

Environmental Science Forum
Weedon Island Preserve Cultural & Natural History Center
Thursday, December 7, 2006, 3:00 p.m.

MEETING MINUTES

Approved by Forum at January 11, 2007 Meeting

Attendees:

1.	Holly Greening	Forum Member, Co-Chair
2.	Darden Rice	Forum Member Co-Chair
3.	Ray Wunderlich	Forum Member
4.	Bruce Hasbrouck	Forum Member
5.	Joseph Maier	Forum Member
6.	Mark Mueller	Forum Member (Alternate)
7.	Dr. Jerry Smith	Forum Member
8.	Dr. Gabriel Vargo	Forum Member
9.	Tom Muntz	Forum Member
10.	Barbara Hoffman	Forum Member
11.	Doug Robison	Forum Member
12.	Cathy Harrelson	Forum Member
13.	Ann Paul	Forum Member
14.	Walt Hoskins	Forum Member (Alternate)
15.	Steve Spratt	Pinellas County Administrator
16.	Elizabeth Warren	Pinellas County Assistant Administrator
17.	William Davis	Pinellas County Environmental Management
18.	Andy Squires	Pinellas County Environmental Management
19.	Dr. Bruce Rinker	Pinellas County Environmental Lands
20.	Lisa Baltus	Pinellas County Environmental Lands
21.	Lynn Smith	Pinellas County Environmental Lands
22.	Mary Burrell	Pinellas County Communications
23.	Joe Morrissey	Pinellas County Attorney
24.	Dave Slonena	Pinellas County Utilities
25.	Paul Cozzie	Pinellas County CEL
25.	Paul Cassel	Pinellas County Development Review
26.	Gordon Beardslee	Pinellas County Planning Department
27.	Marcia Crawley	Pinellas County Communications
28.	Pick Tally	Pinellas County Utilities
29.	Thomas W. Reese	Citizen
30.	Marilyn Ruga	Citizen
31.	Kathy Johnson	Citizen
32.	Jim Garoy	Citizen
33.	Francia Smith	Citizen
34.	Diane Steinle	Citizen
35.	Jane Williams	Citizen
36.	Mike Salinero	Citizen
37.	Steve Poling	Citizen
38.	Mathew Poling	Citizen
39.	Ned E. J. Webster	Citizen
40.	Ellen Thompson	Citizen
41.	Bill Bilodeau	Citizen
41.	Howard Troxler	<i>St. Petersburg Times</i>

42. Theresa Blackwell *St. Petersburg Times*
43. Sidney Crawford Citizen

Handouts: December 7, 2006 Agenda; Minutes of November 2, 2006; Environmental Science Forum Members; Project Timelines for County Environmental Lands and Parks; “Penny for Pinellas” Fast Facts.

I. **Welcome and Introduction:**

- Co-Chairs Ms. Holly Greening and Ms. Darden Rice welcomed Forum Members and the public to the meeting. They also provided instructions for public comment during the meeting as noted in the agenda.
- Forum members introduced themselves; Ms. Barbara Hoffman reminded members that they do not officially represent their affiliated organizations but act as autonomous individuals during Forum meetings. Further, she noted that the findings and recommendations of the Forum are reported to County Administrator Steve Spratt.
- Ms. Greening made a recommendation that the Forum adhere to “Robert’s Rules of Order.” Motion to adopt “Robert’s Rules” was made by Mr. Doug Robison and seconded by Mr. Bruce Hasbrouck. Motion carried unanimously.

II. **Additional Agenda Items:**

- Co-Chair Ms. Holly Greening suggested the Forum should establish clear bylaws for its operation (including the conduct of meetings, e-mail issues, and Forum replacements). The Forum will establish a subcommittee to accomplish this (Ms. Holly Greening as chair with Mr. Bruce Hasbrouck and Mr. Tom Muntz). Further, Mr. Doug Robison recommended that the mission statement of the Forum be revised accordingly. This too will be considered by the Forum subcommittee.
- Co-Chairs Ms. Holly Greening and Ms. Darden Rice discussed the manner in which members should vote on recommendations for Mr. Spratt: findings of the Forum will be noted as pros and cons from which specific recommendations will then be made by majority vote but with the minority position provided. A brief discussion followed after which members agreed to proceed as suggested by the Forum Co-Chairs.
- Ms. Greening asked for any additional agenda items. None was provided.

III. **Approval of Minutes from November 2, 2006:**

- Co-Chair Ms. Holly Greening asked for any changes to the meeting minutes from November 2, 2006. Motion to accept as written was made by Mr. Bruce Hasbrouck and seconded by Mr. Doug Robison. Motion carried unanimously.

IV. **Forum Business:**

- Citizen Mr. Thomas Reese requested permission to address the Forum. This was granted by the Co-Chairs, and Mr. Reese suggested that “Robert’s Rules of Order” are too restrictive. Ms. Greening replied that Mr. Reese’s statement will be considered during the process of developing the Forum’s bylaws.
- Ms. Greening again reminded attendees from the public sector to follow the Forum’s instructions for comment about various agenda items.
- Ms. Rice moved to the business of member replacement. Mr. Ray Wunderlich nominated Ms. Cathy Harrelson to replace Mr. Bill Stokes. The Co-Chairs invited Ms. Harrelson, already attending the meeting, to speak about her interests and qualifications. Mr. Wunderlich’s motion for Ms. Harrelson to replace Mr. Stokes was seconded by Mr. Joseph Maier. The motion carried unanimously. Ms. Greening then asked County Administrator Steve Spratt if he would consider an immediate appointment of Ms. Harrelson to the Forum to which he agreed. Mr. Spratt explained that he had reviewed Ms. Harrelson’s qualifications prior to the meeting and was prepared to approve her appointment.

- Ms. Barbara Hoffman next nominated Dr. Craig Huegel as a possible Forum member. He was the previous administrator for the County's Environmental Lands Division who resigned his position in 2004. Mr. Tom Muntz asked that this recommendation – and all subsequent recommendations – be postponed until the Forum's bylaws are finalized and approved. He suggested that it is unfair to Mr. Spratt and to the Forum members to make “shotgun” decisions. The Co-Chairs recognized Mr. Spratt who then expressed his comfort with Ms. Harrelson's appointment because of considerable lead time to study her qualifications, but he respectfully requested time to review Ms. Hoffman's nomination with County staff, especially given Dr. Huegel's employment history with the County.
- Ms. Holly Greening also recommended that Dr. Randy Runnels, FDEP Aquatic Reserve Manager and a Pinellas-County resident, be considered by Mr. Spratt for Forum membership to replace Dr. Brandt Henningsen.
- It was noted that in addition to new member recommendations from the Forum, Mr. Spratt has independent authority to add new members to the Forum.

V. **Brooker Creek Preserve Golf Course Irrigation and Well Pumping:**

- Mr. Bruce Hasbrouck presented the findings of his subcommittee that examined the reactivation of three wells in Brooker Creek Preserve for irrigation of the East Lakes Woodlands Golf Course (a private golf course). Subcommittee members included Ms. Jan Allyn, Mr. Jake Stowers, Dave Kantz, and Ms. Ann Paul with Mr. Bruce Hasbrouck as chair. Mr. Stowers and Ms. Allyn were unable to attend the subcommittee meeting. The subcommittee identified a number of potential alternative irrigation water sources and examined supply-and-demand issues related to surface water, groundwater and greywater.

SUPPLY - SURFACE WATER:

LAKE TARPON

Pros: Existing reservoir, close proximity to the golf course, viable storage option, water not brackish

Cons: Potential to affect lake levels (could mitigate through operation of water level control structure), water may contain herbicides from hydrilla management (could mitigate by timing water removal or by collecting water upstream)

STORMWATER

Pros: Eliminates nonpoint pollution source, limited collection/distribution, minimal treatment required

Cons: Size of reservoir prohibitive, unreliable source, contains pollutants

SUPPLY - GROUNDWATER

SITE NEW WELLS

Pros: Moves cone of influence outside of wetlands, can be sited in close proximity to existing infrastructure (pipeline), could reduce severity of impacts

Cons: Infrastructure impacts and costs, limited suitable locations

ON-SITE (GOLF COURSE) WELLS

Pros: proximity reduces need for distribution infrastructure

Cons: desalination required (could mitigate by using salt tolerant grasses)

SUPPLY - GREYWATER

GOLF COURSE FACILITY

Pros: On-site availability, more reliable than storm/surface water, minimal treatment required

Cons: Elaborate distribution infrastructure, permissibility, negative public perception

NEIGHBORHOOD

Pros: On-site availability, more reliable than storm/surface water, minimal treatment required

Cons: collection/distribution system required, permissibility, negative public perception, neighborhood cooperation required

RECLAIMED WATER

Pros: Reduced potential impact on Brooker Creek Preserve, eliminates costs to reactivate wells

Cons: Increased demand on a scarce resource, increased reliance on potable water elsewhere

DEMAND - REDUCE DEMAND:

COUNTYWIDE CONSERVATION - POTABLE WATER

Pros: Minimal per capita reduction needed, system-wide sustainable solution

Cons: Reduced supply of reclaimed water, thereby increasing its demand

COUNTYWIDE CONSERVATION - RECLAIMED WATER

Pros: Minimal per capita reduction needed, system-wide sustainable solution

Cons: None provided

GOLF COURSE MANAGEMENT

Pros: Sustainable solution, educational opportunity, flexible and customizable solution, focused area of change

Cons: Minimal savings, limited scope of benefits, high cost of management changes

DEMAND – ELIMINATE NEED

GOLF COURSE CLOSURE

Pros: Reduced demand on reclaimed water

Cons: Replacement development may be more consumptive

ELIMINATE IRRIGATION

Pros: Eliminate demand on reclaimed water

Cons: Aesthetics, possible loss of income, cost of sod replacement, increased erosion, increased demand for fertilizers and pesticides

- Having examined these pros and cons, Mr. Hasbrouck then suggested that the reactivation of three wells in the Brooker Creek Preserve will likely have the least environmental impact of any of the alternatives that the committee explored, especially given the available data, the thoroughness of the hydrological models, and the checks-and-balances built into the project.

A discussion followed among Forum members about the quantity of water used for clay tennis courts, the biggest users of reclaimed water, legalities of the golf course agreement, the appropriateness of pulling water from a preserve, seasonality issues, impacts on existing wells, reclaimed water from the City of Clearwater that might be pumped into Tampa Bay, and possible effects of pumping on wetlands and uplands in the preserve.

- Mr. Hasbrouck stated that in his professional opinion from a science-based perspective, there would be a negligible environmental impact on the preserve from the pumping, and the required wetland ecosystem monitoring would serve as a safe guard in the event an impact was detected.
- The Co-Chairs then recognized the following members of the public to speak (each with a two-minute limit): Mr. Thomas Reese, Ms. Ellen Thompson, Mr. Robert Parker (not present), Mr. Dave Kandz, and Ms. Jane Williams (declined). Mr. Reese stated it is a State violation to use potable quality water for golf course irrigation. Ms. Thompson said: the discussion can't be limited to just Brooker Creek Preserve, she supports greywater for the golf course, cheap water should not be provided to the golf course, and that the neighborhood would probably approve golf course use of greywater. Dave Kantz noted that SWFWMD's regional water supply plan says to reduce regional groundwater withdrawals, thus the pumping permit may not be approved by SWFWMD staff.
- Co-Chair Ms. Greening asked the Forum for their own pros and cons, followed by their recommendations to County Administrator Steve Spratt. The Forum identified the following pros and cons.

Pros: It would be a good signal to upgrade monitoring aspects even though not required by permit

Cons: Pumping water from the Preserve sends a bad signal (or precedent); a band-aid approach to a larger community issue; a myopic approach; insufficient monitoring of vegetation
- Discussion followed about science vs. policy recommendations around an essential question: Should the County use water from the Brooker Creek Preserve for any purpose other than for preserve ecosystems?
- The Forum concluded that if the County decides to go forward with the use of the Preserve for golf course irrigation, they have the following recommendations.
- Non-policy recommendations: (1) Enhance monitoring to include wet and dry seasons as well as wetlands and uplands within the predicted cone of influence, (2) include good control sites for comparison, (3) monitor water levels every two weeks, and (4) consider augmentation of water within the zone of influence if impacts are observed.
- Policy recommendations: (1) Adopt a minimization strategy for the golf course's water use, (2) provide financial incentives for the golf course via a tiered fee schedule, and (3) specify exact (operational) triggers when wells are activated.
- Discussion continued with a list of reasons why the Forum should recommend to deny the use of the Preserve water for golf course irrigation. The reasons were: (1) it seems inconsistent with the Federal Safe Drinking Water Act (only potable water can be used for potable purposes), (2) because other sustainable options may be available (such as those listed by Mr. Hasbrouck in his presentation findings), and (3) it sets a bad precedent for the preserve because it is part of our commonwealth to protect a natural resource.
- Ms. Greening recognized Mr. Dave Slonena of Pinellas County Utilities to speak about the use of potable water for only potable purposes. Mr. Slonena indicated that the County's proposed use of the groundwater for golf course irrigation is not inconsistent with the Drinking Water Act. He then went on by listing numerous permitted examples of groundwater of drinking water quality that are currently being used for irrigation in the Tampa Bay region.
- Ms. Greening reiterated that a separate motion and vote for each recommendation is required by the Forum.
- Mr. Bruce Hasbrouck made a motion to recommend that, if the wells located on the Preserve were used to supply water as proposed by the County, the County should consider the recommendations of the Forum as stated above; i.e., (1) Enhance monitoring to include wet and dry seasons as well as wetlands and uplands within the predicted cone of influence, (2) include good control sites for comparison, (3) monitor water levels every two weeks, and (4) consider augmentation of water within the zone of influence if impacts are observed. The motion was seconded by Mr. Doug Robison. The motion carried unanimously (13 Yes, 0 No).
- Ms. Ann Paul made a motion to modify the second recommendation to read "We recommend against the use of Brooker Creek Preserve water for the purpose of golf course irrigation" but

without the reasons discussed, seconded by Ms. Cathy Harrelson. The motion to accept the modification in language carried unanimously.

- Ms. Greening then notified the Forum that she would vote against this motion because, in her opinion, the scientific evidence presented indicated that there would be negligible impact to the Preserve if the wells were reactivated.

- Mr. Doug Robison voiced that he will also vote against because the term “preserve” has not been defined adequately. Further, he noted that we cannot live in a world without impact; our objective is to minimize that impact where we can and mitigate where we need; and this project seems to do just that.

- Ms. Cathy Harrelson disagreed, saying that she was satisfied with the working definition of the term, preserve. She pointed out that the Brooker Creek Preserve Environmental Education Center is free to all visitors, but the golf course is a private enterprise with only a small number of patrons.

- Ms. Rice stated that she “poured through the science,” finding no way around the fact that the public cares very deeply about the preserve, and she will vote for the recommendation not to proceed with the well reactivation. Ms. Rice stated that scientific decisions still take place within the context of community values, and that larger questions about the proper stewardship of the preserve can, and should, shape those scientific questions.

- Ms. Greening called for a vote on motion on the floor. The motion carried with 9 votes for the recommendation and 4 votes against the recommendation. As previously agreed, the majority opinion will be presented to County Administrator Mr. Steve Spratt.

- Given the late hour, Mr. Bruce Hasbrouck motioned to hear public comments and then adjourn. The motion was seconded by Mr. Joseph Maier. Motion passed unanimously.

- Ms. Greening called Mr. Tom Reese, a citizen, to the floor. Mr. Reese made a suggestion that the Forum employ Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council’s Agency on Bay Management rules and procedures.

- Ms. Greening asked the Forum to decide on the next three meeting dates, times, and locations: January 11, 2007 at Heritage Village; February 1, 2007 at Weedon Island Preserve Cultural and Natural History Center; and March 1, 2007 at Heritage Village. All meetings will be from 3:30 pm to 6:30 pm. Assistant County Administrator Ms. Liz Warren reminded the Forum that meeting locations will be subject to room availability.

- Dr. Jerry Smith made a motion to adjourn the Forum meeting, seconded by Mr. Doug Robison. Motion carried unanimously. Adjournment was at 5:57 pm.