

**PINELLAS COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL WORKGROUP
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2004
MEETING SUMMARY**

ATTENDEES:

Environmental Work Group: Dianne Wheatley Giliotti, Joyce King, Michael Miller, Bill Showalter, Joanne Shrewsbury

Pinellas County Staff: Gordon Beardslee, Will Davis, Liz Freeman, Leah Hoffman, Joe Lupardus, Samantha Shorr-Zigante, Andy Squires, Jake Stowers

Welcome and Introductions

- Gordon Beardslee, Pinellas County Planning Department Administrator, welcomed everyone and began introductions.
- Will Davis, Director of the Pinellas County Environmental Management Department, Leah Hoffman, Operations Manager of the Pinellas County Culture, Education and Leisure Department, Joe Lupardus Operations Manager of the Pinellas County Culture, Education and Leisure Department, Andy Squires, Environmental Lands Division Administrator of the Pinellas County Department of Environmental Management and Jake Stowers, Assistant County Administrator of the Pinellas County Administration were introduced.
- Gordon thanked the group for joining County staff over the past nine months and explained how the workgroup is an essential component in the preparation of the Evaluation and Appraisal Report (EAR) of the Pinellas County Comprehensive Plan.

Review October 14th Meeting Summary

- There were no revisions made to the October meeting summary.

Review Proposed Changes to List of Goals, Objectives and Policies and Make Final Recommendations

- Gordon suggested that the workgroup review the proposed changes to the list of Goals, Objectives and Policies and determine which recommendations to move forward.
- Holly commented that several of the recommendations could be strengthened if a completion date were added.
- Liz replied that staff would add completion dates because the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) will expect to see them upon submittal.

Water Supply and Sanitary Sewer Element

- Regarding how well the County is managing retention/detention ponds, Holly suggested including a regularly scheduled report available to the public.
- Liz said that the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) report somewhat serves that purpose, however, the workgroup agreed additional language could be added to the already suggested policy to make it more clear – something like:
 - *“Pinellas County shall continue to review, upgrade and manage optimization of its retention/detention ponds through a variety of **current and Best Management Practices (BMPs)**.”*

Surface Water Management Element

- Relating to Policy 1.7.2., the workgroup questioned whether it’s possible to have both an aquatic preserve management plan as well as a policy to encourage the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) to develop management plans for spoil islands. Jake said, “As long as FDEP concurs, we can do both.”

- Jake said that Pinellas County is considering developing land development regulations that implement Low Impact Development (LID). He said that the County is looking for incentives to get builders to redevelop land versus using vacant land for developments. The County is looking to incorporate LID into a redevelopment zoning code.
- Joyce asked if there are any Brownfield incentives in the Comprehensive Plan?
- Gordon said there aren't any Brownfield policies in the Plan, but the County's new Brownfield program has already helped to designate two sites. The County will, however, be incorporating Brownfield policies into the Comprehensive Plan during the EAR process.

Floodplains Section of the Natural, Historic and Cultural Resources Element

- Regarding the County's Adopt-A-Pond program, Andy said approximately six ponds have been adopted.
- Jake asked the workgroup how they felt regarding a stormwater utility for Operation and Maintenance (O&M) purposes. He said that it would likely be a single-rate monthly fee with a sliding scale (residential versus business).
- Dianne asked, "When/if you do assess a fee, will the money be dedicated?"
- Jake replied, "It's similar to a Transportation Impact Fee (TIF) in that the money has to be allocated to the specified cause." So, yes, it will be dedicated.
- Leah asked how would the municipalities work with the County if a stormwater utility were to be enacted?
- Jake replied that the municipalities could enter into Interlocal Agreements (ILAs) with the County and that the City of Seminole and the City of Largo have already expressed interest in this approach.
- Jake added that the County will also more than likely go out for the Penny for Pinellas again, which will allow the County to build additional facilities.
- Regarding the following policy, Jake commented that he didn't want to be inconsistent with the tree ordinance. He said that it would be unconstitutional to say "shall not" so he suggested the recommended policy be amended as follows:
 - *"Special emphasis will be placed on protecting viable native floodplain forests from destruction by shall not be destroyed by compensating excavation activities during development."*

Recreation and Open Space Element

- The workgroup agreed that Bruce Rinker's definition of Preserves and Management Areas was appropriate, but needed to be refined. However, Joyce commented that even though Bruce's definition might be long, the Recreation and Open Space Element Glossary is currently too vague, so maybe we should keep this definition.
- In regard to marinas, Will referenced an article in the newspaper that discussed how it was less expensive to build condos than it was to own a marina, and consequently we were seeing existing marinas go away, and being replaced with condos.
- Jake said, "We would prefer to upgrade or retain an old marina versus build a new one. If someone walks in with plans to enhance an old/existing one, we will work with them."
- Dianne asked, "Is it State regulation to provide beach access?"
- Gordon answered, "No, but it is State requirement to provide beach access if you want beach renourishment."
- Will suggested writing a new policy that says the County should preserve existing public beach access. The workgroup agreed.

Natural Systems and Living Resources Section of the Natural, Historic and Cultural Resources Element

- Michael said he would like to see consistency between the phrases *Florida-friendly* and *native vegetation*.

- Jake suggested *Florida-friendly landscaping with native plants* as an alternative phrase. The workgroup agreed.
- Joyce asked, “Is it feasible to inventory ecosystems and develop ecological management plans for existing parks?”
- Jake said it is not a problem, but it must be compatible with the park purpose.

What Happens Next?

- Gordon said that everyone could continue to send revisions, comments, etc.
- Liz said that the workgroup could be on the mailing list as County staff continues the EAR process.
- At a minimum, Gordon said that staff would mail out a final draft to the workgroup before it went to the BCC.
- Before the recommendations go to the BCC, they will be presented at public and community meetings/hearings. Then in July 2005 the recommendations will go to the Local Planning Agency (LPA) and then to the BCC in August 2005. After that, they will be sent to the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) where the County will then have 18 months to develop specific amendments to move forward.

Additional Items

- At the last meeting, staff said that they would provide the workgroup with some additional information regarding the status of County involvement in managing the Gateway tract that was annexed by the City of St. Petersburg. Will said that nothing has changed regarding management of the Gateway Preserve and the County intends to continue to be the management entity, consistent with the County’s approved management plan. It was revised about a year ago to include a canoe/kayak trail, exotic removal and habitat restoration but overall the preserve is pretty inaccessible. The Department of Environmental Management has to report to the State every year.
- The workgroup agreed that staff would develop a new policy recommendation supporting the feasibility study of implementing a stormwater utility and email it out for review. This new policy would eventually be included under the Surface Water Management Element.
- Gordon said that staff is looking at integrating an Economic Development Element into the Comprehensive Plan. This Element would include topics such as redevelopment efforts and LID.
- Jake thanked everyone again for joining County staff in reviewing and helping to update the Comprehensive Plan.

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