




April 22, 2025

TO: Commissioner Kelly Martinez Semrad
FROM: Byron W. Brooks, County Administrator 
SUBJ: Commissioner's Report on Split Oak Forest

This memorandum is in response to your request to Mayor Demings to schedule a Commissioner's Report on Split Oak Forest for a future Board of County Commissioners (BCC) agenda. Mayor Demings has placed this topic on the May 6, 2025 BCC agenda should you still desire to discuss this topic.

In your March 3, 2025 memorandum, you identified five (5) requested actions for BCC consideration. As I communicated to you back in March, there was a significant amount of information and activities associated with this topic that you may not have been aware of, recognizing that the BCC gave considerable attention to matters related to Split Oak Forest for several years prior to your election to the BCC. Accordingly, I asked staff to prepare a comprehensive update to the BCC on Split Oak Forest because some time had past since there was any new information to report. Staff provided a very detailed, thorough, and comprehensive update to the BCC in a memorandum dated April 4, 2025, from Renee Parker, Manager of EPD.

With respect to the 5 actions you noted, the April 4th memo adequately addressed each item and a recap is as follows:

1. An update on the status of compliance with the conditions of approval set by the BCC and Florida Communities Trust (FCT).
 - Provided in the April 4th memo.
2. A potential motion to reconsider the original vote on the Osceola Parkway extension if original members determine the conditions of approval have not been met.
 - As noted in the April 4th memo, the BCC voted on November 28, 2023 to rescind its support of the linear facility application originally approved on December 17, 2019 in Resolution 2019-M-50. The BCC voted 6-1 to rescind its support, and that direction was communicated to both FCT and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC).

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3. County Attorney review for potential breach of contract due to failure to comply with conditions of approval.
 - Staff is unclear about what "contract" you're referring to, however the County Attorney's Office has reviewed all relevant documents in the matter, most importantly those that Orange County is party to, and at this time does not recommend any viable breach of contract claims for pursuit.
4. Review of the "tri-party" agreement for the subject properties.
 - Done.
5. A discussion on the future of Split Oak Forest and the additional 1,550+/- acres, if applicable, and this Board's responsibility to protect it for future generations.
 - As noted in the April 4th memo, the 1,550 acres will be donated along with \$23.9 million for long-term land management of the donated lands. The 1,550 acres will be conveyed to the Fish and Wildlife Foundation of Florida, which will then be transferred to the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund through the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Division of State Lands. Thus, Orange County Government will hold no ownership or oversight of the donated lands. Of the 1,550 acres, 968 acres will be located within Orange County and will remain conservation land.
 - And, as previously noted, the portion of Split Oak Forest in Orange County (original 1,004 acres owned fee simple by Orange County) will not be disturbed as all road impacts are within Osceola County's portion of Split Oak Forest (originally 685 acres owned fee simple by Osceola County).
 - As noted in the April 4th memo, there may be a future action or consideration by the BCC and that is whether the BCC wants to revise the current Interagency Agreement between Orange County and FWC to allow FWC to manage the Orange County-owned portion of Split Oak Forest and make certain improvements (entrance and trailhead enhancements, construct a viewing platform, and install picnic facilities).

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Hopefully, the historical information and update provided in staff's April 4th memo was helpful to you and the BCC. Further, each of the actions you noted for discussion in your memorandum has been addressed. Your Commissioner's Report will be placed on the May 6, 2025, BCC agenda unless you choose to defer your discussion at this time given the update provided.

BWB/cr

c: Mayor Jerry L. Demings
Commissioner Nicole Wilson, District 1
Commissioner Christine Moore, District 2
Commissioner Mayra Uribe, District 3
Commissioner Maribel Gomez Cordero, District 4
Commissioner Michael Scott, District 6
Jeffrey Newton, County Attorney
Georgiana Holmes, Deputy County Attorney
Jon Weiss, Deputy County Administrator
Tanya Wilson, Director, PEDS Department
Renee Parker, Manager, Environmental Protection Division
Liz Johnson, Assistant Manager, Environmental Protection Division
Beth Jackson, Environmental Programs Administrator
Roseann Harrington, Mayor's Chief of Staff