

**MANATEE COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL LANDS MANAGEMENT AND ACQUISITION
ADVISORY COMMITTEE (ELMAC)
REGULAR MEETING
ROBINSON PRESERVE
MOSAIC CENTER FOR NATURE, EXPLORATION SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (THE NEST)
10299 9TH AVENUE NORTHWEST
Bradenton, Florida
January 7, 2019**

Present were:

Bill Webster, Chairman
Bob Nicholson, Vice-Chairman
Randy Cooper
Gregory DeMeuse
David Landers
Debbie Lansing
Ingrid McClellan
Jim Parks
Scott Tussing
Marsha Lee Wikle

Absent were:

Mike Burton
Bradley Hawkins
Patrick Healy
Charles Kennedy
Terry L. McKamey

Also present was:

Charlie Hunsicker, Parks and Natural Resources Director
Mike Elswick,
Vicki Tessmer, Board Records Supervisor, Clerk of Circuit Court

Chairman Webster called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

AGENDA

EL20190107DOC001

A. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS
Members and citizens introduced themselves.

Charlie Hunsicker, Parks and Natural Resources Director, explained the purpose of the NEST Nature Exploration Science Technology, the donation by the Mosaic Company Foundation, and how the construction of the NEST came about. The structure is fashioned after a tree house at a camp outside of Atlanta. In addition to the Nest and the restoration already done, and the 1.6 mile rubberized track adjacent to the NEST dedicated to walkers and runners; there will be a playground for kids set in the trees.

B. MINUTES

 Motion was made by Member Lansing, seconded by Member Tussing, and carried 10-0 with Members Burton, Hawkins, Healy, Kennedy and McKamey absent, to approve the minutes of November 5, 2018.

C. CITIZEN COMMENTS

 Stephen Murphy, League of Women Voters, spoke about solar panels an projects the League has sponsored in the past. This coming year, the League would like to focus on water quality, land conservation, sustainability, and reducing the use of fossil fuels.

 Merrie Lynn Parker, Florida Fish and Game Association, spoke on water quality and natural resources and wishes to move forward with seeking funding sources to acquire more land for preservation.

 Dick Eckenrod, Manatee Fish and Game Association, spoke on the 2004 referendum to acquire conservation land that failed. There is a need to consider a new referendum/bond issue that will make more funds available for preservation. There are several people who are willing to help with a campaign including the Trust for Public Land, and he wants to work closely with ELMAC.

There being no further citizen comments, Chairman Webster closed citizen comments.

D. **STAFF REPORTS**

Cortez Road Landscaping

 Member McClellan distributed an email from the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) to accompany the memo included in the agenda. She toured the Cortez Road medians from 75th Street West to the Village of Cortez with FDOT and staff from the Public Works Department, and all participants came up with a project outline. The medians from Palma Sola Boulevard to 119th Street West will be covered with Bahia sod, and plant materials will be replaced as the Public Works' budget permits. She also distributed an email regarding the removal of invasive species at 119th Street West and improving the landscaping in that area. FDOT will remove the invasive species and then work on landscaping. EL20190107DOC002

Discussion ensued regarding this being a temporary fix until funding is available.

Tree City USA

Member McClellan distributed the final 2018 Tree City USA Application. The annual budget is included as well as a spreadsheet with all the departments and their efforts. '

 Charlie Hunsicker, Parks and Natural Resources Director, suggested a member of ELMAC should give a presentation to the Board of County Commissioners outlining ELMAC's efforts. He also commented that a memo was sent to new County Commission members regarding the purpose of ELMAC. EL20190107DOC003

National Arbor Day

 Member McClellan reviewed the two National Arbor Day projects, including the Robinson Preserve parking area tree plantings on the south side of Manatee Avenue at the cut through. The El Conquistador community is getting bids for tree planting for the median project just west of 34th Street West on El Conquistador Parkway.

Proposed Referendum For Sensitive Lands And Parks

 Mr. Hunsicker explained staff is always ready to supply information regarding conservation land, and the Trust for Public Land is ready to conduct polling, and understands the need to acquire private funding for polling. The polling will cost approximately \$5,000 to \$10,000. In addition to large land acquisitions, there are also opportunities to get easements and acquire land for urban/suburban open spaces and to have staff take care of those open spaces.

Discussion ensued regarding having various committees to help educate the public and the role of ELMAC and the citizens in this process to get a referendum on the ballot, and many citizens feel there is a need to have more land set aside for water conservation and treatment.

Mr. Hunsicker stated ELMAC should be supportive and champion the referendum to citizens and the Board of County Commissioners. Members should get as much information as they can. The lands in Manatee County do not rank as high on the State priority list as other counties, and there have been very few lands purchased in the last nine years.

Discussion continued that the Florida Communities Trust has funding that can help Manatee County acquire land.

Damon Moore, Environmental Program Manager, Parks and Natural Resources, explained there must be matching funds available to obtain Florida Communities Trust funding. All of the grants require matching funds to get the funding.

 Discussion ensued regarding one member of ELMAC taking notes during meetings with the Trust for Public Lands and providing those notes to Parks and Natural Resources staff to share with ELMAC members, need to obtain land for flood control purposes, storm water parks, how can proceeds from a referendum be spent, as a bond it would be up to the Board of County Commissioners to decide, and when the referendum is written, the guarantees must be defined.

E. **NEW BUSINESS**

There was no new business to discuss.

E. **MEMBER FOLLOW-UP AND DISCUSSION**

Member McClellan and Chairman Webster will present Tree City USA plans to the Board of County Commissioners in February.

Member Parks questioned if there is a future plan for Manatee County for the next 75 years.

Charlie Hunsicker, Parks and Natural Resources Director, stated there is no one in house working on future planning. He thanked all the organizations supporting the referendum.

 Chairman Webster encouraged ELMAC members to do as much research as they can and to speak positively about the referendum to the Board of County Commissioners.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, Chairman Webster adjourned the meeting at 7:19 p.m.

Minutes Approved: _____