

Environmental Science Forum (ESF)
Pinellas County Extension, Largo, FL
Thursday, March 1, 2007

MEETING MINUTES

Approved by Forum at May 3, 2007 Meeting

Attendees:

1.	Holly Greening	Forum Member, Co-Chair
2.	Darden Rice	Forum Member, Co-Chair
3.	Ann Paul	Forum Member
4.	Catherine Harrelson	Forum Member
5.	Joe Maier	Forum Member
6.	Dr. Randy Runnels	Forum Member
7.	Ray Wunderlich	Forum Member
8.	Tom Muntz	Forum Member
9.	Walt Hoskins	(Non-voting Alternate)
10.	Mark Mueller	(Alternate for Dr. Melissa Grigione)
11.	Barbara Hoffman	Forum Member
12.	Jake Stowers	Forum Member
13.	Bruce Hasbrouck	Forum Member
14.	Dr. Jerry Smith	Forum Member
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. H. Bruce Rinker	Pinellas County Environmental Lands Division
20.	Dr. Steve Harper	Pinellas County Environmental Lands Division
21.	Lisa Baltus	Pinellas County Environmental Lands Division
22.	Pamela Leaseure	Pinellas County Environmental Lands Division
23.	Lynn Smith	Pinellas County Environmental Lands Division
24.	Jewel White Cole	Pinellas County Attorney
25.	Paul Cozzie	Pinellas County CEL
26.	Devesh Nirmul	Pinellas County Extension
27.	Bryan Kutchins	Citizen
28.	Mary Burrell	Citizen
29.	Theresa Blackwell	<i>St. Petersburg Times</i>
30.	Tom Reese	Citizen
31.	Ray Muller	Citizen
32.	Shirley Muller	Citizen
33.	Allyn Childress	Citizen
34.	Rick Watson	Citizen
35.	Sharon Philyaw	Citizen
36.	Paul Piatt	Citizen

Handouts: List of Members and Alternates of Environmental Science Forum; Project Timelines for Pinellas County Environmental and Park Lands; Forum Bylaws Draft; Draft of Special Subcommittee Report on ELYSA Recreational Fields Expansion; Pinellas County ESF Agenda; ESF Meeting Minutes of Thursday, February 1, 2007.

I. **Welcome and Introduction:**

- Co-Chair Ms. Rice welcomed Forum Members and the public to the meeting. She reminded members of the public that they will have an opportunity to address agenda items by filling out a yellow or blue form. Ms. Rice asked everyone to respect the Forum Bylaws and the two-minute time limit for each public speaker.

II. **Additional Agenda Items:**

- Co-Chair Ms. Rice invited additional agenda items.
- Ms. Hoffman suggested a representative from the Utilities Department provide an update on the Blending Facility, referencing a recent article in the *St. Petersburg Times*.
- Mr. Davis read an e-mail from Bureau Director Mr. Pick Talley to address Ms. Hoffman's request. The estimated cost for construction of the Blending Plant has increased \$20 million since the project was authorized in August 2005. The County is now re-evaluating all options that include moving forward as planned, building a scaled-down facility, and not building at all. The County is also evaluating the impacts of each option on water quality and public health, a process that should be completed in 60 to 90 days. Currently, only the site work and landscaped berm have been completed. No contract for further construction exists at this time.
- Ms. Paul asked if Forum members might review County proposals for the upcoming "Penny for Pinellas" vote (Tuesday, March 13, 2007), especially given that some citizens have campaigned against the "Penny" extension without full knowledge of supporting revenues for preserves, parks, recreational services, and other projects.
- Co-Chairs Ms. Rice and Ms. Greening suggested that they author a letter to the editors of local newspapers in general support of the "Penny." After some discussion, Ms. Rice repeated a motion made by Ms. Paul to write such a letter on behalf of the Forum, seconded by Mr. Stowers. Motion carried unanimously.

III. **Approval of February 1, 2007 Meeting Summary:**

- Co-Chair Ms. Rice asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Hasbrouck made a motion to accept the minutes as written, seconded by Mr. Stowers. Motion carried unanimously.

IV. **Forum Business:**

- Co-Chair Ms. Greening explained that the copy of the Bylaws distributed to Forum members is the final copy, not a draft, that was voted upon during the previous Forum meeting. The only action needed is the signature of the co-chairs. Mr. Stowers inquired about the section left out temporarily until Mr. Spratt could review the implications. Mr. Davis affirmed that this was settled through changes in the introductory statement about "Pinellas County's parks and environmental lands and their associated water and biological resources."
- Co-Chair Ms. Greening recognized Mr. Tom Reese who requested a copy of the Bylaws and agreed to comment later in the meeting.

V. **Recreation Fields at Brooker Creek Preserve:**

- Co-Chair Ms. Greening introduced Mr. Stowers, chairman for the subcommittee report on the ELYSA recreational fields expansion proposed at Brooker Creek Preserve.
- Mr. Stowers recognized Ms. Rice, Ms. Paul, Dr. Smith, Mr. Hasbrouck and Ms. Greening as members of the subcommittee. He reported that they had reviewed the site history, the flora and fauna, soil maps, and related aerial photos. The subcommittee recommended the following points for discussion:
 - Require drainage patterns to return to pre-agricultural conditions;
 - Require 50-foot buffers when possible;
 - Require retention areas designed for optimal hydro-period and nutrient uptake;
 - Require parking lot drainage into vegetated strips;
 - Require drainage of the playing fields through underground passages to vegetated buffers;
 - Require the existing ELYSA ball field complex and the proposed site to meet current wellfield protection ordinance permits;
 - Require enhancement of retention areas by using native plants;
 - Require wildlife corridors;
 - Require 'green building' and low-impact technologies and materials;
 - Require a thoroughly detailed vegetative analysis in the permitting process;
 - Require an ongoing monitoring program to determine the effectiveness of pollution reduction techniques incorporated into the site design; require site improvements if monitoring results indicate degraded conditions
- Co-Chair Ms. Greening invited discussion from Forum members.
- Co-Chair Ms. Greening provided time for public comments from Mr. Tom Reese, Ms. Shirley Muller, Mr. Walt Hoskins and Mr. Rick Watson.
- Co-Chair Ms. Greening asked for a vote from Forum Members on whether sufficient scientific facts and information have been gathered to make a fully informed conclusion. Members voted 10 to 2 in favor that sufficient facts and information have been gathered.
- Co-Chair Ms. Greening requested recommendations and actions on three elements related to the subcommittee's report: scientific findings, policy issues, and recommendations should the project go forward.
- The members made the following recommendations:
 - Use a 50-foot upland buffer where possible;
 - Return to pre-agricultural hydroperiod for site;
 - Use a passive retention system for the parking lot with low-impact construction materials and ongoing monitoring program to assess nutrient uptake and flow.
 - Manage the runoff from playing fields, allowing infiltration, staying in compliance with well-head ordinance, and minimizing the impacts from lighting and noise.
 - Allow no further active recreation within the boundaries.
 - Design a good plan for safe parking and for overflow parking.
 - Conduct a thorough environmental analysis of the site.

- Provide some indication of biological diversity on the site should it be restored as was originally proposed.
- Mr. Stowers motioned to accept the scientific findings of the report up to page six along with materials previously received such species lists and a soils map to move forward; Ms. Paul seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.
- Co-Chair Ms. Greening asked members about recommendations or actions for policy issues. The following were recommended:
 - Break the license agreement with ELYSA and find an alternate site for the recreational fields.
 - If the expansion is allowed, then allow the following recommendations:
 - Remove the proposed site from the boundaries of the Brooker Creek Preserve.
 - Allow no similar activities and deletions for the Brooker Creek Preserve.
 - Require the recommendations above as reported by the subcommittee.
 - Restore areas immediately to the north in accordance with soil surveys.
 - Acknowledge the following points: expansion of the ballfields means valuable loss of potential for restoration; inconsistency with the original plans and for wellfield protection; conflict with the Preserve Ordinance 2-6, Resolution 99-196, the Brooker Creek Management Plan, and the County Comprehensive Plan; a “death of a thousand cuts.” Further, the County should scrutinize management plans vis-à-vis proposed leases/agreements/licensed for consistency with these guiding documents.
- Dr. Smith recommended to the County Administrator that the County break its license agreement with the East Lake Youth Sports Authority for the 38-acre site and locate an alternative site for the proposed ballfield complex. The motion was seconded by Ms. Hoffman. Motion carried 11 to 2.
- Ms. Paul recommended to the County Administrator that, if the proposed ballfields project is approved and developed, the 38-acre site be removed from the Brooker Creek Preserve; that this development not establish a precedent for other holdings within Brooker Creek Preserve; that ELYSA be required to incorporate and implement the recommendations of the science subcommittee into its development; and that the existing wetlands on the site be placed into a strict conservation easement. Mr. Hasbrouck seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

VI. **March 15th BCC Workshop on Brooker Creek Preserve:**

- Mr. Davis listed some of the Brooker Creek Preserve issues to be addressed at the upcoming Commission workshop on March 15: reactivation of well-field pumping; the ELYSA recreational fields expansion; future land use and FLUM designations; pertinent ordinances; Utilities land use; updated lease parcels; blending facility; and Toniwoods flooding in Tarpon. The meeting will start at 9:30 a.m. The public will have an opportunity to speak at the end of this day-long meeting. The Department of Environmental Management wishes time to

provide information and viewpoints to the Commission on these issues, especially questions about policy. These questions and policies will probably not get resolved on March 15, and the issue may roll into two other days for workshops: April 24 and May 7.

- Mr. Spratt thanked members for their considerable time and energy given to the work of the Forum. The County is anxious to provide the Commission a full understanding of the issues. Mr. Spratt intends to apprise the Commission about the Forum's activities and findings.

VII. **Shell Key Management Plan Up (Pam Leasure):**

- Co-Chair Ms. Greening announced that County staff will update the Forum next meeting about the Shell Key Management Plan Update.

VIII. **Next Meeting:**

- Co-Chair Ms. Rice announced the next ESF meeting will be April 5, 2007 from 3:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. at Weedon Island Preserve Cultural and Natural History Center in St. Petersburg.

IX. **Next Meeting Agenda Topics:**

- Co-Chair Ms. Rice updated members about upcoming topics for Forum review:
 - March 15 BCC Workshop
 - Shell Key Management Plan
 - Wall Springs Park Project

X. **Public Comment:**

- Co-Chair Ms. Rice provided citizens Mr. Paul Piatt and Ms. Sharon Philyaw an opportunity to address the Forum.
- Co-Chair Ms. Rice motioned to adjourn, seconded by Ms. Greening. Meeting adjourned at 6:50 pm.