

**MANATEE COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL LANDS MANAGEMENT AND ACQUISITION  
ADVISORY COMMITTEE (ELMAC)  
REGULAR MEETING  
COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE CENTER  
1112 MANATEE AVENUE WEST  
Bradenton, Florida  
April 1, 2024**

Present were:


Mason Gravley, Chairman  
Terry L. McKamey, Vice-Chairman  
Brian Searcy  
Craig Copeman  
Lorraine Prosser  
Mike Burton  
Randy Cooper (entered during meeting)  
Scott Childress  
Scott Tussing  
Thomas Loeffler

Absent were:

Chris Conley  
Carol Ann Felts  
Barry Grooms  
David Landers  
Richard Larsen  
Jonathan Lynch  
Keith McMahan

Also present was:

Commissioner James Satcher  
Debra Woithe, Environmental Lands Division Manager  
Hannah Turbiville, Environmental Lands Program Coordinator  
Julissa Santana, Deputy Clerk, Clerk of the Circuit Court

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


**AGENDA**

EL20240401DOC001

1. **WELCOME**


 Members introduced themselves.


2. **MINUTES**

 A motion was made by Member Copeman, seconded by Member Tussing, and carried 9-0, to approve the minutes of March 4, 2024, with Member Grooms, Felts, Conley, Landers, Lynch, McMahan, Cooper, and Larsen absent.

(Enter Member Cooper)

3. **IFAS EXTENSION TREE-RELATED UPDATES**


 Alyssa Vinson, IFAS Extension, spoke on her role as a certified arborist, the non-profit program TreeQuest, her mission to provide awareness on the environment, and wanted to know the best ways to assist ELMAC.

 Discussion ensued regarding common ways to interact with the public, possibly a \$75,000 Federal grant opportunity, including the removal of invasive trees, and soil modification, and no professional license is required for tree trimmers in Florida.

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4. **2024 ARBOR DAY PROCLAMATION AND CELEBRATION**

 Ingrid McClellan, Scenic Manatee, encouraged ELMAC members to attend the National Arbor Day Observance events at Governor Ron DeSantis Park and Tom Bennet Park on April 26, 2024.

 Discussion ensued regarding the proclamation being presented at the Board meeting, information outreach group will be sending out a press release, and a 250-tree giveaway.


5. **CONSERVATION ACQUISITION CANDIDATE PROPERTIES**


 Debra Woithe, Environmental Lands Division Manager, provided updates on the following properties:

- Port Manatee Buffer- appraisal done for the State to purchase
- Crooked River Preserve- site visit planned for Florida Community Trust to receive the \$1.5 million that will help fund restoration, and working on submitting capital improvement plans
- Emerson Point- the Board approved a purchase price, and staff is working on contract
- Gamble Creek- appraisals came back lower than expected, staff is revisiting assumptions, and starting negotiations
- Rye Cemetery Buffer- currently under staff review
- LMR Connector – appraisal still being completed
- Rye Road Property – sent contract with purchase price, and plan to meet with owner
- Myakka Conservation Stewardship Area – owners wishing to sell, rather than donate, and working with owners


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**Mossy Island Ranch**

 Ms. Woithe, and Jeremiah Thompson (SVN), utilized a slide presentation to discuss Mossy Island Ranch. The property is on 438 acres bordering Myakka River State Park, Rural and Family Lands Program (RFLP) approved for a Conservation Easement, and the owners are interested in a strategic partnership with typical cost contributions being 50 percent County, and 50 percent RFLP.


 Discussion ensued regarding surrounding development, the property was approved by Florida Forever in December 2023, no communication with South West Florida Management District (SFWMD) at the moment, acquisition timelines, and the property would provide a great buffer to Myakka State Park.

**Golf Course Road**

 Ms. Woithe continued the slide presentation to display photos and review Golf Course Road. The property is 95 acres, has three water courses, is currently used for cattle, and was previously used for citrus farming. She also discussed water quality, stormwater improvement potential, intense development pressures, ecological quality, habitat rarity, connectivity, and water source protection.


 Discussion ensued regarding the property being a rare opportunity to preserve the water courses, reasonable restoration is needed, the home on the property is in moderate condition, and the Cannon Family Trust sent a letter offering it to the County for preservation.

**Crane Park Addition**


 Ms. Woithe continued the slide presentation to display photos and review Crane Park Addition. The property is 16 acres, there is potential for wetland mitigation, is being evaluated for a County program in combination with Crane Park, and there is a possibility of a


partnership opportunity with Conservation Foundation of The Gulf Coast (CFGC) for option contracts.

**Verna Bethany**

 Ms. Woithe briefly reviewed the Verna Bethany property. At this time, she would not recommend it over the other properties presented, staff does not plan on looking more into it, due to the lack of unique high-quality habitats, and it's surrounded by low density development.

**Grove Park**


 Ms. Woithe continued the slide presentation to display photos, and site plans of Grove Park. She raised questions staff has regarding completion of purchase, public safety concerns, the value based on other appraisals, and believes more time and consideration is needed before a recommendation is made.

 Peter Constantino, representing Grove Park, stated 20 acres could be turned into a park, and would be a great addition to the County.


6. **CITIZEN/GUEST COMMENTS**

 There being no citizen comments, Chairman Gravley closed citizen comments.


7. **PRIORITIZATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

 Discussion ensued regarding conservation easements, Golf Course Road property will be expensive to acquire, more information is needed with Grove Park, and habitat types on Verna Bethany.


Motion

 A motion was made by Member Copeman, seconded by Member Tussing, to move forward on recommending Mossy Island Ranch, Golf Course Road, and Crane Park, to the Board of County Commissioners for consideration.


Motion- Withdrawn


 Member Copeman withdrew his motion. Member Tussing seconded the withdraw.


Motion- Mossy Island Ranch


 A motion was made by Member Copeman, seconded by Member Proser, to move forward on recommending Mossy Island Ranch, to the Board of County Commissioners for consideration. The motion carried 10-0, with Member Grooms, Felts, Conley, Landers, Lynch, McMahon, and Larsen absent.

Motion- Golf Course Road


 A motion was made by Member Copeman, seconded by Member Burton, to move forward on recommending Golf Course Road, to the Board of County Commissioners for consideration. The motion carried 10-0, with Member Grooms, Felts, Conley, Landers, Lynch, McMahon, and Larsen absent.

 Discussion ensued regarding Crane Park Addition should be a property that other departments in the County should pursue, could always approach it in the future, and Grove Park and Verna Bethany could be revisited once more information is provided.


 Debra Woithe, Environmental Lands Division Manager, stated staff will review the properties, provide more information, and work on furthering discussions with other departments.

 Discussion continued regarding other insight is not needed for the Verna Bethany property with the criteria that has been listed, no reason for further investigation, would not be wise use of effort, and the willingness of the owners.

8. **NEW BUSINESS AND COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS**

 Debra Woithe, Environmental Lands Division Manager, announced that an at-large seat on ELMAC is expiring, and the application has been uploaded online, and shared on social media. She encouraged citizens to apply, as the only requirement needed is to be a resident of Manatee County.

9. **ADJOURN**

 There being no further business, Chairman Gravley adjourned the meeting at 7:55 p.m.

Minutes Approved: