Transportation, Natural, Historic and Cultural Resources, Coastal Management, Housing, Intergovernmental Coordination, Recreation and Open Space, Sanitary Sewer, Capital Improvements, Water Supply, Solid Waste and Resource Recovery, and Surface Water Management. Throughout these meetings, the Workgroup will have a chance to review the environmental components of each element.

Discussion and Agreement on Meeting Structure, Format and Schedule

- The workgroup discussed and agreed on meeting at an earlier time.
- The next Pinellas County Environmental Workgroup meeting will be held Thursday, April 8, 4:30-6pm.

Workgroup Discussion/Meeting Points (these have been grouped under common subject headings by staff)

- The Work Group was asked to try and identify what they thought were the major environmental issues facing the County. The following items were identified by the group:

Water Supply

- Reclaimed water is a finite resource – it should be a conservable commodity
- Water supply/water conservation (e.g., don't use fresh water for lawn irrigation)
- Potable water quality (safe supply and distribution systems)
- Use greywater for toilets (i.e., household water)
- Shut off valves for irrigation (did the County opt out of State law?)
- Aquifer storage
- Rain barrels/cisterns for water conservation

Surface Water Management

- Stormwater run-off; impacts on water quality
- Continue implementation of watershed management programs, water quality monitoring programs
- Minimize pesticide use
- Streambank erosion due to development; impacts of decreased vegetation

Recycling

- Recycling/use of recycling materials
- Consistent application of recycling programs countywide
- County should be an example re: use of recycled products

Parks/Conservation Areas

- Management of conservation areas (including neighborhood conservation areas) – quality of conservation lands
- Control of invasive species – not just plants (non-native insects, etc.)
- Maintain the quality of what we have
- Develop and maintain natural area inventories
- Impact of development in parks
- Emphasize partnership between the County and the School Board for provision of active recreation – and do not use (over use) our parks for this (e.g., consider partnerships with Palm Harbor High, Eastlake High)
- Eco-tourism and Pinewood Cultural Park; environmental education

Transportation

- Increase pedestrian and bicycle trails
- Public transportation including affordability
- Is there any motivation to use public transportation? Is it/can it really serve the needs of the County?
- Mobility overall
- Increased usage of alternative fuels/low pollutant vehicle; hybrid vehicles – County should be the example
- Incentives to get people to take buses to work

Sustainable Development

- Permeable pavement (in both commercial and residential applications)
- Limiting size of lawns; require native plants
- Low impact development/livable design
- Parking lots without trees – bad idea! There should be minimum percent of the parking area devoted to landscaping.
- Concurrency – don't build without assurance infrastructure can support it
- Commitment (including financial) to maintaining what we have before we go and do “another big project”
- Revisit our landscape ordinances – need better design and quality environment/landscape incentives to get folks to (e.g.) take buses to work, etc.
- Contaminated lands and their environmental impact; ability to reuse, etc.
- Sidewalks and trees contribute to beautification of environment
- In a partnership with schools – can County improve the school's landscaped environment?

Coastal Management

- Environmental/Public Health – beach closures, shellfish beds (relationship to septic systems, etc., sewer lines, water quality and waste water overflows)
- Alternatives to current beach renourishment programs
- Increase shoreline habitat on renourished beaches
- Coastal habitat protection – fisheries

- Incorporate Manatee Program into Pinellas County Comprehensive Plan?
- Identify hot spots/priority areas in relation to beach closures

Assignments for Next Meeting

- Pinellas County Staff to find out if other cities have environmental advisory citizen committees.
- The workgroup will review the above listed meeting points, and be prepared to pick a few to focus on and discuss them further at the next meeting.
- The group also noted that in regard to all of the issues identified, solutions should be “feasible, practical and implementable.”

At this point, with no further questions, the meeting concluded.