

## NATURE CENTERS COMMISSION

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

May 14, 2015  
Thursday, 6:30 PM

### MINUTES

#### I. Call to order and roll call

Members Present	Members Absent	Staff Present	Guests
Amy Carpus (Policy)	Rupa Lloyd, Treasurer	Geoff Parks	Anthony Dennis, Environ. Health Dir., Alachua Co. Health Dept.
Grace Crummer	David Miller, Vice Chair (Policy)	Michelle Park	Greg Owen, Sr. Envir. Spec., Alachua Co. Environ. Protec. Dept.
Kathy Ewel, Secretary			
Charles Pedersen, Chair (Policy)			
Jon Reiskind (PR)			
Taylor Stein (Policy)			
Leslie Straub (PR)			
Penny Weber (PR)			

#### II. Agenda approval

<u>Motion By:</u> Jon Reiskind	<u>Seconded by:</u> Amy Carpus
<u>Moved To:</u> Approve agenda as submitted	<u>Upon vote:</u> Passed unanimously

#### III. Approval of minutes of April 9, 2015

<u>Motion By:</u> Amy Carpus	<u>Seconded by:</u> Jon Reiskind
<u>Moved To:</u> Approve agenda as submitted	<u>Upon vote:</u> Passed unanimously

#### IV. PRCA Staff Report

a) Michelle Park reported that the Recreation, Cultural Affairs, and Public Works Committee (RCAPW) heard a presentation this afternoon from the Trust for Public Lands (TPL), which is working on a contract with the City of Gainesville to help identify the optimum funding mechanisms for supporting parks and to conduct citizen opinion polls to test ideas for funding; they may also provide support for a campaign for a ballot measure. TPL's presentation (powerpoint slides distributed and attached) summarizes the feasibility study it did for the City. TPL also did a

similar feasibility study for Alachua County, which is interested in reauthorizing funding for Alachua County Forever. The goal is to get a financing mechanism onto the March 2016 ballot, which will already include presidential primary elections, the District 4 City Commission seat, and the Mayor seat. RCAPW accepted the study and directed that members and staff meet with TPL over the next few weeks to see if anything else should be included in the opinion poll. The poll will be implemented in June or early July, the results will be reported back to RCAPW, discussed with NCC as well as and a presentation will be made to the City Commission as early as its July 23, 2015, to describe how this initiative will serve the Master Plan. TPL will raise funds privately for the poll. It should be noted that the Alachua County School Board's request for 1 mill for school operations will be back on the ballot in November 2016. Property tax increases in the City of Gainesville can, like sales taxes, also be used for operations and maintenance, whereas a bond can only be used for capital improvement. Gainesville's millage rate is the lowest in Alachua County: 4.7, with a capacity of 10. A tax increase voted in by the City Commission will only last for 2 years and can then be changed by the City Commission again; an increase approved by the voters will be for the stated duration (e.g., perpetuity).

Considerable discussion followed on revenue sources: property tax or bond in the city; property tax, bond, or sales tax in the county. A sales tax is appealing because the area receives lots of visitors; the half-cent sales tax for the Wild Spaces and Public Places program passed jointly with Alachua County, passed in 2008 along with an increase of 1 mill for schools, was very successful. TPL's analysis showed that City of Gainesville voters carried this issue. A combination of property tax and bond issue might be appealing, or it may create too complex a ballot. The limited time span of a bond may be an advantage, although a bond issue alone might be too restrictive. The most suitable strategy may be revealed by the polling.

The TPL report will be available to NCC shortly. In late June or early July the NCC will be convened along with RCAPW and the Gainesville/Alachua County Cultural Affairs Board (all were involved in the Master Plan process) for presentation of the polling results by TPL. The city and county Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Board may also be included.

#### b) Staff report.

Geoff Parks reported that the P.O. has been executed for Cofrin Park and a contractor is ready. Members received a written copy of the monthly staff report.

### V. New Business

a) Geoff Parks described issues at creekside parks: erosion; trail creation; people and pets wading, swimming, and digging in creek. Staff members have tried working with groups who have specific interests, such as mountain bikers, but staff presence is insufficient to meet demands. Discussion centered around Loblolly Woods, where increased sedimentation from erosion, decreased water quality,

trespassing on private land, and “technified” fossil hunting are becoming major problems. Geoff reported that Hogtown Creek is classified as “impaired” because of fecal coliform levels. Greg Owen reported that fecal coliform levels at Hogtown Creek (as well as Sweetwater Branch and Tumblin’ Creek) should not exceed 800 colony counts per millimeter but are averaging 1000. More information is available in the Orange Lake Basin Management Plan. Other pathogens are being measured, but these data are not definitive yet. Vultures, feral cats, or dogs may also contribute to this reading, as animal density is usually high in these narrow corridors. Anthony Dennis pointed out that sewage mains are old and sometimes break and leak into the creek, and there is some septic tank drainage as well as homeless camps. Average fecal coliform levels cannot exceed 200 at public bathing places; an advisory must be posted if levels ever exceed 800. Leslie Straub suggested that public education, such as the effects of cats and dogs, might be possible.

Classes of 11-year-olds when accompanied by staff members will understand and respect the rules, but youngsters taken to use the creek without permission or staff supervision may not be aware of the rules; toddlers cannot be expected to respect them. Geoff asks what our obligation to the community is because of public health issues. More people are becoming used to using the parks on an unsustainable basis. There is little signage now about appropriate behavior, in part because staff members have tried to avoid negative signs. Perhaps kiosks can be used to better effect.

Anthony Dennis pointed out that liability is associated with in-creek recreation and that public bathing should not be promoted. Taylor Stein, on the other hand, emphasized the importance of these parks, where children too young to appreciate them because of their biodiversity can instead find excitement in hunting for sharks’ teeth. How can an early appreciation of parks be encouraged without increasing liability? Penny Weber reminded the NCC that there should be a kiosk at every park with essential information. After some discussion, it was agreed that information should be provided with a few appropriate signs at the kiosk, including notification of water quality status and location of legal trails, and that a coordinated campaign is needed, including outreach to organizations and schools, and should proceed as soon as possible and include information about rules and liabilities.

Motion By: Amy Carpus	Seconded By: Taylor Stein
Moved To: Recommend strongly that staff return in June with a strategy for addressing these issues.	Upon Vote: Passed unanimously

b) Other New Business

Penny Weber would like to have discussion about possible consequences of inhabitants from Dignity Village getting to Morningside Nature Center on the power

line. Charley Pedersen will talk to Linda Demetropoulos about approaches to this issue.

#### IV. Old Business

##### a) Approve work plan

Motion By: Jon Reiskind	Seconded By: Amy Carpus
Moved To: Accept the work plan as presented	Upon Vote: Passed unanimously

NCC will discuss this in more detail at the next meeting.

##### b) Nuisance wildlife policy

This is the first reading of the most recent review. Amy Carpus mentioned that more copy editing is needed and that the scope of trapping (p. 3 at bottom) is unclear. Also, treatment of some issues such as disease transmission is uneven among different kinds of animals. Penny Weber disagreed with the policy on feral hogs, with which the landowner must deal as the policy is written. Leslie Straub disagrees with designation of the coyote. She recommends an appendix with all names of people and phone numbers, as names may change. She also pointed out the confusion caused by referencing FWC, which can refer to organizations. Charlie asks NCC members to get their edits and other complaints to Linda Demetropoulos. Further discussion was tabled.

VII. Chair Report. No report.

VIII. Treasurer's Report. No report.

IX. Committee Reports.

a) Policy Committee: Taylor Stein will not be here in July and will be attending only sporadically during the Fall Semester. There will be a committee meeting in June but not in August. The committee will need to take up issues identified in the work plan as well as the information the staff produces for creekside parks. Leslie points out that policy on protection of wildlife in Gainesville should be considered.

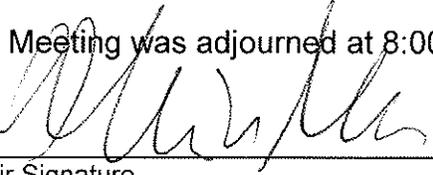
b) PR & Awards Committee: Leslie Straub reported that finishing and printing the large storyboard is top priority for the committee, then the two stand-alone banners for Star Award advertisement and marketing. The committee will then review the materials it has for the small storyboard and possibly purchase a new one. Finally, they will begin to look at improvements for Morningside and bring those up for discussion. The committee will meet in July and will bring in all the materials used for marketing to be stored in a common storage area. The signout sheet will have a place to enter venue where shown. The materials are now at Loblolly.

X. Friends of Nature Parks Report: No report.

XI. Liaison Reports: No reports.

XII. Board or Citizen Comments: None

Meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.



Chair Signature

6-25-2015

Date