



October 29, 2008

County, cities pool money for parkway

Look for draft agreement in February

*BY RICK NEALE
FLORIDA TODAY*

VIERA -- Shift planning for the years-delayed St. Johns Heritage Parkway from neutral to drive, county and city leaders say.

Brevard County Manager Peggy Busacca and a trio of city managers whose communities are directly affected by the proposed parkway decided to pool resources to help speed up the project.

They will use the money to research the parkway's design criteria, including funding options, right-of-way land acquisition, access management and design speeds.

The county, Melbourne, Palm Bay and West Melbourne propose to split the tab and hire Dyer, Riddle, Mills & Precourt, an Orlando engineering firm, and the Orlando legal firm Brown, Garganese, Weiss & D'Agresta.

"We have agreed that we need to do some additional collaborative efforts to make sure that we have some standardized information about that parkway, such as the amount of right-of-way that we will acquire and that kind of thing," Busacca told the Brevard County Commission on Tuesday.

Busacca hopes the Orange County firms can deliver a draft agreement to the county commission and the Melbourne, Palm Bay and West Melbourne city councils by Feb. 28.

The four governments likely would spend about \$10,000 each for the report, she said.

Busacca met with city managers Lee Feldman of Palm Bay, David Reynal of West Melbourne and Jack Schluckebier of Melbourne to work out the basics of the cost-sharing deal.

The St. Johns Heritage Parkway strategy comes on the heels of two developments earlier this month:

- In an Oct. 2 letter, F. Carlyle and Douglas Platt told West Melbourne leaders their family wants to annex its unincorporated 4,000-acre ranch west of Interstate 95 into Melbourne.

The parkway is projected to slice north-south through the Platt Ranch. Melbourne and West Melbourne already are feuding in court over land-water issues in this region.

- On Oct. 9, Melbourne City Councilman John Thomas and Palm Bay City Councilman Milo Zonka called for their municipalities to join forces and pursue federal parkway dollars.

Busacca said parkway development should continue, regardless of any Melbourne-West Melbourne annexation squabbles.

"The parkway should stand on its own," she said.

County commissioners were expected to discuss the Platt Ranch annexation Tuesday afternoon, but the matter was postponed.

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