



Volusia Forever Advisory Committee Listening Session Minutes



Wednesday, May 19, 2021

Deltona Library

2150 Eustace Ave., Deltona, FL 32725

ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT

Wanda Van Dam, Vice Chair
Gerald Fieser
John Gamble
Derrick Orberg
Suzanne Scheiber
Steve Crump (online)
Derek LaMontagne (online)

STAFF PRESENT

Clay Ervin, Growth and Resource Management Director
Dona Butler, Community Services Director
Brad Burbaugh, Extension Services Director
Ginger Adair, Environmental Management Director
Tim Baylie, Parks, Recreation and Culture Director
Russ Brown, Senior County Attorney
Danielle Dangleman, Special Project Coordinator
Nick Dunnam, Land Management Activity Manager
Sarah Presley, Administrative Coordinator

Call to order:

Vice Chair Van Dam called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

Presentation: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KUOCP7ag48k>

Public Participation

Amy Munuzie, DeLeon Springs Community Association, explained that a letter had been sent to the committee with several questions and suggestions, and asked if they had received it.

Vice Chair Van Dam advised that all incoming correspondence is being compiled at this time and will be responded to at a later date.

Libby Levette stated that there was property available in the wildlife corridor in the Farmton area. She reminded the committee a wildlife corridor act was established in 2021, and the state would like to enlarge the area. She asked that the committee object to the rescinding of the Farmton DRI, stating that the property is prime real estate for scrub jays, black bears, panthers and it must be prioritized.

Ginger Adair, Environmental Management Director explained the process for land acquisition and the fact that we are willing seller program.

Member LaMontagne, said he supports the efforts by Ms. Levette and thanked the committee for what they do.

Rebecca Perry, North Florida Land Trust, asserted that there are approximately 100,000 acres of unprotected agricultural lands in Volusia County. She said those lands could be the first to be developed if farmers are having trouble making ends meet. She believes the criteria, as it stands now, does not support the newly added forests and farmland ballot language.

Ms. Perry stated that this was a good opportunity to leverage federal dollars through the Farm Bill Program. She shared that there are programs that can be brought to Volusia County that match your dollars 50/50 to protect farmland.

Member Gamble asked if there were specific changes to the criteria language that she could suggest.

Ms. Perry affirmed there were and said she would add that to her comments and recommendations and share with the committee. Her letter is included as part of record in these minutes.

Member Crump, said there were three exception categories and asked if farmlands should be a fourth special exception or exemption.

Ms. Adair said that term is enhancement criteria.

Member Crump suggested adding new primary criteria for forests and farmlands.

Melissa Lammers wanted to remind the committee of a past committee meeting regarding the land management piece where there was wide consensus from previous and current members as well as staff that land management set aside needed to be increased to 15% because the ballot language talks about being stewards of the land in perpetuity.

Member LaMontagne asked when the program and criteria would be finalized.

Dona Butler, Community Services Director, explained the staff would bring back all of the criteria and try to match it with the comments from the listening sessions and that any that match the criteria will be discussed. She stated that discussion points would be laid out on the criteria as well as the process.

Ms. Butler discussed the possibility of discussing the criteria at one meeting and the process at a second meeting before meeting with council on July 13.

Member Scheiber asked that since this is a willing seller, are there properties that have been on this list for the entire length of the Forever program? These would be properties the county is interested in acquiring, that have been waiting on/for connectivity. Have they been waited on because they have never come available, or has there never been a willing seller?

Ms. Adair said there are parcels on the last active A and B lists that have not been acquired because the sellers were not willing. She said she would check to see if properties have been on the list for more than 20 years.

Vice Chair Van Dam asked when the committee would need to bring their information before council. She suggested having a second meeting to ensure the committee has sufficient time to be prepared for the July 13 meeting with County Council.

Member LaMontagne shared that he did not see a reason for an additional meeting.

Ms. Butler polled the group as to their availability and the consensus was for an additional meeting on Friday, June 11. She also shared there has been some changes in how we will address absences. Each member will receive a survey tomorrow which prompts them to share the number of absences that would be appropriate during this first year of service. Your input will be used to approach council about the possibility of changing the allowable absences. The reason for this is the increased number of meetings associated with re-launching the Forever Program. She also shared the joint workshop would be counted as a listening session; as such, attendance would not count against the allowable absences for the calendar year.

Libby Levatt shared she is all for more frequent meetings. She wanted to remind everyone that they can request an excused absence and it will not count against the number of allowed absences.

Russ Brown, Senior Assistant County Attorney, stated the absences are not excused on an individual basis from the advice of the council; it is an overall amount that committee members, based on what the council sets, that they are allowed to miss. That is the rule.

Member Fieser asked if other environmentally sensitive properties in Volusia County had been identified and if they would be treated similarly to the wildlife corridor; as examples, he mentioned the Indian River Lagoon, drainage issues, the springhead protection, and properties with issues in the area they would want to automatically review.

Ms. Adair suggested that staff review the maps and data that they have available, to evaluate the issues and address questions from the committee. Discussion ensued.

Clay Ervin, Growth and Resource Management Director, explained how the process would work moving forward to prepare for council. He stated that staff would assist committee members to compile their information.

John Gamble made a **MOTION** *"To schedule a meeting on June 11, 2021"*. The motion was seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Meeting adjourned by Vice Chair Van Dam at 7:13 p.m.

Re: Volusia Forever Listening Sessions
Date: May 14, 2021



Dear Volusia Forever Advisory Committee and Staff,

As you begin to formulate where to direct renewed efforts for land conservation, the DeLeon Springs Community Association, Inc. thanks you for requesting guidance from the community through public “listening sessions”.

The members of the DeLeon Springs Community Association, Inc. urge you to direct your view toward preserving this area of Volusia County that is quickly becoming a greater target for development, as growth continues to march ever northward.

The unincorporated community of DeLeon Springs is an exceptional jewel in Volusia County, and our goal as a 501(c)(3) organization is to protect our beloved namesake spring, while preserving our rural nature and agricultural heritage. To that end, the members of the DeLeon Springs Community Association, Inc. see ourselves as stewards of this unique area and we work to cultivate an appreciation for the environmental treasures that abound in DeLeon Springs through education, awareness, and conservation of natural resources.

As a community built around DeLeon Spring, one of 30 Outstanding Florida Springs as established in 2016 by the Florida Legislature, we are acutely aware of the fragile nature of this area. With an active Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP) and Priority Focus Area (PFA) in place, we hope that vigorous efforts will be made to acquire conservation lands to protect this delicate springshed and ultimately the pristine water source it provides.

We realize that priorities for renewed land conservation efforts should go toward completing projects that remain on the original Volusia Forever program, and the DeLeon Springs area is on that list, in particular “The Long Leaf Pine Ecosystem”.

An outstanding opportunity was lost to purchase property located in The Long Leaf Pine Ecosystem, which included lands in the vicinity of Lake Winona, Caraway Lake, and Lake Dias. This area is listed as an “Essential Parcel Remaining” in the 2020 Florida Forever Project Atlas, as shown on page 235 (Map 5) at:

<https://floridadep.gov/sites/default/files/2020%20Florida%20Forever%20Project%20Atlas.pdf>

A large portion of that land was sold and cleared by the new owner, but some area remains along Caraway Lake that could be acquired. Working in tandem with the State of Florida on these projects should prove to be successful to conserving these remaining lands before they slip away.

Since the newer Volusia Forever goals include protection of forests and farmlands we believe this is a momentous opportunity to implement conservation easements in areas located in the Highway 17 and Highway 11 corridor, as they include several family farms and forest areas that belong to historic families whose younger generations may see their best alternative as selling these delicate spring recharge areas for housing developments, reducing water quality and causing additional nitrogen loads in the BMAP and PFA areas.

For those that are unfamiliar with this area, we include an attachment of a map of the DeLeon Springs BMAP and PFA that clearly shows this as a triangular area bounded by Highway 17, Highway 11 and Highway 40 to the north. Because the renewed Volusia Forever program has expanded to include water resource protection, this is certainly an area worthy of your consideration for conservation.

Additionally, conservation easements provide working farms an opportunity to continue food production, something essential to all of us. Working farmland conservation easements allow continued economic benefits by providing jobs and generating tax revenues while guaranteeing environmental protection from increased development.

We thank you for your desire to hear the public on these important issues and to spend these tax dollars where they will provide the most benefit to the citizens of Volusia County. We are grateful for the efforts you will make to preserve this community's rural heritage and protect our fragile springshed environment from further injury for the benefit of our community, Volusia County and future generations.

Sincerely,

Amy K. Munizzi

President,

DeLeon Springs Community Association, Inc.

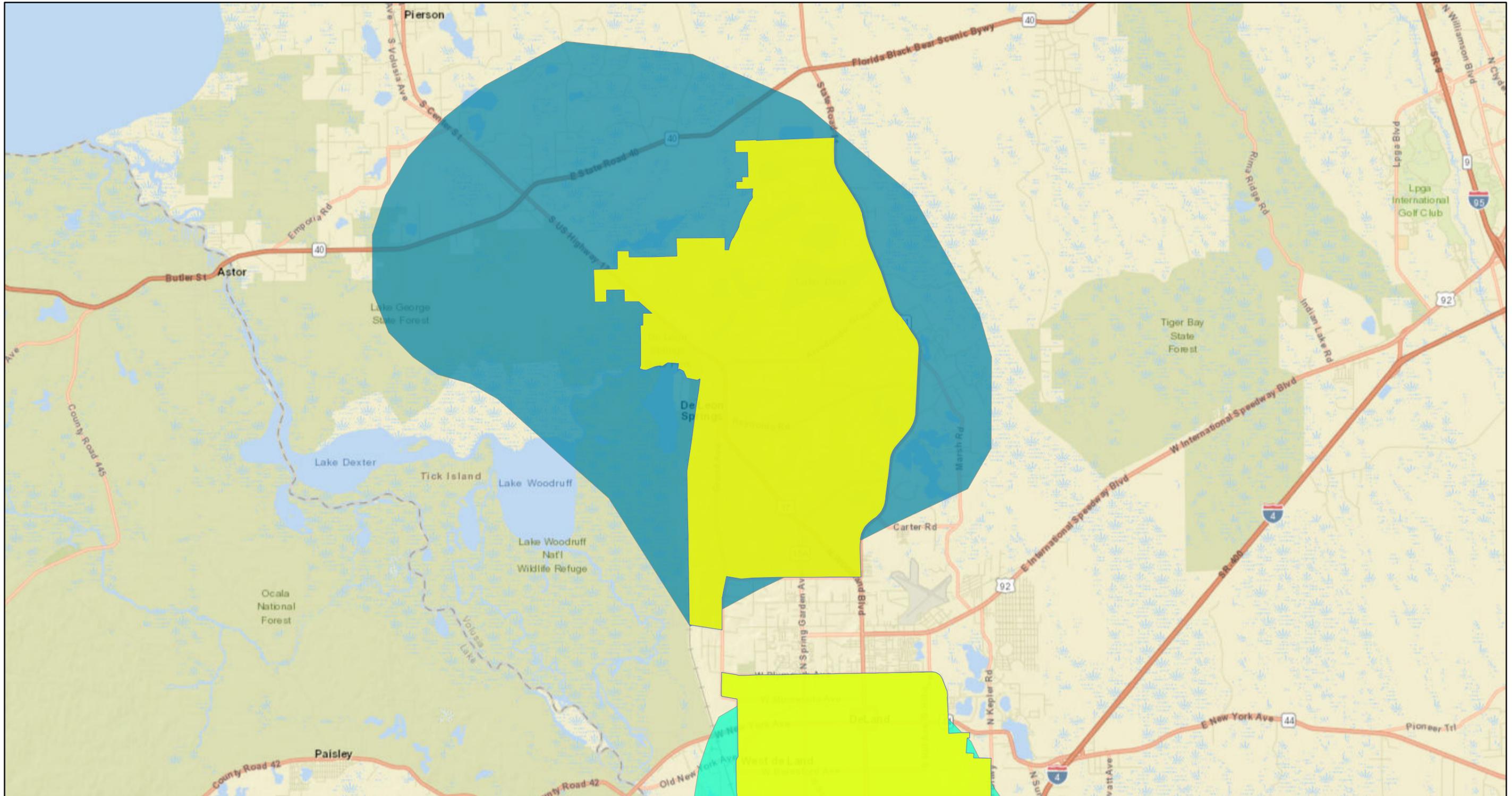
A 501(c)(3) Organization

"Making DeLeon Springs A Better Place to Live, Work and Play"

www.deleonspringscommunityassociation.com

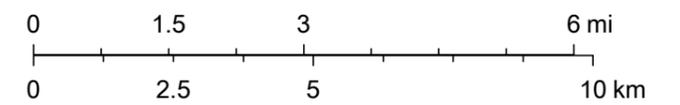
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DeLeon Springs BMAP and PFA



May 13, 2021

1:144,448



Esri, HERE, Garmin, NGA, USGS, NPS