

Rural Fringe Mixed Use District (RFMUD) Focus on North Belle Meade Sending Land January 27, 2016

Introduction:

This public workshop focused on the topic of the Rural Fringe Mixed Use District Master Plan (Plan) North Belle Meade Sending area, the associated issues, and generating ideas for potential solutions. Despite a heavy rain event through the afternoon and evening, over 50 people attended.

Staff presented a brief overview of the Plan and highlighted the issues unique to the North Belle Meade Sending area (see panel questions, below), with explanations of each issue. The presentation also featured a summary of the public comments provided at the first workshop, and the comments provided from the on-line Sending area survey.

Following the staff presentation, a panel was seated to discuss possible solutions to the North Belle Mead issues. The panelists were Bob Mulhere – Planning Director for Hole Montes, Nancy Payton – SW Florida Representative for Florida Wildlife Association, and Tim Durham – Senior Ecologist for Passarella & Associates. Five questions were asked for each panelist’s response.



Panel Summary:

Five questions posed to panelists and their responses.

In Sending areas (where development rights have been removed), what should the fulfillment of conservation goals as conceived in the Plan look like, say, in 20 years?

Panelist 1. Natural Resource Protection Area (NRPA) will be under Collier ownership through conveyance/willing sellers and managed by Conservation Collier. NRPA will be rehydrated via

Golden Gate Canal diversion, no reservoir. Wildlife crossings or land bridge to connect NRPA and Picayune Strand Forest. Currently listed species such as the red-cockaded woodpecker will be thriving. Collier County will be implementing a North Belle Meade Habitat Conservation Plan for public infrastructure (roads). NRPA becomes destination for passive nature-based recreation

Panelist 2. There is a single management entity for Sending Lands, maybe best option Conservation Collier. There is hydrologic sheet flow. Public access for passive recreation. There is significant land connectivity.

Panelist 3. Lands are available to public for active recreation such as horseback riding, camping, fishing, and biking. Landowners in Sending area received fair deal and were made whole.

If the current pattern of fragmented ownership and maintenance continues, what issues would persist?

Panelist 1. With lack of connectivity the same issues today will continue with hydrology and listed species. Exotics will continue to be a problem. If lands are fragments the Plan hasn't been successfully completed with fair compensation to land owners.

Panelist 2. The issues continue with hydrology, economics of land management, and exotics.

Panelist 3. Plan goals will not be met – Final Order settlement in question. Inability to manage – remove exotics, restore habitat, enforcement. Natural resource values and wildlife use will diminish

What alternatives can you suggest to achieve the vision you first described? (e.g., ownership alternatives; management alternatives?)

Panelist 1. Make sure adequate compensation is provided. Simplify the Plan; err on making the landowners whole.

Panelist 2. Collier County must step forward to accept the Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) conveyance lands. Accept land and bank TDR restoration/endowment money until management can be "conservation of scale;" in the interim, possibly a land trust. Swap program between NRPA and isolated western sending lands. North Belle Meade Habitat Conservation Plan - county mitigates infrastructure impacts in North Belle Meade to help secure large blocks of conservation land.

Panelist 3. Increase the TDRs that Sending can generate. There are issues with the cost of restoration and what a landowner gets in return. The process for TDRs must be simple. Consider allowing the use of TDRs to mitigate for urban area infill native vegetation requirements. Make it easier for landowners to sell credits.

What funding mechanisms can you envision that might be feasible to allow consolidation of responsibility for restoration and maintenance? (e.g., more TDR credits, grants, mitigation banking, etc.)

Panelist 1. Mitigation bank, or ROMA, may be relevant, but can have challenges. Need to put together the numbers for maintenance cost so it can be better understood what is feasible.

Panelist 2. Revive Conservation Collier. Maybe a “green utility fee.” Use mitigation for wetland and wildlife. Partner with downstream communities and agencies that benefit from North Belle Meade rehydration. Panther Refuge is interested in expansion. There are other plans and programs that could coordinate to get results.

Panelist 3. Use TDRs in urban area for native vegetation mitigation.

Do you have a preferred alternative for ownership and long term maintenance, among the ideas that have been suggested?

Panelist 1. Ownership Collier County, and long term maintenance Conservation Collier.

Panelist 2. Collier County is best alternative.

Panelist 3. Preference is Collier County, would like to see State park with active recreation.

Following the panel discussion, the audience provided their comments.

Public Discussion

Consider increasing TDR demand by decreasing the Receiving area minimum of 40 acres.

Make Receiving areas more attractive to worldwide developers, like Celebration, FL.

Concerns that the program is the big guy vs. little guy, and animals vs. people.

Concerns that eminent domain is coming.

Assessed value of land is more than the value of a TDR. No incentive to create TDR.

To increase land connectivity and management efficiency, consider working with landowners that have established mitigation lands to convey them to Collier County, with their funds for maintenance.

Big developers have their own Sending lands and credits so don't need to buy others.

A non-regulatory R&M should be considered as part of the feasibility for mitigation- i.e. non-mitigation might be simpler and less costly overall.

STAFF PRESENT: Commissioner Tim Nance

Kris Van Lengen, Community Planning Manager (Staff Liaison)

Mike Bosi, Director, Planning and Zoning

Anita Jenkins, Principal Planner, Community Planning

Greg Ault, AECOM, consultant

Panel Biographies

Tim Durham – Senior Ecologist for Passarella & Associates

Tim Durham has over 30 years experience as the lead environmental consultant for a variety of projects in Florida and the southeast U.S. He has extensive experience preparing local, state and federal permitting documents, providing listed species evaluations, and designing and permitting wetland mitigation and habitat conservation banking. Tim has a Bachelor of Science degree in civil engineering for the University of Florida and is a member of the Association of Environmental Professionals and Society of Wetland Scientists.

Nancy Payton - Florida Wildlife Federation

Nancy Payton joined the Florida Wildlife Federation (Federation) in 1994, the same year the Federation opened its Southwest Florida Office in Naples. The Federation was founded in 1936 and is the state affiliate of National Wildlife Federation. As the Southwest Florida Field Representative, she coordinates the Federation's Western Everglades rural lands and wildlife protection campaigns. These campaigns include growth management, native wildlife protection, land conservation, and habitat preservation.

Bob Mulhere - Director of Planning for Hole Montes, Inc.

Bob has more than 27 years of professional planning experience. Prior to employment at Hole Montes, Mr. Mulhere operated his own consulting firm. Between 1989 and 2001, Bob was employed by Collier County Government and was the Director of Planning from 1996 through 2001. Mr. Mulhere holds a B.A. in Political Science from St. Michael's College and a master's degree in Public Administration from Florida Gulf Coast University. In 2010 Bob was named a "Fellow" of the American Institute of Certified Planners (FAICP).