

## Turnbull Creek Land Preservation Meeting

June 19, 2023

Video link can be found [HERE](#):

Members present: Athearn, Ingalls, Planson, Weston. Warner, absent

Assistant City manager, Ron Neibert, covered the Flood Exposure Study, especially as it relates to the Turnbull Water System. USID will inspect to see how Ian affected these parts of the canal system. Cleaning out the various drainage systems would help in many situations but in this case with Ian, 22" of rain plus high tides and storm surge would have overcome most of the drainage system. At least the water drained fairly quickly. Ron noted that the Study showed that NSB has the highest standards for storm water control but even these may need improvement based on new predictive analysis coming from FEMA.

The City will be able to use a grant for \$500,000 to clean out parts of Turnbull north and will "piggyback" on a Tampa project to determine the contractor and the cost. He said that NSB received a USID watershed management grant where 70% (\$1.2M) will be covered by USID and \$400,000 will be contributed by the City. This will support the clearing of debris from south of RSR44 to Old Mission Road. He added that the Governor vetoed \$1 million of funding for the New Smyrna Beach Pine Island/ Aqua Golf Canal dredging and cleanup. Ron also reviewed the many different types of water systems and ditches within the 41 square mile boundary and the challenges of determining ownership and cooperation between the City, County, Mosquito Control and other entities including HOAs.

The committee discussed using the new LIDAR (laser/light imaging, detection, and ranging) maps with FEMA forecasting to better understand the hydrology of the City and how to rank the importance of cleaning out different parts of the Creek and other waterways.

The City is negotiating the purchase of two of the highly ranked "Turnbull" properties and will get two appraisals over the next 45 days. The taskforce also discussed the purchase of conservation easements along Turnbull Creek. Property owners have not been forthcoming so various ideas were discussed to better inform property owners of the value of better protecting their properties because of the easements and the better control of the Creek that they will allow.

A publicity campaign was discussed to inform the citizens about the great progress that has been made thus far in purchasing and protecting Turnbull Creek. A new observation tower will be constructed along the NSB Pedestrian Trail that will give a good overview of some of the protected property along the Creek.

Chair Athearn discussed the Florida Forever Application and the various types of funding that may be available for cleaning out the water systems. She also discussed the amazing history of this first Egyptian Canal system in the USA and the importance of telling its story. The Task Force discussed the different types of stories that need to be told about the history, the initiative, and the protecting of the water system environment. She also suggested that the Commission consider continuing the task for another year.

On November 6, 2018, over 70% of the citizens of New Smyrna Beach voted in favor of issuing up to \$15 million in general obligation bonds to protect natural areas and wildlife habitat from development by acquiring land along the Turnbull Creek watershed.

Turnbull Creek was selected for its environmental sensitivity as a critical waypoint for waters flowing north into Turnbull Bay, Spruce Creek, the Indian River, and Atlantic Ocean and its historical significance as "Andrew

Turnbull's Grand Canal" during our area's British colonial period. Lands that are acquired, including those portions of land currently zoned for development, will be set aside, and protected in its natural state.

The City Commission created the Turnbull Creek Land Preservation Committee in February of 2019 to work with staff to rank specific properties along the watershed for purchase. Over 100 properties along the Creek were ranked for environmental importance. The City Commission retained the services of The Trust for Public Lands to negotiate with the property owners on behalf of the City.

A 40% matching grant from the State of Florida was awarded to New Smyrna Beach. A number of properties along the Creek have been purchased including the 152-acre Turnbull Trace that was paid for with a \$3.6 million State Grant and \$5 million of bond financing. \$1.2 million was paid for the 10+ acre Sea Star property on the Creek along SR 44 at Webster Drive. A total of \$9.5 million was borrowed. This leaves \$2.8 million plus the City can borrow the remainder of the \$15 million bond if agreements can be reached with other property owners.

Staff continues to negotiate for potential purchases and/or conservation easements.