MEETING SUMMARY
Lemon Bay Weir Installation meeting with Residents and County Staff
December 18, 2006 7:00 p.m. Shamrock Park

Attendees:

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SUMMARY

Mike Jones gave an overview of project goals. The goals of the project were to re-route stormwater flows from the entire upstream portion of the Woodmere Creek watershed through the restored wetlands on the preserve to take advantage of the natural water quality treatment component of the wetlands rather than a direct stormwater discharge to upper Lemon Bay. Residents were then reminded of the proposed weir design that was discussed with residents in the spring of 2006 when the residents and staff met in the field. At that time, the proposed weir was to be installed in the main Woodmere Creek canal North Branch just downstream (west) of where the South Branch of Woodmere Creek meets the North Branch after exiting the stormwater pond. Mike Jones also reminded the residents that the original proposed design was contingent upon the results of stormwater modeling not showing increased off-site flood levels. Residents were then informed that modeling results indeed showed adverse increases to approximately three properties one of which was Mr. Coyle’s. Many different stormwater model iterations were attempted to correct the off-site stage increases. The only design that does not cause adverse flooding is the current proposed design. This current design abandons the idea of installing a weir in the North Branch and moves it to the channel connecting the stormwater pond to the main Woodmere Creek canal North Branch. This would route only flows from the South Branch through the restored wetlands on the preserve. This scenario would treat approximately 500 acres of neighborhood stormwater runoff as opposed to original intent of treating the 1200 acres of watershed stormwater flows. The SWFWMD SWIM program has agreed to this approach.

The following resident concerns were discussed during the meeting:
Kayak Access
From the original beginning of the project Mr. Coyle was told by County staff (no longer County employees) that his access would remain unchanged. When the pond was constructed, loose stone rip-rap was installed both where the South Branch enters the pond at the border of Mr. Coyle’s property and where the pond discharges to the North Branch. This has caused a number of concerns for the residents. Mainly the rip-rap has
been a constriction for flows entering the pond and cut off kayak access and increased water levels upstream. Mr. Coyle stated that the creek used to go dry at times but, since the pond construction this no longer happens.

This concern seems valid as indeed is shown in attached photo #1. The stone rip rap area appears to be of a much smaller width than the channel upstream and also appears to constrict flows entering the pond. The proposed weir installation in addition to the constructed pond will prevent that area from going dry again or be tidally influenced (except in extreme high tides) as it was historically. Mr. Coyle was informed that the area will not go dry again. This weir design is proposed to direct the stormwater flow from the South Branch through the preserve instead of out to the North Branch.

The County agreed to request through SWFWMD the removal of the stone rip-rap at this juncture to allow flows to enter the pond more efficiently and Mr. Coyle should also be able to kayak through this area into the pond. The County has asked the contractor on 12/19/06 for a price quote for the removal and disposal of the rip-rap as well as a price for hydro-seeding the banks for stability. (Note the stone was originally installed to slow water but with the new proposed weir this function is no longer necessary.)

Mr. Coyle’s personal shoreline enhancement. Selective removal of Brazilian Pepper, native plants intact on stable shoreline, additional native plantings.

Photo #1 Width of channel with rip rap –vs- upstream width of channel w/out rip rap. This is looking upstream to Mr. Coyle’s property from stormwater pond bank where south branch flows into pond. This is the area that he has been planting native plants that seem to be doing well.
Weir Design

The proposed weir design was approximately 15 feet wide to allow for pick-up truck vehicular access for fire emergency crews and land management activities. The residents were not pleased with this for aesthetic reasons and because they were told since the beginning of the project that this would not be a public access point.

*This concern seems valid. Residents were indeed told on numerous occasions by other County staff that this would not be an access point to the preserve. The County is exploring changing the design to a single sheet pile weir as opposed to the wider weir. Staff feel that the residents view of this weir will not be an eyesore due to the low elevation (2.3 ft NGVD) and the plants in the area. The County has asked the contractor to provide a quote for the weir based on current design plans and a quote for the single sheet pile weir. Either weir design should be easy to pull a kayak across to provide access to the North Branch.*

There was lengthy discussion as to why the County cannot redesign the existing broad crested weir located where the stormwater pond was originally intended to discharge to the restored area on the preserve and abandon any additional upstream weir.

The main reason for this, aside from cost, is that the restored wetlands immediately downstream from the weir would have to be excavated to an elevation lower than the North Branch ditch. This would essentially need to be so low in elevation that the area would no longer meet the habitat intent of a high salt marsh and would be predominantly open water essentially creating another extensive pond or channelized system that would allow stormwater to enter the bay without any treatment.

The residents also stated that they did not see a reason for a skimmer as the slow velocities in the area are not conducive to floatable debris and trash is rarely seen. Residents also mentioned that the thick vegetation on the opposite side of the broad crested weir as well as the weir itself serves as a natural skimmer that is more aesthetically pleasing. With the required skimmer design, there will be a 3 foot fiberglass wall obstructing the current view of native salt marsh plants on the downstream side of the existing broad crested weir.

*Staff will AGAIN request that SWFWMD remove the requirements for the skimmer from the design.*

Maintenance

This issue has been raised in the past. There are three separate County entities conducting maintenance in the vicinity. These are Drainage Operations, Natural Resources, and Public Works. The goals are often different for each one. For instance, Drainage Operations is non selective in maintaining vegetation and has in the past treated not only desirable native vegetation but vegetation that public works has planted. Also, on the South Branch the county does not appear to have an easement and County work crews recently came through and conducted maintenance with heavy equipment (see photo #2).
The issue of legal access and easements is one that needs to be coordinated with the County Attorneys office.

Mr. Coyle stated that he was attempting to re-establish native vegetation on his shoreline and was having difficulty preventing maintenance crews from mowing or removing it. This may indicate the need for better training of our staff or contractors and coordination with landowners who want to “do the right thing’.

Sedimentation
Theresa Fouts raised the issue that the Woodmere Mere Creek Canal (North Branch) behind her house has been accumulating sediment and plant material ever since the pond and upstream improvements to the canal have been made. She showed pictures of an apparently dry bottom canal with vegetation growing completely across.
This concern also seems valid based on her photos and a site visit on 12/19/06. County staff agreed to look into sedimentation issues. Upon site inspection, it appears that the area immediately upstream of where the South Branch/pond discharges to the North Branch of Woodmere Creek has accumulated matted vegetation debris and sediment on the south bank (see photos #3 & #4). The area of the North Branch at this location is now narrower than upstream areas of the canal. Staff recommends further action to remove matted vegetation from this area and examine sedimentation issues for this drainage basin. The vegetation issue here highlights a larger need on the part of the County to adopt more sustainable vegetation maintenance methods where the biomass is removed from the system rather than cut and left to decompose and/or be transported downstream.
Photo #3 North Branch vegetation buildup and sedimentation. Facing east (upstream)
Public Use
Pete Svoboda brought up his concern with public use of the preserve directly across the north branch south of his house on the preserve. He indicated that it was at times a nuisance.

_Nancy Edmondson (Land Manager for Lemon Bay Preserve) informed the group that 4 signs will be posted on trails leading to that area stating service access only._

At the end of the meeting Mr. Coyle stated that he recognized that since the pond project was completed his property has flooded less that it used to.