

**DEBMANATEE COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL LANDS MANAGEMENT AND ACQUISITION  
ADVISORY COMMITTEE (ELMAC)  
REGULAR MEETING  
COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE CENTER, 5TH FLOOR, MANATEE ROM  
1112 Manatee Avenue West  
Bradenton, Florida  
May 6, 2024**

Present were:

Mason Gravley, Chairman  
Mike Burton  
Randy Cooper  
Carol Ann Felts  
David Landers (entered during meeting)  
Richard Larsen  
Jonathan Lynch  
Lorraine Prosser  
Brian Searcy  
Scott Tussing

Absent were:

Scott Childress  
Chris Conley  
Craig Copeman  
Barry Grooms  
Thomas Loeffler  
Keith McMahan  
Terry L. McKamey, Vice-Chairman

Also present were:

Commissioner Jason Bearden  
Debra Woithe, Environmental Lands Division Manager  
Mike Elswick, Resource Management Division Manager  
Vicki Tessmer, Board Records Supervisor, Clerk of the Circuit Court

**AGENDA**

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1. **WELCOME AND CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Gravley called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

2. **MINUTES**

Motion was made by Member Tussing, seconded by Member Lynch, and carried 9-0, with Members Childress, Conley, Copeman, Grooms, Landers, Loeffler, McMahan and McKamey absent, to approve the minutes April 1, 2024.

3. **ARBOR DAY 2024**

Debra Woithe, Environmental Lands Division Manager, displayed a slide of the 2024 Arbor Day Celebration which took place at Governor Ron DeSantis Park, as well as plantings at GT Bray Park, and Tom Bennett Park.

Chairman Gravley relayed information from a 1917 National Geographic article regarding preserving sequoias.

Ms. Woithe noted there will be a presentation to the Parrish Civic Association in July.

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4. **FLORIDA WILDLIFE CORRIDOR**

Debra Woithe, Environmental Lands Division Manager, noted there is a webinar on Planning to

Protect the Florida Wildlife Corridor. The webinar offered good information, for viewers of all levels of knowledge regarding the corridor. The link for webinar is as follows:  
[https://clicktime.symantec.com/15tStdxovD29EgccC455a?h=t\\_DLY19Ra-eE1QUg-deck-DOD1noI8AOAbkev5NCHq4=&u=https://1000fof.org/upcoming-webinars/past/](https://clicktime.symantec.com/15tStdxovD29EgccC455a?h=t_DLY19Ra-eE1QUg-deck-DOD1noI8AOAbkev5NCHq4=&u=https://1000fof.org/upcoming-webinars/past/)

5. **CONSERVATION ACQUISITION CANDIDATE PROPERTIES**

**Existing Project Updates**

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

- Emerson Point Expansion - Contract to be on the May 14 Board of County Commissioners agenda for execution, closing in 60 days, and refined the “Reserve Parcel boundary”
- Gamble Creek Preserve - Owners ordered appraisal; new consideration if agreement cannot be reached, land for up to eight homesites along the river could be kept and appraisal updated to new value, and awaiting official approval from Southwest Florida Water Management District

(Enter Member Landers)

Discussion ensued regarding access to preserve if land for homesites is carved out, the homesites location would be a huge loss, since both sides of the river would not be preserved, and it is questionable if carving out the home sites would affect the appraisal.

- Myakka Conservation Stewardship Area: University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) considering home on site; contract submitted to the County Attorney’s Office for review (environmental deed restriction, extended possession, and name for preserve (Myakka Stewardship Preserve); and request for Board approval of contract anticipated in June


Discussion ensued that the offer is under appraised value.

- Rye Road - Awaiting signature on Contract
- Perico Bayou - Impact fee credits not available within the City of Bradenton; and transfer of existing County property being considered
- No specific update for other candidate properties

Discussion continued regarding addresses for properties are included on the website, and the upland in Perico Bayou is only one acre.

**New Projects**

- Verna Bethany - 47 acres, did not come across with higher values, no strong natural resources, and not near conservation areas.
- Hundred Acre Woods (Grove Park) - Closing for development May 23, high cost for purchase and maintenance, and Public Works considerations for possible flood mitigation

 Discussion ensued regarding the site plan for Grove Park, good trees on site, but requires a significant investment, some connectivity to downstream waters, not connected to other conservation lands, habitat is not the best quality, good use for stormwater management or an active park, this is not the right program, and Florida Communities Trust can only have three open projects at one time, so one would have to be closed prior to opening another one.

Ms. Woithe provided a history of Rattlesnake Key and noted one of the local Legislatures has spearheaded the purchase of the property. This was a special consideration, and the appraised value and asking price are not close. The State’s Florida Forever program has tried to purchase the property previously, but the owners want a higher selling price.



Bryan Parnell, Deputy County Administrator, noted the asking price is much higher than the appraisal.

Ms. Woithe continued to note the Board of County Commissioners sent a letter to the State supporting the purchase.

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6. **CITIZEN COMMENTS**



Merrie Lynn Parker questioned if the funds promised to the State was \$3 million, and did not support the Hundred Acre Wood property.

Mark Proch, Senior Ranger, appreciates what ELMAC is doing, and they look forward to working on the properties. There will be 26,000 wire grass plugs planted in Duette Preserve on June 1. Registration is required for volunteering.



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

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

Chairman Gravley opened the floor for comments. There will be no further discussion on the Verna Bethany property.

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

There were no Member comments or new business. The next meeting is July 1, 2024.

9. **ADJOURN**

There being no further business, Chairman Gravley adjourned the meeting at 7:09 p.m.

Minutes Approved: \_\_\_\_\_