

# NATURE CENTERS COMMISSION

Thomas Center, Bldg A, Room 204  
302 NE 6<sup>th</sup> Ave

December 10, 2015  
Thursday – 6:32PM

## Minutes

I. Call to Order and roll call.

Members Present	Members Absent	Staff Present
Krisjanna Olson (new student member)	Amy Carpus	Linda Demetropoulos
Grace Crummer	Leslie Straub (PR)	
Jon Reiskind, Vice-Chair (PR)	Taylor Stein (POL)	
Charlie Pedersen, Chair	Penny Weber (PR)	
Rupa Lloyd, Treasurer		
Kathy Ewel, Secretary		

Chair recognized new student member, Krissy Olson, who is a studying sustainability in the built environment in UF's College of Design Construction and Planning and hopes to get a master's degree in Environmental Planning.

II. Agenda Approval

<u>Motion by:</u> Jon Reiskind	<u>Seconded by:</u> Grace Crummer
<u>Moved to:</u> Approve agenda with addition under New Business: Chair requests discussion about letter to be written to the City Commission concerning Green Space Acquisition Fund.	<u>Upon vote:</u> Passed unanimously

III. Approval of minutes of November 12, 2015

<u>Motion by:</u> Jon Reiskind	<u>Seconded by:</u> Grace Crummer
<u>Moved to:</u> Approve minutes	<u>Upon vote:</u> Passed unanimously

IV. Chair Report

Now that the City and County Commissions have agreed to put the ½-cent sales tax on the ballot, we should consider how the NCC can support it with outreach and education. Charlie Pederson will talk with Michelle Park, Assistant Parks Department Director. Jon Reiskind asked that a list of possible projects be recirculated to the NCC. Charlie said the issues will include articulating the ballot measure, getting it approved, and demonstrating how the funds might be spent responsibly.

V. Treasurer's Report

Linda Demetropoulos reported that the Nature Centers Commission has spent none of its 2015-16 budget of \$5,573; she will continue to consult with Budget and Finance about the withdrawal of \$1,000 as a grant match for the Historic Grant from the 2015-16 NCC budget, an apparent error, as \$1,000 was also taken from the 2014-15 NCC budget. The next known expenses will be associated with the Star Awards function.

## VI. PRCA Staff Report

The monthly report has been circulated to the NCC. Linda Demetropoulos mentioned that there is a proposal by Public Works to install a sediment trap adjacent to the Mason Manor boardwalk (the easternmost of the two boardwalks) in Loblolly Woods Nature Park north of NW 8<sup>th</sup> Ave. A representative from Public Works will attend the January NCC meeting and plans will be available for review. This installation will be similar to sediment traps installed in Hogtown Creek at 34<sup>th</sup> Street and University Ave. Public Works will use heavy equipment to remove sediments periodically. This is in response to frequent flooding in the Mason Manor subdivision because the culvert at 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue where Possum Creek goes under the road has filled with sediment.

The PRCA trends analysis on positions lost requested by Commissioner Chase will be discussed at the January 21 City Commission meeting. This may be an opportunity for the NCC to advocate for returning positions lost from Nature Operations.

Proposed expansion of Girls Place is likely to impact a natural habitat area in the Kiwanis Green Tree Park on 39<sup>th</sup> Ave. There is a proposal to build a recreational facility in the middle of the running track that will impact 125 trees. The issue will be taken up by the Recreation, Cultural Affairs, and Public Works Committee and then by the City Commission. Karen Garren (Florida Native Plant Society) is a leading proponent of not cutting these trees.

The PRCA Environmental Education Section has moved back to the Nature Operations Division. Jon Reiskind has requested a current organization chart.

Grace Crummer would like to see more PR about the tree giveaway program and asked how many were given away at the Downtown Festival and Art Show. Linda Demetropoulos pointed out that the Urban Forestry workshop at Ironwood also had a tree giveaway program and that more trees will be given away on Arbor Day, Jan. 21, at the Matheson Museum.

At the Chair's request, Linda updated the NCC on the status of discussions about the tree ordinance. Ms. Demetropoulos said that the City Arborist presented at the December 2nd Community Development Committee. The committee's main concern is that mitigation requirements are more stringent for commercial developments than residential areas. An entire meeting on Jan 27 at 1 pm in City Hall, Rm 16, will be devoted to discussion of the tree ordinance. Support is encouraged from the NCC especially with providing information related to the environmental benefits of trees. While these discussions are pending, tree mitigation funds have been frozen including funds for hiring a consulting firm engaged to prepare for several City tree planting projects. The fund had also been proposed for paying for trees planted in Public Works and CRA projects.

VII. Committee Reports

Jon Reiskind reported that the PR & Awards Committee recognize a Good Neighbor and a Volunteer. After considerable discussion, it was decided not to present an award to EnviroTech because the firm is not located within the City of Gainesville and so does not meet the criteria of the award. It was suggested to send a letter and certificate of appreciation to EnviroTech.

<u>Motion by:</u> Recommendation of PR & Awards Committee, represented by Jon Reiskind	
<u>Moved to:</u> Present the Star Award for Good Neighbor to Maria Huff-Edwards and the Star Award for Volunteer to Shirley Baker and her sons Andy, Arthur, and Alex.	<u>Upon vote:</u> Passed unanimously

<u>Motion by:</u> Jon Reiskind	<u>Seconded by:</u> Grace Crummer
<u>Moved to:</u> Write a commendation letter to Enviro Tech	<u>Upon vote:</u> Passed unanimously. Charlie will write the letter.

VIII. Liaison Reports: none

IX. Friends of Nature Parks Report: none

X. Old Business

- a. Star Award (see vote above)

XI. New Business

Linda Demetropoulos reported on the upcoming discussion of the Greenspace Acquisition Fund (GAF) at the December 17<sup>th</sup> City Commission meeting. There is \$1.5 million available in Green Space land acquisition funds and the Commission will be discussing if those funds could be used for other purposes. It was reported that the GAF came from the general fund and therefore does not have restrictions on its use. For many years some money (sometimes as much as \$425K annually) had been put into the fund, but not recently. Chair Charlie Pederson feels that a letter should be written to the City Commission pointing out the original intent of these funds. Jon Reiskind said the letter should point out that the trust fund had not been needed for land acquisition for several years due to availability of Wild Spaces funds. Now, however, several projects on which this money could be spent are pending, including the following:

- 1) Three acres adjacent to Forest Park and contiguous to conservation lands already purchased; acquisition in process.
- 2) Recreation land adjacent to the former Florida Forest Service's Smokey Bear Park. A deposit has been put down but there are legal issues that need to be resolved prior to acquisition.
- 3) Glen Springs, adjacent to Ring Park, could use up a majority of the funds and there is currently a City Commission Strategic Initiative (7.1) regarding acquisition and restoration of Glen Springs. Jon will alert the Friends of Glen Springs (FROGS) about this possibility and the upcoming meeting on Dec. 17 when the issue will be discussed.

Rupa Lloyd said it was important to reference the PRCA master plan, in which Glen Springs is mentioned.

4) Acquisition is in process of a parcel adjacent to Loblolly Woods Nature Park currently owned by Alachua Conservation Trust.

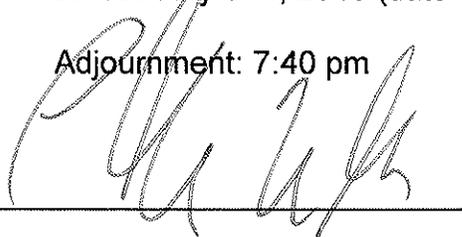
5) "Greentree Park inholding" about 2 acres owned by the Ridgeview Baptist Church: acquisition in process.

<u>Motion by:</u> Charlie Pederson	<u>Seconded by:</u> Jon Reiskind
<u>Moved to:</u> Write a letter to the City Commission about the Green Space land acquisition funds and the larger issues of conservation land acquisition	<u>Upon vote:</u> Passed unanimously

- I. Next Meeting
  - a. January 814, 2016 (date corrected)

- II. Adjournment: 7:40 pm

Chair



Date

1-14-2016

## Nature Centers Commission

Charles Pedersen, Chair

PO Box 490, Station 30 Gainesville, FL  
32627

December 16, 2015

Re: December 17<sup>th</sup> City Commission Agenda Item Regarding Greenspace Acquisition Fund

Dear Gainesville City Commissioners,

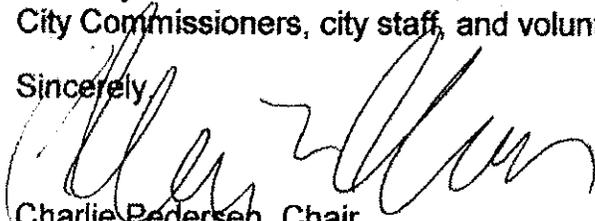
Greenspace acquisition is a vital component for future park planning in Gainesville. Purchasing conservation land and active park sites is complex and can be expensive. The Nature Centers Commission (NCC) is eager to take any steps helpful to the City Commission to build confidence in this program.

For instance, NCC works with staff to review their priority list of potential conservation land purchases. Also, in 2011 NCC worked with staff to develop the Disposition of Conservation Lands Policy. When the "Review of Greenspace Acquisition Fund" item comes up in the December 17, 2015 City Commission meeting, please remember NCC and our willingness to address these issues.

During the discussion on this topic at the last NCC meeting, the board agreed that this frugal land acquisition program, working with willing sellers, has been a great success. Of course conservation land acquisition is ongoing, most recently using Wild Spaces money to purchase such gems as the upland property that expanded Palm Point Nature Park from 16 acres to 169 acres. In the past, having a dedicated trust fund has been quite helpful when providing a match for grant money or expediting the sale when a willing seller becomes available for property on the priority list. Either of these mechanisms may be instrumental to buy current priorities, such as Glen Springs. Looking to the future, any acquisition projects on the 2020 Master Plan would also be helped by having an acquisition trust fund.

The City of Gainesville has established an amazing network of nature parks. Thanks to all the City Commissioners, city staff, and volunteers who have worked on these over the years!

Sincerely,



Charlie Pedersen, Chair  
Nature Centers Commission

