



Nassau County
Conservation Land Acquisition and Management (CLAM)
Committee Agenda
January 20, 2022

1. Welcome
2. Approval of Minutes from November 18, 2021 CLAM Meeting
3. CLAM Vision and Project Overview
4. Consideration of Project Area Approval
5. CLAM Nomination Schedule Update
6. Introduction of Key Partners
 - a. Ramesh Buch, NFLT, Director of Conservation Acquisitions
 - b. Pegeen Hanrahan, TPL, Southeast Conservation Finance Director

**NASSAU COUNTY
CONSERVATION LAND ACQUISITION AND MANAGEMENT
NOVEMBER 18, 2021, 5:00 P.M.
COUNTY COMMISSION CHAMBERS,
JAMES S. PAGE GOVERNMENTAL COMPLEX
YULEE, FLORIDA**

A Conservation Land Acquisition and Management (CLAM) Committee meeting was held this 18th day of November 2021, at 5:00 p.m. in the Commission Chambers, James S. Page Governmental Complex, Yulee, Florida.

Chair Carvalho called the meeting to order at 5:05 p.m. Present Committee Members were Brandy Carvalho, Bill Watson, Bill Korn, and Chris Hill. Also present were Denise May, Assistant County Attorney; Taco Pope, County Manager; Holly Coyle, Assistant Planning Director; Melissa Lucey and Jennifer Marlatt, Deputy Clerks.

It was moved by Mr. Korn, seconded by Mr. Watson, and unanimously carried to approve the minutes from the September 16, 2021 meeting as presented.

Ms. Coyle informed the Committee that a revised CLAM implementation schedule was provided in each agenda packet. She disclosed that nine nominations have been received thus far and proposed extending the nomination period for thirty days from December 31, 2021, to January 31, 2022. Ms. Coyle explained that the extended period would allow additional time to restructure the scope of work and provide an extra Committee meeting to receive public input and rank proposals. She clarified that the nomination process would continue to be ongoing; however, the initial ranking period will conclude on January 31, 2022. Additional nominations will be considered based on prioritization. Ms. Coyle announced that Rebecca Perry had left the North Florida Land Trust (NFLT), and Ramesh Buch and Heather Nagy will replace her as Nassau County's NFLT representatives. As a result, the scope of work was restructured into three basic steps: (1) identifying the project areas, (2) scoring the properties, and (3) prioritization from the CLAM Committee.

It was moved by Mr. Korn, seconded by Mr. Hill, and unanimously carried to approve the revised CLAM implementation schedule as presented.

Ms. Coyle advised that the guest speaker was running late but should be arriving around 5:15 p.m. In the meantime, Mr. Pope briefly introduced Pegeen Hanrahan, Southeast Conservation Finance Director for The Trust for Public Land (TPL).

The Committee recessed at 5:14 p.m. and reconvened at 5:23 p.m.

Ms. Hanrahan came forward and introduced herself. She explained that Nassau County established the CLAM program to identify, protect, and dedicate natural resources vital to the local community. Ms. Hanrahan emphasized the significance of protecting and improving land conservation and acquisition while Nassau County is experiencing considerable population growth. She briefly reviewed successful ballot measures that

provided funding for conservation parks, trails, and schoolyard improvements, explaining the motto “Land for People” mainly focuses on public access projects, such as boat launches, soccer ball fields, or a pickleball court.

Ms. Hanrahan presented a map depicting successful and unsuccessful state and county measures nationally. She explained that states with the most significant number of city and county measures generally provide robust funding to local governments to encourage investments in parks, trails, and natural lands. Ms. Hanrahan reviewed the process TPL follows to help communities succeed and generate funding for land conservation: feasibility research, public opinion survey, program recommendations, ballot language, and campaign. She explained that in 2019, Nassau County made it to the ballot language stage but did not move forward with the campaign.

Ms. Hanrahan confirmed that the feasibility research had been completed, which analyzes Nassau County’s demographics, current budget, fiscal capacity, finance options, political profile, election history and requirements, ballot language requirements, and best practices. She reviewed the voter-approved options for major projects in local governments, such as general obligation bonds, property taxes, and sales taxes, pointing out that bonds are the most common in Florida, with an 88 percent success rate. Ms. Hanrahan emphasized that determining a suitable financing method is vital to the overall process.

Ms. Hanrahan stressed the significance of the ballot language, explaining that it should be legal, ethical, transparent, and reflective of the values of the community. The TPL recommends Counties establish a citizen oversight committee to oversee the funding methods and provide recommendations to the elected officials. She presented the ballot language adopted by the Board of County Commissioners in December 2019; the Ballot Title was Nassau County General Obligation Bonds for Land to Protect Water Quality, Wildlife Habitat, and Rivers; the Question read, “To acquire land to improve water quality in rivers, creeks, and drinking water sources; to protect natural areas to prevent flooding, the St. Mary’s, Nassau, and Amelia Rivers, and beaches; and conserve wildlife habitat; shall Nassau County be authorized to issue General Obligation Bonds, not exceeding maximum lawful interest rates, maturing within 30 years, not exceeding 30 million dollars payable from ad valorem taxes, with citizen oversight and full public disclosure of all bond spending?”

Mr. Watson inquired about the lack of public access and active recreation terminology in the ballot language, stating that the community involvement and interest elements are nonexistent within the context. Ms. Hanrahan explained that water quality protection tends to be the most favored poll because clean drinking water is critical, and active recreation is generally associated with operational maintenance expenses. However, a *Florida Statute* allows local governments to adopt a bond amount with additional millage to cover those operating expenses in a single ballot measure. She advised the Committee Members to provide feedback regarding revisions to the ballot language.

Ms. Hanrahan reviewed the 2019 Public Opinion Survey results; the following items received the strongest support:

- Protecting the water quality of rivers, lakes, and streams.
- Preserving land to protect drinking water sources.
- Protecting natural areas that help to prevent floods.
- Conserving wildlife habitat.
- Preserving coastal salt marshes.
- Protecting land around the St. Mary's River and Nassau River.
- Managing parks and conservation lands.

The overall support at the beginning of the poll was 59 percent and 67 percent by the end of the poll. Ms. Hanrahan recommended conducting another Public Opinion Survey to ensure accurate and updated responses within Nassau County. She explained that if the Board of County Commissioners refers it back to the ballot, the TPL will review the funding mechanisms, associated costs, the ballot language, and the election date. She advised that the TPL recommends a local leadership committee to communicate the ballot language effectively.

Mr. Korn suggested aligning the priorities defined within the assessment tool with the ballot language. Ms. Hanrahan concurred, stating that the priorities in the assessment tool should be reflected in the ballot language. She indicated that priorities, such as protecting agricultural and forestry lands, are generally associated with protecting wildlife habitats. Mr. Pope restated that the CLAM implementation schedule was revised, allowing additional time to review and provide feedback before the Board of County Commissioners decide on the ballot language. Ms. Hanrahan offered to attend an additional meeting for a more thorough discussion. Mr. Pope advised that the Board of County Commissioners will make the final decision on submitting a Resolution to the Supervisor of Election in August 2022.

It was moved by Mr. Korn, seconded by Mr. Hill, and unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting at 6:19 p.m.