



Pinellas County Parks and Conservation Resources Advisory Board Minutes of the Meeting on February 8, 2024

PARK BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr. Tex Carter, Mr. Miles Croom
Ms. Cynthia Grizzle, Mr. Steven Ochsner
Mr. Alan Shapiro, Ms. Julie Vayne
Ms. Heather Vernillo

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.
Joseph Morrissey, Assistant County Atty.
Ms. Deann Baker, Administrative Support Spec.

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 January 18, 2024.

I. Open Meeting/Introductions

- William "Tex Carter" introduced himself as a new member. Introductions were then made by all present.

II. Approval of Minutes – October 19, 2023

- A motion was made by Julie Vayne and was seconded by Miles Croom to approve the minutes from the meeting held on October 19, 2023.

III. Citizens to be Heard

- None present.

IV. Old Business

a) Unincorporated Seminole MSTU

- The BCC approved an MSTU in December for the Unincorporated areas in Seminole. The MSTU rate will be addressed during the budget approval process. There's the ability to approve a ¼ mil tax in the Unincorporated Seminole area. This MSTU will provide operating money for CBAAI, SYAA & SJWAA. A board will be appointed by Spring and then a proposed budget will be presented to the BCC.

b) Land Acquisition Update

- 12/23 Acquired the 9-acre Grey Oaks parcel in the Crescent Oaks community. Located at Trinity Blvd. and East Lake Rd. This will become part of the Brooker Creek Preserve.

- Empath Health is donating a parcel of land located in Tarpon Springs, north of the Anclote River. This is considered an infill property for P&CR.
- W. Klosterman parcel – 16 acres. The agreement is being finalized between the W. Klosterman Preservation Group (WKPG) and the County. The County is committing to \$1.5M and the WKPG will be raising the remaining \$1.5M by mid-September. This will become part of the Mariner’s Point Management area.
- Whitesell parcels – adjacent to the Pinewood Cultural Park, between Pinewood and 119th. Waiting on the boundary surveys to return & the total number of acreage available. The county has had the right of first refusal for this property since the 1980’s. The intention for this acquisition was to expand the Pinewood property.
- Stauffer property off Anclote Rd. – The county is interested in 9-11 acres of the 70 total acres available. P&CR is looking for a north county site to put a boat ramp in. The property was heavily contaminated but has been capped. The EPA came in years ago and did a complete cleanup on this property.
- Once these acquisitions are complete, there are only a few properties left on the highly desirable property list. The Tides Golf Course is at the top of the list. The Tides connects to Boca Ciega Park. There’s a multi-dimensional opportunity for both stormwater, park expansion trails and access to views of Boca Ciega Bay.

c) ARPA Projects Status

- P&CR has multiple projects that are being funded by ARPA. There are deadlines for encumbering funds as well as spending the funds.
- The Taylor Park playground was completed and is open to the public. Additional sites for playgrounds will be at Fort De Soto’s North Beach and Philippe Park. Walsingham Park will be next on the list. The goal is to complete 6+ playgrounds this year. Part of the ARPA funding will go towards Ray Neri Park and Highpoint Community Park. Highpoint is being worked on in conjunction with the school board and the City of Largo. The County will build it, the school will provide the land adjacent to High Point Elementary School and once it’s built, the City of Largo will take over operations and maintenance. Going to bid in June, construction to begin in November with the completion date of July 2026.
- Dansville Community Park project – located off Wilcox Rd. This will be a community park and will have walking trails, a picnic shelter, restrooms, and a small parking area. Scheduled to go to bid in September of 2024 with construction beginning in February of 2025 and a completion date of June 2026.
- Unincorporated Seminole MSTU: Cross Bayou Athletic Association – the bid will go out in May of 2024 with construction beginning later in 2024, and a completion date of December 2025.
- Ray Neri Park – this is currently out to bid. 2 contractors picked up bids for this. Hoping to start construction in July of this year with a completion date of April 2025. Estimated cost for this project is \$6M+.
- 119th lot – just East of the gardens. This is an overflow lot for events held here at Pinewood Cultural Park. Previously this was a landfill. Methane gas has been detected on the site beginning to travel off site. ARPA funds are being used for a mitigation plan. As part of the mitigation, they’ll be putting in an improved grassy parking area. Future improvements will be done once the methane has been addressed. Construction 5/25.

- McKay Creek Greenway – the design and permitting for this has become more involved. ARPA funds will be used for the design and some permitting. The construction will not use ARPA funding. The Greenway starts in the middle of the parcel here and then goes to Taylor Park and then to Walsingham Park and beyond. The Greenway is intended to provide a bike/pedestrian trail connecting the park here, Taylor and Walsingham. The City of Largo has acquired the Golf Course on 8th Ave. SW across from Taylor Park.

V. New Business

- Philippe Park Archaeological Findings – as part of the ARPA projects, there is a replacement playground program. There was a pause replacing the playground at Philippe due to the thought that there may be an old burial mound under the existing playground. The playground will be moved and best practices implemented to make sure the new playground is beyond the burial mound boundaries. In addition to best practices, we work with Florida Statutes with regards to disturbing Native American burial mounds. Dr. Pluckhahn has applied for a grant for additional signage. Additional information will be shared with this board. **ACTION: Deann will send the Philippe Park Archaeological Findings to the board.**

VI. Parks and Conservation Resources Director's Report

- Currently in the FY25 budget process.
- Instructed by the Office of Management and Budget to submit a flat line budget. The Commissioners are looking to roll back the millage rate. In addition, all departments that have a general fund have been asked to do a stress test. I.e., If we were to reduce our budget by 3% & 5%, what would we have to do differently or eliminate. We can offset some of our costs by increased revenues. We've got beach parking fees and campground fees, and these may be used to offset some costs. Our strategy will be to include fee increases, and to look at what activities we can suspend for a limited amount of time and then focus on our core missions.

VII. Other Business

- Earth Day Celebration at Brooker Creek on April 20, 10am – 3pm. At 2:00 pm, the Friends of Brooker Creek will have a cake and Birthday celebration for the Education Center that will be turning 20 years old.
- Paul has requested the Advisory Board members submit any agenda ideas you may have. Feel free to reach out to Deann. Please do so individually.
- Meetings with Friends of the Pinellas Trail – meetings have been requested by the Friends Group to bring up issues they have to discuss. They're an advocacy group for the trail.
- Julie – Will there be an update on the budget at our April meeting? Yes

With no further business, Steve Oschner made a motion to adjourn and was seconded by Alan Shapiro. The meeting was adjourned at 10:53 a.m.

The next meeting of the PCR Advisory Board is scheduled for April 18, 2024