

Land Preservation Options for Comal County Meeting  
Tuesday, December 12, 2017  
McKenna Center

Attending: Elizabeth Bowerman, Julie Crouch, Cliff Kaplan (HCA), Katherine Romans (HCA), Jensie Madden (LWV-CA), Rachel Nelson (Melton?) (Community Impact.com), Eva Silverfine-Ott (LWV-CA), Dave McCallum (Sentinel Peak Preserve), Tim Barker, (Friends of Landa Park), Tom Blagg (NB Masterplan), Shelly Meyer (Master Naturalists), Danelle Crowley (LWV, Master Naturalists, NPSOT), Roxanna Deane (LWV-Comal), Dianne Wassenich (San Marcos River Foundation), Annalisa Peace (Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance), Harry Sutherland (LWV-CA, Master Gardener), Robin Sutherland (LWV-CA, Master Gardener), Helen Ballew, Nancy Pappas (Comal Trails Alliance, New Braunfels Headwaters)

- Discuss individual visions and goals –

Identify potential parkland and areas in need of protection as contributing watersheds, charm, etc.

Educate property owners (large and small tracts) – perhaps host a conference about conservation easements

Identify areas of concern – mapping exercise to identify places on the map that Comal residents are interested in preserving. May apply for a grant for Participatory Mapping Exercise

Identify areas to protect. Examples: recharge property, Guadalupe River Road properties, Devil's Backbone, Comal River watershed (Dry Comal Creek)

Need a group with county-wide focus. Individual interests are spread through-out the county. Form an umbrella group.

Involve Land Trusts to help us understand how they work. Partnering to identify land and help working with landowners.

Talk to Commissioners Court about incentives for land owners (property tax valuations).

Hays County passed a Parks Bond to buy land. They put together a citizens group to rank properties to be purchased for bonds.

Find the correct entity to work with landowners to obtain public right of ways along waterways. Find out mechanism for tax incentives to land owners to cede public right of ways for land in the flood plains and or for trails projects.

Possibility of partnering with EARIP for watershed protection. Recharge land and features could be prioritized.

Educate policy makers about options available for preserving land.

Might create a Comal Advocacy Group to advocate for parks and open space preservation.

County doesn't have authority to enforce a comprehensive plan for land preservation but, there could be benefits of doing a comprehensive plan.

NB Chamber of Commerce has a committee for looking at growth.

Hays, Travis, and Bexar County have put money into land conservation. Put up money for polling to see if bond issue would be supported in Comal County. The national Trust for Public Land would consult with Commissioners to study options and information on ballot initiative for bond issue to preserve land for \$10K. Polling regarding citizen support would cost additional. Comal citizens can advocate bond to Comal Commissioners. Can get help in elucidating benefits of preserving land.

Commissioners are concerned about raising property taxes for such a bond. Unincorporated areas need to participate in these efforts. Make the connection that higher taxes for bonds = protection of current natural areas from development. County would be the way to go.

- Come to agreement on how to organize to meet these goals –

Could organize an effort to make a presentation to Commissioners Court. Might get help from the "No Land No Water" campaign. (put TWA no land no water link on GEAA web site)

Obstacles – political leadership (need to give local policy-makers confidence of public support), creating a local leadership (organizing ourselves), education and awareness

Next steps: Planning, Conservation Priorities, Identifying leaders to move forward with this effort.

Might pull together a coalition to advocate. What is the message that the coalition would advocate?

Brain storm about groups, HOA's, that would be interested. Jen Crownover and Roxanna might be able to provide contact information for HOA's. Annalisa will put together a list of organizations that all can add to.

NB Herald-Zeitung has hired Carry Heath to cover growth issues.

#### Next Steps:

Each person present could contact 2 or 3 people from other organizations who might be interested in participating. Annalisa will send out a list of groups. Put your name beside the group that you know someone to contact. Add any additional groups to the list that you intend to make a contact with.

For speaking with contacts to bring in more groups, we need a Mission Statement & talking points. Mission statement could be, "Everyone I know is concerned about growth in Comal County." HCA, LWV and GEAA will draft something and send out to all attendees.

Annalisa will send out:

- Spread sheet of organizations for individuals to "sign up" to make a contact.
- Mission Statement and talking points to use when making contacts.
- List of who participated today & contact info.

- These Meeting Notes

Next Meeting: Wed, Jan. 17, 2:30 pm, McKenna Events Center