

## Volusia Forever Advisory Committee Listening Session/Workshop: Session 2 - April 28, 2021

The full presentation is available [HERE](#).

Committee Members: Mary Anne Connors, Chair; Wanda Van Dam, Vice Chair; Members Steve Crump, Gerald Fieser, John Gamble, Jessica Gow, Derek La Montagne, Derrick Orberg, Suzanne Scheiber

### Description:

This was one of five listening sessions being held by the Volusia Forever Advisory Committee at different locations throughout the county to explain their mission/mandate and garner citizen participation. The workshop was live and simultaneously virtual., Volusia Forever Advisory Committee chair Mary Anne Connors gave a PowerPoint presentation. Public participation followed.

### Background and history:

- Originally approved by voters in 2000
- Funded by taxes collected from annual levy of additional ad valorem tax not exceeding 1/5 mill for 20 years and proceeds of Limited Tax General Obligation Bonds
- County objective was to match funds awarded under Florida Forever or similar federal programs
- Projects are limited to restoration, conservation or preservation of environmentally sensitive lands and water areas and for providing public use opportunities
- Through Volusia Forever, more than 38,000 acres have been acquired through purchase and conservation easements
- Volusia Forever has won several national awards and has been used as a model for other government acquisition programs
- A portion of Volusia Forever Funds are set aside for management of the purchased properties
- 75.6% of Volusia County voted in favor of the initiative
- It is estimated that \$179M will be available over 20 years for land purchase and property improvements and management

The all-volunteer Committee was established under County ordinance 2021-11 and is charged with:

- Oversee the review of proposed acquisitions and make recommendations to the county council
- Review applications to ensure requests meet the objectives, criteria, procedures and guidelines of the program
- Periodically review program procedures, guidelines established by the council
- Oversee the review of proposed acquisitions and improvements for consistency with intent and goals
- Assess program priorities and recommend ranking of properties
- Make recommendations regarding participation in federal, state and district grant programs
- Review and/or assess the land acquisition, water resource protection, and outdoor recreation needs of the county and make recommendations on how Volusia Forever can address them
- Recommend further evaluations of properties through resource assessments

There are 18 criteria in six general categories used to rank each application. Following the committee's application review and ranking process, each parcel is assigned to one of two groups:

- Group A properties meeting all the criteria
- Group B properties which are promising but not ready for acquisition.

The County Commission can select from either group but cannot itself seek or find property to be considered. Once selected, the actual process of property acquisition is handled by County staff for due diligence, appraisals, surveys, etc. One appraisal is required if the property is valued at less than \$500,000. Two appraisals are required if valued at more than \$500,000. Staff findings are presented to the County Council.

Small lot acquisitions do not require an appraisal or survey and are used to acquire lots in unbuildable subdivisions that hold promise for connectivity to other protected parcels in the county. From 2001-2020 over 2,500 acres was acquired through the small lot program.

You can find information on Volusia Forever, including a list of the properties acquired [HERE](#). Of particular interest to NSB is approving the final purchase of land for the Doris Leeper Reserve. Citizen input is welcome in written form to the Volusia Forever Advisory Committee and/or by contacting your county council member.