

**From:** [Tex Carter](#)  
**To:** [Comments](#), [BCC Agenda](#)  
**Cc:** [Beth Hovind](#)  
**Subject:** WK Preservation Group Inc. Letter for Board of County Commissioners Workshop  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 03, 2021 1:05:09 PM  
**Attachments:** [20210203 Letter to PC Commissioners in re Preserving Greenspace.docx](#)

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The attached letter from the WK Preservation Group Inc. is intended for the commissioners prior to the workshop meeting on selection and acquisition of preservation and recreational property being conducted on February 4.

If this is the wrong person for this submission, please let me know or forward it with our thanks.

Best regards,  
Tex Carter

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# WK Preservation Group Inc.

February 3, 2021

TO: Pinellas County Commissioners

Subject: Preservation of Green Space in Pinellas County

On February 4, you are reviewing the process for the county to acquire environmental and recreational lands in a workshop meeting. As noted in your vision statement, your goal is to be the standard for public service in America—a far-reaching goal but in this area of greenspace preservation, a particularly important goal. Your values as a Commission state “we believe it is our responsibility to improve the overall quality of life through the management and preservation of the natural and built environment.” We agree, and as recent events have shown, the citizens of Pinellas County also agree.

Pinellas County news has been filled with properties threatened, under threat, or actually removed from the list of 60 identified properties to be preserved within the county. It is clear, and particularly clear in the presentation by county staff, that immediate action is necessary to prevent the further encroachment of these properties.

Paul Cozzie and staff have done an excellent service in identifying and categorizing these primary properties and this action is a good start. The scaling and ranking systems have been reviewed by the Parks Advisory Committee who questioned whether the system might not eliminate properties that should be included--- a possibility that should be recognized in the establishment of a framework for making major resource decisions. Cozzie and staff should be empowered to expand the program and accelerate acquisition and preservation of all key properties.

The primary concern in preserving the listed properties appears to be cost. Reviewing the Penny for Pinellas contributions to land acquisition over the past 3 cycles, this year, when the need is great and the urgency growing, we have allocated less money. Our need is \$35 million to preserve all the identified properties. Our budget is only \$15 million. And we are aware that the longer we put off the preservation of green space, the more expensive it will become.

We encourage the Commission to try to identify other sources of funding, reducing other budget items, increasing grant sources, collaborations with communities to jointly own these lands, solicitation of donations from our businesses and residents, and to consider a bond issue or a tax referendum specifically for this purpose. Working in partnership with groups such as the Pinellas Community Foundation, or our WK Preservation Group, who are willing to help raise funds and coordinate acquisition efforts on behalf of the county is also a means of increasing and leveraging your resources.

Other counties have recently passed referenda increasing their property taxes specifically for land acquisition for the future. Manatee County approved a property tax increase to issue general obligation bonds of up to \$50,000,000 for water quality, fish, and wildlife habitat preservation, at a cost of \$29 per household per year. Hillsborough County in 1987 passed an Environmentally Sensitive Lands Ordinance which provided \$21 million

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Email: [info@wkpreserve.com](mailto:info@wkpreserve.com)

Our Mission: To preserve the rural heritage of open space land by protecting its natural forest, plant life, and all native animals in their community. We envision accomplishing this through education and collaboration for the benefit of present and future generations.



# WK Preservation Group Inc.

over 4 years to purchase lands. And in November of 2008 the voters approved the issuance of up to \$200 million in bonds.

In contrast, here in Pinellas, we have communities competing with each other for resources to use for preserving greenspaces in a variety of neighborhoods. The Commission can end this and preserve all the lands that have been and will be identified by county staff and our citizens. As seen in the recent Douglas Purchase, Pinellas County residents care about and highly value open space and land preservation. Our county is the second smallest in the state yet the highest in density. Any parcels of green space, especially those housing native plants and wildlife must be preserved.

You have the power to do this. Time is of the essence as more and more of these properties are removed from public purchase and are being bought up by private entities. WK Preservation Group pledges to work with the Pinellas County Commission to assist in finding the funds to complete this task and preserve our greenspace for future generations.

We ask you to please take the actions today that will assure you have helped preserve and improve the overall quality of life through the management and preservation of the natural and built environment, in line with our vision for Pinellas County.

Respectfully,

WK Preservation Group's board and on behalf of our supporters.

## Board Members

Broderick "Brad" Husserl    Chair

Kay A. Carter

W. L. "Tex" Carter

Kenneth Dambrosio

Beth Hovind

Don Richter

Martha Ryan

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