

To: Mayor Heitmann and City Council

From: Ray Christman

Date: June 10, 2020

Subject: Environmental Advisory Committee

Background

On April 1, Mayor Heitmann requested that I organize a new Environmental Advisory Committee to assist City Council and City management with ideas and advice on important environmental priorities.

Subsequently, I met with the City Manager and the City Attorney to discuss options for establishing this committee and what its scope of responsibility might include. I shared these thoughts with Council at its meeting on May 6 and asked for comments and direction. The consensus of Council was that this should not a committee established by city ordinance such as the Planning Advisory Board or the Design Review Board.

Rather, Council agreed that it should be established as an informal advisory group comprised of Naples residents with background and interest in environmental matters and a willingness to serve in this capacity.

Subsequently, at a workshop discussion on May 11 on the issue of Lakes Management, Mayor Heitmann stated that she would like to use the Environmental Advisory Committee to follow up on several items relating to that issue.

Updated Proposal

Given this direction and based on further discussions with the City Manager, I have developed an updated proposal for consideration and consensus.

While the overall mandate and scope of the committee can remain broad, I recommend that we begin the committee's work by focusing on several specific issues that are before Council today and will likely continue to be in the near term. These include:

1. Lakes Management
 - Review and provide advice on design and construction plans for Swan Lake, East Lake, and Fleishmann Lake, scheduled to begin in FY 20-21;
 - Assess options for testing, treating and improving Swan Lake, where there is currently disagreement between residents and city staff as to the correct course of action;

- More broadly, review the City's current Lakes Management Plan and advise on how the City might spend as much as \$5 million per year for the next five years -- \$25 million overall – to achieve the best water quality and stormwater management benefits for our residents.
2. Basin Assessments
 - Provide advice and recommendations on the Basin 4 Assessment, which is just getting underway.
 3. "Greening" our Land Development Code
 - Advising and making recommendations regarding the City's Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Code on matters like lot coverage requirements, with the goal of making Naples a national leader among smaller cities in aligning residential and commercial development with best environmental management practices.
 4. Gulf Shore Boulevard Beach Outfalls Project
 - Provide advice and recommendations on key aspects still to be determined regarding that project, such as how to effectively measure existing water quality at the project site, evaluation of alternative technologies to enhance water quality, and evaluation of alternative pump station solutions.

These are all issues that Council will be addressing over the next 6-12 months and having input from a citizens-based advisory body will be helpful in reaching best decisions.

Committee Process

An advisory committee of volunteer residents must have appropriate support to be able to have a meaningful impact. No matter how experienced and qualified individuals may be, they will need to receive appropriate briefings and materials in order to make judgments and recommendations.

The committee effort will need to be staffed by appropriate city personnel. This will fall largely to the Street and Stormwater Department, including especially the Natural Resources Division. But it will also include the Planning Department and perhaps other city departments as well.

In addition, the committee's work will be assisted by the participation of "subject matter experts" from local non-profit, academic, and other organizations and institutions. For example, we have already been in contact with Serge Thomas, a professor at the Water School at FGCU, who is a national expert on lake management and has consulted extensively on this matter regionally. Serge has indicated his willingness to assist in resolving the issues at Swan Lake.

Similarly, the Conservancy of Southwest Florida has expressed its enthusiasm about the creation of this committee and Council's desire to elevate its environmental commitment. The Conservancy's Policy Department, headed by Nicole Johnson, has expressed its desire to work with the committee on issues where the Conservancy has expertise including best management practices for water quality and integrating environmental standards into the comp plan and land development code.

There are other key resource people at FGCU beyond Serge Thomas who can be become involved in our efforts and other important local organizations that can be engaged depending on the issue. These include but are not limited to the Collier County Waterkeeper, Audubon of the Western Everglades, Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, and the South Florida Water Management District/Big Cypress Basin.

Membership

My recommendation is that we establish a committee comprised of individuals who have a strong background, either professionally and/or through volunteer and civic service, to serve in this capacity. I also would like to have a committee that is diverse in terms of the geographic neighborhoods of Naples in which they live.

Here are individuals I have spoken with to date who would be willing to serve. Of course, these appointments do not require Council approval.

Judy Hushon – retired scientist and business executive/Active supporter of Conservancy and other environmental causes

Joe Karaganis – retired attorney who specialized in state and federal water law during his career

Stan Karpf – GSAC board member/led effort against proposed Clam Pass Parking Garage

Jake McGarry – Retired attorney/community leader for Spring Lake clean-up and restoration

Michelle Seeger – retired environmental attorney and environmental science specialist/community leader regarding beach outfalls project

Jo Ann Smallwood – Landscape Design professional/longtime civic volunteer and leader on natural resource issues

Sharda Spahr – Member of Mooring Property Owners Association board and Moorings Bay Citizens Advisory Committee

Barbara Walker – head of Neapolitan Enterprises with active interests Crayton Cove/Naples Bay issues among other matters

Note: I am in the process of talking with 4-5 additional individuals who I want to add to the committee because of their background, interest, and the neighborhoods where they reside.

Timetable/Next Steps

Once I have consensus from Council, I would like to move forward to schedule a first meeting of this group, likely a teleconference or Zoom meeting or perhaps a hybrid. During this first introductory meeting, I would hope to establish immediate priorities from the list of items described earlier and set a meeting schedule for the remainder of this year. The goal would be to gain input from the committee to share with Council in a way that aligns with council consideration of key issues.