

July 3, 2024

MINUTES OF THE CONSERVATION COLLIER LAND ACQUISITION
ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
Naples, Florida, July 3, 2024

LET IT BE REMEMBERED, the Conservation Collier Land Acquisition Advisory Committee in and for the County of Collier, having conducted business herein, met on this date at 9:00A.M. in REGULAR SESSION at the Growth Management Department Building, 2800 North Horseshoe Drive, Naples Florida with the following members present:

CHAIR: Michele Lenhard
VICE CHAIR: Ron Clark
Gary Bromley
Rhys Watkins
John Courtright
Nick Pearson
Austin Howell
Oriany Brito
Christopher Satter (Excused)

ALSO PRESENT:

Matthew Denison, Manager, Conservation Collier
Summer Araque, Environmental Supervisor, Conservation Collier
Melissa Hennig, Environmental Specialist I, Conservation Collier
Sally Ashkar, Assistant County Attorney
Jaime Cook, Director of Development Review

1. Roll Call

Chair Lenhard called the meeting to order at 9:00 A.M. Roll call was taken, and a quorum was established with 8 Members present.

A. Approval of CCLAAC Members attending the meeting remotely

Not Applicable

2. Approval of Agenda

Mrs. Lenhard moved to approve the agenda. Mrs. Lenhard would like to add 4B and make a line item for an update on the Exceptional Benefits ~~Aggravation~~ Application for Railhead. Second by Mr. Bromley. Carried unanimously 8 – 0.

3. Approval of June 5, 2024, Meeting Minutes

Mrs. Lenhard moved to approve the minutes of the June 5, 2024; meeting as presented. Second by Mr. Bromley. Carried unanimously 8 – 0.

4. Old Business

A. Acquisition Updates - Current Acquisition Status report updated monthly in advance of CCLAAC meeting provided as part of meeting packet and under Acquisition News at www.conservationcollier.com for information purposes. The report will be updated monthly (last updated July 3, 2024) including parcels the County has acquired to date, offers made by the County, pending acquisitions and those properties where the owner withdrew the application.

Ms. Araque provided the PowerPoint “*Conservation Collier Acquisition Updates – July 3, 2024*” and noted:

- Cycles 10, 11A, 11B and 12A – 73 properties acquired for a total of 615.6 acres.
- Cycle 11B, Cycle 12A, 12B and 2024 – 45 parcels pending acquisition totaling 2,478.45 acres.
- Cycle 12B – Approved by Board on June 25, 2024
- Cycle 10 & 11A – All properties have closed
- Cycle 11B – 2 Pending properties, Descoteau in probate & Buckley
- Cycle 12A – Offer letters have been sent out for all multi-parcel projects
- Cycle 12B – 13 properties approved by the Board for A-list totaling 753 acres
- Cycle 2024 – William’s farm, nothing has changed. Property will probably not have any movement in a couple of months.

- **Mrs. Lenhard** would like for an update on Environmental studies as they come out for the committee.

B. Update on the Exceptional Benefits Application for Railhead

- Appraisal was received by transportation. Appraisal was twice what Conservation Collier paid for the property. Transportation is proposing to pay what Conservation Collier paid for the property plus the \$35,000 exceptional benefit.

Speakers

Brad Cornell, Audubon of Southwest Florida noted:

- the commitment from County transportation division to pay current appraised value. On the exceptional benefits ordinance requires any diversion of land purchased for conservation purposes be compensated or balanced with something more valuable than land being transferred, also could be a combination of capital and land.
- On April 3rd the application written by transportation division states 6.9 acres, it has moved to 7.5 acres totaling 8.9% more acreage being required which was not mentioned.
- RWA report on pond siting mentions all open land options for pond sites were evaluated, but the southeast portion of the north preserve did not get evaluated.
- Audubon Western Everglades proposed the southeast portion of the north preserve and site 3 as the best alternative for a pond to not destroy high value scrub preserve and wetlands. In terms of Ecology, Site 3 meets the criteria stated in the transportation department's application to have one consolidated pond site. Also, it makes sense for wildfire safety as the pine flatwoods that would be turned into a pond are adjacent to Mediterra, which are vulnerable to wildfires. Lastly, site 3 is deemed as a wetland per South Florida Water Management's District wetland conservation easement. However, it is a young pine flatwood, not a wetland.
- The objection rose by consultants, using site 3 would require to ask the Water Management District to vacate or move their conservation easements, but the county has to ask South Florida Water Management District for vacation of conservation easements to the right-of-way anyway.
- Another point: No provisions have been made on wildlife crossings. In April, transportation talked about an 18-inch pipe. It was dismissed as "completely unuseful", by Dr. Dan Smith from the University of Florida, who is a statewide expert in transportation and wildlife conflicts and citing wildlife underpasses.
- A 6-foot-by-10-foot box culvert-sized underpass needs to be under all 4 lanes of road for Bears, Deer, and other large animals to cross. The objection is that the underpass needs to meet grading requirements of the railroad. There is a proposed high area of about 17-18 feet high of scrub dunes. It is recommended to put the ledges under the 6-by-10 box culvert. If there's water in the bottom, ledges will allow wildlife to continue to use when it's wet.
- Audubon of Southwest Florida has asked the county manager and Trinity Scott, head of transportation, to delay sites as it is believed they have not considered the alternatives that have been recommended. It is not ready for board as board has only considered site 1.
- Noted by Mr. Cornell, an overpass was discussed in a call with Dr. Smith. An overpass is preferable over an underpass because it looks more natural. Animals do not see a change in terrain.
- **On June 11th** the Board approved payment to the Trust for Public Lands for preparation of a grant application for the acquisition of the Seminole Guld Rail Line and to pledge up to \$241,611 toward the local match for the grant. There has been no coordination by conservation collier, motor safety and trail, walking and riding public which needs to be done as soon as possible due to having to close by 2026.
- **Mrs. Lenhard** questioned what the capital expense budget for railhead was. In changing the roadway in terms of capital budget. Mrs. Lenhard asked if whatever the acquisition price is, will the capital go back to the budget. Also, she asked if transportation is purchasing piece of property where tortoises' burrows are, the cost of relocation falls on conservation collier.
- **Ms. Araque** noted the capital could be from \$250,00 to \$300,000 for cost relating to fencing for roadway. The reason for this pricing is due to not having quotes so it could be higher or lower. It is more costly to do work in the area because of the number of tortoises. Also, noted the relocation costs do not fall on conservation collier, but possible ongoing costs of monitoring are things that were anticipated. Ms. Araque noted it will be going back to budget once we get past exceptional benefits there will be a sit down with transportation to prepare for construction.

- ***Ms. Araque noted*** the acreage increase was revised due to it being close to property line which was not enough width for maintenance nor wildlife movement.
- ***Ms. Araque*** introduced Mr. Denison as the temporary manager for railhead preserve.
- An update on Mr. Cornell & Audubon of Southwest Florida proposed sites. Noted by Mrs. Araque, these sites were not taken into consideration due to the Water Management District saying that their pond-siting needed to be west of the railroad tracks as they are in separate basins. Also, no response from property owners was received and Transportation was told by the district they needed to go west of the railroad tracks.
- The board will be approving the transfer of land and money, along with, the demonstrated need, the price that would be reimbursed to the program, and the exceptional benefit to the program.

Mrs. Lenhard moved to section 5.

5. New Business

A. Initial Criteria Screening Report (ICSR) and Ranking

1. B&G Landholdings

- a. Ms. Hennig Provided an update regarding the 4 noncontiguous parcels that total 21.68 acres. 3 Parcels south of 75 in holdings of Picayune Strand State Forest, 1 parcel north of 75 adjacent to the 900-acre Hussy property recently acquired by Collier County. Parcels scored 195 out of 400.
- b. Ecological value score: “Relatively High”. Spread amongst the 4 parcels there is Cypress, Cypress/Pine Cabin Pond/Cabbage Palm, and Wet Flatwoods. No listed plant species.
- c. Ecosystem Connectivity: High because three of the parcels are completely surrounded by Picayune.
- d. Human Value Score: “Not so great” although it is accessible it is only for bird watching and hiking, and hunting. All have trails through them. Potential for public use. North parcel should have access once project for Hussy Property gets done, it is only accessible through a very rough trail. No Outstanding aesthetics or cultural enhancements were observed.
- e. Restoration and Management Score: High due to parcels being small and having low exotics and possibility of burn assistance from Picayune. Slim to none - possibility of burning parcel to north alone due to being 1.67 acres. No major issues anticipated.
- f. Zoning is AGG, but all parcels are also in the rural fringe mixed-use district sending lands and all of them have the first TDR stripped.
- g. Dwelling units are not allowed with use anymore on these.
- h. The three southern parcels are within the Florida Forever Boundary, but the state is not buying in the area. They are actively buying in Fakahatchee Strand but not in this area. Parcels are being too small; they’re not putting money into this area now.

Mrs. Lenhard moved to recommend the placement of B&G Landholdings on the C-list, second by Mr. Bromley. Carried unanimously 8-0.

B. Target Protection Mailing Areas 2024. Mrs. Araque updates:

- **Caracara preserve** is the first target area. The western part of the northern property is in process, while the other half of the property, owners are not interested in selling.
- **Pepper Ranch preserve** area, there is a focus on the eastern side of the preserve. The center part of the preserve has been tapped out along Trafford Oaks Road. Property

- owners within the preserve that showed interest in selling, have sold to Conservation Collier, or to somebody else.
- Conservation Collier is not targeting areas to the north and southeast because they are part of the RLSA, and those will not be targeted for now.
 - **Railhead Scrub Preserve**, there is interested in the railroad area adjacent to the preserve, but Mrs. Araque stated that does not mean a letter will be sent.
 - It was asked, “is there any harm in adding it into the TPMA?”, regarding the Two Lakes property adjacent to the east side Railhead Scrub Preserve. It will be included as a Revision.
 - **Red Root Preserve** is a 19.5-acre parcel and a 4.5-acre parcel. Discussions at the subcommittee meeting with transportation, noted that transportation could target the 4.5-acre parcel, but it was suggested by Conservation Collier that they still include 4.5-acre parcel as it is of lesser quality than the existing preserve.
 - **Four multi-parcel project areas:**
 - **Winchester Head and Red Maple Swamp are areas that have been in existence for 20 years and 70-80% of the property has been acquired.**
 - **Panther walk & The Gore Area:**
 - Conservation collier is looking to possibly expand these mutli-parcel projects if a big percentage of the adjacent properties are acquired. Letters will be sent out to properties along the perimeter to see if property owners would be interested in applying.
 - At the Gore, 12-13 property owners have accepted offers.
 - **Winchester Head:** No expansion proposal
 - **Red Maple Swamp:** No expansion proposal
 - MOU approved for Panther Walk Preserve land in the area north of 60th. Florida Wildlife Corridor Foundation pays half of the acquisition price based on the MOU. North of 60, seven property owners have accepted offers.
 - Nancy Payton Preserve is a very important area as Panthers still move through the area. This area has been targeted for years. Along with Nancy Payton Preserve is Buckley, this is a CLIP 4 priority Two Habitat, and is on the board-approved A-list.
 - North Bell Meade Preserve, acquired 256 acres in 2022. It has since been building upon the acreage and the core focus is to build upon a specific area.
 - Bayshore Area, this area had applied in cycle 10, and ranked as A, but they did not move forward with getting an appraisal. It continues to be a target area and letters will be sent.
 - Shell Island Preserve has added two new parcels on the west side. West side of Collier Boulevard.

Mrs. Lenhard introduced Mitch Barazowski to review the Brewer Parcel Interim Land Management Plan & Naming.

C. Brewer Parcel Interim Land Management Plan & Naming

- **Brewers landing preserve** land management plans for this meeting. A new area to target is 2.7 acres a letter will be sent once the board has approved the name of the preserve. Discussions have been made about areas to the east, but areas are plotted as estate state lots this will become another multi parcel project area - for now we have enough of those.

- The recent acquisition is about 14 acres with the purpose of the management plan to establish Conservation Colliers management authority.
- This preserve is important due to having wildlife resource in form of a swallowtail kite roost that stop to rest and refuel before their journey
- This property is utilized by Florida Panther and other threatened endangered wading birds in area
- On this preserve the main goal is to not disturb the kite roost
- The preserve is not suitable in any way, shape, or form for a public recreation site. It is quite small and wet.
- We're worried about trespassing such as off roading, we want to maintain the existing fences and gates along canal and monitor the preserve.
- Vegetation removal has been done in areas that are more of a shrub scrub habitat which has been successful which wouldn't cost more then a few thousand dollars each year.
- The name he would like to suggest is Brewers Landing Preserve in honor of Dick Brewer who used his own personal funds to purchase this property to protect the roost.
- Dick' last report said there were 42 kites.

Mrs. Lenhard moved to accept the Management Plan as presented. Second by Mr. Bromley.

Mrs. Lenhard moved to approve the naming of "Brewer's Landing Preserve" Second by Mr. Bromley. Carried unanimously 8 – 0.

6. Subcommittee Reports

A. Lands Evaluation & Management – Chair, Ron Clark – Next meeting is yet to be scheduled.
Mr. Clark noted the Brewer parcel will be discussed at the meeting.

B. Outreach – Chair, John Courtright – Next meeting to be scheduled.
No update necessary.

C. Ordinance Policy and Rules – Chair, Michele Lenhard - Last meeting December 18, 2023
No update necessary.

Mrs. Lenhard moved to Coordinator Communications

7. Coordinator Communications

A. Reminder – August meeting cancelled

B. BCC Items Related to Conservation Collier

1. Previously Heard

- a. 6/25 BCC – Gore Preserve – Langell Trust & Sardinas
- b. 6/25 BCC – Diveley Trust
- c. 6/25 BCC – Cycle 12B Active Acquisition List
- d. 6/25 BCC – Capital Project Fund Budget Amendment

2. Upcoming

- a. 7/9 BCC – Railhead Scrub Exceptional Benefits request
- b. 7/9 BCC – First amendment to Agreement 21-7903 for Preserve Area Maintenance

- c. 7/23 BCC – Hughes and Wilson-Mason Parcels
- d. 7/23 BCC – Aristizabal & Ayra Parcels

8. Chair/Committee Member Comments

None

9. Public General Comments

Richard Blonna

- Update on the WISC investment, which has been an A-list property
- It got all the way to BCC and got snagged over conflicting appraisals and not approved
- The Marco Island committee wrote a letter requesting that as a capital acquisition Marco Island buy the property he is committed to argue it for us and the letter did indeed get on the agenda
- WISC being part of a potential 3 parcel mini preserve also since it had such a value BCC would want to acquire.
- If unable to get a new fund with open space preservation fund he may be able to get the money to park it in the Community Parks Foundation and wait to see what happens if not acquire it again

Mrs. Lenhard mentioned if it is brought back, we would put through our process which is much quicker. It was a price hang up not the environmental value of application.

10. Staff Comments

Ms. Hennig mentioned there will be a lot of purchase agreements in the next couple of months. The ones that will close this year, which is before October 1st, are the ones going to July 23rd, anything that goes to board after that will have to wait until October 1st to close.

11. Next Meeting – September 11, 2024

There being no further business for the good of the County, the meeting was adjourned by order of the chair at 12:00pm.

**Conservation Collier Land
Acquisition Advisory Committee**

Michele Lenhard, Chair

These minutes approved by the Committee on _____ as presented _____ or as amended _____.