



# MINUTES – January 16, 2024

## ENVIRONMENTAL LAND ACQUISITION PANEL (ELAP)

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Minutes of the  
**Environmental Land Acquisition Panel**  
Indian River County Administration Complex,  
Building B, Conference Room B1-501  
1800 27<sup>th</sup> Street, Vero Beach, FL  
**5:30 PM Tuesday, January 16, 2024**

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9 members/7 for quorum

### 1. Call to Order

Chair Peter O'Bryan called the January 16, 2024, meeting of the Environmental Land Acquisition Panel (ELAP) to order at 5:30 PM.

A full recording of this meeting is available in the office of the Board of County Commissioners.

### 2. Roll Call

#### **Members Present:**

|                   |                                           |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| Sammy McGee       | District 1 Appointee                      |
| Janice Broda      | District 2 Appointee                      |
| Daniel Bott       | District 3 Appointee (arrived at 5:55 pm) |
| Peter O'Bryan     | District 4 Appointee                      |
| James Connaughton | District 5 Appointee                      |
| Jeff Beal         | Natural Resources Representative          |
| Heather Stapleton | Natural Resources Representative          |
| John Orcutt       | Real Estate or Finance Representative     |
| Roland DeBlois    | Planning or Engineering Representative    |

#### **Members Absent:**

None

#### **Staff Present:**

|                |                                                              |
|----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| Joseph Earman  | Commissioner, BCC Liaison                                    |
| Wendy Swindell | Conservation Lands Manager                                   |
| Beth Powell    | Interim Assistant County Administrator, Parks & Rec Director |
| John Titkanich | County Administrator                                         |
| Michael Zito   | Deputy County Administrator                                  |
| Andy Sobczak   | Interim Community Development Director                       |
| Susan Prado    | Deputy County Attorney                                       |
| Kim Moirano    | BCC Recording Secretary                                      |

*Minimum Quorum requirements were met.*

3. **Election of Officers:**

a. Chair

*ON MOTION made by Roland DeBlois and SECONDED by Janice Broda, the Environmental Lands Acquisition Panel nominated PETER O'BRYAN as the Chair of the ELAP.*

*Motion passed unanimously.*

b. Vice Chair

*ON MOTION made by Janice Broda and SECONDED by Heather Stapleton, the Environmental Lands Acquisition Panel nominated ROLAND DeBLOIS as the Vice-Chair of the ELAP.*

*Motion passed unanimously.*

4. **Approval of Minutes:**

*ON MOTION made by Heather Stapleton and SECONDED by Janice Broda, the Environmental Lands Acquisition Panel approved the Minutes of the October 17, 2023, meeting as amended for clerical corrections.*

*Motion passed unanimously.*

5. **Discussion Items:**

Comments from the Chair:

Chair Peter O'Bryan thanked Roland DeBlois for stepping in as chair while he was travelling. Chair O'Bryan also thanked the panel and staff for the hard work that was put into the revisions of the draft guide, which was finalized, presented, and approved by the Board of County Commissioners in December.

Preview of the GIS Dashboard for the Environmental Bond Process:

Paige Lester, GIS Analyst in the Information Technology Department was present and provided a demonstration of the new online dashboard for the Environmental Lands Acquisition Panel. Ms. Lester commented that this tool was developed to help assist the panel with looking at available land and to give the panel the ability to evaluate potential candidates with all the data. This dashboard will have layered permissions, including for the panel, staff, and the public; will have maps, and links to key information such as the guide, history, the resolution, and photos.

This dashboard will be a great resource for storing documents and interactive maps related to properties that the panel is investigating for purchase. It will also give updates on current conservation lands as well as partnerships with other organizations. Ms. Lester explained that there will be a search function as well as a section for frequently asked questions.

Wendy Swindell, Conservation Lands Manager, complimented Paige Lester on the work she has done to develop this “hub” dashboard which will be a one-stop location for all reports, maps, and historical land acquisition data relating to the conservation lands where information can be stored and archived.

Ms. Lester continued her presentation about the dashboard and answered questions from the panel, staff, and partner agencies that were present.

Point of Order – Panel Member Daniel Bott arrived at 5:55 PM.

#### Timing of Bonds Discussion:

There was a brief discussion on the timing of when the bonds will be issued. Beth Powell, Parks, Recreation and Conservation Director indicated that it should be in June that it shows up on the tax roll and the bonds will be issued in November; however, if an emergency acquisition was necessary, it could be accomplished by inter-fund loan until the bonds are issued. With the bonds being issued in November, that starts a timeclock running for a three-year period by which the funds must be expended or encumbered in some form. The county will do two rounds of 25 million each in six-month cycles. Staff met with financial advisors last week and have clarifications to work through with the bond counsel.

#### RFP Acquisition Agent Search:

Wendy Swindell updated the panel stating that the process is underway; interviews with some of the respondents are currently being worked on. This process should be completed within approximately three months. Staff is undergoing the due diligence to make sure the process is done properly.

#### Application Cycles:

Beth Powell briefly discussed the application cycles, which will be clearer when the dashboard is completed and live. While applications could be received at any time during the year, they would fall in one of two cycles within the calendar year, the first six months or second six months. One is not better or worse than the other but gives you an opportunity to close the application cycle so the panel can begin to rank the properties and establish the tiers. When ELAP gets into the evaluation and prioritization part, meetings will be held more frequently.

Once a property is entered into a cycle, it will remain in the queue until it is either acquired or, for some reason is no longer a viable project. The more properties we have the better bargaining position we will have.

Chair Peter O'Bryan suggested a motion for a policy decision that any property that has been ranked and scored, will remain on the ranking list until such point as the panel takes action to remove it.

***ON MOTION made by Jim Connaughton and SECONDED by Daniel Bott, the Environmental Lands Acquisition Panel approved the policy decision that a property that has been selected, ranked, and scored will remain on the ranking list for future application cycles until such time there is an action to remove the property from consideration or the property has been acquired.***

***Motion passed unanimously.***

**d. Commissioner Matters**

Commissioner Earman took a moment to acknowledge the panels' service in putting the guide together and noted that he is very pleased with the progress to date. Commissioner Earman took this opportunity to introduce the new Assistant County Attorney, Keith Jackman, who will be attending the committee meetings going forward.

**e. Other Business**

2024 ELAP Meeting Calendar

***ON MOTION made by Heather Stapleton and SECONDED by Janice Broda, the Environmental Lands Acquisition Panel approved the 2024 ELAP Meeting Calendar subject to adding additional meetings as needed once the applications start coming in.***

***Motion passed unanimously.***

5. **Next Meeting:** The next meeting of ELAP will be held February 20, 2024.
6. **Adjournment:** Chair Peter O'Bryan adjourned the meeting at 7:48 PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
*Maura Stokes*

*A copy of the full meeting recording is kept on file in the office of the Board of County Commissioners.*