

**ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY BOARD MEETING MINUTES
CITY OF CLEARWATER**

July 20, 2016

Awaiting approval

Present: Chair Leann J. DuPont, Vice Chair Lynn F. Sumerson, Board Member Michael Engelmann, Board Member Jared Leone, Board Member Mark Wright

Also Present: Laura Mahony – Assistant City Attorney, Ed Chesney – Environmental Manager, Patricia O. Sullivan – Board Reporter

The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. at City Hall.

To provide continuity for research, items are in agenda order although not necessarily discussed in that order.

2 – Approval of Minutes

2.1. Approve minutes of the April 20, 2016 Environmental Advisory Board meeting as submitted in written summation.

Chair DuPont said she voted against the fracking ban at the last meeting because she did not have time to review distributed materials prior to the vote. She said she supported the ban.

Chair DuPont moved to approve minutes of the April 20, 2016 Environmental Advisory Board meeting as submitted in written summation. The motion was duly seconded and carried unanimously.

3 – Citizens to be Heard re Items Not on the Agenda: None

4 – New Business

4.1 Coastal Resilience Vulnerability and Adaptation Update

Planner Kyle Brotherton reviewed the Coastal Resilience Vulnerability and Adaptation Project and reported Phase 1 of the City's highly technical study, completed last month with the help of consultants, considered effects of sea level rise to bridges, roads, and beach erosion and was sent to the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity for review. Columbia University Law School will oversee phase 2. The project will end by December 31, 2016.

Mr. Brotherton said it was anticipated that nuisance flooding would impact North Clearwater Beach. Community meetings will be held before the plan is implemented. In response to questions, he said installation of signs identifying sea level rise impacts would be discussed. NOAA's (National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration) 4 graphs, based on a range of assumptions, estimated sea level rise in the next 100 years

would range from 1 to 3 feet. NOAA reported a 6-inch sea level rise in St. Petersburg over the past 60 years. The Department of Economic Opportunity appointed Columbia University Law School to review case studies for Clearwater's project.

Mr. Brotherton said new State Statutes addressed coastal adaptations to reduce risk. The City hosted the effort but did not control it. Each of the 3 project communities (including Escambia County) had a different focus. St. Augustine was concerned about its historical area. Clearwater was focused on its beach economy. The project will develop tools other coastal communities could adopt and provide 3 options to protect resources communities considered most important. Another update will be scheduled after completion of Phase 2.

4.2 Moccasin Lake Park Construction Projects / Grant Expenditures

Administrative Support Manager Felicia Donnelly reviewed plans to upgrade Moccasin Lake Nature Park with grant and City matching funds.

In response to a question, Ms. Donnelly said signage on the Ream Wilson Trail was planned to direct trail users to the park. Future maintenance of the park would not have budgetary impacts. For budget efficiency, staff will schedule and lead trail talks for groups of 15 or more; the park frequently hosted group tours.

Member Sumerson expressed concern that despite numerous complaints, the Parks & Recreation Department had not replaced a bridge that washed out a year ago and the connecting trail was closed and overgrown. He said the department had wanted to get rid of the birds and make it a passive park; residents had to approach the Mayor to open the park on Sundays and install a bird blind. He said the Parks & Recreation Department did not want the park to succeed and its treatment of the park was disgraceful. He said other local municipal nature parks had tremendous success. He said many Friends of Moccasin Lake Nature Park members had stopped attending meetings because of the department's poor attitude.

It was stated it was frustrating but the park was not an issue for the Environmental Advisory Board which did not oversee the park or Friends group.

Environmental Manager Ed Chesney did not think Member Sumerson's tone toward Ms. Donnelly and the Parks & Recreation Department staff was appropriate. He said the subject trail was accessible from a different section of the park and suggested it would be more appropriate to bring these issues to the Parks & Recreation Board.

Member Sumerson said the park was an issue for this board as the Moccasin Lake Environmental Education Center had environmental in its name. He said the Parks & Recreation Board did nothing after the Friends of Moccasin Lake Nature Park's presentation to them.

Member Sumerson moved that Clearwater City Council would do well to CONSIDER transferring Moccasin Lake Environmental Education Center from its current status with the Department of Parks & Recreation to the Department of Engineering. We advise that a City Council member oversee this site on a regular basis and then report back to the Council as to the needed improvements to this site or the lack of progress as observed (If the first is unreasonable). There was no second.

Member Sumerson said the Engineering Department would have fixed the broken fence before street people had accessed the park after hours. He said the Parks & Recreation Department said nature parks don't have fences and that it took 48 hours to get street people out of the park. He said that would be troubling to parents.

Mr. Cheney said Member Sumerson had placed an item re Moccasin Lake Nature Park on nearly every Environmental Advisory Board agenda. He suggested Member Sumerson address the City Council re his concerns during Citizens to be Heard.

Surprise was expressed the Ream Wilson Trail did not connect with Moccasin Lake Nature Park and there was no directional signage or lights to safely cross the nearby street.

A resident supported Member Sumerson's complaints, said the park provided environmental education, and recommended the board take a position.

In response to a question, Mr. Chesney will report if the Parks & Recreation Department planned to purchase property next to the park.

4.3 Solar Power Presentation - Alan Brand

Alan Brand discussed the PACE (Property Assessed Clean Energy) program that provided funding to qualified homeowners to add energy efficiency, renewable energy generation, and wind mitigation improvements to their homes and for repairs. He said funds were repaid through a property tax assessment for up to 25 years. He said participation was voluntary. He said Miami and Orlando were participants; the program was coming to Pinellas County. He said the program provided homeowners a long-term option to finance energy efficient upgrades with minimal annual financial impact.

In response to questions, Mr. Brand said energy efficiency improvements were not taxable by state law. He said a home purchaser could take over the property tax assessment or negotiate with the owner to pay off the loan. He said preapproval of contractors provided consumer protection. He said the program had no cost for communities, which could opt out at any time; participating homeowners would still be obligated to service their loans. He said Florida Statute prohibited 3rd party energy sales, which disallowed malls from installing solar power and providing tenants with free or reduced cost energy.

Mr. Brand said Clearwater could participate in the program. He said the City also could offer tax credits to promote solar power. He said solar power systems were becoming less expensive. He said waiting 5 years to install a less expensive system would be offset by 5 years of lower energy bills. He said savings were greater than costs over time. He said after 30 years, solar systems became less efficient. He said solar power systems did not require batteries. He said a 2008 Florida law allowed net energy metering that credited homeowners for power entering the grid during the day and charged the same rate for power entering the house at night.

Mr. Brand invited interested parties to his solar power presentation at the Dunedin Public Library on August 16 at 6:30 p.m.

Mr. Chesney will distribute Mr. Brand's handouts.

5 – Old Business

5.1 Pinellas County Fracking Ordinance

Mr. Chesney reported Pinellas County had adopted an anti fracking ordinance that covered the entire county. Clearwater did not opt out of the legislation and would not be adopting a separate resolution.

5.2 Environmental Lands Acquisition - Clearwater Christian College

Mr. Chesney said the City had closed on its purchase of the Clearwater Christian College wetland and bottomland property. The City and County also owned nearby land. A scope of work will be developed to create an area master plan. The City will apply for grants for wetland restoration. Passive recreation, such as kayak trails, were planned. Boardwalks also would be added.

In response to questions, he said the gate would remain open for Audubon member access to the bird walk; the City tried to accommodate the few requests it received. A board visit to the park could be scheduled if it was noticed to the public. It was stated the eagles would return to Coopers Point in January.

A resident said an observation tower and boardwalk once were planned for Coopers Point, reported a resident's concern re large pile of gravel next to the eagles' nest, and questioned if removal of the Brazilian pepper trees continued.

Mr. Chesney said a tower would cost 10 times more than anticipated. The City contracted year-round spraying to destroy Brazilian pepper trees. He was unaware of a gravel pile.

6 – Director's Report

In response to a question, Mr. Chesney will report on the planned use for the NE Coachman Road property where the house was razed by the disc golf course.

6.1. Agenda topics for October 19, 2016 meeting

A presentation was requested re proposed Gondola Sky Tram, including environmental impacts to landing sites, including necessary parking. Mr. Chesney said the presentation to the City Council was available on streaming video. Assistant City Attorney Laura Mahoney said the discussion was hypothetical; no plan existed. It was stated that public transportation between the mainland and beach would reduce traffic and affect the environment.

An agenda item was requested to consider impacts of plastic straws on Clearwater Beach and a possible proposal to them on the beach. Mr. Chesney requested board members forward relevant information.

It was requested that the board be provided an opportunity to provide input re Coachman Park redevelopment plans and environmental impacts of bluff development.

An update was requested on the grease disposal ordinance final draft.

7 – Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 5:42 p.m.

Chair
Environmental Advisory Board

Attest:

Board Reporter