

Environmental Science Forum (ESF)
Weedon Island Preserve Cultural & Natural History Center
St. Petersburg, FL
Thursday, July 10, 2008
4:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

MEETING MINUTES

Approved by Forum at September 4, 2008 Meeting

Attendees:

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| 1. | Cathy Harrelson | Forum Member, Co-Chair |
| 2. | Tom Muntz | Forum Member |
| 3. | Howard Rutherford | Forum Member |
| 4. | Lindsay Cross | Forum Member |
| 5. | Mark Mueller | Forum Member |
| 6. | Ray Wunderlich | Forum Member |
| 7. | Joseph Maier | Forum Member |
| 8. | Darden Rice | Forum Member |
| 9. | Robert McConnell | Forum Member |
| 10. | Dr. Randy Runnels | Forum Member |
| 11. | Elizabeth Warren | Assistant County Administrator |
| 12. | Dennis Long | Pinellas County Attorney |
| 13. | Andy Squires | Pinellas County Environmental Management |
| 14. | Dr. Bruce Rinker | Pinellas County Environmental Lands Division |
| 15. | Dr. Steve Harper | Pinellas County Environmental Lands Division |
| 16. | Lynn Smith | Pinellas County Environmental Lands Division |
| 17. | Paul Cozzie | CEL |
| 18. | F. Hartvelt | Citizen |
| 19. | T. Hartvelt | Citizen |
| 20. | Joseph Dorsey | Citizen |
| 21. | Sidney Crawford | Citizen |
| 22. | Allyn Childress | Citizen |
| 23. | Francia Smith | Citizen |
| 24. | Cathy Foster | Citizen |
| 25. | Ned Webster | Citizen |

Handouts: Pinellas County Environmental Science Forum Agenda; ESF Meeting Minutes from June 5, 2008; Ordinance NO. 08-; Brooker Creek Preserve Management Plan General Information; Pinellas County Parks and Recreation Budget Comparison; Parks and Recreation Department Draft Flow Chart.

I. Welcome and Introduction:

- Co-Chair Ms. Cathy Harrelson called the meeting to order at 4:05 p.m., generally welcoming members and citizens.

II. Additional Agenda Items:

- Co-Chair Ms. Cathy Harrelson called for additional agenda items.
- Co-Chair Ms. Harrelson noted there were no additional items from Forum Members, but a written comment was presented by Sidney Crawford. His comment was to request an agenda item for the next meeting that concerns the Fred Howard Park Causeway Reconstruction: a request for a presentation on the scope and schedule of the pending causeway and bridge reconstruction, particularly addressing mitigation measures to protect wintering piping plovers which are listed as a federally threatened species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).
- Mr. Tom Muntz suggested Forum member applicant résumés be sent to Forum members in advance of ESF actions related to new ESF appointments. A potential applicant, Dr. Joseph Dorsey, was introduced and encouraged to submit his résumé to Mr. Fred Marquis, Interim County Administrator, for consideration in becoming a Forum member. Dr. Dorsey is a professor at the University of South Florida (St. Petersburg Campus) who teaches in the Environmental Policy program.

III. Announcements:

- Co-Chair Ms. Cathy Harrelson asked Mr. Andy Squires, DEM Assistant Director, to provide an update on the FY09 budget for the Department of Environmental Management. Ten positions within Environmental Management have been eliminated. Only one of the ten positions was filled, and one staff member will lose his position due to the County's "bumping" process.
- Dr. Bruce Rinker spoke about the Environmental Lands Division's budget for FY08 and FY09. He explained ELD has restructured significantly in response to deep budget cuts in operations and capital funds, resulting in several broad programs (Ecological Services, Education Services, and Support Services). Restructuring (that includes a 5-year strategic plan) will be completed by October 1, 2008.

IV. Approval of June 5, 2008 Meeting Minutes:

- Mr. Howard Rutherford made a motion to approve the minutes from June 5, 2008. Mr. Joseph Maier seconded motion. Motion carried unanimously.

V. Nominations for New Co-Chairs (Andy Squires):

- Mr. Andy Squires reminded ESF members that, according to the ESF bylaws, it is time to nominate new co-chairs. Ms. Cathy Harrelson has agreed to serve a second term as the policy chair if no one else is interested. Mr. Doug Robison chose not to serve a second term due to work priorities. Mr. Squires called for nominations, none were received. Nominations will be left open until next month's meeting. At the next (August) meeting, nominations will close and a vote will be taken. The new co-chairs will begin serving in September.
- A short discussion followed about policy vs. science. Mr. Andy Squires stated that he will identify the affiliations of ESF members (viz., policy, science, or both) via e-mail prior to the next meeting.

VI. Charter Amendment for Environmental Lands (Dennis Long, CAO):

- Mr. Dennis Long, Assistant County Attorney, explained the procedural issues. In order to approve an ordinance, the BOCC must first give permission to advertise (July 22, 2008). The second step will be to schedule a public hearing (August 5, 2008, 9:30 am). Mr. Long reminded members that the Charter Amendment will not address use of the facilities; usage will be addressed in the County's comprehensive plan and management plans.
- Mr. Long discussed the proposed Charter Amendment for the County's Environmental Lands. The document amends the Pinellas County Charter by defining environmental lands and then identifying preserves and management areas as County-owned environmental lands. It gives authority to the BOCC to remove the designation of environmental lands by adoption of an ordinance and approval by a majority vote of the Pinellas County electorate in a public referendum. It also requires a referendum and a majority approval of the electorate to sell, convey, or transfer any fee simple interest in County-owned environmental lands. Further, the Charter Amendment contains language for the upcoming November ballot.
- Mr. Long also discussed a second matching ordinance that identifies County-owned properties within preserves and management areas by name and by ownership maps.
- A brief discussion followed Mr. Long's informative presentation. Forum members stressed the importance that voters understand the ballot language. Assistant County Administrator Liz Warren emphasized that the County's Communications staff will work closely with the media in developing a clear understanding of the ballot question.
- Ms. Liz Warren thanked Forum Members and County staff for their detailed work on the Charter Amendment and Ordinance.
- Forum members requested information on the comprehensive plan update process and timetable. Mr. Squires said he will get the information from Planning Department staff and send it out to Forum members by e-mail.

- Dr. Randy Runnels made a motion recommending adoption by the BOCC. The motion was seconded by Mr. Joseph Maier. Motion carried unanimously.

VII. Cultural, Education & Leisure Department (CEL) Budget Update (Paul Cozzie, CEL):

- Mr. Paul Cozzie, CEL Bureau Director, provided an overview of the Parks and Recreation Department's budget for FY08 and FY09. The overview included budget comparisons for FY07, FY08, and FY09 in a number of categories: personal services, operating expenses, capital outlay, and staff positions (including all permanent and full time positions). Mr. Cozzie covered the subsequent budget reduction impacts of these levels of services. He also highlighted the proposed 2009 fee schedules for CEL.

VIII. Brooker Creek Preserve Draft Management Plan-Status of Plan Updates (Dr. Bruce Rinker):

- Dr. Bruce Rinker, Division Director for the Environmental Lands Division, provided an overview of the major changes made thus far in the draft Brooker Creek Preserve Management Plan (not including minor edits and issues still under discussion). He acknowledged the many helpful suggestions provided to-date from ESF members, the Friends of Brooker Creek Preserve, and other stakeholders. Dr. Rinker noted the major points in a handout provided to ESF members. He also provided the following timetable of activities related to the plan's adoption: BOCC workshop on August 7, 2008; BOCC adoption on August 19, 2008. A brief discussion followed.
- Ms. Lindsay Cross made a motion commending the staff on their efforts, supporting the ongoing process, and anticipating the final draft. Mr. Tom Muntz seconded motion. Motion carried unanimously.

IX. Public Comment:

- No public comments were made.

Mr. Tom Muntz made a motion to adjourn at 6:15 p.m. Mr. Robert McConnell seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.