



## Alachua County Special Meeting Minutes

**October 1, 2024, 1:30 PM**

Present: Chair Mary Alford, Vice Chair Charles S. Chestnut, IV,  
Commissioner Ken Cornell, Commissioner Anna Prizzia,  
Commissioner Marihelen Wheeler

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### **A. Approval of Agenda**

Chair Alford called the meeting to order at 1:30pm

**Commissioner Prizzia moved** approval of the agenda.

2nd Commissioner Chestnut

**The motion carried 4-0 with Commissioner Cornell not present.**

To approve the Agenda.

### **B. Items for Discussion**

1. Mill Creek Sink Projects Discussion - 24-00859

Environmental Protection Department Director Stephen Hofstetter and Water Resources Program Manager Stacie Greco presented the above item to the Board.

Commissioner Cornell entered the meeting at 1:34pm

Mill Creek Sink:

- Terminus of Mill Creek and Townsend Branch
- Part of an ancient drainage system, connected to Hornsby Spring and the Santa Fe River

- Hundreds of feet of mapped cave, several large rooms, and complex system of conduits extending to depths up to 215 feet

#### Mill Creek Sink Water Quality Improvement Project:

- \$2M project implemented by the City of Alachua funded by SRWMD and FDEP (Phase I of Mill Creek Sink Project grant).

- Primary goal to reduce nitrogen loading to the Santa Fe River Basin, which is listed as impaired for nitrogen.
- Also intended to remove other pollutants such as heavy metals, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, and suspended solids.

#### Land Conservation:

- Portions of the property were added to the County Active Acquisition List in 2018.
- ACEPD received acquisition funding from SRWMD and FDEP. (Phase II of Mill Creek Sink Project grant).
- County staff were not able to negotiate an agreement with the current landowner.

#### Mill Creek Sink – Development Concerns:

- Developing within karst geology increases chances of sinkholes.
- Sinkholes can damage property and create a direct conduit for pollutants to contaminate drinking water and springs.
- Proposed development patterns result in high water use for landscapes.
- Manicured landscapes also contribute to nitrogen pollution from fertilizers.

#### Actions to Protect the Watershed:

- Creating a conservation area is the most protective option.
- If the area is developed, low impact development techniques should be in place.
- Monitoring wells should be installed to demonstrate protection of the Floridan aquifer.

#### Mill Creek ACF Project Area:

- Mill Creek Preserve
- Rembert Conservation Easement
- Hitchcock Ranch Conservation Easement

Low Impact Development (LID): LID is most successful when incorporated into earliest stages of planning.

#### Low Impact Development Best Management Practices (BMPs):

##### Site Planning (Avoidance)

- Inventory site assets (hydrology, topography, soils, vegetation, structures)
- Protect surface waters, wetlands and groundwater
- Preserve open space
- Retain tree canopy and native landscapes
- Cluster design and maximize gross density
- Minimize building footprint
- Minimize total impervious area
- Minimize directly connected impervious area
- Eliminate curbs and implement curb cuts

##### Source Control (Minimization)

- Retain natural landscape depressions
- Minimize clearing and grading
- Minimize soil disturbance and compaction
- Build with landscape slope
- Retain native landscapes at the lot level
- Florida-friendly landscapes
- Rainfall interceptor trees
- Minimize/eliminate fertilizer & irrigation
- Community and home-owner education

##### Structural (Mitigation)

- Retention basin
- Exfiltration trench
- Underground storage and retention
- Rain gardens
- Bioswales

- Vegetated buffers
- Permeable pavements
- Green roofs
- Stormwater harvesting
- Wet detention systems
- Filter systems
- Managed aquatic plant systems
- Biofiltration systems
  
- For the lowest impact, site planning BMPs should be prioritized.
- Second priority should be given to source control BMPs.
- Finally, as a last resort and considered more of a retrofit, structural BMPs should be implemented.

Low Impact Development and Landscaping and Irrigation:

Through Covenants Codes and Restrictions (CCR) or Utility Use Agreements on lots and common areas:

- Prohibit permanent landscape irrigation
- Prohibit irrigation wells
- Require native and/or Florida Friendly Landscaping
- Require Soil amendments

Commissioner Prizzia, County Attorney Torres, Commissioner Cornell, Water Resources Program Manager Stacie Greco, Environmental Protection Department Director Stephen Hofstetter, Commissioner Wheeler, Chair Alford, Commissioner Chestnut, Environmental Protection Department Director Stephen Hofstetter, and Commissioner Prizzia presented comments.

**Commissioner Cornell moved** the following 14-part motion:

1. Direct staff to follow "next steps" slide as presented which states the following:

- Attend future City of Alachua public meetings and hearing related to any of the mentioned development projects to retain affected party status
- Meet with City staff to discuss concerns and propose strategies to address these concerns with existing applications

- Meet with development representatives when appropriate
  - Provide updates to the BOCC on status of projects moving forward
2. Bring back recommendations to strengthen our stormwater quality code regulations and procedures immediately.
  3. Bring back recommendations to eliminate the current self-certification process for the county's stormwater regulations and look at improving these regulations prior to preliminary approval.
  4. Bring back whatever recommendation that staff has to avoid this current situation from happening again which might include but not be limited to formal interlocal agreements that improve collaboration with both our state and municipalities.
  5. Authorize a chair letter to city of Alachua to discuss holding off on any approvals of Tara April and Tara Phoenicia or anything that relates to the Mill Creek Watershed.
  6. Ask staff to inquire with developer to see if they willing sell Tara Phoenicia to the county.
  7. For the sensitive areas within the county during the EAR process review potential requirements for comp plan and code which would require prevention and avoidance.
  8. Allow staff to obtain any consultant support or any other documentation or information with regards to the stormwater plan for Tara West to ensure it will function as claimed.
  9. Ask to consider the Community Commercial zone in the Mill Creek Sink watershed.
  10. Direct staff to obtain the necessary experts to determine if the stormwater plan will work.
  11. Ask staff to review the community Commercial Comp plan amendment and Tomoca Hills comp plan amendment. Also ask staff to engage about excluding sensitive karst areas and specifically the Mill Creek for that Comp Plan Amendment.
  12. Send a chair letter to the water management district to express the county concerns for the record.
  13. Review the comp plans for the municipalities around the county and identify where there might be some conflict with sensitive environmental

areas and try to be proactive in a discussion with those cities about those areas.

14. Ask staff to look into have funds from the County Reserves moved into legal reserves so that they are available should they be needed.

2nd Commissioner Prizzia

**The motion carried 5-0.**

Chair Alford exits the meeting at 3:16pm

Chair Alford return to the meeting at 3:18pm

Public Comment

Khalil Blount, Jay Rosenbeck (handout given to commissioners), Mrs. Younger, Dennis Price, Joann Trippley, SoUnique Cojo, High Springs Mayor Katherine Weitz, Bob, Mr. Davis, George, Fred Strep, Daniel Durrante, Bobby Sharping, Jacob Fletcher, Ms. Z, and Brian Bisher presented comments.

Commissioner Prizzia, Environmental Protection Department Director Stephen Hofstetter, Commissioner Wheeler, Commissioner Cornell, and County Manager Lieberman presented comments.

To receive direction from the Board.

**C. Closing Comments**

1. Public Comment

Chair Alford recognized Khalil Blount, and SoUnique Cojo who presented comments.

2. Commission Comment

Commissioner Chestnut stated he has been reading about the ban on public encampment and he has some concerns because in South Florida and Miami Beach they passed an ordinance against it which results in locking up homeless citizen which increases the jail population. Commissioner believes if our county sheriff starts to enforce house bill statue 1365 it will cost us more in term of jail and housing our homeless population and does not agree with the bill. Commissioner believes we should help our citizens rather than place them in jail.

Commissioner Prizzia stated she agrees with Commissioner Chestnut and would like to have a proactive conversation regarding the issue.

Commissioner Cornell stated he had a conversation with the mayor and agrees with both Commissioner Chestnut and Commissioner Prizzia, this is an issue that will need to be looked at and put together a plan about how to move forward.

**D. Adjourn**

There being no further business before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 4:12 p.m.

To adjourn the meeting.