

**Wellington
Equestrian Preserve Committee Meeting
December 2, 2020
Village Hall
12300 Forest Hill Boulevard**

MINUTES

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 PM. Jane Cleveland, Carlos Arellano, Glen Fleischer, Annabelle Garrett, Dr. Rachel Eidelman, and Haakon Gangnes were present. Dr. Kristy Lund arrived late.

Staff present: Michael O'Dell and Ryan Harding.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

III. Remarks by Committee Chair

Chair Cleveland noted that the meeting is a public hearing, with zoom being utilized to take public comments on the Equestrian Element of the Comprehensive Plan. She mentioned how the element was initially presented in the form of an outline to the committee two months ago, and one month ago the committee was given a detailed presentation. She then said that each of the committee members met with Village of Wellington staff go over it. Chair Cleveland mentioned that staff has done their best to incorporate the comments of committee members into the draft.

IV. Additions/Deletions/Reordering of Agenda

There were no additions to the agenda.

V. Approval of Minutes

Glen Fleischer motioned to approve both the October and November sets of minutes. All were in favor, and the motion to approve both sets of minutes passed unanimously.

VI. New Business

Equestrian Element Presentation

Michael O'Dell began the presentation by giving a recap of the key Plan of Action items that form the basis of the Equestrian Element. He said that in the November meeting there were 6 different requests to take on additional information into the plan. He said that staff provided the committee with a memo detailing the 6 items and staff's recommendations to the Planning, Zoning, and Adjustment Board. The first item to come from the committee was an emergency evacuation plan. The recommendation from staff was to add policy EQ 1.1.3, which would coordinate with State and County emergency managers to provide support to the equestrian community within the Equestrian Preserve Area if impacted by and area-wide event.

The second item to come from the committee regarded schools in the EPA. The recommendation from staff was to add #4 to Policy EQ 1.1.1, which would provide for primary and secondary schools that also provide educational programs supporting the equestrian industry. Mr. O'Dell then brought up a 30 acre site near 50th Street and 120th Street that is owned by the Palm Beach County School Board. Haakon Gangnes suggested that this site could possibly be turned into a horse park/public park through a public/private partnership. Chair Cleveland asked Mr. Gangnes if he was thinking along the lines of education, to which he responded either education or expanding the multi-modal system so that there can be more open space that can be used. Chair Cleveland stated that the Jim Brandon facility outside of Wellington is very similar to what Mr. Gangnes is talking about.

The third item to come from the committee regarded water quality and quantity education. While this would not be directly addressed within the plan, the recommendation from staff was to educate homeowners and builders on subjects like water quality and quantity through Wellington Public Service Announcements and website, and through distribution of existing documents such as the FDACS BMP manual. Chair Cleveland mentioned that the Village is currently right up against the cap of how much phosphorous come out of the lands, and the high level of phosphorous is created by fertilizer and horse manure. Chair Cleveland asked if the Village's best management practices for property owners regarding water quality and quantity are enforced or voluntary, to which Mr. O'Dell responded that they are voluntary. Mr. O'Dell said that the Village does have sub-pumps and does dredge the canals. Haakon Gangnes mentioned that he asked Village Manager Paul Schofield in the October meeting if the Village dredges all of the canals, to which he replied no, we only do that near the treatment centers. Mr. O'Dell stated that he knows the Village has been dredging and widening canals on a regular basis. Mr. Gangnes asked if the intent is to clean any of the sediment out. Mr. O'Dell responded that the sediment tanks do get cleaned out.

The fourth item to come from the committee regarded including a competitive component to the plan. The recommendation from staff was to add Policy 3.2.2, which would maintain Wellington's world-class status by adapting to and accommodating venue modifications that arise from market conditions, or which contribute to the increase of the numbers of competitors and equine in Wellington. Glen Fleischer suggested two things he would like to see built into the competitive component. First that we seek to understand why equestrians are investing in farms here in Wellington. Second that we seek to understand why equestrians are investing in farms outside of Wellington. Discovering the push-pull factors that lead equestrians to invest in Wellington versus other communities will allow us to find ways to out-compete other communities for equestrian investment. Several members of the committee suggested that it may be a good idea to send out a survey in order to figure out what the factors are that lead to investment in Wellington versus outside of Wellington. Annabelle Garrett suggested that it's important to realize the distinction between Wellington proper and the Wellington equestrian lifestyle which encompasses many of the areas surrounding the Village. Chair Cleveland asked if it's appropriate to include language in the Comprehensive Plan that acknowledges that the horse industry depends largely upon land, operations, and activities beyond just Wellington. Mr. O'Dell responded that as we approach build out, areas outside of Wellington will continue to affect the horse industry in Wellington increasingly, but there are limitations

on what the Village can do to control things outside of Wellington. Mr. Gangnes asked if the Village is willing to invest in the infrastructure to support the venues. Mr. O'Dell responded that the plan addresses the widening of Lake Worth Road, and that the Village can and does provide the infrastructure that will support the venues. Annabelle Garrett asked if it includes paving Flying Cow Road to 50th Street. Glen Fleischer said he believes that it's a huge question, but we will need help if we are going to tackle it.

The fifth item to come from the committee regarded the formation of a county-wide equestrian association. It is outside of the purview of this Comprehensive Plan for the Village to step outside of its boundaries, so Mr. O'Dell said staff could offer no recommendation on the item at this time. That said, there are several associations that already exist that are county-wide that could discuss and deal with some of the issues we would like to tackle that exist beyond Wellington, and Mr. O'Dell encouraged the committee members to get involved with them.

The final item to come from the committee regarded the inclusion of the Equestrian Preserve Committee in the Equestrian Element of the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. O'Dell said that the EPC is already included within the Village's land development regulations, so it wouldn't be necessary to duplicate it within the Comprehensive Plan. Thus staff is not giving a recommendation on this item at this time.

Discussion – Michael Stone, Equestrian Sport Productions

Michael Stone, President of Equestrian Sport Productions, began his remarks by saying that he was glad to see that the major issues that he had with the plan have been addressed, and that issues regarded the inclusion of the venues were a part of the Comprehensive Plan. He said without the venues, you don't have an equestrian lifestyle. Regarding water quality, Mr. Stone said that he thinks the plan should say that the Village will identify the causes of the issue. He said that he doesn't think too many farms spread manure on their land, so he's not sure how much of the phosphorous issue comes directly from horse manure. He then mentioned policy 2.2.2 which talks about Lake Worth road being widened in the future. He noted that the policy does not specifically mention South Shore Boulevard being widened in the future like Lake Worth Road just that it could be.

Mr. Stone said that a frequent theme throughout the document is mitigation by the landowner. He said he wasn't sure if this was appropriate within a comprehensive plan as opposed to being written in some other document. He also said that the term "mitigated" is vague. Mr. O'Dell said that this is a high-level document, and there is language in the Village's land development regulations as well as its charter that says impacts by development have to be paid for by the development. In some cases, cost share is a mitigation measure, because the development would be responsible to pay its pro-rata of an impact.

Chair Cleveland asked Mr. Stone how he is getting feedback from his clients as to how to improve. Mr. Stone said that the biggest issue he hears about through feedback is footing. Chair Cleveland then asked Mr. Stone if he thinks about the need to have the support of Wellington as well as the surrounding areas for the farms and venues, to which Mr. Stone responded yes, and that the livestock waste issue is a great example of this.

Equestrian Element of the Comprehensive Plan – Public Hearing and Discussion

Glen Fleischer motioned to begin the public hearing portion of the meeting. Annabelle Garrett seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

The first to speak was Judith Gordon of 14532 Belmont Trace. Alluding to the idea of surveying the farm owners about why they invest in Wellington versus other communities, she said that many of the people actually at the farms are not the owners, and asked the committee how exactly they plan to reach out to people to really get feedback. Chair Cleveland responded that the committee doesn't have the answer to that question currently, but that it's something that they need to figure out. Ms. Gordon claimed that many owners don't know what is happening locally because they come into Wellington, do their thing, and leave. So the committee may get a different perception from the owners as opposed to some of the residents who are more involved. So there needs to be a way to reach out to everyone involved in this process.

The next public comment came from Victor Connor, who lives just outside of Wellington in Homeland. He first asked if there is a benefit to all of Wellington by widening Lake Worth Road and South Shore Boulevard, or rather would it benefit the equestrian community as opposed to the rest of Wellington. He then said that Wellington has some clear advantages over other equestrian destinations such as Ocala, but economics and rising land values in Wellington will create an impact regarding where equestrians choose to move to. He then stated that with any sports venue, it must evolve or it will die out. He said that what created Wellington wasn't a government plan, but rather the equestrian community evolving into what it is today. So he reminded the committee that their job is not to tell the venue going forward, but rather to protect the venue and allow it to evolve over time. He then asked each committee member what their impact would be to their revenue if the equestrian industry in Wellington disappeared.

The next person to speak was Dean Turney, who suggested that the Village join with the Palm Beach County Sports Commission Economic and Market Study in order to survey equestrians. Regarding a county-wide equestrian commission, Mr. Turney said that he was involved with one about 15 years ago (Palm Beach County Horse Commission). He said he believes it would be worthwhile to get equestrian involvement on certain issues like waste removal, but the countywide commission he was involved with previously just didn't work out. He suggested starting topic-specific ad hoc committees instead. He then said he is still preparing a full critique of the Equestrian Element draft. He said he will be cutting off his Facebook group at 400 members (currently has 385 members) and he will be getting input from that group on the plan. He has a second Facebook group called the Wellington Equine Club with 3,781 members whose input will be received as well.

Annabelle Garrett motioned to close the public hearing. Glen Fleischer seconded, and the committee passed the motion unanimously.

Chair Cleveland asked the committee if they had any comments on Goal #1 of the Equestrian Element. Haakon Gangnes questioned why the term "exurban" is still being used as a label for the equestrian lifestyle. He suggested using the term "world class" instead. Jane Cleveland asked if we needed the term "exurban" at all in the plan, and the committee unanimously agreed that it should be taken out.

Chair Cleveland then asked the committee if they had any comments regarding section 1.1.1 Mr. Gangnes asked the committee if we should keep "provide for limited commercial uses with the support of the equestrian industry" in this section. He suggested this is too broad, and could lead to certain uses that the equestrian community wouldn't want. Annabelle Garrett suggested that whatever is allowed in the Equestrian Preserve Area now is what should be stated as being allowed within the Comprehensive Plan. Glen Fleischer asked if statement #3 should be deleted entirely from section 1.1.1 Chair Cleveland stated that the original intent of this statement was to provide retail and restaurant uses to support the industry. Mr. O'Dell said that these uses are already written in the zoning code for the EPA. Mr. Fleischer asked if #2 of section 1.1.1 should say "maintain site development regulations" as opposed to "establish site development regulations". Chair Cleveland agreed that "maintain" makes more sense in this context, as none of the language is meant to introduce anything new.

Ms. Garrett questioned primary schools providing educational programs used to support the equestrian industry as written in the element. She said she's never heard of primary schools doing this, and asked if the element is saying that we want schools in the Equestrian Preserve Area. Chair Cleveland said no, we just want primary schools to provide education about the horse industry. Mr. Fleischer suggested that the sentence needs to be constructed differently to say "provide educational programs to support the equestrian industry within Wellington's primary and secondary schools". Dr. Rachel Eidelman asked for an example of a school that will support the equestrian industry. Mr. O'Dell said he understands the comments regarding schools and educational programs in support of the equestrian industry.

Chair Cleveland moved the conversation on to section 1.1.3, which is additional language to coordinate evacuations in case of emergency. All agreed that the language in this section is sufficient.

Haakon Gangnes asked what exactly section 1.1.2 means. Mr. O'Dell stated that the charter indicates that any development that happens within the village of Wellington that needs infrastructure will need to pay for that infrastructure to be brought to their facility. Mr. O'Dell stated that once the infrastructure is built, the Village takes over maintenance responsibilities. Carlos Arellano asked if the expansion of Lake Worth Road and South Shore Boulevard will be paid for by the Village. Mr. O'Dell said possibly, but there could be some developers that need to pay their pro rata share. Annabelle Garrett asked Mr. O'Dell how one determines pro rata share. Mr. O'Dell said as an example traffic volumes can be used to determine road improvements.

Mr. Gangnes asked if the committee wants an actual study to find out what the source of phosphorous. He said that from an engineering standpoint, if he doesn't understand what the source of the problem is, he's not actually fixing it. Mr. Fleischer suggested stating in the plan that "the Village will coordinate with state and federal agencies to assess and address" regarding the phosphorous issue. The committee was in favor of this language being used.

Annabelle Garrett mentioned that the plan has separate sections that talk about South Shore Boulevard versus Lake Worth Road. She asked if the plan should again include a separate section that talks about South Shore Boulevard from Lake Worth Road to Pierson Road. Mr. O'Dell suggested that we could just combine them all into one, to which the committee agreed. Mr. Gangnes then asked if the plan should have anything written to accommodate any future venue that could open up in the Equestrian Preserve

Area, since it's a document that is supposed to look to the future. Mr. O'Dell said that if something new were to be constructed in the future, say for a different discipline than what already exists in Wellington, there would be a Comprehensive Plan amendment to deal with this. Should this new venue create impacts to utilities, roads, drainage, then this development would be responsible to pay for these needed improvements

For Goal 3 of the Equestrian Element, Mr. Fleischer suggested using the following language: "support the equestrian industry and particularly the competition component as an economic driver of Wellington." The committee agreed with using this language for Goal #3.

Chair Cleveland suggested that with all of the suggested changes, the committee will probably need to see another version of the Equestrian Element. Mr. O'Dell agreed, and said another meeting in January to go over the latest draft will be necessary. He said if there are still comments about using different words and language in January, his suggestion would be that the committee approves it and sends their remaining recommendations on to the Planning, Zoning, and Adjustment Board.

Fireworks Bill Discussion

The fireworks letter was passed around and signed by each committee member. Mr. Gangnes asked Mr. O'Dell how exactly Wellington not abiding by this statute would work. Mr. O'Dell said he's not sure because attorneys are working on the language, but it would be brought to the Palm Beach County Legislative Committee, who would then bring it forward to the Florida Legislature, so it is a step-by-step process.

VII. Staff Comments

Mr. O'Dell stated to the committee as a final piece of new business that the HiPoint Bedding project was approved by Palm Beach County. The next step for them will be to get building permits, so it will likely not be ready for the upcoming equestrian season.

There were no additional staff comments.

VIII. Board Comments

There were no board comments.

IX. Public Comments

There were no public comments

X. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:02 PM.

Jane Cleveland, Chair

D.J. Helkowski, Recording Secretary