

**ELMS PROPERTY
ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
10:00 A.M. July 19, 2007
Minutes**

Members present were Denis Canavan, Brad Clements, Steve Riley, Phil Rollins, Robert Paul, Sandra Patty, Marianne Chapman, and Brian King.

Members absent were David Gailey.

Others present were Shawn Seaman, DNR; Margarita Rochow, Elms Environmental Center; Kurt Reitz, Elms Environmental Center; Dan Raley, Commissioner; and Jada Stuckert, Recording Secretary for LUGM.

Mr. Canavan called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m. and asked for additions or amendments to the agenda. Ms. Patty introduced Shawn Seaman who is a new staff member of PPRP.

Mr. Riley asked the agenda be amended to include the establishment of the hunting boundary line. Mr. Canavan stated this could go under unfinished business. Ms. Patty objected to the amendment stating this topic has dominated the conversation the last several meetings. Ms. Patty further stated she would like to be able to make it through one entire agenda before discussing this issue again. Ms. Patty asked if the topic is going to be discussed can it be discussed at the end of the meeting, after more important topics are discussed. After discussion and due to members and public in attendance leaving the meeting early it was decided to discuss the hunting boundary line as II.a with a time limit of 25 minutes.

I. Approval of Minutes – 3/15/07 & 6/7/07

Ms. Patty made a motion to approve the minutes of 3/15/07 and 6/7/07 and Mr. Rollins seconded. The motion passed without opposition.

a. Discussion of Minutes Procedure: None

II. Unfinished Business

a. Hunting Boundary Line

Mr. Riley provided a chart which showed how much property has been expanded to include the two leases. Mr. Riley stated over the years this expansions has resulted in denial to the public citizens of St. Mary's County to use the property for their recreational purposes outside of the school and recreational and parks. Mr. Riley stated the environmental center and recreation and parks now have three quarters of a square mile in property. Mr. Riley stated this is much larger than the 44 acres that they began with. Mr. Riley stated due to the taking of the property the hunters have lost use of duck blinds, dove fields, and ponds.

Mr. Riley stated at one time there were two leases and now they have been combined and when this happened the new lease eliminated all areas to hunters. Mr. Riley stated if the lease were approved by the Board of County Commissioners to allow the School Board to sublet there would no hunting on the property at all. Mr. Riley stated the hunters have been good neighbors and managers of the area, we have heard that if the school hears gunshots they automatically go to lock-down. Mr. Riley stated the property has been hunted for 30 years and there has never been an incident where the school had to go into lock-down. Ms. Chapman stated this is incorrect. Mr. Riley asked how many times the school has gone into lock-down. Ms. Chapman stated she has already reported this and would rather not discuss it now.

Mr. Riley stated the hunters are proposing that we go back to the 2003 boundary line.

Mr. Riley stated he appeared before the County Commissioners in 2003 and at that time they were unaware of the expansion program of the school. Mr. Riley stated the hunters and sportsmen are now organized, we have a seat on this board, and now have a voice. Mr. Riley stated he is the only member of the committee that is not employed by the State, County, or School system. Mr. Riley stated being just one vote is kind of hard to fight what is happening. Mr. Riley stated sportsmen are not trying to expand hunting into the Elms property area; we are trying to retain what we have had in the past. Mr. Riley stated the County has allowed hunting in these areas for the past 30 years.

Mr. Clements stated the Board of Education is very much aware of the discussions of this committee and will not agree to a re-alignment of the lease lines for the purpose of hunting. Mr. Clements stated other uses of the property for public use including trails, horse back riding, and archery are still being discussed.

Mr. Canavan asked that Mr. Clements explain the posted exhibit entitled "Current & Future High School Study Areas." Ms. Rochow stated the exhibit allows the expansion of the school property to utilize the freshwater stream areas. Ms. Chapman stated the high school students have been using these areas for quite a few years. Mr. Canavan stated this plan (exhibit) was brought to the committee this past year and asked if the committee entertained the plan as a recommendation on how to use the leased area. Mr. Clements stated there has been no action taken on this plan. Mr. Canavan stated there needs to be some coordination between parks and recreation and the Board of Education because we were talking about access along the beach and paths. Mr. Clements stated we established this at the last meeting meaning we agreed with the plan on the subject of how the property would be used. Mr. Canavan stated the committee reaffirmed moving ahead with the current Elms Management Plan to the Board of County Commissioners. Mr. Canavan stated the question is how the leased area is going to be used.

Mr. King stated you can argue this forever but the question that needs to be asked is what you want this place to look like in 20 years. Mr. King stated if you want it to look natural you are going to have to manage the deer population. Mr. King stated the other questions is how consistent do you want your approach for the environmental standpoint to be. Mr. King asked if you want to control some species and not control others. Mr. King asked what if weed swans come to the property, are they going to stay or are they going to be exterminated. Mr. King stated the worst thing for his department is letting a species become a nuisance. Mr. King stated the property is going to need active management.

Mr. Clements asked if the County chooses to allow hunting in these areas is the County going to manage the hunting on the County leased property. Mr. Canavan stated he does not believe the County has the resources to manage the hunting. Mr. King stated Wildlife Management would probably be willing to manage the hunting if there are good boundary lines in place. Mr. Riley stated we have a confusion factor here, the hunters and other sportsmen are not asking for hunting and education use at the same time. Mr. Riley stated the sportsmen are advocating for designated times and places to hunt. Mr. Riley stated the Commissioners are going to make the decision on this issue. Mr. Riley stated if there are three separate designated areas there should not be a problem. Mr. Riley stated the sportsmen are not trying to encroach on the school it is actually the opposite.

Ms. Chapman asked what type of management Mr. King is speaking about. Ms. Chapman stated in the past DNR would come out and check the property once or twice a year. Mr. King stated he is referring to natural resource management. Mr. King stated we promote hunting, because if deer become a nuisance we are trying to back-paddle. Ms. Chapman stated the committee has discussed having managed hunts if a species

become a nuisance. Cindy Thomas stated this would be a reaction to the problem and not managing the problem so that it does not occur.

Mr. Clements asked how many State acres of land are available for hunting in the County. Mr. King stated there are probably over 3,000 acres of State hunting land available. Mr. Clements stated this is not the only area to hunt in the County. Ms. Thomas stated the citizens are trying to figure out what they do and do not have access to on the property. Ms. Thomas stated the citizens just want to be able to use the property as it is. Ms. Chapman stated the citizens already have access to the public beach. Ms. Chapman stated the citizens have public access to the shoreline.

After further discussion Mr. Riley made a motion to define the current lease defined into three separate areas, environmental education center, parks area, and other recreational purposes including hunting, each to be clearly defined. Having no second, the motion failed.

Mr. Canavan referred to the management plan which refers to utilizing the overall site. Mr. Canavan stated the overall site is approximately 476 acres. Mr. Rollins stated this is the County Lease Area. Mr. Canavan stated if you remove the 81 acres for parks and recreation you have 391 acres. Mr. Rollins stated forget the 81 acres; this is what it used to be back when there were two separate leases. Mr. Rollins stated the County has 476 acres for environmental education and parks and recreation. Mr. Rollins stated it has not been decided as to how this acreage will be broken out.

Mr. Canavan asked Mr. Clements to prepare documentation for discussion before the Commissioners how the Board of Education intends to use the land. Mr. Canavan stated he intends to take the management plan and the annual report to the Commissioners on July 31, 2007.

Before leaving Commissioner Raley stated a few of the questions he will be asking on the 31st will include one, the letter from the Board of Education to Mr. Canavan dated 4/18/07 referring to houses on the property and 85 acres; two, wherever the line is there needs to be a buffer and on which side of the line does the buffer go; three, how will the Board of Education use the acreage; four, public access to the water will be questioned; and lastly, the goals listed on page 18 of the management plan, are they in order by priority. Mr. Raley stated these will be the questions he will be asking at the July 31, 2007 meeting.

b. Trail System

Kurt Reitz indicated on the "Future Field Site Map" where the current trails are located and where they would like to expand the trails. Mr. Canavan asked about accessibility and clearing. Mr. Rollins stated his hopes are to have a trail around the perimeter of the acreage with possible links to internal connections from the environmental education center. Mr. Rollins stated Parks and Recreation are thinking more along the lines of a nature trail and not a paved pathway. Mr. Canavan reiterated that the trails would be light foot access trails. Dr. Paul asked if management of the property and trails is included in the budget. Mr. Clements stated this was discussed at the Board of Education meeting but no action was taken. Mr. Reitz asked about having a fire path. After discussion, it was the discussion of the committee to further discuss Fire Management at a future meeting.

c. BOCC Presentation (Annual Report & Management Plan): Discussed under II.a.

d. Maintenance Issues

Mr. Canavan asked if the new well has been installed. Mr. Reitz stated the well is not in. Mr. Canavan stated this should be an agenda items for the next meeting.

The committee took agenda items IV out of order. Please see below for discussion.

III. New Business

a. Role of Members & Composition of Committee

Mr. Riley stated he has noticed that every voting member except for himself is an employee or immediate retiree of the State, County, or School Department. Mr. Riley stated this is the reason for wanting to expand the citizen voting members on the committee. Mr. Riley stated it would be beneficial to have more citizen members who have no connections to the government.

Ms. Patty stated this property was acquired by the power plant sighting program and is designed to be a power plant site. Ms. Patty stated the statute whereby the State was able to purchase the property had provided for interim uses. Ms. Patty stated the statute itself mandates the first interim use is for environmental education, the second is towards the line of recreation. Ms. Patty explained for these reasons the board is over weighted with government members because we are the two entities who have control over this property.

Ms. Thomas stated there are no members of the committee who even live within 15 miles of the site. Ms. Thomas asked who is looking out for the common member of the public or her interests. Ms. Thomas stated as a property owner she has had more problems with the County lease line area since the lease was implemented. Ms. Thomas stated there were no problems when DNR managed the site. Ms. Patty stated the same people have had the property this entire time. Ms. Thomas stated, no, over the past three years the management has gone from DNR to the County.

Mr. Canavan stated in reading the management plan we have 9 individuals including 2 citizen members. Mr. Canavan asked if the committee members are opposed to increasing the number of citizen members from two to four citizen members. Ms. Chapman stated she is opposed because you don't even have to be a member of the committee to get full attention. Ms. Chapman asked why you have to be a member when as a citizen you can get full attention. Mr. Riley stated you can get full attention, but as a citizen you do not vote. Ms. Chapman stated the only reason Mr. Riley is upset is because nobody is voting along with him. Ms. Patty stated she objects to increasing the number of citizen members of any entity on the committee. Ms. Patty stated the County Commissioners need to determine what makes a good member for this committee before we begin adding citizen members. Mr. King stated he is not opposed to the idea however he would recommend having one of the two citizen members be from the local neighborhood.

Mr. Riley made a motion to recommend that the land be divided into three parts for specific uses to be defined for each part. Having no second the motion failed.

Mr. Canavan reminded the committee of the topic at hand. Mr. Clements stated he is not opposed to looking at the make up of the committee. Mr. Rollins stated he has no objections to adding more citizen members. Dr. Paul stated he has no objections and really likes the idea of having a local citizen member. Mr. Canavan stated he is not opposed as long as the total number of members is an odd number.

Dr. Paul made a motion to recommend to the Board of County Commissioners that two additional citizen members be added to the Elms Advisory Board. Mr. King made a friendly amendment to the motion adding that the Committee recommends to the Board

of County Commissioners that one of the two proposed citizen members be from the local community. Mr. King seconded. The motion passed by a 4-3 vote with Mr. Canavan, Mr. Riley, Dr. Paul, and Mr. King in favor and Mr. Clements, Ms. Patty, and Ms. Chapman opposed. Note: Mr. Rollins was out of the room while the vote was taking place.

b. Addition of Citizen Members: Please see III.a for discussion

IV. Update on Action Items

a. Letter to John Horton Family

Mr. Canavan stated the letter was drafted and reviewed by Ms. Patty and Ms. Chapman with only one correction. Mr. Canavan stated he will sign the letter and have it mailed.

b. Letter to DNR Police and County Sheriff's Office

Mr. Canavan stated he would like to invite both parties to the next meeting however; the next meeting is scheduled for October. Mr. Canavan recommended meeting in September. After discussion it was decided to tentatively schedule a meeting for September 13, 2007 and to also invite the State Police Department.

c. Letter update on Trailers and Buildings

Mr. Canavan stated he is still working on this letter and will keep the committee updated.

V. Announcements

Mr. Buist stated he presented a letter and a package to the Board of County Commissioners one year ago that would allow use of the property for archery only. Mr. Buist stated at that time Commissioner Raley agreed that this was a good proposal. Mr. Buist stated we could move the safety zone signs and re-post them with yellow caution archery only, no guns signs. Mr. Buist stated archery range is only about 30 yards which is fully within sight range.

After further discussion a motion was made and seconded to adjourn at 12:25 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

VI. Lunch