

Black Diamond Foundation, Inc
Monday, March 3, 2008, 3:30 pm
Board Room, Black Diamond Country Club
Lecanto, Florida

Present: Jim Briley, Dave Burns, Bill Joens, Nancy Manafort, Sue Pratt,
Sharron Rosenberg, Art Thomas, Jim Wood, Linda Youell

John Bourdeaux

Guests: Capt Jamie Bell, Corps Officer, Salvation Army
Sheriff Jeff Dawsy, Citrus County Sheriff
Sgt Phil Royal, Citrus County Sheriff's Office

1. The meeting was called to order at 3:30 pm, Monday, March 3, 2008.

2. Central Citrus Food Bank

Capt Jamie Bell, Citrus County Corps Officer, Salvation Army, provided his perspective on social service needs in Citrus County. Capt Bell arrived in Citrus County mid-2007.

In January 2007, Homosassa Civic Club announced its intention to raise \$500,000 to build a central warehouse to serve various food banks in Citrus County. Four agencies are partnering for the project: Homosassa Civic Club; Suncoast Harvest Food Bank, Land O'Lakes; United Way of Citrus County; Citrus County Harvest. It's anticipated that Homosassa Civic Club will own the building, and Suncoast Harvest will manage the warehouse.

Salvation Army is not a partner. Capt Bell said that the Salvation Army itself needs a new building, and didn't think it would be appropriate to be part of a separate capital campaign when its own needs are so great. Its mission is not only to help society's less fortunate, but also to find the underlying need that caused the crisis.

In the current economic climate, demands are increasing on resources to serve the immediate needs of residents, leaving little for capital expenditures.

In Lake and Sumter Counties, the Salvation Army was instrumental in getting a central food bank operational in less than a year. Also, in partnership with United Way of Lake and Sumter Counties, the Salvation Army developed the "Human Care Network". Capt Bell offered a possible stop-gap solution: On days when the trucks from local thrift stores were not being used to collect donations, they could pick up food at Suncoast Harvest in Land O'Lakes for distribution within Citrus County.

According to John Bourdeaux, who volunteers at a local church food bank, it appears as if there is no clear understanding of the needs in the County, such as Who is receiving services? Are people obtaining services from more than one agency? Could agencies develop a network to share information and resources?

Capt Bell replied that consultants could conduct a needs assessment, and then tie the information and agencies together, but a major hurdle would be confidentiality of information between agencies, and shared responsibility.

The Foundation thanked Capt Bell for his forthright comments.

[Secretary's Note: Linda Youell distributed statistics from Daystar Life Center and Family Resource Center about number of families served and quantities of food distributed.]

3. Citrus County Sheriff's Office

Sheriff Jeff Dawsy and Sgt Phil Royal of the Citrus County Sheriff's Office accepted the Foundation's grant to acquire two more Automated External Defibrillators for Sheriff's vehicles. In 2006, the Foundation supported the acquisition of two AEDs for CCSO with a grant to the American Heart Association.

Sheriff Dawsy and Sgt Royal thanked the Foundation, and described instances when the AEDs have saved lives. Approximately 10 vehicles are not fitted with AEDs.

Sheriff Dawsy expressed interest in meeting with the Foundation to discuss "Jessie's Place", a child advocacy center, named in honor of Jessica Lunsford. The center would provide services and counseling for children when there is an allegation of physical abuse, neglect or sexual abuse.

Citrus County School Board has designated 15 acres of land for "Jessie's Place", and an architect and builder are on board. Initial estimates are \$1.8 million, which could be reduced to \$1 million, after donations of materials and services.

The Foundation invited Sheriff Dawsy to the April or May meeting.

ACTION: Bill Joens will arrange a time with Sheriff Dawsy.

[Secretary's Note: Linda Youell distributed an article from *St Petersburg Times*, March 1, 2006, "Jessie's Place nudges forward", and directed members to the website of the Zebra Child Protection Centre in Edmonton, Alberta - www.zebracentre.ca.]

4. Review of Minutes, February 4, 2008.

The Minutes were approved as distributed.

5. Treasurer's Report

Jim Briley distributed the Foundation's financial report for the first two months of 2008. The Sanctuary Fund has purchased trees, and Mrs Pam Kelly wishes to direct some of the donations in memory of her husband, Larry, to Hospice of Citrus County.

Bill Joens reported that approximately \$27,000 has been donated to "Birdies for Tampa Bay Charities", with Black Diamond Foundation as the designated charity. The PODS Championship adds a 10% bonus to these donations, resulting in about \$30,000 for the Foundation. The total will be announced at the end of the PODS Championship, Sunday, March 9, 2008. This is the final year of PODS sponsorship, but the PGA Tour is actively recruiting new title sponsors.

The Treasurer's Report was accepted as distributed.

6. 2007 Annual Report and 2008 Donation Request

Jim Wood circulated a revised edition and asked for final comments and corrections. He anticipates sending it to press by the middle of March, for distribution before the end of March.

Some donors have already made their annual contribution, to take advantage of the PODS bonus, noted above.

7. Old Business

Jim Wood reported that Big Brothers Big Sisters recruiting efforts for "big" are very successful, due to the energy of Ms Sheree Munroe, community outreach manager, and a former employee of Black Diamond Country Club. One high school student has recruited 12 of his friends as "bigs".

Art Thomas reported that he is receiving scholarship applications from public high schools in Citrus County, and anticipates selection of the three recipients in April. He also distributed information from Withlacoochee Technical Institute about its scholarship recipients, including some "thank you" letters.

Dave Burns reported that Central Florida Community College is pleased with the Foundation's \$25,000 pledge, and will highlight it during the capital campaign kick-off .

ACTION: The Foundation will award \$10,000 at the end of April 2008, and the remaining \$15,000 in January 2009, to help CFCC qualify for matching grants.

8. New Business

- Dave Burns raised the purchase of the Three Sisters Springs property in Crystal River, to bring it into public ownership, and protection. Citrus County has agreed to support Crystal River's grant applications for environmental protection.

MOVED BY: Dave Burns

SECONDED BY: Sue Pratt

That the Foundation keep the Three Sisters Springs property as an item of consideration, and

That Sue Pratt be the Foundation's liaison with the discussion.

APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

[Secretary's Note: Please see attachments to these minutes: "Move afoot to buy springs", by Jim Hunter, *Citrus County Chronicle*, January 27, 2008; "Public support a must in Three Sisters property purchase", *Citrus County Chronicle*, February 25, 2008]

- Dave Burns is attending a CFCC luncheon on Thursday, March 6, 2008.

- Bill Joens is meeting with DuWayne Sipper, executive director of The Path of Citrus County, on Thursday, March 6, 2008. The Path is a homeless shelter.

- Bill Joens is learning about the Key Training Center, a program for mentally disabled and developmentally challenged Citrus County residents.

- Sharron Rosenberg distributed a funding request from Citrus High School's "Project Graduation", Class of 2008. Art Thomas described the benefits of "Safe Grad" programs.

ACTION: Sharron Rosenberg will contact all three Citrus County public high schools for information about their "Safe Grad" programs.

- Linda Youell provided current information from Citrus County Family Resource Center, including the 2008 budget, people served and the number of services provided. She also circulated the program for the February 10th performance in the CFCC Performing Arts Series, listing Black Diamond Foundation as a sponsor.

- Linda Youell had asked social service agencies in Citrus County about helping low-income workers apply for the federal government Stimulus Package. Most indicated that volunteers from AARP were their best resource. Individuals who might not otherwise be required to file a 2007 tax return will need to file this year to receive the stimulus payment. The return must show at least \$3000 in qualifying income.

9. Review of ByLaws of Black Diamond Foundation, Inc.

Members found some inconsistencies and typographical errors in the by-laws.

ACTION: Linda Youell will circulate revisions of the ByLaws to members and to Monroe (A) Coogler, who drafted the original version, for review and approval, prior to filing amendments with the State of Florida and the IRS.

10. New Board Members

Members unanimously agreed to ask Michael Bays, Anil Ram, and Bill Williams to join the Board.

11. Adjournment and Next Meeting

The meeting adjourned at 5:30 pm, Monday, March 3, 2008.

The next meeting is scheduled for 4:00 pm, Monday, April 7, 2008, in the Clubhouse Boardroom.

Linda M Youell
March 12, 2008

Move afoot to buy springs

By Jim Hunter, *Citrus County Chronicle* on-line, January 27, 2008

The desire to make the property surrounding the Three Sisters Springs in Crystal River publicly owned goes back to the 1970s, but it has never happened. A city advisory board is suggesting one more try.

The value of that prime 60 undeveloped acres in the city has obviously gone up over the years, and efforts have never been successful in putting together the necessary funding. The current owners, who bought it with the intention of developing upscale single- and multiple-family housing, say they will consider offers to buy it, though they have begun the preliminaries to develop it.

Harry “Hal” Flowers of Tampa and two business partners bought the Three Sisters property in March 2005 from the late Harvey Goodman for \$10.5 million.

Sensing the time might now be right because of conditions in the current building and real estate markets, a loose coalition of groups and individuals long interested in public ownership is scrambling to put a plan together that might make a purchase possible. Supporters fear it may be a limited window of opportunity, though.

On Jan. 15, some of these and some representatives from a number of agencies got together with the city of Crystal River to discuss the feasibility of the idea. At that meeting, the Florida Communities Trust (FCT), which had been responding to various requests about what it would take to get FCT funding to accomplish public ownership, said that a grant application for its funding would have to come from either the city or the county.

The agency, part of the state Department of Community Affairs, has been getting about \$66 million each year to help a limited amount of such purchases, and it can fund up to \$6.6 million for a project.

The FCT said the city would have certain advantages as a sponsor in terms of favorable grant award consideration because of its small size, and while \$6.6 million would not be enough for Three Sisters, there is some precedent for phased purchases — though such a grant wouldn’t come with any guarantees of subsequent grants.

To score the most points in the competitive application, the city would have to pledge 30 percent of the purchase price, but it would partner with the county and private groups to come up with that.

The city of Crystal River’s Waterfront Advisory Board is very much in favor of a purchase. An initial draft of a letter the board is submitting to the council, points out a number of environmental and economic benefits, including:

- Cooperative efforts with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in protection of the manatee and its habitat.
- Creation of educational and passive recreational improvements like trails or structures to observe manatee and nature around the springs.
- Cooperative efforts with the regional water district for wetland recreation to aid in the filtration of stormwater into Kings Bay.
- Avoidance of the inevitable additional bay pollution from 300 residences on the tract.

- Promotion of ecotourism which would offset lost taxes.
- Creation of a signature attraction for the city.

The waterfront board wants to submit the letter to the county commission, as well as the council, saying it feels the acquisition would be extremely beneficial for the whole community and urging them both to pass a resolution pledging full support for purchase of the tract and to provide as much aid as possible, including funding.

The advisory board will meet briefly Tuesday and was expected to approve the letter to the council. The city council meets Wednesday night, and the letter and issue are on its agenda. The council would have to approve the letter to go to the county commission.

The agenda item for Wednesday is specifically whether or not the council should direct city staff to initiate action to serve as the lead grant applicant for FCT funding to go toward buying the Three Sisters Springs property. If the city was to do so, it would have to move quickly as the grant applications are due in May for the upcoming grant cycle.

City Manager Andy Houston said Friday he is not recommending the council should or should not do so, but he will point out what staff sees as the considerations and the possible pluses and minuses in the situation.

An obvious consideration, he said, is the city's limited resources and staff in a time when it is trying to retrench, trying to accomplish projects through its Community Redevelopment Area and is taking about a marina.

While it been pointed out the property holds much opportunity if it could be acquired – some have proposed, for example, private, state and federal agencies building such things on the property as an education center and a manatee observation tower — Houston said it would also hold much responsibility, such as the management and operation of such a facility.

And while it could have the kind of potential that is realized for the city of Inverness in the city/county regional park at Whispering Pines, it could also require resources that don't exist, he said.

There is also a question of offsetting the lost taxes. Houston said some believe increased ecotourism would offset losses and the owners could never develop the property, and so increased taxes are really a dream anyway, but offsetting any taxes is now an unanswered question.

And then there is the question of protecting the springs themselves. While some say joint or partitioned ownership, or leasing of the property to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, or example, could solve that problem, the agency has seen significant cutbacks in its personnel and may be struggling to provide the kind of enforcement it wants to give now.

The city would also be responsible for developing and implementing a management plan for the tract and would have to make some changes in its comprehensive growth management plan. So, he said, even if the money could be raised with taxing city resources, there are many facets to the issue that the council has to consider.

He said the council could decide to not get involved, or it could approve a limited involvement, telling the staff to go forward with just an application and exploration of the scope of the project so application deadlines could be met, while still reserving the final decision on whether to go forward with a grant commitment or any funding mechanism or agreement.

Houston said if that happened, the staff would probably quickly begin a search for a grant application writer. That cost is estimated to cost between \$15,000 and \$20,000 and how that would be paid has not been discussed.

George Wilson of the Conservation Fund is experienced with the FCT process and is expected to be at the meeting Wednesday to answer questions about the process.

One of the various agencies that could be involved is the Southwest Florida Water Management District. It is now doing an appraisal on the property.

The regular city council meeting is normally Tuesday, but is being held Wednesday night, because of the election Tuesday. The meeting is at 7 p.m. at city hall.

**Public support a must in
Three Sisters property purchase**

Opinion, *Citrus County Chronicle*, February 25, 2008

City Manager Andy Houston is right - it will take a community. Actually, it will take a county and some outside help, too, but buying the Three Sisters Springs property in Crystal River is the right thing to do for a lot of reasons.

The city of Crystal River has taken a big, noble step in its commitment to trying to get the property. Some less-enlightened leaders without vision might just dream about taxes the property might bring some day.

Buying it will finally take the land around the fragile springs out of development potential, and this may be the last chance to do it. The property is strategic to Kings Bay, not to mention critical to the three fragile springs that have hung on, despite public abuse over the years.

The effects of the development of the property on an already-stressed Kings Bay could be devastating. On the other hand, if it was in public hands, the potential for environmental protection, environmental recreation, environmental education and specifically for manatee education and protection, would be significant.

And it's the right economic thing to do for the long run. Buying it will pay us all back so much more and in so many more ways in years to come than some upscale housing would.

There are many ideas about how the property could be used for all kinds of worthy purposes, like a passive city/county park, a manatee education center, a manatee overlook and an environmental education center, just to name a few. That part won't be a problem. Getting the money up to buy it will be.

The city has stepped up to be the sponsor for a grant. The Citrus County Commission has pledged its support and will lend its staff. The Southwest Florida Water Management District is having an appraisal done and it ought to be eager to help in other ways, too.

There are some dedicated people willing to work hard to raise money and lobby state and federal officials, but the people and businesses of Citrus County must show they support the campaign. They need to be willing to volunteer and to contribute what they can according to their means.

Solid support will be critical. When a whole county joins a campaign and speaks as one, it is very hard for state and federal officials to deny that force.

Local veterinarian K C Nayfield has pledged \$10,000 to get the effort going. That's what you call putting your money where your mouth is. Now the rest of us need to follow his lead as we are able.

The Friends of the Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge is willing to take a lead in putting together a coalition of the public and private entities to wage this campaign.

Once before, this county interceded to keep an environmental jewel out of development. The county found the money to buy the Homosassa Springs Attraction to keep it until the state could purchase it. Look what happened. It is the most popular state park. [The State took over control of the park on January 1, 1989, after purchasing it from the County for \$3.4 million. lmy]

Together, we can do this. As the campaign takes shape, take note of ways to support the effort.

Citrus County, which is an environmental treasure - and your quality of life - will be much the richer for it.