

**MANATEE COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL LANDS MANAGEMENT AND ACQUISITION
ADVISORY COMMITTEE (ELMAC)
REGULAR MEETING
COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE CENTER
1112 MANATEE Avenue West
Bradenton, Florida
November 5, 2018**

Present were:

Bill Webster, Chairman
Randy Cooper
Greg DeMeuse
David Landers
Ingrid McClellan
Terry L McKamey
Scott Tussing
Marsha Lee Wikle

Absent were members:

Mike Burton
Bradley Hawkins
Debbie Lansing
Bob Nicholson, Vice-Chairman
Jim Parks

There are two seats vacant

Also present was:

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

- A.  Chairman Webster called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m., and members introduced themselves.

AGENDA

EL20181105DOC001

B. **MINUTES**

 Motion was made by Member Tussing, seconded by Ms. McClellan, and carried 8-0 with Members Burton, Nicholson, Hawkins, Lansing, and Parks absent and two seats vacant, to approve the minutes of May 7, 2018.

C. **CITIZEN COMMENTS**

There being no citizens present, Chairman did not open Citizen's Comments.

D. **STAFF REPORTS**

BOND ISSUE

 Charlie Hunsicker, Parks and Natural Resources Director, discussed revisiting opportunities for land acquisitions and easements. There is the possibility of adding a tax for acquisitions of conservation land, or to consider bond funding. Staff considers the priorities of certain parcels including the ability of the land to host wildlife and support a repopulation of plants and animals. Manatee County owns 30,000 acres of conservation land. Other considerations are location to water sources, adjacency to other parks, connectivity to flood plains and water courses, and urgency for conversion. There is the possibility of taking a referendum to the citizens with a consistent message to protect the environment. ELMAC

would be the driving source to the County Commission for moving this out to the citizens through environmental organizations and the Chamber of Commerce. It is possible to motivate individuals to vote for environmental issues and items for the public benefit. Manatee County has had environmental referendums that have passed for drinking water and Emerson Point. The timing would be good to have a referendum during a presidential election.

 Mr. Hunsicker proceeded to discuss the process for putting a referendum on the ballot, taking the right approach and having enough funds to influence the vote. The County Commission cannot fund the influence for a vote. The process would include public polling and if private money is used for the polling, the results do not have to be disclosed. The Trust for Public Land is willing to help put a referendum on the ballot. EL20181105DOC002

 Mr. Hunsicker displayed a future land use map of Gamble Creek Village and discussed options of development or saving the land for conservation. There are currently 13 rangers on staff, and Statute specifies that staff can be included in the requested funding if done via a government obligation to maintain the property. Sales tax can only be used for capital improvements. Upon question Mr. Hunsicker explained there is about \$50 million worth of land that would serve the County's needs, but there must also be willing sellers. This request would be a property tax referendum and paid back by bond issue. EL20181105DOC003

 Discussion ensued regarding the amount for research for the referendum, public/private partnership, there are grants to help with funding, Manatee County would need more than \$22,000 to run the campaign, the proposal would also include the ability to obtain land for parks in the urban area, 10-12 locations of vacant land that could serve smaller neighborhoods that need parks, 20 year bond, focus on watershed land and improve drainage, easements are also important, and constant removal of exotic species raises maintenance costs.

Mike Elswick, Resource Management Division Manager, discussed the ratio of maintenance costs for different types of lands.

 Discussion ensued regarding Manatee County being the only County to not have an environmental line item on the taxes, cannot get grants without a funding source, there is no operating fund to purchase environmental lands, the only way for this to come forward is a bond issue, time line necessary to put this on the ballot, need more information, and there is very little land in Manatee County that qualifies for the Florida Forever program.

Motion was made by Mr. Landers to invite Pegeen Hanrahan, Southeast Urban Parks Finance Director, The Trust for Public Land, to speak to the committee. The motion was seconded by Member Wikle, adding to try to have the next meeting at the Nest at the Robinson Preserve Expansion. The motion carried 8-0 with Members Burton, Nicholson, Hawkins, Lansing, and Parks absent, and two seats vacant.

COUNTY WEBSITE LISTING

 Ms. McClellan distributed a packet with the updated membership list, and the purpose and plan of ELMAC as taken from the website. EL20181105DOC004

CORTEZ ROAD GATEWAY

 Ms. McClellan distributed a packet regarding the Cortez Road Gateway and provided a brief history regarding the original agreement with the Florida Department of Transportation and Manatee County Public Works to maintain the medians on Cortez Road west of 75th Street. As materials in the medians died; they were not replaced. The County does not have an urban forester on staff. The plan is to make the area presentable with bahia sod and trees as identified in the packet. There will be a walkthrough on Cortez Road with Public Works staff to evaluate the existing landscaping and trees. EL20181105DOC005

ARBOR DAYS

Ms. McClellan reviewed the application for Tree City USA, and the Arbor Days projects. A tree was planted on Anna Maria Island and the El Conquistador project will take place in 2019. Projects at Robinson and Perico Preserves are also included to plant 11 live oaks, to provide shade at the entrances of the preserves.

 Motion was made by Member McClellan to accept the proposal of 11 live oak tree planting and continue progress on El Conquistador Parkway after the old FPL poles are removed. The motion was seconded by Member Tussing.

Ms. McClellan distributed a packet regarding an update for El Conquistador parkway. All of the poles will be removed by April 2019. It is not feasible to connect reclaimed water to this area. There is an irrigation system that works on well water. The packet includes the details of the plan for planting 33 trees from 34th Street West to 47th Street West. EL20181105DOC006

The motion carried 8-0 with Members Burton, Nicholson, Hawkins, Lansing, and Parks absent and two seats vacant.

TREE COUNTY USA RECERTIFICATION

Ms. McClellan referred to the Tree City USA Certification and the requirements to prove the designation. The recertification must be submitted every year. EL20181105DOC004

ADJOURN

There being no other business, Chairman Webster adjourned the meeting at 7:53 p.m.