

**MANATEE COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL LANDS MANAGEMENT AND ACQUISITION
ADVISORY COMMITTEE (ELMAC)
REGULAR MEETING
COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE CENTER, 5TH FLOOR, MANATEE ROOM
1112 Manatee Avenue West
Bradenton, Florida
May 5, 2025**

Present were:

Mason Gravley, Chairman
Kate Horne, Vice-Chairman
Mike Burton
Scott Childress
Randy Cooper
Eric DiSilvestro
Kyle Fisher
Alyssa Gay
David Landers
Merrie Lynn Parker
Charles Richards
Brian Searcy, (Entered during meeting)


There is one vacant seat.

Absent were:

Barry Grooms
Jonathan Lynch
Richard Larsen
Scott Tussing

Also present was:

Charlie Hunsicker, Natural Resources Director
Debra Woithe, Environmental Lands Division Manager
Hannah Turbiville, Environmental Lands Program Coordinator
Mike Elswick, Resource Management Division Manager
Hannah Bishop, Deputy Clerk, Clerk of the Circuit Court

 Chairman Gravley called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.


AGENDA

EL20250505DOC001

1. **WELCOME**

 Chairman Gravley welcomed Members and guests.

2. **MINUTES**

 A motion was made by Member Landers, seconded by Member Childress, and carried 11-0, with Members Grooms, Lynch, Larsen, and Tussing absent, to approve the minutes of March 3, 2025.

3. **VICE-CHAIRMAN**


 Chairman Gravley opened the floor to nominations for Vice-Chairman.

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(Continued)

Nominations – Vice-Chairman


Member Cooper by Member Burton
Nomination withdrawn by Member Burton
Member Horne by Member Cooper

 A motion was made by Member Cooper, seconded by Member Burton, and carried 11-0, with Members Grooms, Lynch, Larsen, and Tussing absent, to close nominations. Kate Horne was appointed as Vice-Chairman by Majority vote.


4. **CONSERVATION REFERENDUM FUNDING UPDATE**

 Sheila McLean, Chief Financial Officer, Financial Management, utilized a slide presentation reviewing environmental lands millage, establishment of millage, Resolution R-20-105, acquisition funded environmental lands funds, grants awarded and received, operating programs funded with environmental lands funds, funded staff positions, Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) funded with environmental lands funds, financial position as of fiscal year (FY) ended 2024, and FY 2025 through April 30, 2025, balance sheet and income statement as of September 30, 2024, cash balances, operating fund revenues, expenditures, limited general obligation bonds series 2023 (Debt Service), debt service schedule (principal and interest), and the environmental lands millage fund (and partner funds).

(Enter Member Searcy)

 Discussion ensued regarding the funds used for the purchase of for the Emerson Point Property, coupon rate being seven percent, bonds, interest rates, Environmental Lands Acquisition Management and Acquisition (ELMAC) Ordinance and responsibility, use of the funds, an understanding of the allocation of the funds, growth in Fiscal Year (FY) 2025, and assessed values. EL20250505DOC002


9. **NEW BUSINESS/COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS**

 All Members and staff introduced themselves and shared their experience in the County.

5. **ARBOR DAY 2025**

 Hannah Turbiville, Environmental Lands Program Coordinator, shared the proclamation from the April 15, 2025 Board of County Commissioner (BOCC) meeting, provided an update of the Arbor Day events, held on April 25, 2025, plantings at Palma Sola Scenic Highway Park and Coach Eddie Shannon Park, and Keep Manatee Beautiful will have a tree giveaway at the Downtown Farmer’s Market on May 31, 2025.

6. **CONSERVATION ACQUISITION CANDIDATE PROPERTIES/EXISTING PROJECT UPDATES**

 Debra Woithe, Environmental Lands Division Manager, utilized a slide presentation to provide updates on ELMAC properties, existing projects, general updates, and staff reports.

Mossy Island Ranch

Ms. Woithe continued the slides reviewing the 443-acre property, working ranch adjacent to Myakka River State Park, sustainable cattle, hay, and sod production, native

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(Continued)


woodlands, freshwater marshes, wet prairies, lake swamps, qualified for Florida Forever and Rural and Family Lands Program Conservation Easement by SVN Saunders (JT), and initial, second, and current consideration.

Discussion ensued regarding putting a conservation easement on the property, prevents further development, purpose of the easement, concerns with the acquisition, costs, management and maintenance of the property, acquisition versus conservation easement, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS), partner funds, and wildlife corridor.

A motion was made by Member Richards, seconded by Member Burton, and carried 12-0, with Members Grooms, Lynch, Larsen, and Tussing absent, to endorse the acquisition of Mossy Island Ranch, and the County would cover 100 percent of the cost of the Conservation Easement.

Betts Property


 Ms. Woithe continued the slides reviewing a new candidate property, 41 acres of land, and displayed photos of the property.


 Discussion ensued regarding the amount of land and water on the property, North Crooked River Ranch update, and an understanding of the appraisal.

Emerson Point Expansion

Ms. Woithe stated the ~~contract with the State will be presented to Board on~~ May 8, 2025, Board of County Commissioners Land Use meeting, sold to the State for \$11,940,000 for continued conservation, and there will be a long-term lease for County management.

Existing Candidate Property Update

 Ms. Woithe provided updates on Golf Course Road, North Pine Island, Crane Park addition, Rye Cemetery buffer, Rye Road property, Anson Road properties, Sweet Bay property, Rattlesnake key parcels, LMR connector, B Squared Ranch, North Crooked River Preserve, Thundercloud West, Gamble Creek Preserve, Perico Bayou, and Prairie View property.


 Ms. Woithe stated the next meeting is July 14, 2025.

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7. **CITIZEN COMMENTS**

 There being no citizens present, Chairman Gravley did not open citizen's comments.

8. **PRIORITAZTION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**


 A motion was made by Member Landers, seconded by Member Fisher, and carried 12-0, to direct staff to proceed with due diligence in anticipation of a purchase contract review, and approval by the Board of County Commissioners for the Betts Property.


Discussion ensued regarding the appraisal and funding towards the Pine Island Property.

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(Continued)

9. **NEW BUSINESS/COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS**

 Chairman Gravley ~~shared-announced~~ the Corridor Connect Summit ~~event-intakes~~ place in Orlando, on June 3-~~through~~-5, 2025, and ~~stated-noted~~ Debra Woithe will be speaking as a panelist.

 Charlie Hunsicker, Natural Resources Director, shared a pamphlet on Duette Preserve 2025 to 2026 Quality Wildlife Management Program. EL20250505DOC004

There being no further new business or committee member comments, Chairman Gravley closed committee member comments.

10. **ADJOURN**

There being no further business, Chairman Gravley adjourned the meeting at 8:25 p.m.

Minutes Approved: _____

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