

CHATHAM COUNTY RESOURCE PROTECTION COMMISSION

**ARTHUR A. MENDONSA HEARING ROOM
112 EAST STATE STREET**

January 15, 2009

3:30 P.M.

MEETING MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT:

**Dionne Hoskins, Chair
Elizabeth “Chica” Arndt
Mark Bouy
Larry Miles
Meddy Settles
Kristina Williams
Paul Wolff**

MEMBER ABSENT:

**Felton Jenkins
Dane Spencer**

MPC STAFF PRESENT:

**Joanna Bounds, Resource Protection Planner
Jessica Mayfield, Administrative Assistant**

I. Call to Order

Dr. Hoskins called the meeting to order at 3:31 p.m.

II. Meeting Minutes

CCRPC Action: Mr. Miles made a motion that the Chatham County Resource Protection Commission approve the minutes as submitted. Mr. Settles seconded the motion and it was unanimously passed.

III. RPC-20081203-02-01 Site Ranking Manual

Ms. Bounds discussed the different documents that make up the Site Ranking Manual. The first document in the manual is the Site Ranking Criteria Policy, which establishes the site ranking process. This process involves 3 main steps: site nomination, site evaluation, and site ranking. Once nominated, a site will be evaluated using the Site Ranking Criteria that are included as the second page of this policy. These criteria will be used by a site evaluation team when conducting field evaluations of individual sites. Specifically, the team will give a site a score from 0 to 5 for each criterion. Then, all of these scores will be tallied to give the site an overall score. And this overall score will be used to rank a site against the others. Those sites with the highest scores will be ranked the highest. The next document found in the Site Ranking Manual

is the Standards for Evaluation. These standards provide additional guidelines and examples of how to score a site for each criterion. The last document included in this manual is the Field Evaluation Sheet. This sheet provides a space for an evaluation team to record the scores given to a site and to justify the scores given.

Dr. Hoskins stated that the TAC has spent some time working on this manual and that some changes were made.

CCRPC Action: **Mr. Wolff made a motion that the Chatham County Resource Protection Commission approve the Site Ranking Manual as submitted. Mr. Settles seconded the motion and it was unanimously passed.**

IV. Discussion of Funding Options

Ms. Bounds discussed a few funding options including a Real Estate Transfer fee, which would be included in any real estate transaction that occurs within the county. It can be paid by the seller or the purchaser. On the state level, there are over 14 states that use the real estate transfer fee to support their land conservation programs. On a local level, a community within Rhode Island campaigned for and won a 3% tax increase. One of the elements key to the community's success was the support of local realtors and the incorporation of a provision to the tax, which exempts the first seventy five thousand dollars of purchase in order to protect first time middle income home owners. The pros to the real estate transfer fee are that it would give us a continuous source of funding and that it would also protect environmental lands. The cons are we would have to go to the Georgia general assembly to get approval, which would take time. In addition, we would need to garner the support of the local Board of Realtors. With all the steps we would have to take the earliest it could go to the County Commission is 2011. The other option is the General Obligation Bond, which would be issued by the county and backed by the levy of property taxes within the county. The State General Obligation Bond is very popular. It is used in over 25 states to fund state land conservation programs. A General Obligation Bond was approved in Lake County, Illinois and provided one hundred and seventy million dollars for land conservation in a period of seven years. The pros are that it is a dedicated source of funding so it would all go to the program and that it's very popular. The cons are that it is not a continuous source of funding and it would also have to win approval from the majority of Chatham County voters.

Mr. Wolff stated that the Real Estate Transfer fee is already on two other commissions' lists.

Mr. Settles stated that with the economy the way it is, it may be better to pursue a tax on tourism.

Ms. Bounds stated that it would be difficult to pass any tax at this time.

There was further discussion on the different funding options.

V. Blue Sky Announcement, Pat Monahan, Assistant County Manager

Mr. Monahan announced the acquisition of the Blue Sky property and discussed many different properties along the Ogeechee River and Highway 17 in relation to the Blue Sky property.

VI. Commissioner's Items

VII. Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Chatham County Resource Protection Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 4:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joanna Bounds
Resource Protection Planner

JHB/jm