

## **Equestrian Trails & Facilities Referendum Committee**

Appointed by the North Brevard Commission on Parks and Recreation (NBCPR)

Meeting of February 20, 2006, 6:00 p.m., at the Mims-Scottsmoor Library

### Committee Members Present

Donna McCone, Chairman

Jennifer Hill

Sabrina Jeffers

Kay Miller

Mary Page, Vice Chair

Carol Thompson

Winnie Woods

### Committee Members Absent

Susan Canada

Connie Carswell

### NBCPR Liaison Present

Gigi Henkel

### Brevard County Staff Present

Barbara Meyer, Bicycle/Pedestrian Coordinator

Terry A. Lane, North Area Parks Operations Manager

Judy Inman, Administrative Secretary

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### I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman McCone called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

### II. ROLL CALL

It was assumed Connie Carswell might be busy with horse breeding season and Susan Canada has extra work from the hurricanes, so the Chairman asked to leave it open whether or not their absence is excused. Staff attempted to contact them my mail and by phone without results.

### III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

**The minutes of January 30, 2006, were approved at the motion by Sabrina Jeffers, seconded by Winnie Woods.**

**AYE: Hill, Jeffers, McCone, Miller, Page, Thompson, Woods**

**NAY: None**

**Carried 7-0**

### IV. STAFF REPORTS

#### A. Barbara Meyer, Bicycle/Pedestrian Coordinator

reported Volusia County, Brevard County & the State have worked out some concepts with Miami Corp to share the corridor until their logging operations cease. Miami Corp has agreed to probably give an area for a trail head as well. The rail bed will be shared on the 100-200 foot corridor that FEC is purchasing and will be shared with Miami Corp logging trucks. In some areas Miami Corp will give easements to go off the trail, but it is very wet. Miami Corp will not sue. Volusia County will carve out 80 acres that Miami Corp will buy from FEC. Hopefully the paperwork will be completed in March. After purchase, the State will do environmental studies and staff will work on the management plan with the State. There was good dialog with the Miami Corp. It may not be the ideal condition, but without negotiation, there might not have been use of the corridor at all.

At this point Ms. Meyer gave the following answers to questions.

- In Volusia County, the corridor includes 80 acres which Volusia County doesn't need and Miami Corp wants. FEC will sell those acres to Miami Corp. (McCone)

- How long the logging will continue is uncertain. Logging is getting more difficult. Staff is trying to make it exclusive to logging vehicles. That use would be known in advance and signs can be posted. Another intent is to work with the Historical Society as there is a wealth of history along the corridor. It is hoped to designate points of interest.
- It is unknown if the land for the trail head will be in Volusia County or Brevard County. Access is unknown at this point. This is very preliminary and will be part of the agreement. (McCone)
- As to funding, the State is funding the acquisition. Any development will fall back on the managing entities—Brevard and Volusia Counties. However, there are Rails-to-Trails grants that will be sought. The Brevard Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) has some money to build a small trail head. Gigi Henkel pointed out there are other funding sources available in addition to the Referendum.
- Rails-to-Trails is a national organization and grants are both Federal and State. There are some congressional set asides. A project of this magnitude opens up a different way of funding. There will be 45 miles of trails which will connect to different counties and systems including Chain of Lakes in Titusville and out to the Space Center eventually. (McCone)
- As to using MPO funding for trail heads for equestrians, caution will be needed as those are transportation dollars, but parking and restrooms could be shared. MPO doesn't have money to purchase trail head property. There are some opportunities where the corridor ends in Titusville. (Thompson)
- This has been going on since 1988.

Chairman McCone asked for questions from the public.

Walter Pine had several questions as follows:

- A 100-200 foot corridor is a big difference. What will be available in Brevard County?
- Since this committee is responsible and has the authority to choose the location for an equestrian trail head, how do they get involved in the negotiations to determine where the property will be?
- How will the committee be kept informed of funding sources? Mr. Pine believes the function of the County is subordinate to the recommendations of the Equestrian Trails Committee and that all the negotiations should be available to the Committee for comment.

Ms. Meyer didn't have the survey with her, but offered to share it with Mr. Pine. The corridor varies from 50' to 200', and averages about 100' which was shared with the Committee at a previous meeting. Ms. Meyer stated she will always work with the community as to location and design of the trail head which will be coordinated with Parks and Recreation.

Chairman McCone noted the size of the trail head conversation predated the Referendum. Ms. Meyer stated this is to compliment the committee's project. She believes there is \$600,000 for different trail heads. Mr. Pine discussed various funding sources and segregation of funds.

Chairman McCone stated her understanding is that this Committee has influence over one segment of the budget. The MPO has its own governing bodies within the MPO to establish and administer the \$600,000. Ms. Meyer stated the MPO prioritizes projects but does not implement them. Brevard County would submit the trail head application and is LAP certified, which means they can do State projects.

Walter Pine stated there is confusion on the authority of this Committee, saying this Committee can amend the priorities set by the MPO or recommend differently to the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) who then rectifies or decides themselves. Ms. Meyer stated the MPO is pretty much out of it now that the money has been programmed. The County makes the design decisions. However, because it is a Federal program, there are certain design criteria which will have to be adhered to.

Sabrina Jeffers stated she thought what this Committee was formed to deal with was Rails-to-Trails and to build a trail head. Ms. Meyer responded that the Committee was set up for a purpose, but when the rail trail came on board Commissioner Scarborough said to work through this Committee and the NBCPR.

The MPO is the conduit for the money. The MPO is a group of elected officials county-wide that prioritizes transportation projects county-wide. They also do the bicycle/pedestrian trails plans. Public meetings were held for a trails plan years ago which the MPO said was good, and gave priority to trail projects.

Ms. Meyer continued by saying any non-profit group can come to the MPO and submit an application. If the MPO likes the application it is prioritized and sent to FDOT, who programs it and let the MPO know when the money is coming. This application was submitted four or five years ago and is just now starting to hit the work program. An application also was submitted to build about 25 miles of supplemental trails. This was called a program for four to five trail heads county-wide to avoid glitches. When something is programmed in 2000 and it comes to fruition in 2006 or 2007, things change. Commissioner Scarborough asked early on to coordinate with this group so nothing falls through. Trail heads must be built on land already owned.

Gigi Henkel stated she doesn't feel it is out of the scope of this Committee to consider Rails-to-Trails and that she doesn't think they are two separate issues. To go to the NBCPR it would be like starting a new committee and retraining.

Chairman McCone stated she is finding out there is more to this than was understood before.

Ms. Meyer stated that as the corridor is bought, the real work begins with studies, design criteria, and she would look to a committee of this caliber to advise and will involve a lot of field trips. It is a beautiful corridor.

Mr. Pine suggested making a list of tools and define each so it is known what is in the tool box.

Mr. Pine pointed out the logging is to be a parallel activity and not stop trail activities where there is sufficient easement. There are environmental issues if Miami Corp is to build another roadway. It is possible, though not under discussion to widen the dry surface area so both activities could occur which would require some waiving of some environmental issues. Ms. Meyer stated that has been briefly discussed because they have certain abilities and rights that the County doesn't have. Mr. Pine stated they don't have to go through the same approval processes the County does. Ms. Meyer also talked about turn arounds for people to wait for trucks to go by. She will be looking for this Committee to make those kind of design decisions.

Sabrina Jeffers noted the fast speed of some logging trucks. Ms. Meyer stated there is no doubt there is a challenge ahead. Ms. Meyer stated it was agreed to agree to the concept of shared use and will begin to work out those details.

Mr. Pine noted that the Americans with Disabilities Act would require dry spaces in the turn arounds for disabled children. Wading areas would be difficult for them. If it is a civil culture issue, you may get to waive some of the environmental issues for the turn around under a civil culture permit. Ms. Meyer pointed out there is about 15 miles in Brevard County, only 1.5 miles involve Miami Corp.

Jim Sloan, 5402 James Lane, asked if this is one of the five trail head projects. Ms. Meyer stated that when she wrote the grant for the County, it included this large multi-use trail head. Mr. Pine pointed out that if they don't get all the four in the south, that money could be moved north. Ms. Meyer stated that is why it is called a program, so amendments are possible. Ms. Meyer stated Commissioner Scarborough told her this would be the best forum. It will be the same with trail grants. Mr. Pine stated the funds have suspense dates, which vary which is why the tool box is important. Ms. Meyer stated the funds cannot build an equestrian facility, but can build restrooms and parking. She agreed with Mr. Pine that a multi-use fair ground area could be built.

Gigi Henkel asked Ms. Meyer if she had any anticipated time frame on the finalization. Ms. Meyer responded she only knows FEC wants to sell it to DEP. DEP wants to buy it and she won't know until it is completed. DEP will bring it to the legislature and don't anticipate any opposition at the legislative level. If they hadn't come to terms with Miami Corp, there would have been opposition.

In response to a question from Carol Thompson, Ms. Meyer stated the trail heads are not yours or mine. The money goes to the County. The program was written to build five showcase trail heads at five locations. It is very possible this is one of the five. Ms. Meyer noted the funding for the trails program through the MPO cannot purchase property. Discussion ensued on funding, building a trail head at Buck Lake, etc.

Carol Thompson noted if land were left open for the equestrians at a multi-use fair ground, the equestrians could have fund raisers for more improvements. Ms. Meyer suggested having a design workshop after the trail is purchased. The trail heads are to be on land already owned by the County or the State.

Chairman McCone asked about the area Ms. Meyer spoke of near Garden Street. Ms. Meyer stated it looks like there is an area near Garden Street for mini-trail heads, noting there will be different kinds of trail heads.

Mr. Pine suggested asking Ms. Meyer to carry back to the State a request to use civil culture overrides in the contract so Miami Corp couldn't hold them back. Ms. Meyer stated there will be other opportunities after the property is purchased. Mr. Pine stated the sooner the better as there may be other wishes to be included in the contract.

Chairman McCone thanked Walter Pine, Thelma Roper and Barbara Meyer for their work.

Sabrina Jeffers noted one of the biggest problems is finding a large enough piece of property. Barbara Meyer stated the quicker a design charette is done, the better. Malabar did a mini-trail head on a small piece of property with very little money and volunteer work which she recommended visiting.

Chairman McCone inquired how to look at property as a Committee in Sunshine. Barbara Meyer stated she will update the MPO greenways trails bicycle and pedestrian facilities plans to get on GIS to see where parcels may need to be acquired. This updating should start in July. Gigi Henkel reported staff in the past has set up tours on busses to look at sites. It's public and in a set time frame.

Chairman McCone stated this should be entertained because the weight of the responsibility of the decisions this Committee will recommend to the County is greater than was anticipated. She would like to see some examples of what works and the area required. Terry Lane stated such a tour would have to be noticed, in the Sunshine. McCone would like to take a tour before July. Mr. Pine suggested the Committee ask for documentation and blue prints for notes for the onsite inspections.

Chairman McCone asked to stop public input and for Committee to have discussion at this point. It appears only Gigi Henkel recognized scope of the Committee. Sabrina Jeffers stated she thought the Committee was focusing on Rails-to-Trails. Ms. Meyer commented it all came together at the same time. Chairman McCone stated the Committee doesn't have any official mandate (for the Rails-to-Trails) and wanted to vote on the confidence of the ability of each Committee member to make fabulous recommendations to use the County funds.

Chairman McCone stated it appears to her there are two separate blocks of money, one predating the Referendum and the other voted by the people for specific use as an Equestrian trail head. She suggested looking at what was done in Malabar and what could be done at Buck Lake. It was noted the Malabar

property is not C-54. Ms. Meyer stated she would be glad to give some good examples, including what not to do. Micco Scrub has the ability to bring horses where parking is a free for all and is an example of what doesn't work. Horse people are incredibly creative. Some EEL sites have equestrian facilities.

Sabrina Jeffers questioned hypothetically, if the Committee uses the Referendum money at Buck Lake which is not adjacent to the railway for that project, how would it work as to the money. Ms. Meyer stated she would look for other opportunities to build a trail head. She also said that Buck Lake does connect along the St. Johns River Heritage Trail.

Carol Thompson asked if Buck Lake can be connected to the Rails-to-Trails. Ms. Meyer thinks it can be done which would be part of the design charette.

Sabrina asked what will happen if the Committee can't find something already owned by the County or the State adjacent to the trail. Ms. Meyer stated Aurantia Road has some possibilities or opportunities. If a piece of land can't be found, Miami Corp has shown some interest in selling some land to the EELs, to purchase another 500 to 1000 feet of the corridor which may give other opportunities.

Chairman McCone asked if now that the Committee has this other purview, if the Committee's input is limited for those trails should the Committee decide on another use for the money. Ms. Meyer said absolutely not. She indicated her office is not an implementer. She is a planner. It then goes on to design, construction, and then maintenance.

Chairman McCone stated she appreciated the input from the public and now it was time to define motions. She stated she would entertain a motion to ask that in this contract the civil culture overrides be added and asked Ms. Meyer to explore that for the Committee. She would also like a breakdown of funding and documentation of what transpires at meetings. Ms. Meyer agreed and said she would be willing to provide progress reports and share photos she has taken of the trail if the Committee wants to do a design charette.

Gigi Henkel noted Ms. Meyer's office is available during work hours and she can be reached at 321-690-6890.

Ms. Meyer stated that as development comes in, she is part of the process for easements, which could create some opportunities. She noted sometimes developers can be your best friend in getting the project into the community. Carol Thompson stated she would be interested in knowing if Ms. Meyer has any concepts to connect Buck Lake to Rails-to-Trails. Ms. Meyer stated she can bring some maps to a future meeting. She noted this would be purely planning. The grants she is involved with don't do any condemnation. There must be willing sellers or easements. Ms. Meyer stated Buck Lake is a great project, and suggested looking to see if there are some pieces to connect up.

Terry Lane asked Ms. Meyer if the MPO dollars could be used at Buck Lake for development of a trail head. Ms. Meyer indicated yes, as long it is multi-use and could connect to a showcase trail. The Heritage Trail is to the west or there is the Rail Trail, so it would meet the intent of the program she put forward. Mr. Lane then noted the \$230,000 from the Referendum could be used to purchase property adjacent to the trail. Ms. Meyer stated the need to look at map, get the list of tools and the plan of attack. Then one can go after more grants. Writing the grant is not the hardest part; implementing is difficult. If one has all their eggs in a basket, grant sources will be interested in the project. Ms. Meyer suggested the Committee might want to buy land with the \$230,000 and then she could come in and multi build something in phases.

Mr. Lane reported he has left several phone messages and sent emails to Pete Henn with St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD) who has been out, but they haven't connected yet. It was noted

there wouldn't have been time at this meeting. Terry Lane will continue to ask for a representative from SJRWMD to attend a Committee meeting.

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**Motion by Sabrina Jeffers, seconded by Jennifer Hill, to ask that civil culture overrides be included in the contract, a funding tool box be provided to the Committee, and the Committee be provided documentation from transportation meetings in the form of quarterly reports.**

**AYE: Hill, Jeffers, McCone, Miller, Page, Thompson, Woods**

**NAY: None**

**Carried 7-0**

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Ms. Meyer reported there is a bicycle/pedestrian trails advisory committee to the MPO and will be discussing these types of things.

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**Motion by Carol Thompson, seconded by Winnie Woods, to take a publicly noticed field trip to Malabar, St. Sebastian River Preserve State Park, and Micco Scrub.**

**AYE: Hill, Jeffers, McCone, Miller, Page, Thompson, Woods**

**NAY: None**

**Carried 7-0**

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B. North Area Referendum Projects Budget Summary—Mr. Lane presented a budget for funding the Equestrian Trails which is still at \$230,000 and can be used for land acquisition, trail improvements, restrooms.

V. OLD BUSINESS

A. Potential Properties—No discussion.

VI. NEW BUSINESS—None

VII. PUBLIC INPUT—George Miller will hold his comments to the next meeting.

VIII. NEXT MEETING DATE

In lieu of a March 20 meeting, the Committee will tour Equestrian Facilities in South Brevard, on Saturday, March 25, leaving at 9 a.m. from 475 North Williams Avenue, Titusville. Meeting business can be conducted on the bus. Ms. Meyer will get maps and information and will include a packet of information on equestrian facility design.

IX. ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 7:15 p.m. at the motion by Mary Page, seconded by Jennifer Hill, carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna McCone, Chairman

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