

Land Acquisition and Management Program Conservation Board Minutes

*For more detailed minutes, please visit the St. Johns County YouTube page for the April 11, 2023 meeting audio recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GbYYpxIqkyI>

Date/Time of Meeting: Tuesday, April 11, 2023 at 1:30 P.M.
Location/Address: St. Johns County Permit Building, Conference Room 1
4040 Lewis Speedway, St. Augustine, FL

Members Present: Michael Adams, Wayne Flowers, Elizabeth Guthrie, Travis Minch, Hawley Smith, JB Miller, Irene Kaufman

Members Absent: Jimmy Watson, Shorty Robbins

Commission Member: Absent

Staff Present: Ryan Mauch, Hali Barkley, Jan Brewer, Kyrsten Gage

Public Attendees: Ed Slavin (called in), Charles Lebanowski

- Ms. Guthrie called the meeting to order at 1:30 PM
- Public Comment for items not on the agenda: Ed Slavin spoke about cultural resource reviews by the County and the LAMP Board budget.
- Motion by Mr. Miller and second by Mr. Adams to approve the February 14th 2023 meeting minutes. The Board members approved the meeting minutes with no changes.
- Motion by Mr. Minch and second by Mr. Miller to approve the current agenda. Board approved the current agenda.
- Item 1: Staff stated that the LAMP Board meetings will be held in the County Auditorium beginning with the next meeting on June 13th 2023.
- Public Comment: None.
- Item 2: Staff provided a brief update on the acquisition process to be carried out by County Real Estate staff for those five (5) properties currently listed on the LAMP Board Recommended Property list. Mr. Miller asked about those properties on the list outside of the current LAMP budget. After property appraisals, the list of properties will be brought back to the Board of County Commissioners for a final decision to acquire or not to acquire the properties. Mr. Minch asked about the appraisal process and staff provided that the process is guided by the County Real Estate Department's procedures, with final approval by the Board of County Commissioners. Ms. Kaufman asked about purchasing development rights under recorded conservation easements versus purchase of lands. Ms. Guthrie stated that the LAMP Board can consider conservation easements in property acquisitions.
- Public Comment: None.
- Item 3: The Chair Elizabeth Guthrie provided a presentation on a drafted outlined process for the LAMP Board to follow when a property application is received and necessary steps for property evaluation and recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners. The process includes application by the landowner, staff intake and data entry, LAMP Board initial assessment, site visits, LAMP Board final assessment, evaluation and ranking, and submittal to the Board of County Commissioners for approval and staff process for property acquisition.
- Mr. Minch asked about property asking price and Ms. Guthrie stated that asking price is good information to have, but it comes down to the appraised value of the property. Mr. Smith stated that the asking price is a valuable piece of information to have.
- Staff provided that any site visit during property evaluations would be conducted by Board members and not County staff. Staff can assist with arranging site visits with landowners and Board members. Staff will conduct legal due diligence and surveys during the acquisition process, which would occur post evaluation by the LAMP Board during negotiations and appraisals. The Board members entertained the concept of a volunteer group of individuals or even LAMP Board members to visit properties to get valuable data for property LAMP Board evaluation.

- Staff suggested that the volunteer group concept would need to be reviewed by the County Attorney's office and a form could be created for a property owner to set up a site visit.
- Public Comment: Chuck Lebanowski stated that the asking price should stay on the form and be used in the evaluation of the property.
- Board members continued discussion on the property intake, evaluation and recommendation process and the Board members provided consensus on finalizing the process outline.
- Ms. Guthrie stated that she would like to see the LAMP Board meeting schedule amended to once a quarter. Ms. Kaufman asked when staff places the meetings out for advertisement if the LAMP Board meeting schedule were to be amended. Staff responded that the meeting dates are advertised once a year beginning in October. Additionally, staff recommends that the LAMP Board property recommendation list be submitted to the Board of County Commissioners once a year.
- Mr. Flowers stated that it would be beneficial to have a calendar to follow along with the process outline. Also, Mr. Flowers stated that four meetings a year may not be enough to evaluate properties.
- Mr. Minch stated that along with the process outline, it would be beneficial to have the evaluation matrix be available on the LAMP Board webpage.
- Public Comment: None.

Board Member Reports

- Ms. Guthrie proposed to have the LAMP Board write a letter of recommendation and support of increasing the LAMP Board funding from \$500,000 annually to \$2million annually to echo the statement made by Commissioner Dean during the February 14th 2023 LAMP Board meeting. Mr. Miller and Mr. Minch agreed with the proposed increase in funding. Mr. Minch also stated that although the LAMP Board is not the most efficient avenue to acquire property in the County, he supports an increase in funding. There was consensus from the Board to write the letter.
- Ms. Guthrie stated that a St. Augustine National Park and Seashore concept is administered by the National Park Service and not within the purview of the LAMP Board. Therefore, the LAMP Board should not entertain the concept any further at this time.
- Ms. Guthrie stated that the Hamilton Trust properties which were submitted previously, will be evaluated at the next meeting in June.
- Ms. Guthrie stated that for the other properties brought up in the previous meeting by Board members, the Outpost property and the Riverdale Heritage Lands properties, those properties will continue to be evaluated when an application signed by the property owner has been received.
- Mr. Flowers asked when the process outline for the LAMP Board would be revisited and Ms. Guthrie stated that she would bring it up for finalization at the June meeting.
- Ms. Kaufman asked about the status of a potential donation to the County of 600 acres of property currently owned by Jaxport, located adjacent to the County-owned McCullough Creek Conservation Area and under a recorded conservation easement. Staff responded that Jaxport has mentioned that the agency may offer to donate the subject 600 acres since the initial acquisition of the McCullough Creek property from Jaxport in 2018 and the County will continue to request updated on this offer.
- Mr. Minch stated that the LAMP Board should proactively recommend properties for acquisition and strategically engage the public in determining areas to acquire property and contact property owners who will to willingly offer their properties to the Program.
- Mr. Miller discussed the St. Johns River Water Management District Critical Wetlands inventory properties and those properties located within the Florida Forever Northeast Florida and St. Johns River Blueway Corridors. As these properties are within these corridors, there may be opportunities for State funding with a smaller County match to acquire properties within these corridors. If acquired with State funding, properties would need to be managed consistent with State requirements.

Staff Member Reports

- Staff introduced two new Environmental Division staff, Hali Barkley- Environmental and Cultural Resources Specialist and Kyrsten Gage-Environmental Specialist, who will both be assisting with the LAMP Board.
- Staff reminded the Board members that the LAMP Ordinance requires a concise and conceptual management plan for any property to be acquired and that a template has been created for the management plan.
- Staff provided a brief update on the Summerhaven area and that staff is targeting a land acquisition US Fish and Wildlife grant in an upcoming grant cycle along with a state funding for acquisition of sensitive habitat in the area.
- Staff mentioned two property application forms that have been recently received in April 2023 and signed by willing sellers for: 1536/1600 Brinkhoff Rd. and 605 Favor Dykes Rd.

Elizabeth Guthrie called the meeting to a close at 2:53 PM.

Elizabeth Guthrie- Chair

Ryan Mauch- Staff Recorder