



MINUTES – September 16, 2025

ENVIRONMENTAL LANDS ACQUISITION PANEL (ELAP)

Minutes of the
Environmental Lands Acquisition Panel
Indian River County Administration Complex,
Building A, Commission Chambers
1801 27th Street, Vero Beach, FL
5:30 PM Tuesday, September 16, 2025

9 members/6 for quorum

1. **Call to Order**

Chair Roland DeBlois called the September 16, 2025, meeting of the Environmental Lands 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:

Grant Gilmore	Natural Resources Representative
Roland DeBlois	Planning or Engineering Representative
John Orcutt	Real Estate or Finance Representative
Heather Stapleton	Natural Resources Representative
Samantha McGee	District 1 Appointee
Janice Broda	District 2 Appointee
Daniel Bott	District 3 Appointee
Patrick Pitts	District 4 Appointee
James Connaughton	District 5 Appointee (participated remotely)
Joseph Earman	Commissioner, BCC Liaison

Members Absent:

Others Present:

Wendy Swindell	Conservation Lands Manager
Beth Powell	Director - Parks, Recreation & Conservation
Kimberly K. Moirano	BCC Recording Secretary
CE Swindell	Public
Chris Hicks	Attorney

Mr. Roland DeBlois introduced and welcomed Grant Gilmore who is now a member of the panel. Mr. Gilmore stated he had lived in Indian River County for 53 years and is familiar with the land and policies. He was a research scientist at Harbor Branch for years studying the lagoon. He also taught ecology at IRCC for about ten years. He stated it was a pleasure to be active again.

3. Approval of Minutes:

a. April 15, 2025 -- Regular Meeting

ON MOTION made by Heather Stapleton SECONDED by Janice Broda, the Environmental Lands Acquisition Panel approved the Minutes of the April 15, 2025, meeting with one change.

The motion PASSED unanimously.

b. June 17, 2025 -- Regular Meeting

ON MOTION made by Heather Stapleton SECONDED by John Orcutt, the Environmental Lands Acquisition Panel approved the Minutes of the June 17, 2025, Meeting.

The motion PASSED unanimously.

c. July 15, 2025 -- Regular Meeting

ON MOTION made by John Orcutt SECONDED by Janice Broda, the Environmental Lands Acquisition Panel approved the Minutes of the July 15, 2025 meeting.

The motion PASSED unanimously.

4. Discussion Items

a. Update on the status of Nomination Period 1 projects

Ms. Wendy Swindell proceeded to give an update on Period 1 Nomination projects, indicating that the County's consultant (Colliers) has been busy working with the various property owners in negotiations. The County has completed appraisals on the majority of the willing seller parcels in Tier 1. The first category is projects currently still under negotiation, being the Winter Beach 73rd Street Property, the Padgett Branch Easement 2 Property, and the Osprey Estates Property. Colliers is working to finalize the best and final offer on those projects. Pending contract approval, these are ones that were sent out to the Board Members. At least two of the three have public-noticed appraisals.

Regarding the Hale Grove and Durrance Place properties, the owners have signed a letter agreeing to a negotiated purchase price. Staff is planning on taking those agreements to the BOCC for the Board to consider at its October 7th meeting. Regarding the Jungle Trail Island Club Manor Property, Ms. Swindell indicated she just received a call from the broker and they are expecting a signed purchase agreement letter. Given that, staff will be noticing the appraisal per the statute and then moving forward with scheduling the matter for BOCC consideration. Pertaining to the Sebastian Riverview Property, appraisals are in process. Once the appraisals are finalized, Colliers will proceed with owner negotiations.

Regarding Tier 1 easement negotiations, County staff met with the owners and went through a fairly detailed discussion. There were a lot of questions back and forth about what the terms of the easement may or may not be. Staff indicated that the Board has given them directions that the County would like to see more public access if it does acquire some easements in this bond period. Staff indicated that they would like to see the easements not just a snapshot in time and they stayed the same; if there is a need for ecological restoration that's meaningful, they would like for that to be done and then the snapshot to be taken so that over time that property is at its highest invest value. The owners have indicated that they would like to see how the value per acre comes out for the Padgett property before they make any decision about whether or not they would want to move forward.

For Period 1 Tier 2 projects pending appraisals, staff is waiting to finalize most of the Tier 1 negotiations before moving into Tier 2. Ms. Swindell stated that no agreement reached means that these owners and the County are far apart on where the price is and they're not anticipating that we'll come to a meaningful middle ground on that. The Cantor Farms West fee simple appraisal came back way lower than they thought. Keep in mind that Cantor Farms West is still listed from the conservation easement point of view, so it does have a second go around in that respect. The Jungle Trail Fisher project was withdrawn by the owners who are already building a house on that site. Two other project owners have contacted staff and said they're no longer interested in participating. Ms. Swindell reminded ELAP that it combined the Durrance Place and the Hale Grove Properties into one Tier 1 nomination. Ms. Powell stated for clarification the Board is only moving forward with the BOCC's direction for Tier 1 property negotiations at this time.

The Hale Groves/Durrance Place project: Ms. Swindell stated that the negotiated purchase price was below the two appraisals for this project. Mr. Roland DeBlois stated procedurally all the Tier 1 properties when the Panel approved the list and ranked everything and created the Tier 1. We're at a point with the Durrance Place and Hale Grove properties where we've come to an agreement on a price based on the appraisals that were obtained within the procedures of the statutes, the laws and in the guide. He stated that what we're looking for in today's discussion is for this panel's support or non-support for the negotiated contracts that we would forward to the scheduled meeting of the Commission. As he understood it, these agreements are contingent upon due diligence and the County Commission's approval at a public hearing on October 7th. What we're looking for today is basically a Panel position and either approval or whatever comments to bring forward when it goes to the Commission as far as support. It was negotiated at a purchase price below the approved appraised value.

With the Hale Grove property, one consideration besides the price and the terms of payment was that the Hale family wants to have name recognition because it was a family holding for a long period of time and they would like that whatever we choose to name that property, they would like the name Hale incorporated into that. Staff thought that would be appropriate. People know that area as Hale Groves. Mr. DeBlois stated that part of the process as it moves forward to the Commission is the conceptual plan for the management use of the property. The Environmental Reports that were done for these properties, as done for all the properties in Tier 1, have a basic assessment as to the status of the property and suggestions on what could be the use moving forward.

- b. Presentation of Nomination Period 2 & 3 willing seller properties
- c. Discussion of upcoming project ranking meeting

Ms. Swindell stated we will go through all of the Nomination Period 2 and Period 3 projects in preparation for the committee to do the ranking. Ms. Lingwood has prepared all of the ranking sheets. The hope was that at the end of this meeting, the ELAP would do the rankings and send them back to staff so when we met next time we would go through like we did in the past and do our summary of the rankings and tiering. Any project that has a protected species is considered as satisfying one of the minimum criteria if it trips that threshold. Ms. Swindell stated that the ELAP members have the environmental reports, and they are online in the ELAP portal. Ms. Swindell proceeded to give an overview of the Period 2 and 3 projects, as follows.

The Blue Cypress Lake Shoreline Property (38.85 acres);

The Sebastian South Prong Linus Property (39.4 acres);
The Two Dollar Bluff Property (2.7 acres);
The Hobart Scrub Property (155.53 acres);
The Indian River Drive Property (5.87 acres);
The 12300 Archie Carr Property (9.71 acres);
The Blythewold 11 Acres Property (11.34 acres);
The Countryside Citrus Property (26.23 acres);
The 103rd Court Gopher Tortoise Property (0.22 acres); and
The Joel F. Wynne Memorial Park Property (2.76 acres)

[Note: a copy of the Nomination Period 2 and 3 Review presentation has been posted online on the County's Environmental Lands Acquisition Program Hub portal]

There was a clarification regarding that the zoning on the Hobart Scrub property is RM-6 (multi-family residential), not RF-6. Mr. DeBlois stated that was the summary of the properties and what we're looking at potentially those properties that were just summarized to move towards a ranking of those properties. So, one of the questions is does the panel feel that we have enough information to move forward between now and the next meeting to do our individual draft ranking of these properties.

Ms. Stapleton asked how far in advance of the meeting next month, which is on October 21, how far in advance would you like ELAP to submit individual rankings to staff. Ms. Swindell stated that she thought one week before the next ELAP meeting would suffice.

Mr. DeBlois thought it would be best to go forward with the process. Ms. Swindell state that they will put the PowerPoint on the hub and Ms. Lingwood is going to get to Ms. Moirano everything to send to ELAP members for the ranking, the sheets and just as simple as it was the last time when you enter your scores, it automatically takes into account the weighing factor so you just have to literally enter your scores. For those of ELAP that haven't gone through this before, at the ranking meeting staff tallies the individual rankings. An individual ELAP member has the opportunity to change scores if deemed appropriate during the ranking discussion. You have every opportunity to discuss it at the group. The hope is that at the end of the meeting is that ELAP ends up with a ranked list that's approved and can move forward as a recommendation to the Board.

Public Comment: Mr. Baker commented on the Blue Cypress Lake property. He stated that there's only that one little village in there.

Ms. Lingwood stated for the ranking she was going to send everyone their own group of Excel sheets so ELAP members will have one Excel sheet per property to nominate, and they are already going to be loaded with each ELAP member's name.

Adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

5. Public Comment:

No public comment.

6. Next Meeting:

The next scheduled meeting of ELAP is October 21, 2025, at 5:30 PM in Building B, Room B1-501.

7. **Adjournment:** Chair Roland DeBlois adjourned the meeting at 7:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Kimberly K. Moirano

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