

Culverhouse Community Garden and Education Center

MEETING NOTES Aug 24, 2009 at 2 PM at Turtle Rock Community Center
by Catherine Dente 921-1598

ATTENDANCE - According to the sign-in sheet, 56 people attended Monday's meeting. Present were 31 potential or interested community gardeners and 25 county and community leaders including Commissioners Barbetta, Mason and Thaxton, four Master Gardeners, a 4-H Extension Agent, an Agriculture Agent, a cattleman, people from Friends of Legacy Trail, the Palmer Ranch Master Association, board and environmental committee members of local HOAs, and the generous donors of the parkland, Hugh and Eliza Culverhouse.

RECAP - for those who attended, those who wanted to attend, and those who asked to be kept informed.

2:00 – Opening Program included a Power Point presentation by Jim Paulmann, resident of Turtle Rock, a planner for Palmer Ranch Development, a Master Association Trustee, and a person with a 25 year history of being involved in the Palmer Ranch community. Jim gave an overview of where the park is located, how it fits in to the original DRI (Development of Regional Impact), and how a community garden and park fit into the county's sustainable living initiatives. Then followed a six-minute slide show by Catherine Dente describing the various features of this 82-acre parkland, and why our meeting organizing group is so enthusiastic about helping to move the whole project forward.

2:30 – The audience contributed forty minutes chock full of ideas, comments, suggestions, and questions. The mood was excited, enthusiastic, and pervaded by a can-do attitude. Here is the promised summary of what was mentioned:

- **WATER** – collect rain water, have a system of cisterns, draw from retention ponds, drill a well and power it by a windmill or a hand pump, as on property near Honore and Bee Ridge, incorporate drip irrigation.
- **ENTRANCE** – Swiftmud gave its OK for an entrance off McIntosh, north Palmer Ranch Parkway East. They also OK'd parking inside the park. The construction details of the ingress and egress are still to be designed.
- **PARKING** – Some events may draw more than 50 carloads of people. The conservation easement (OR# 2006222278 28 pages, including maps, and is readily available on the County's website) permits only 50 parking spaces, and they must be on permeable surfaces. How would a greater number of cars be accommodated?
- **CONSTRUCTION VEHICLES** – Stonebridge residents want reassurance that there will be no temporary or permanent entrance to the park from the Ridge Road cul-de-sac.
- **MONEY** – For what aspects of the park will money have to be raised? Who will do the fundraising? Where will money come from? Comments: Extension Service will lend a tractor to till soil for a community garden. Neighborhood Grants can be applied for by the people wanting to establish a community garden. Extension Service offers technical help, and we have master gardeners who are residents of this local area who have offered to help. Federal Stimulus money may even be tapped?
- **FEES** for gardening? The structure of community gardens, including fees, is determined by the gardeners themselves. Some gardens are run by boards.

- BICYCLES – Friends of Legacy Trail suggested a bicycle loop within the park.
- WILDLIFE – Will wildlife corridors be affected by opening up the park to humans?
- GARDENING TOOLS & FIRST AID – Can we place a shed in the garden to store gardening tools and a first aid kit? Do people with special needs have to bring all their own safety supplies? How do other community gardens deal with these questions?
- FENCE – a chain link fence around the garden, buried a little, would probably be needed to keep deer, rabbits, wild hogs, etc. from eating the vegetables.
- COMMUNITY MINDEDNESS – A park and garden can serve the whole community in many ways – bringing children and adults together, promoting healthy eating, sharing fresh vegetables with poor people in Sarasota, selling some extra produce at the upcoming Phillipi Creek Market.
- INVOLVE CHILDREN– 4-H is enthusiastic about using the park. They would like to see double the number of children involved in county OUTDOOR programs, and this park will help. Senior gardeners want to work beside families and children. The YMCA may be involved in recreational opportunities. Sarasota’s public and private schools and colleges will have a resource for environmental education (Meg Lowman is greatly interested). Sarasota Historical Society may want to interpret the pine woods and its remnants of the turpentine industry on the property.
- FRUIT TREES – There was a well received suggestion to include a number of fruit trees around the garden.
- LIABILITY – When the county owns the park, they will assume liability, but the community garden may need to ask people to sign waivers.

 Gail Harvey of Sarasota’s Orange Blossom Community Garden forwarded these two links to sites that you may enjoy:

A short video describing the Arvada, Colorado, Community Garden:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y3ilm2UUNTI>

Website of the American Community Gardening Association: <http://www.communitygarden.org>

 Sarasota County offers all sorts of help to community gardeners at their website:
<http://sarasota.extension.ufl.edu/Hort/commgarden.shtml>

 Florida West Coast Resource Conservation and Development has ideas at:
<http://fwcrd.org/index.html>

 Palmer Ranch Master Property Owners Association is having a Horticulture Seminar on “Natural Fertilizers – Nature’s Own Way” led by Tammy Kovar of Biological Tree Services about “the Natural Approach to landscape installations and maintenance, including incorporating the use of mycorrhizal fungi and beneficial bacteria.” It will be held at Covenant Life Presbyterian Church on McIntosh, Rm 134, from 3 to 4 PM on Tuesday, Sept 1. Please call Tracy at the Master Association office (922-3866) if you want to attend.

 If you want an electronic copy of Jim Paulmnnn’s PP presentation, please reply to this email and ask me for it.

 If you want to sign up for the next field trip to the Culverhouse Park, please call Rick Barth at 922-3866 or send an email to prma.president@verizon.net

Bob Kluson of the county extension service sent us two other links. He conducts natural resources extension programs that may be of interest to the plans in wildlife conservation for this project. For example, he offers the UF/IFAS Backyard Landscape for Wildlife Program (see <http://www.wec.ufl.edu/extension/landscaping/fblw/>) and the FL Master Naturalist Programs (see <http://www.masternaturalist.ifas.ufl.edu/>)

Kay Karioth of Turtle Rock heard a discussion of gardens on NPR. Here is a link to the podcast with Robert Pogue Harrison, professor of Italian literature at Stanford University. He is the author of the new book, "Gardens: An Essay on the Human Condition." <http://www.onpointradio.org/2008/06/the-gardening-art>

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