

Turnbull Creek Land Preservation Committee

May 20, 2024

Video and agenda can be found [here](#)

Present: Chair Donna Athearn, Lamont W. Ingalls, and Vice-Chair Chip Weston. Absent: Robert Werner and William Robitzsch. Minutes of the February 19, 2024, meeting were approved.

Public Participation: None

Chair Athearn shared Resolution No. 17-24 that was adopted at the City Commission's April 9, 2024, meeting which extended member appointments to August 1, 2025. Duties follow.

- review and research any information related to the land preservation along the Turnbull Creek area properties.
- provide recommendations to the City Commission as to proposed projects and initiatives to advance the conservation efforts;
- research and recommend grant sources to fund proposed project initiatives within the Turnbull Creek area properties.

VC Weston was very pleased with what the City Commission had accomplished. He requested a new codified map of all the Turnbull Creek properties purchased as well as the ranking on those remaining to be possibly purchased or requiring negotiation of easements for environmental, conservation, or maintenance/flooding purposes. Chair Athearn agreed, stating that there are grants to help with the preservation effort. Assistant City Manager Rob Neibert stated that the City Commission has tasked the committee with the responsibility of ranking the properties, setting goals and submitting recommendations to the City Commission.

Committee member Ingalls asked about the status on acquisitions of easements to which Mr. Neibert replied over \$5.5 million of the original bond money remains. He explained that easements can be donated or purchased if the owner doesn't want to sell the entire property. If purchased as a conservation easement, they can save on property taxes, and it remains part of their deed. He further explained that all easements the City negotiates and gets are then rezoned C (Conservation) with a deed restriction in perpetuity is added to the property.

An update was given on the Turnbull Bay Dredging Project which has a North and a South area. The South area is being held up by the Army Corps of Engineers permitting problems, and Mr. Neibert has recently been in communication with the Colonel regarding this issue as it has been nine months. If nothing happens soon, he will go to our congressmen. The North area has a sovereignty problem regarding who is in charge of this waterway, so it's a legal issue. David Ray did get a grant to help with the dredging, and the Committee has done all it can do, but the City must be careful in rectifying these issues, so it doesn't turn political.

There was discussion about grant suggestions that had been sent from the Committee to the City but were put on hold due to lack of manpower, money, priority, and timing. One grant, that was submitted under the County's 386 Program, requested \$6 million of the \$8 million estimated cost for the Corbin Park flooding as that is a priority.

The Committee feels, as does Mr. Neibert, that we need to start planning for climate change, specifically in city building regulations in flood zone areas and where to house displaced residents when their homes flood. Mr. Neibert suggested the Committee make a recommendation to the City Commission to contact the Florida League of Cities asking for consideration in moving forward with specific pieces of legislation.

Commissioner Martin stated that she has discussed notifications disclosing flooding at all home sales with our City Attorney and our City Manager. She also supports city Land Development Regulations being updated to FEMA recommendations when flooded homes are being rebuilt. Currently, houses are being built with stem walls that sit higher than their neighbors. Even though designed to include stormwater retention, there is often no calculation on the amount of water flowing into the retention areas.

Committee Comments:

- First goal is to update the acquisition maps and prioritize the remaining available properties, looking at both purchasing entire properties and easements. Once this is done, they will schedule a workshop.
- Property tax breaks (what is available and how they work) should be better publicized and communicated clearly to those properties in the target areas.
- The Committee will be invited to the Ribbon Cutting of the Turnbull Creek Observation Deck to publicize the Committee's goals and accomplishments.