

**NATURAL RESOURCES ADVISORY COMMISSION (NRAC)  
January 27, 2016 REGULAR MEETING**

Meeting Place: Bert J. Harris Agri-Civic Center, Auditorium  
4509 George Blvd., Sebring, FL 33875  
Meeting Time: 4:00 PM

**ATTENDANCE:**

Members

Erin McCarta  
Hilary Swain  
Kevin Main (absent)  
Benjamin Butler  
Dale McQuillen (absent)  
Tim Hurner (absent)  
Trevor Murphy (absent)

County Staff

Isis Brown  
Mike McMillian  
Joedene Thayer

Guests:

Ray Royce  
Clinton "Gator" Howerton Jr.  
Rebecca Perry  
Angela Klug

- I. Meeting was called to order by Erin McCarta at 4:02 pm. Ms. McCarta read the public notice. Introductions were made.
- II. Pledge of Allegiance
- III. Approval of the December 2, 2015 minutes – Tabled. No quorum.
- IV. A. Membership Update. **Ms. McCarta** welcomed Clinton "Gator" Howerton. **Mr. Howerton** had not been sworn in and not received a letter from the BCC. **Ms. McCarta** explained that until he was sworn he was not officially on NRAC. **Mr. McMillian** stated that he would pursue this with administration. **Mr. McMillian** reminded the members of NRAC that the second open professional slot had been advertised for quite some time. **Ms. McCarta** asked where the advertisements are placed as she sees an advertisement for RPAC every time she opens the News Sun. **Mr. McMillian** stated that he would find out. **Ms. McCarta** suggested looking over all the applications received in 2015 to see if anyone might still be interested.  
B. Presentation by Rebecca Perry and Angela Klug from The Nature Conservancy (TNC). **Ms. Perry** updated the members of NRAC on the current status of the Avon Park Air Force Range REPI grant for 2015. An application had been completed for the Arbuckle Creek Ranch however the owners decided not to pursue an easement at this time. Instead TNC is negotiating Phase III of the Rafter T Ranch. **Ms. Perry** informed the group that the 500K earmarked from the Conservation Trust Fund would not be needed at this time. **Dr. Swain** suggested that TNC write a formal letter to the BCC letting them know they would not need the money for this year's REPI grant and they could remove the earmark status especially since the money was earmarked specifically for the 2015 REPI grant.  
**Ms. Klug** stated that TNC was ready to attempt another land acquisition project in Carter Creek. Between the state and TNC 90% of the lots are in conservation. TNC will begin a mass mailing to the remaining owners to see if anyone wants to sell. Recently, the state has been reluctant to take properties because of management implications. TNC is putting out feelers to other possible entities in case the state rejects the gift of these properties. **Ms. Klug** asked if the County would take them. **Mr. Royce** suggested that the Soil and Water Conservation District might be a better entity especially if the land came with management money. **Ms. Klug** stated that they had not done that in the past but thought a small amount of money set aside for management might be possible. **Mr. Howerton** asked if any of the lots were delinquent on taxes and **Ms. McCarta** explained that while many of the lots are it's a complicated issue. **Mr. Howerton** suggested that if there is any cost to the County by taking on these "tax delinquent" lots that it be paid out of the Conservation Trust Fund. **Mr. Howerton** stated that they were looking at similar delinquent tax issues to complete the Sun 'N Lake Sebring mega-parcel. Ms. Perry pointed at the many of the lots in Carter Creek fall into the MAZ1 zone of the APAFR and would be eligible for REPI money.  
C. Land Acquisition Flowchart – To assist members of NRAC in writing the flowchart narrative, Mr. Chris Benson recently emailed narrative samples. **Dr. Swain** suggested sitting down with Mr. McMillian and going over the flowchart and samples and putting together the narrative. Once the narrative has been completed, the flowchart/narrative will go to County Administration. Mr. McMillian was asked to email the sample narratives to the members of NRAC.

**D. Rapp Property – Mr. McMillian** stated that there will be a walking tour of the Rapp Property February 10 at 11:00 a.m. The Conservation Fund had approached the County to see if they would be willing to take ownership of the Rapp Property. The Conservation Fund would attempt to find most if not all of the funding for this property. The property contains 50-60% of the worldwide population of the federally endangered garrett's mint (*Dicerandra christmanii*) and other listed species. Any member of NRAC wishing to attend is welcome.

**REPORTS:**

A. Chairperson's Report: None.

**VI. UPDATES:**

A. **Conservation Trust Fund –Mr. McMillian** presented the most current report from the Conservation Trust Fund which suggests construction is on the rise in Highlands County.

**VII. CITIZENS NOT ON THE AGENDA – None.**

**VIII. ANNOUNCEMENTS – Dr. Swain** announced that Archbold Biological Station is celebrating its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary and will have a small gathering to honor the event.

**IX. NEXT MEETING – February 24, 2016.**

**X. ADJOURN – meeting adjourned at 5:25pm.**