



Pinellas County Parks and Conservation Resources Advisory Board Minutes of the Meeting on April 15, 2021

PARK BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr. Connor Carlisle, Ms. Debbie Chayet
Ms. Peg Cummings, Ms. Manitia Moultrie
Mr. Steven Ochsner, Mr. Dan Savercool,
Dr. Brandon Shuler

PARKS & CONSERVATION RESOURCES STAFF:

Mr. Paul Cozzie, Director
Mr. Spencer Curtis, North County Operations Mgr.
Mr. Lyle Fowler, South County Operations Mgr.
Dr. Steve Harper, Resource and Asset Mgr.
Mr. Matthew Tolnay, Assistant County Atty.
Ms. Deann Baker, Administrative Support Spec.
Ms. Amanda Smith, Project Mgmt. Spec. I

A regular meeting of the Pinellas County Parks and Conservation Resources (PCR) Advisory Board was held at the Pinellas County Extension Building, located at 12520 Ulmerton Rd. Largo, FL 33774 on April 15, 2021.

I. Open Meeting/Introductions

Debbie Chayet, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 9:30 am. Introductions were made by all participants present.

II. Approval of Minutes

Chairman Chayet entertained a motion to approve the minutes of the March 18, 2021 meeting. A motion was made by Dan Savercool and seconded by Peg Cummings to accept the PCR Advisory Board minutes as written. Motion unanimously approved with no corrections.

III. Citizens to be heard

There were no citizens to be heard.

IV. Old Business

• Integrated Vegetation Management Working Group Update

- IVM Manuals were distributed to the group which was a result of a collaborative effort between Pinellas county, various municipalities, UF/IFAS staff & Public Works.
- The goal was to put together a manual to provide a unified methodology for vegetation management that encourages the minimal use of herbicides while encouraging the implementation of alternative control.
- Pinellas county will be kicking off the program during Earth Week.

- The orientation booklet will be used by those in the field that are using herbicides and pesticides. Classes will be held for orientation and training purposes.
- PCR's goals are to reduce the use of pesticides and herbicides while not limiting our ability to address invasive exotics.
- PCR will not be using Glyphosate around dog parks or playgrounds. There is an alternative to using Glyphosate called Whack out Weed (WOW), which uses peppermint oil and is a systemic weed killer. PCR is implementing a pilot program with WOW around the dog parks and playgrounds.
- The Advisory Board members were supportive of not only the leadership provided in putting the program together, but also for taking the lead in this effort.

V. New Business

- Level of Service (LOS) Study

- Mr. Cozzie presented the draft document for the Level of Service study which was recently completed by the Novak Consulting Group. A final document will be sent out in the next week to 10 days.
- A presentation will be made to the Board of County Commissioners in May.
- Novak conducted 10 virtual interviews and were on site for a week to complete 38 interviews with groups of staff, 72 park rangers as well as horticulture and trade workers. They spent time in 9 parks witnessing the staff working. Analysis was completed on the data that PCR provided to Novak.
- Park infrastructure overview: PCR manages 32 properties, over 20,000 acres and 50+ miles of trail, 400 picnic shelters and 43 restrooms. Attendance has increased over 11% since 2018. In the FY2007 budget PCR had 346 full time employees. PCR's current staffing level is 183 full time employees. That represents a decrease of 46% in staff. We consolidated with the Environmental Lands division in 2007 which had 35 people, however, when we consolidated PCR acquired only 9 staff members. We're closer to a 56% reduction in labor force since 2007. This type of reduction can strain service delivery.
- Initial findings and recommendations from Novak confirmed PCR's commitment to quality service delivery. The park rangers work well as a team and the horticulture and trade crews function well.
- Challenges: Existing SOP's align well with best practices, but our staffing levels are insufficient to meet the current park service levels. Capacity for customer service and code enforcement is constrained, as rangers are busy cleaning restrooms and shelters, which does not allow for them to be available to educate and inform the public about the parks, or work on enforcement when necessary.
- Best management practices are being met in boat ramp cleaning, park/playground safety inspections and restroom and shelter cleaning. We're not meeting them in edging trail paths, mowing and blowing leaves.
- Deep cleaning of restrooms and shelters are not being done as much as needed. This is due to the lack of staff to complete this type of work.
- Pinellas Trail staffing – no real rule of thumb as to the requirements of what tasks should be completed. Novak recommends 3 crews of 2 people each to cover the North, South and Central portion of the county.
- This report is just a draft right now. Paul and staff will be going through the draft, making sure it's accurate and then discuss Novak's prioritized recommendations, comparing them to what ours are. A final project report and then an implementation plan will be completed afterwards.

- The Advisory Board would like to provide support for the LOS study and the final recommendations made. Paul suggested that the members speak with their appointing Commissioners via phone or email. In addition, they can attend the BOCC meeting that will be held on May 19th and show their support.
- Gladys Douglas Property Acquisition
 - The county partnered with the City of Dunedin to purchase this property. The closing is set for May 13th. The county took the lead role in applying for the FCT Grant. Seventeen entities vied for the \$10,000,000 grant. A final ranking has not been completed, nor has the project excellence points been awarded. We're hopeful we will obtain the grant funding, but if not, we will submit again in partnership with the City of Dunedin.
 - The City of Dunedin will own the property and Pinellas County will assist with the purchase of the property, restoration and renovations. The county is working with the city to outline our responsibilities. As part of the purchase, the county is requiring that the area which includes the Rosemary Bald and scrub pines be a dedicated conservation area. The habitat will be preserved and fenced off by the county. The county also considered access to Jerry Lake as a priority in this purchase. The City of Dunedin has set aside this property for passive recreation.
 - Funding to purchase the property came from the city of Dunedin (2.5 million), the county (3.5 million) and the remaining funds came from the public as well as donations raised by the Pinellas County Community Foundation. If the FCT Grant is received, the county's contribution will be reduced to the original 2 million dollars, which will allow the county to use the remaining money for other property acquisitions. We have an extensive list of properties on the list.

VI. Parks and Conservation Resources Director's Report

- Parks and Conservation Resources Director's Report
 - Mr. Cozzie offered his sincere appreciation to the Advisory Board members for their participation and dedication to the Parks and Conservation Resources Department. The members are volunteers and are really doing this for the love of Pinellas County parks. Thank you for all you do to make his job a little easier.

VII. Other Business

- Klosterman Property - This property is on the land acquisition list, which currently has over 300 properties listed. The asking price is 3.3 million dollars. The evaluation of the cost per acre is quite expensive. PCR has a total of 15 million to spend over the next 10 years. Currently there is 3.5 million dollars tied up with the Gladys Douglas property. PCR is waiting on the school board to decide how involved they will be with the acquisition.
- Stormwater Conservation Project Update – Mr. Cozzie has seen a couple of concept plans for the layout. The property was purchased with Stormwater funding. This will be a passive park. It will probably be a couple of years before it is ready for public use.

Adjournment

Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:45 a.m.
 The next meeting of the PCR Advisory Board is scheduled for July 15, 2021.
 12520 Ulmerton Rd., Largo, FL 33774 (De Soto Room)