



Agenda Report

2725 Judge Fran Jamieson
Way
Viera, FL 32940

New Business - Miscellaneous

J.2.

5/19/2020

Subject:

Request for the Board of County Commissioners to send a letter to the Nature Conservancy requesting that they conduct a poll for an EEL referendum item.

Fiscal Impact:

None

Dept/Office:

District 5 Commission Office

Requested Action:

It is requested that the BOCC sends a letter to the Nature Conservancy requesting that they conduct a poll for an EEL referendum item to determine how many voters would vote in favor of small ad valorem to fund the EEL.

Summary Explanation and Background:

The Brevard County Environmentally Endangered Lands Program runs out of funding in 2024 with the expiration of the small ad valorem tax from a 2004 referendum. The 2004 referendum was passed by approximately 70% of the voters. The operating costs of maintaining approximately 17,000 acres of nature sanctuaries and managing three education centers totals \$2.35 Million annually. This amount is considered too large to move into the General Fund so the best alternative requires another referendum measure to continue operations for another twenty years.

This referendum approach could be utilized this November or November 2022. The 2020 date is preferred for several reasons including the opportunity to try again if 2020 fails.

The Nature Conservancy has offered to utilize their resources to conduct a poll for an EEL Program referendum item. This poll would show how many voters would expect to vote in favor of continuing a small ad valorem to fund the EEL Program. The poll would also determine which aspects of the program do the voters consider most valuable. The Nature Conservancy is willing to fund this effort at no cost to Brevard County but they want a letter from the Commission requesting this help.

The poll will serve two primary purposes. First, it will allow the BOCC to make an informed decision regarding placing a referendum item on the November ballot. This decision must be reached by August 17, 2020. Next, this information provides the basis for a communications campaign to inform the voters. A political action committee will be formed and run by volunteers to inform the voters on this matter.

The plan would be to conduct the poll in late June and have results for the Commission by mid-July. Similar polling was utilized in 2016 regarding the sales tax increase to restore the Lagoon, and it accurately predicted the voter approval of the referendum item.

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Clerk to the Board Instructions:

None



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May 20, 2020

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Frank Abbate, County Manager

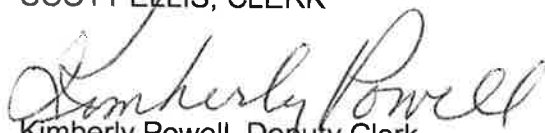
RE: Item J.2., Approval to Send a Letter to the Nature Conservancy Requesting that they Conduct a Poll for an Environmentally Endangered Lands (EEL) Referendum Item

The Board of County Commissioners, in regular session on May 19, 2020, approved sending a Letter to the Nature Conservancy requesting that they conduct a poll for an EEL referendum item to determine how many voters would vote in favor of small ad valorem to fund the EEL. Enclosed is a fully-executed Letter.

Your continued cooperation is always appreciated.

Sincerely,

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
SCOTT ELLIS, CLERK


Kimberly Powell, Deputy Clerk

Encl. (1)

cc: Each Commissioner
EEL Program Manager
Finance
Budget

Adam Snyder
Conservation Campaign Manager
The Nature Conservancy
120 19th Street North, Ste. 200
Birmingham, AL 35203

Will Abberger
Director, Conservation Finance
The Trust Public Land
306 North Monroe Street
Tallahasscc, FL 32301

Dear Mr. Snyder and Mr. Abberger,

On behalf of the Board of County Commissioners of Brevard County, I would like to request technical advice and assistance from The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and the Trust for Public Land (TPL) in connection with our efforts to secure reliable continuing funding for the land and water conservation efforts of our Environmentally Endangered Lands Program. This program has been funded using ad valorem taxes authorized by voter referendums in 1990 and 2004, which expire in 2024.

As part of your assistance, I understand you will conduct research and develop recommendations for the County Commission's review on strategies for achieving dedicated, ongoing sources of public funds for land and water conservation. Our objective is to find the best alternative to continue funding this program with regard to our residents, visitors and taxpayers.

We are interested in not only in the factual information that you can provide but also the opinions and recommendations on public funding measures available to us and the strategies to enact these options into public policy. That would include understanding the public's priorities and attitudes concerning land and water conservation, environmental outreach, outdoor recreation and natural areas - including trails and wildlife habitat.

Information provided to this Commission will be public record as a matter of law. This request does not in any way commit public funds to the efforts of TNC and TPL regarding this request, nor does it require public disclosure of any confidential information of either organization. In addition, this request does not imply that any recommendations provided to this Commission will be considered for public policy enactment.

This request will continue in effect for any advice you offer or presentations you submit. In addition, I would like to take the opportunity to request that you continue to be available to provide technical advice and assistance on this matter and on related matters as the Commission may request.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter. We eagerly await your response. Please contact me if I can provide any assistance.

Respectively,



Commissioner Bryan Lober
Brevard County Commissioner, District 2