



Land Acquisition & Management Program

Minutes
Regular Meeting of the St. Johns County
Land Acquisition and Management Program
Conservation Board
Tuesday, June 10th, 2025, at 1:30 pm

The regularly scheduled public meeting of the St. Johns County Land Acquisition and Management Program Conservation Board was held on Tuesday, June 10th, 2025, at 1:30pm in the County Auditorium at the St. Johns County Administrative Complex located at 500 San Sebastian View, St. Augustine, Florida.

Members Present: Elizabeth Guthrie (Chair), JB Miller (Vice Chair), Wayne Flowers, Hawley Smith III, Michael D Adams, Anila Lahiri, Shorty Robbins.
Members Absent: Irene Kaufman, Lauren Howington
Commission Member: Ann Taylor
Staff Present: Ryan Mauch; Kealey West (Sr Asst County Attorney); Mike Lagasse; Megan Wright.
Public Attendees: Dirk Schroeder; Chuck Labanowski; Suzanne Clulow

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- **Ms. Guthrie:** Called meeting to order at 1:30pm
 - **Public Notice** read by Ms. Guthrie.
 - **Public Speakers:** None
(01:24)
 - **Motion to approve the meeting minutes for March 11th, 2025, by Mr. Miller, seconded by Mr. Flowers , carries 6/0 .**
(02:10)
 - **Motion by Mr. Smith, and seconded by Mr. Adams, carries 6/0, to approve the agenda.**

AGENDA ITEMS:

1. Christina Dr. and Shores Blvd. Parcels – First review

Staff (Mr. Mauch) presented the Christina Dr. and Shores Blvd. Parcels – First review

Three vacant commercial properties are located on Christina Road and Shores Boulevard. 2.8 acres total vacant, forested commercial property with mature hardwood/ pine canopy and adjacent to 36-acre SJC Canopy Shores Park with entrance along Christina Dr.

Mr. JB Miller had visited the property several times over the years. Mentioned that this is likely a property candidate to seek funding from the Florida Community Trust (FCT).

Ms. Robbins agreed that this property could apply for funding with the FCT program.

Mr. Flowers considered this an ideal project to be moved to the next step.

Mr. JB Miller suggested that if the County wanted to buy this property that funding could be 50 percent reimbursement from FCT and the balance could come from the Florida Forever program as this property is in the NE Florida Forever Blueways.

Public comment:

Dirk Schroeder (Property Broker): SUPPORTS Explained he was representing on behalf of the owners. Provided an aerial diagram of the parcel with relation to neighboring properties. Presented two photos showing both sides of the Shores Blvd.

Suzanne Clulow: OPPOSED to the County obtaining this property because there is property in the Shores area they are trying to get conserved from Deltona Corporation. Concerned that there has been no mention of the cost to acquire this property. Considering this property is too wet. Has been aware of the property being on the market for residential development in the past. Does not want County funds spent on this property, to allow the owner out of a bad investment.

Further discussion occurred with Board members regarding the wetlands adjacent to the subject property.

Ms. Guthrie explained that the potential acquisition of this property meets the LAMP Board objectives.

Ms. Guthrie explained to those new in attendance that this is the first review of this property. At this stage the Board looks at whether or not the property meets the goals of the LAMP program which are written in the LAMP Ordinance.

Mr. Smith also explained that the ranking of these properties considers alternative funding opportunities and price points and the LAMP stewardship of accessing these funds.

(19:58)

Motion by Mr. Smith, seconded by Mr. Adams, carries 7/0, to move the Christina Dr. and Shores Blvd. Parcels to the second review and ranking stage.

2. 825 N. Clay St. _ First review

Staff (Mr. Mauch)

Explained that the 825 N. Clay St property was 1.14-acres of vacant forested property. It is adjacent to a City of St. Augustine property. There are 0.5 acres of wetland area, with 0.6 acres of uplands. It is located in a residential area with no roadway access. Parcel is within flood zone X. There has been storage of miscellaneous materials evident on earlier aerial views from the late 1990s to 2000s. It has development challenges. This complicates its potential for development. Given that it is located within a residential area this parcel is not ideally suited for a passive park. The property has no roadway frontage so County staff do not know how anyone can get legal access.

Ms. Guthrie struggled with finding qualities about this property given that it is isolated, has no legal access, it is very small, and is not connected to another conservation area.

Mr. JB Miller mentioned that given the property has a boundary with a City of St Augustine property, that access could be gained through that property.

Public Comment:

Mr. Chuck Labanowsky, OPPOSES: mentioned that he had concerns about what materials were stored on this property in the past. The property would need to be tested. Highly recommends denying this property.

Ms. Suzanne Clulow, OPPOSES: mentioned the lack of access. In doing research, she found that this property was bequeathed many years back to the current owner who now has to pay property taxes.

Mr. JB Miller questioned Staff with regard to whether or not we are doing a Phase One environmental assessment.

Staff (Mr. Mauch) confirmed that the St Johns County Real Estate department always does an environmental assessment prior to acquiring property.

Mr. Adams mentioned that the market value of this property is \$17,538 and the asking price was \$250,000. Queried the difference.

Staff (Mr. Mauch) confirmed that those prices were correct. The market price was obtained from the St Johns County Property Appraiser website.

(29:35)

Motion by Ms. Robbins, seconded by Ms. Lahiri, carries 7/0, to not proceed with the second review and ranking of 825 N. Clay Street.

3. Hawkins Island – Conceptual management plan

Staff (Mr. Mauch) explained that the Hawkins Island property is currently number four on the acquisition list that went to the Board of County Commissioners. Staff sent a purchase and sale agreement to the owner in May. The property is 14 acres of vacant forested island located on the Eastern bank of the Matanzas River. Staff added a few concepts for this property for the LAMP Board to discuss. Explained that checking the property for trespass, access, and invasive species would be important. Recommended that this property stay in its current natural state due to a lack of access. Staff recommended signage be placed on the property stating LAMP acquisition or conservation area.

Ms. Guthrie read a statement from Board member Ms. Kaufman (absent) who was unable to attend this meeting. Ms. Kaufman recommended allowing non-profit environmental educators to access the property.

Discussion occurred between Board members and Staff as to how this property would be managed.

Staff (Mr. Mauch) Parks and Recreation would be able to manage access to the island.

Mr. JB Miller cautioned that the County does not post NO trespassing signs and instead install specific Conservation Area signs.

Ms. Guthrie mentioned that there were several thousand postings on social media in support of having Hawkins Island preserved.

Mr. Adams asked if the archeological model showed that Hawkins Island is a potential archeological resource.

Staff mentioned that this Island is within a high probability for a potential archeological resource.

Ms. Lahiri mentioned she would be willing to reach out to someone at FPAN to undertake a cultural resource on a partnership arrangement.

Staff (Mr. Mauch) confirmed that the Board is voting to finalize this plan today. The purchase and sale agreement for this property will be considered by the Board of County Commissioners at the July 22nd meeting. The LAMP Board Ordinance requires the LAMP Conceptual Management Plan to be approved prior to going to the Board of County Commissioners.

Staff: (Mr. Mike Lagasse, Growth Management) mentioned that the LAMP Board may like to add specific language to this item in the Conceptual Management Plan before voting on this plan.

Staff: Mr. Mauch. Mentioned that this property would be a conservation area so the Conceptual Management Plan would need to include some specific wording for unauthorized access and/or impacts to vegetation and soils.

Ms. Lahiri read from the LAMP website, for the purpose of the audience, what the purpose of LAMP was about the County acquiring land. That the purpose was primarily for water resources, conservation of green spaces, preservation, and historic and ecological activities.

Ms. Robbins mentioned that there are current standards and practices for County property and State property available for conservation property.

Ms. Guthrie recapped the Board's discussion that the County would initially maintain the Island for preservation and have regular visits by County staff. That the County would remain open to the idea of allowing certain groups. Yet that usage will be dictated by rules displayed on signage. That it is important to strike a balance between it being a publicly available property yet not necessarily for public recreation. The County would encourage perusing an archeological study on the property.

(54:39)

Moved by Mr. JB Miller, seconded by Mr. Flowers, carries 7/0, to approve the conceptual management plan for Hawkins Island with the assistance of County Staff to write specific wording for the plan.

- **Staff Reports: (Mr. Mauch):**

LAMP budget balance as of May 2025 was \$5,143,846.

Staff sent a letter of support from the LAMP Board to Administration and the Board of County Commissioners for the Union Land and Timber property. They are also applicants through the Florida Forever grant acquisition program and support the concept of the County acting as a manager of the property and being considered by the State for acquisition, with the County as the manager.

Advised there is a webpage link that has been added to the LAMP webpage. It has an interactive map that shows all the acquired LAMP properties along with their management plans. All the properties that were acquired back in the mid 2000's are on there. Properties are also listed there from 2021 when the LAMP Board was reestablished.

The Shores Boulevard Deltona Corporation property is number one on the LAMP list. The second appraisal was ordered by the Board of County Commissioners, and negotiations are ongoing inclusive of a concurrent development approval of the St Augustine Unit 7. A Master Development Plan was submitted concurrently with the County considering this acquisition.

The Bishop Estates Road - Bailey Ranch, has a Rural Lands application submitted through the office of Intergovernmental Affairs and North Florida Land Trust. Staff undertook a site visit to the North Bailey Ranch lots. This is in due diligence phase of acquisition for a passive park with creek access. Acquisition of this property, by the St Johns County Real Estate Department, is due to be undertaken July 2025.

Ms. Robbins informed the Board that there were 400 applications to the Rural and Family Lands program in 2025. In 2024 there were about 40.

- **Board Member Reports**

Ms. Guthrie brought up two items.

1. That it is time to write a letter requesting the Board of County Commissioners support the LAMP program. In the County budget, the line item that has been allocated to LAMP for 2026 is \$500,000. Requested a consensus from the Board that \$5,000,000 be allocated to LAMP for land acquisitions for 2026. This is in line with last year's request. The amount that was finalized by the County for LAMP last year was \$2,000,000.
Board members agreed to write a similar request letter to last year with a change of date only on the letter.
2. That the board needs to revise the LAMP process document how the LAMP Board is currently operating.
 - a) Revise Conceptual Management Plans so the Board waits until the properties are approved by the commission before we write the Conceptual Management Plan for each property. We can have Staff write a draft for each property which the Board can then consider.
 - b) Section Five where LAMP ranks the properties. The top 5 that are presented to the Board of County Commissioners should remain. The properties with an asterisk should remain until the LAMP Board removes them with a super majority vote.

Board members suggested that these changes be made at the September meeting and put for a vote so they will be in place before the December meeting.

Mr. Adams reported he had been in communication with the owners of the McCullough Creek CR 13 South property, currently on the 2025 LAMP Board properties list. They are finalizing their updated property appraisal on their different parcels. This property is now looking very positive for the LAMP Board to consider in the future.

Staff: Mr. Mauch mentioned that we would still need a signed willing seller application to make it official.

Ms. Robbins mentioned there was a property for sale on SR13 and at the end of SR 16A near the St Johns River in Orangedale. Agreed to obtain more information on this property before the next meeting.

Mr. JB Miller mentioned that the City of St Augustine has a website with approximately six properties they have acquired for conservation and encouraged LAMP Board members to view their website.

Motion by Ms. Guthrie to adjourn the meeting.

Meeting Adjourned at approximately 2:48 pm