

**LAKE COUNTY WATER AUTHORITY**

**Wednesday, January 27, 2021  
3:30 pm  
Lake County Administration Building**

The Regular Hearing of the Board of Trustees of the Lake County Water Authority was held at 3:30 pm Wednesday, January 27, 2021 in the Lake County Administration Building, County Commissioners Chambers at 315 West Main Street, Tavares, Florida.

**Members Present-District #**

Keith Farner, Chairman (At-Large)  
Courtney Stokes, Vice Chair (At-Large)  
Marty Proctor (#1)  
Trampis BonJorn (#2)  
Tyler Brandeburg (#3)  
Butch Hendrick (#4)  
Rick Donohue (#5)

**Staff Present**

Ron Hart, Executive Director  
Dr. Jason Danaher, Water Resources Director  
Steve Crawford, Water Res. Project Manager  
Biagio Gugliotti, Land Resources Director  
Ben Garcia, Administrative Services Director  
Anna Ely, Recording Secretary  
Tracey Percoco, Financial Analyst  
Kevin Stone, Attorney

A list of others present at the meeting is part filed in the permanent files of the Water Authority.

**1. CALL TO ORDER / PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Everyone stood for a moment of silent meditation and the Pledge of Allegiance.

Tab 1    **2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES** - December 16, 2020 - Regular Meeting

**MR. PROCTOR MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE LAKE COUNTY WATER AUTHORITY MEETING OF DECEMBER 16, 2020 – REGULAR MEETING AS WRITTEN.** Mr. Hendrick seconded the motion.

**Motion approved 6-0.**

**3. PUBLIC COMMENT**

None

**4. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT**

Mr. Hart reported that the rainfall for December was about half of what it is normally. He stated that total annual rainfall was a little over 46 inches, which was 4 inches shy of our normal 50 inches average rainfall. He noted that all rain gauges showed below average rainfall for the year except for one near Four Corners in south Lake County, which indicated above average rainfall in that area and helped to keep the water levels high in the Clermont Chain.

He stated that we’ve had lower rainfall each month over the last year, resulting in a much drier year in 2020.

He stated that water levels in the Clermont Chain are just slightly over 97 feet in elevation which is just under the regulation high amount of 97.1 feet. He noted that this time of the year things are usually a bit drier and if we don’t receive any significant rainfall in the next two or three months, we will probably see that amount drop closer to the minimum regulation.

Mr. Hart noted that on the Harris Chain of Lakes the District has done a really good job of maintaining the water levels close to the regulation schedule.

He stated that Lake Apopka is currently at regulatory levels and there is minimum flow coming out of the lake. He noted that for Harris, Eustis and Dora Lakes this time of the year the water levels are usually lower than regulatory level, but this year the water levels have been right at regulatory level which is where they are supposed to be. He explained that Lake Griffin is also right at regulatory level and all structures are at minimum flow.

Mr. Hart stated that the Agency’s Employee of the Month is Doug O’Neil. He noted that Doug works at Hickory Point and the Agency would like to recognize him for his dedication to the keeping the park clean.

Mr. Hart informed the Board that Lake County Days have been cancelled in Tallahassee, so they wouldn’t be traveling there to talk with our legislatures. He stated that they can still communicate with them and our local delegates about making sure there is adequate funding for hydrilla treatment as well as seeing if we can get any additional funding for the NuRF improvements.

Mr. Hart noted that the Agency has revamped our Volunteer Program as it has been nonexistent for years and starting it back up. He stated that Lake County has a huge opportunity with a lot of retired citizens that are looking for things to do and it is a huge service for our Agency to be able to provide meaningful work for those looking for something to do.

He introduced Michael Titus as the Agency’s first volunteer and noted that he is an intern from UCF pursuing a degree in business.

**5. CONSENT ITEMS**

**MR. PROCTOR MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA.** Vice Chair Stokes seconded the motion.

**Motion approved 6-0.**

Tab 2 a. Transfer Funds from Checking to Money Market Account Tracey Percoco

**AUTHORIZE THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO TRANSFER \$3,500,000.00 FROM THE SUNTRUST CHECKING ACCOUNT TO BANK UNITED MONEY MARKET ACCOUNT.**

Tab 3 b. Extend Contract with Chemtrade for Purchase of Alum Jason Danaher

**AUTHORIZE THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO RENEW THE LIQUID ALUMINUM SULFATE CONTRACT WITH CHEMTRADE CHEMICALS US, LLC FOR AN ADDITIONAL 12 MONTHS AT A COST OF \$265/DRY TON.**

**6. DISCUSSION ITEMS**

Tab 4 a. Joanna Stormwater Partnership w/ Lake County Update Jason Danaher

Dr. Danaher gave a PowerPoint presentation regarding Lake Joanna and explained that two locations are currently being considered for placement of baffle boxes. He noted that the one on East Joanna Drive is currently in the design phase and the County is working on the easement acquisition.

He explained that staff is looking at a 50/50 cost share, with the first baffle box costing approximately \$175,000 or \$180,000. He noted that staff is currently in the yearly stormwater grant process and the County has been asked to fill out a stormwater grant application to request help with funding.

Dr. Danaher explained that the baffle box is just Phase I of the recommended improvements. He stated that for Phase II the County is currently in discussion with DOT regarding creating a stormwater pond on land that DOT had previously earmarked for a stormwater pond but hadn’t used. He noted that the City of Mt Dora may also be asked to assist with funding if this was to move forward.

Dr. Danaher noted that the St. Johns River Water Management District (the District) will have funding available in the spring and the County will be submitting for additional funding from the District at that time.

Chairman Farner asked about the second baffle box that was mentioned and Dr. Danaher explained that an easement is not available for the second baffle box at this time.

Mr. Hendrick recommended earmarking \$360,000 to provide payment in full for the first baffle box and set the remainder aside for funding for the second Phase II baffle box.

Chairman Farner stated that while he can appreciate Mr. Hendrick’s suggestion, he is not comfortable with the County not having a stake in the cost.

Chairman Farner asked if the Board could take action on funding one box now and Dr. Danaher explained that the County staff still needs to go before their own board for approval and once they have authorization, staff will bring it back for approval.

Commissioner Campione stated that if the Water Authority were to pay for the first baffle box the County would have funding to put toward storage for stormwater.

Chairman Farner stated that he is okay with acting on funding for the first baffle box but would like to see the County's plan for the stormwater storage and treatment pond on the agenda in the future. He asked that the cost of funding the first baffle box be on the February agenda.

Dr. Danaher stated that the County will be submitting for a Stormwater Grant, which comes to the Board in February for approval. He explained that there are limited funds and other cities have also applied. He stated that he is comfortable with funding 50% of the cost.

Chairman Farner stated that he too is comfortable with 50% and the need to keep the project moving forward.

Mr. Proctor asked about the cost of the easement and Lake County Commissioner Campione stated that they are hoping not to have a cost associated with the easement for the first baffle box. She noted that the County currently has the funding to do a 50% match for the first baffle box.

Mr. Hendrick reiterated that he thought the Water Authority should fully fund the cost of the baffle boxes and Chairman Farner restated that he is comfortable for 50% funding but not with funding the full cost.

Mr. Proctor asked about funding for the second baffle box and it was noted that it most likely would be \$180,000 plus the cost of the easement at current prices.

Commissioner Campione stated that the next part of the project to be funded would most likely be a pond and the County is hoping to work with DOT to get some of their land. It was noted that there would also be the cost of constructing the pond.

In response to a question regarding the maintenance of the baffle box, Commissioner Campione stated it would be the County's responsibility to maintain the baffle box. She noted that they just want to get past the first baffle box before taking on Phase II.

Chairman Farner noted that no motion was needed at this time as the County doesn't yet have the cost amount or authorization from their board.

Wes Porak, Lake Joanna resident, stated that he had concerns regarding the baffle boxes, and he didn't think the amount of nutrient removal they provide would be enough. He also noted that he had concerns regarding the inflow of water from the ditch. He stated that there are other in-line technologies available that would be a fraction of the cost and he hopes they will continue to investigate the options.

Mary Spacone, resident of the Lake Joanna area, addressed the Board regarding the possibility of a whole lake alum treatment. She stated that she had spoken to several people with DEP and was told that it was acceptable as they (DEP) do whole lake alum treatments all the time.

She noted that Texas Harvesting has stated that they are willing to assess Lake Joanna for whole lake alum treatment and stated that she hopes it is something that will be considered.

In response to questions regarding the baffle boxes, it was stated that they would be 2<sup>nd</sup> generation baffle boxes not 1<sup>st</sup> generation.

There was discussion of the difference in the baffle boxes and it was noted that the baffle box would be dosed with Bold and Gold which is a UCF material that absorbs phosphorous.

Chairman Farner asked for pictures of the baffle box and Jeff Earhart stated that he has an excellent short video that he can provide.

Robin Green, resident on Lake Joanna drive, thanked the Board and County for their help. She stated that many people use the lake and that she sees little kids in the lake all the time.

Ms. Spacone asked where she could send the information she has gathered and was told to send any information to Dr. Danaher at the Water Authority.

*Mr. BonJorn entered the meeting at 4:21 pm.*

Tab 5            b. Update on Lake Denham Bid Package

Jason Danaher

Dr. Danaher gave a PowerPoint regarding the Lake Denham property and stated that the property was acquired in 2019 from the Calhoun family for \$1.6 million. He noted that Leesburg provided \$500,000 of the cost to be used for stormwater credits.

He stated that currently 1200 lbs. of nutrients are being discharged downstream annually as the property was used agriculturally for quite some time. He stated that although the property is no longer being used agriculturally, the property is still releasing nutrients downstream. He noted that currently there is a site resident that continues to operate the pumps, maintain the levees, etc.

Dr. Danaher stated that the City of Leesburg was interested into possibly annexing the property into the city in the future if it would provide a form of passive recreation for the city.

Dr. Danaher stated that the first option would be to flood the property as it is, just turn off the pumps and let it turn into whatever it wants. He noted that there would need to be some reclamation work due to contaminants on the site before it could be flooded.

He explained that most likely invasive species would take over the site and the property would become a shallow water marsh and wouldn't provide much of a usable water body. He stated that flooding would create a nutrient soup due to the nitrogen and nutrients in the soils and if levees fail that would come back out into the Lake Denham area. He noted that the levees are made of peat and could eventually fail over time. He stated that to date the Water Authority has spent \$3,500 in diesel and \$10,000 in electricity.

Dr. Danaher also explained that another option that seems preferred by all the partners is to improve the site into a wildlife recreational area, and to accomplish this alternative, several site improvements are suggested. These potential upgrades include perimeter levee repair, recontouring interior soils, boat ramps and parking, aquatic vegetation planting and exotic control. To implement these improvements, staff has identified a potential methodology that can accomplish the task without any additional local money.

It was noted that some people would consider this a peat mine as they would be removing the peat/soils that are nutrient lading and it could be restored and returned to a usable area. It was stated that although the property is currently agricultural property, it used to be a wetland

Mr. Hart explained that as long as the site is dry we can add fill, but if they decided to flood the property, it would become a wetland and it would be considered filling a wetland and it would be harder to do anything with the site. Mr. Hendrick asked if the residual is safe to use as fill and Mr. Hart stated it has been deemed safe.

Dr. Danaher explained that in June of 2020 the Board authorized staff to contract with Wood Environment & Infrastructure Solutions, Inc. to develop bid documents for the purpose of removing the nutrient rich soils and reduce a large portion of the nutrient load before the site is permanently flooded and to put together a bid package for a company to remove any material that needed removing and create a restoration plan for the property. He stated that staff is looking to present the bid package in February or March and the Board can then decide whether they want to move forward. He explained that several state agency's such as FWC, DEP and the Water Authority would be cooperating in the design.

Chairman Farner stated that the Water Authority is here at the pleasure of the legislature and he didn't think a peat mine would go over well. He stated that he didn't think the City of Leesburg or the adjacent property owner would be happy that there would be a peat mine.

He stated that the Calhoun's could have sold it to the peat mine company for more money if they had wanted a peat mine. He stated that the property hasn't been farmed in years and has already revegetated. He also stated that he thinks the palms currently located on the site are valuable, but staff does not.

Mr. BonJorn asked if the land was just flooded, wouldn't it just drain into our lakes and what kind of effects would that have on the lakes. Dr. Danaher explained that if they were to shut off the pumps it would flood, and soils would stop oxidizing but once it went noxious it will re-enter the water column and if the levees were to break it would release the nutrients into the water system. The levees require a lot of maintenance and once you flood the site 90% of the levees would not be able to be maintained.

Vice Chair Stokes stated that she understands the peat mining concerns but does not agree that it would be a good situation to just flood it. She explained that her background is in invasive plant management and stated that this was the type of land they did their research on. She stated if they were to just flood the property it would become covered in a massive amount of invasive plants.

She also voiced her concerns about the condition of the levees and the cost of maintaining them. She stated they have the opportunity to do restoration that will support a much more robust ecosystem and she would be interested in seeing the proposal. She noted that they have a possible avenue to shave a hundred years off the natural restoration process and benefit the residents of Lake County.

Mr. Hendrick asked if there have been any traffic studies done regarding the amount of truck traffic it would generate.

Chairman Farnier asked Attorney Stone if there would be a problem regarding quid pro quo services and Attorney Stone stated that a project like this is in the scope of what the Water Authority is charged with doing.

Mr. Proctor stated that this was agreed on several months ago and the proposal has already been paid for and he noted it is just a step to move us forward.

Dr. Danaher agreed that it is a step forward and we would be able see if there is anyone even interested and if the project would be worthwhile. He noted that if they were to just shut the pumps off, there would be a very serious problem if there were to be a flood.

Mr. Hendrick asked if the area is considered a sovereign land of the State, and if not, why not just fill in the whole thing with the residual from the NuRF and then turn off the pumps. Mr. Hart explained that they would have to run the NuRF for another ten thousand years to have enough to fill it in completely.

Mr. Brandenburg asked how flooding the property could cause a problem and Dr. Danaher explained that if there was a heavy rain and the property flooded and levees failed, the overflow of water would release the nutrients downstream. He explained that the levees would hold four to eight feet of water depending on the area.

Mr. Proctor stated that he agrees with Vice Chair Stokes; it is a large piece of land and we have an opportunity to make a big impact for the people of Lake County.

It was noted that this is an opportunity that can slip away. The land is currently zoned agricultural and once it is flooded and it becomes a wetland, the rules change and there is less that can be done with the property. It was stated that now is the time to look at what can be done before the land is flooded.

Matt Bigler with Southeast Soil addressed the Board. He stated that he is what they would call a peat guy and does sustainable projects and had previously done work for the Calhoun's. He stated that rather than looking at the project as a peat mine, they should look at it as a lake restoration, which it really would be and could result it something good like the Emerald Marsh Restoration project.

He explained that the number of trucks a day would be about eighteen which is not a big impact. He stated that he knows a lot of the neighbors in the area and most would not be worried about it.

He stated that although he could give them an idea on the costs of such a project, he would rather withhold that information as he would like to be able to bid on the project should they decide to move forward with it.

Mr. Hendrick asked how much material it would take from the NuRF to make the project cost neutral and it was explained that it would be up to the contractors bidding to come up with an amount.

Chairman Farnier stated that he would like to see documentation of what Leesburg is proposing as well as Fish and Wildlife and any other stakeholders.

Tab 6            c. Sawgrass Island Entrance Road

Ben Gugliotti

Mr. Gugliotti explained that Mr. Munson had addressed the Board last month and stated that the road to Sawgrass Preserve was getting in bad shape. He had stated that if the Agency would provide asphalt milling to fill in and smooth the road, he would spread them and move them with his tractor.



Tab 8 e. Hickory Point Boat Ramp Improvements Ron Hart

**MR. BRANDEBURG MADE A MOTION TO AUTHORIZE THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO ISSUE A DREDGING AND MARINE CONSULTANTS WORK ORDER FOR THE DESIGN AND PERMITTING OF THE HICKORY POINT BOAT RAMP IMPROVEMENTS FOR AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$55,000.** Vice Chair Stokes seconded the motion.

**Motion approved 7-0.**

**MR. BRANDEBURG MADE A MOTION TO AUTHORIZE THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO TRANSFER \$55,000 FROM THE HICKORY POINT'S BUDGET LINE ITEM 400-630 LAND IMPROVEMENTS TO 400-310 PROFESSIONAL SERVICES.** Vice Chair Stokes seconded the motion.

**Motion approved 7-0.**

*The Board took a 10-minute break.*

Tab 9 f. Award Contract for Villa City Dam Construction Jason Danaher

Dr. Danaher stated that the Board had authorized staff to get bids to replace the Villa City Dam. He stated that the dam is deteriorating, and it is time for it to be replaced with newer technologies. He explained that one of the upgrades they are incorporating is to put in a gearbox actuator to allow for remote operation in the future.

He stated that the bid package was created by DMC, a pre-bid meeting was held, and the Agency received four bid responses, with the lowest bid by Carr & Collier, Inc for \$917,777. He stated that the amount budgeted by the Board was \$900,000, and the extra \$17,777 needed is already in the budget.

**VICE CHAIR STOKES MADE A MOTION TO AUTHORIZE THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO ENTER INTO A CONTRACT WITH CARR & COLLIER, INC. TO REPLACE THE VILLA CITY DAM STRUCTURE, IN ACCORDANCE TO RFB 2021-02, FOR AN AMOUNT NOT-TO-EXCEED \$917,777.** Mr. BonJorn seconded the motion.

Mr. Proctor asked if the dam really needs to be replaced and Mr. Hart explained that in 1998 when a study of the structures was completed it was the one in worse condition.

He stated that since that time they have hired a contractor to skim coat the walls several times. He stated that the skim coat is falling off and the dam has been patched several times.

He noted that it has well exceeded its lifetime. He stated that in the condition it is right now it can't be totally shut off and if it fails, we flood all the property downstream to the next structure.

Mr. Brandeburg asked whether and automatic gear box was necessary and asked about the savings to keep it manual and Dr. Danaher stated that cost difference was minimal.

**Motion approved 7-0**

Tab 10 g. Adopted Public Comment Policy Ron Hart

Mr. Hart stated that a copy of the adopted Public Comment Policy was included in their Board Memos in response to their request. No one expressed an interest in discussing the topic.

**7. LEGAL COUNSEL REPORT** Kevin Stone

Attorney Stone stated that he had nothing new to report.

**8. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS AND ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDA**

Mr. Proctor asked to set up a tour of the Lake Denham property.

Mr. BonJorn stated that they needed to keep looking at Lake Denham and at what will be best down the road for the property.

Chairman Farner asked that a serious discussion regarding the NuRF project and what direction we are going to head, be a future agenda item.

Mr. Hendrick asked about setting up a NuRF workshop and Chairman Farner stated that he'd rather discuss it at a regular Board meeting and if then if they feel they need a workshop they can set one up.

It was noted with the award of the grant funds for improvements to the NuRF they could possibly look at different and innovative technologies that might be available.

Mr. Hendrick asked for an update on the NuRF property transfer and Mr. Hart stated that SJRWMD should have the paperwork to staff in time for the February Board Meeting.

Mr. Hendrick also asked about touring the SJRWMD project by Phosphorous Free. He also asked for an update on the NuRF Dredging Project.

Mr. Crawford gave an update on the NuRF Dredging Project and noted that C and M Dredging is close to completing the new containment area. He stated that the berm is about 15 feet high and the containment area is about 2 acres. He stated that once it is completed, they will be getting a survey and an as-built permit. He noted that they believe it will hold the rest of the west pond and part of the east pond.

Mr. Hendrick asked about the amount of sediment in the in-flow canal and Mr. Hart explained times of high flows usually flush the canal, so it is pretty well cleaned out. Mr. Hendrick asked if staff could have C and M dredge the in-flow canal as part of their project while they are on-site to ensure that it is cleaned out and Mr. Hart stated that staff could check with them.

Mr. Proctor expressed some concerns about the amount of time staff is spending at meetings. Chairman Farner asked that it be put on the February agenda as a discussion item.

Mr. Proctor stated that Stacey Matrazzo with the Florida Wildflower Foundation, Passionflower Chapter, is interested in visiting the Sabal Bluff wildflower area and possibly giving her opinion on what types of plants would grow best in that area.

Mr. Brandenburg stated that they needed to try and move Lake Joanna along as much as they can, as well as Lake Denham.

Mr. Proctor asked if Board Members could attend St. Johns River Water Management District meetings and Mr. Farner acknowledged that they are allowed.

#### **9. INFORMATION ITEMS**

- Tab 11 a. Staff Reports  
Tab 12 b. Monthly Financial Reports - December 2020

#### **10. ANNOUNCEMENT OF UPCOMING MEETINGS AND EVENTS**

Regular Board Meeting - Wednesday, February 24, 2021 (3:30 pm)  
BCC Chambers/Admin. Building

#### **11. ADJOURNMENT**

Meeting adjourned at 6:25 pm.

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Tracey Percoco, Recording Secretary

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Gary Cooney, Secretary-Treasurer

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Keith Farner, Chairman