

RESTORE ACT ADVISORY COMMITTEE, PASCO COUNTY, FLORIDA

ANNOTATED MINUTES

MAY 7, 2015

**PREPARED IN THE OFFICE OF
PAULA S. O'NEIL, CLERK & COMPTROLLER**

**THE MINUTES WERE PREPARED
IN AGENDA ORDER AS
PUBLISHED AND NOT IN THE
ORDER IN WHICH THE ITEMS WERE HEARD**

6:00 P.M.

**WEST PASCO GOVERNMENT CENTER, BOARD ROOM
8731 CITIZENS DRIVE, NEW PORT RICHEY, FLORIDA 34654**

Committee Members:

Jack Mariano, Board of County Commissioners
Kathryn Starkey (Alternate), Board of County Commissioners - **ABSENT**
Cynthia Armstrong, School Board Representative
Dr. Randy Stovall, College/University Representative
To Be Determined, Science or Fisheries Representative
Jeffrey Lowe, Job Creation Industry Representative
John Hagen, Pasco Economic Development Council Rep.
Kristin Tonkin, Tourism Representative
Bob Robertson, Citizen Representative - **ABSENT**
Bruce Mills, West Pasco Chamber of Commerce Rep.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Mariano called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

**INVOCATION
PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Ms. Sandra Bader, Deputy Clerk, gave the Invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

ROLL CALL

Ms. Bader called the roll. All members were present except Commissioner Kathryn Starkey and Mr. Bob Robertson. Ms. Kristin Tonkin arrived to the meeting at 6:26 p.m. School Board Member Cynthia Armstrong left the meeting at 6:34 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Citizens are given an opportunity to comment on any proposition coming before the Committee during Public Comment. The Committee also takes Public Comment on items to be placed on a future RESTORE Act Advisory Committee agenda.

None.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Minutes Approval from the September 4, 2014 RESTORE Act Advisory Committee Meeting
2. Minutes Approval from the October 2, 2014 RESTORE Act Advisory Committee Meeting
3. Minutes Approval from the November 20, 2014 RESTORE Act Advisory Committee Meeting

Chairman Mariano requested a motion for approval of the September 4, 2014, October 2, 2014, and November 20, 2014 minutes.

MR. MILLS MOVED approval of the September 4, 2014, October 2, 2014, and November 20, 2014 minutes; **SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER ARMSTRONG SECONDED.**

Chairman Mariano called on the motion; the vote was unanimous and the motion carried.

4. National Wildlife Federation – Jessica Koelsch

Ms. Jessica Koelsch, National Wildlife Federation, gave the background of the organization. She was involved in the gulf restoration and would be following the implementation of the restoration. She said she was from St. Petersburg and currently lived in the pan handle. She was working with the 23 counties in developing their Multi-Year Implementation Plans and selecting projects for the pot 1 monies. She said that Pasco was one of the first two Counties to prepare their Multi-Year Implementation Plan

(MYIP). The National Wildlife Federation was very focused on estuary restorations and they held the position that if the environment was restored, the economy would prosper. She noted that she submitted extensive comments on the MYIP.

The Committee, Staff, and Ms. Koelsch held discussion regarding the economy prior to the oil spill; setting the bar for everyone else; the diversity and representation on the Committee; projects needed to restore the environment and the economy; additional details needed on the MYIP for the projects; the key points raised were very helpful; and adding the projects that were not selected for information purposes.

Ms. Michele Baker, County Administrator, stated that one of things they did not think about as the MYIP was published was the need to have an annex or an attachment that spoke to the process. She said a new attachment was being created to add to the MYIP prior to publication. The scoring criteria would also be included.

5. Update on RESTORE

Mr. Keith Wiley, Environmental Lands Program Manager, stated this agenda item should have been heard prior to the National Wildlife Federation item. Some of the information would have been beneficial for discussion on the prior agenda item. He spoke about advice given to the Committee on the various projects and scoring criteria. He noted that the MYIP was published on February 24, 2015 and they received a lot of public comment just prior to the 45-day deadline. He said at last count there were 55 comments and 52 of them were a form letter submitted by the National Wildlife Federation members. He spoke regarding the process being transparent and how to reflect that to the outside. The website had been updated and several of the comments were addressed. The first MYIP that was published was a draft. He had a finalized primary MYIP that would be published. He summarized the comments which were supportive of Orange Lake; not very supportive of Sunwest; and not very supportive of the Port Richey Revitalization Plan.

Mr. Curtis Franklin, RESTORE Act Program Coordinator, said they were asking the Committee to consider the public comments and make a recommendation to Staff so they could take it to the Board of County Commissioners. He explained that the RESTORE Act required the Committee to state to the Treasury what they did and to take public comment into consideration.

Chairman Mariano spoke about the environmental factors related to Sunwest and the Port Richey Revitalization Plan.

Mr. Wiley said they needed to note the environmental factors in the MYIP.

Mr. Hagen stated that he read all of the public comment letters and said he was surprised that the National Wildlife Federation was supportive of the Orange Lake project.

Mr. Franklin said the Orange Lake project was being expanded and separators were being installed for the stormwater going into the lake. Funding was obtained from the Southwest Florida Water Management District. They would look further at the sediments going into the lake.

Mr. Hagen said he had thought a lot about the projects and the environmental impacts. He thought that the prioritization of the projects due to the RESTORE Act was a tremendous benefit. He said the Committee tried to select projects that had immediate and dramatic impacts and would be the beginning of the significant projects. He felt they were focusing on the environment and that the Committee had developed a lot of expertise. He said that several meetings had been held and all of them were in the public record.

Dr. Stovall spoke about the information gathered regarding the Port Richey Waterfront Project.

Ms. Baker stated they would work on clarifying some needed information on that project.

School Board Member Armstrong noted they would appreciate any input from Ms. Koelsch in the future and that if they had any experts that could come and speak to any of the projects, they would welcome them.

Mr. Hagen invited the National Wildlife Federation to join their organization in trying to obtain funding for the Werner Boyce State Park.

SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER ARMSTRONG LEFT THE MEETING AT 6:34 P.M.

6. Reappointment of Committee Members

a. Reappointment List

Mr. Curtis Franklin, RESTORE Act Program Coordinator, noted the following people were listed for re-appointment: Jeffrey Lowe, John Hagen, Kristin Tonkin, Bob Robertson, and Bruce Mills. All Committee members acknowledged that they would like to continue to serve on the Committee. He noted the re-appointment list would be taken to the Board of County Commissioners for action.

Chairman Mariano said he appreciated everyone that served on the Committee to include Staff.

b. Resolution 13-250

Mr. Franklin noted the Resolution was background information regarding the re-appointments.

For information only. No action taken.

7. Gulf Harbors Project Presentation and Discussion

a. Presentation

Mr. Art Haedike, Gulf Harbors Civic Association President, spoke regarding a plan for the Gulf Harbors Coastal Sanctuary which would help the environment and the economy. The proposed area was a defunct golf course, but was now a 50-acre salt barren. There were 1,300 acres which was purchased from the State. It was a natural wildlife area that was protected from the effects of the gulf such as storm surges, red tide, and oil spills. He reviewed the history of Gulf Harbors including the golf course which had been closed and neglected over the years. The area was a thriving wildlife sanctuary and hosted species such as white swans, eagles, rose spoonbills, egrets, turtles, and osprey. The Florida Audubon Society designated the site as an important bird area in 2014. He noted that the Environment Lands Acquisition Management Program (ELAMP) had recommended acquisition of the site and that the Environmental Lands Acquisition Selection Committee (ELASC) conducted a scientific survey but the property had not gone before the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) yet. He reviewed the plan which included a wildlife sanctuary; a nature walk; a public area where the golf course was located; a buffer and nature walk around the perimeter; the existing clubhouse would become restrooms and custodial areas; a resident and visitor parking lot; and a dog walk area. He noted the cost to acquire the property, the planning costs, the clean-up and improvement costs, and the annual maintenance costs. The Gulf Harbors Civic Association was willing to provide funding for the planning costs and improvement costs. The annual maintenance costs could be taken care of through a Municipal Service Benefit Unit (MSBU). He said the residents of the Gulf Harbors Coastal Sanctuary respectfully requested consideration for funding.

The Committee, Staff, and Mr. Haedike held discussion regarding who currently owned the property; the status of the property for ELAMP; the five natural lakes on the property; a possible MSBU to provide additional funding to purchase the property; public access or public facility; and possible tourism promotion.

Mr. Keith Wiley, Environmental Lands Program Manager, clarified for the record that if ELAMP purchased the property, it would become County property and would have public access.

Ms. Jessica Koelsch, National Wildlife Federation, agreed that if other funds were available, they should be sought out before RESTORE funds were considered. She liked the proposal for the property in relation to natural resources.

Mr. Peter Day, National Wildlife Federation, reported that the Gulf Harbors site was an unusual rich source of coastal and other birds. He noted that the only other salt barrens in Pasco were at the Werner Boyce State Park. He spoke regarding duck species that migrated to the area, various other uncommon birds that had been sighted in the area, the gulf course was regarded as a local birding “hot spot”, and the County should consider acquiring the property as it would complement Pasco County.

Chairman Mariano said he would like to see ELAMP purchase the property.

Further discussion followed regarding the standard operating procedure for purchasing properties; meeting with residents; what could happen to the property if it was not purchased as environmental; breaking the property up into pieces to be purchased; and the designated improvement areas for the site.

b. Submittal

None.

8. Public Comment Discussion

Mr. Curtis Franklin, RESTORE Act Program Coordinator, summarized the earlier discussion as follows: the projects would be kept the same, they would address and acknowledge more detail on the MYIP, the actions the Committee had taken would be included, the project owners would be contacted to identify and clarify any and all natural resource benefits that would apply to the properties, the natural resource benefits would be included on the MYIP, and they would coordinate with the National Wildlife Federation to have the information reviewed prior to publication.

Mr. Hagen said the Committee anticipated that the plan would grow. He said there were several projects that were scored and should be available on the internet or in some capacity so that organizations like the National Wildlife Federation could comment on them.

Mr. Keith Wiley, Environmental Lands Program Manager, noted that Staff could work on a distribution list.

Chairman Mariano asked if a big binder could be assembled from all of the meetings and their associated documentation.

Mr. Franklin reviewed the current website and showed that all of the RESTORE agendas and minutes were available. There were also links for the project presentations and summaries. Brief discussion followed.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Jessica Koelsch, National Wildlife Federation, noted that attending the meeting had changed her perspective due to the website changes and information provided. She suggested that any project needed to have elements of green infrastructure. She spoke briefly about the final MYIP. She noted she would bring up the Werner Boyce State Park with their State affiliate Florida Wildlife Federation. She said she would reach out to the members that sent in comments to see if any of them would be willing to participate more often with the RESTORE Committee.

Chairman Mariano thanked Ms. Koelsch for her comments.

Mr. Tom O'Neil, Port Richey City Manager, thanked everyone for the continued support of the Port Richey projects. He noted there had been discussions regarding additional environmental enhancements and was open for continued discussions.

Chairman Mariano said he appreciated the service of the Committee members and their willingness to serve again.

ADJOURN

The Committee adjourned at 7:33 p.m.

RESTORE ACT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
MAY 7, 2015

(SEAL)

Office of Paula S. O'Neil, Clerk & Comptroller

Prepared by: _____
Sandra Bader, Records Clerk II
Board Records Department