



Islamorada, Village of Islands LAND ACQUISITION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

February 4, 2026 - 9:30 AM
Administrative Center and Public Safety Headquarters
86800 Overseas Highway
Islamorada, FL 33036

AGENDA

- I. CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL
- II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
- III. ADDITIONS AND / OR DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA
- IV. PUBLIC COMMENT
- V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
 - A. Approval of meeting minutes for the November 5, 2025 meeting.
- VI. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION
 - A. Monroe County Land Authority Acquisitions- Update
 - B. Village Acquisition Priority List Letters - Responses
 - C. Review Quarterly Action Plan List
 - D. Legacy Hammock Program - Rebecca
 - E. Next Meeting Date
- VII. ADJOURNMENT

ADA Assistance:

These meetings are open to the public. In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, all persons who are disabled and who need special accommodations to participate in this meeting because of that disability should contact the ADA Coordinator at (305) 664-6448 or by email at ADA@islamorada.fl.us at least 48 hours before the scheduled meeting

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Islamorada, Village of Islands LAND ACQUISITION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

November 5, 2025 - 9:30 AM
Administrative Center and Public Safety Headquarters
86800 Overseas Highway
Islamorada, FL 33036

MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at: 9:31am

Present were: Carolyn Amber, Karyn Allman, Howie Arnold, Frank Derfler, Tammie Gurgiolo, and Greg Dully.

Via Zoom was: Matt Turk, Alan Cockerham, and Rebecca Jetton.

Absent was: Kelly Cox

Excused was: Michelle Robinson

Also, present were: Peter Frezza, Environmental Resources Manager, Ron Saunders, Village Manager, Member of council, Deb Gillis, and Angy Rivas, Recording Secretary.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The group participated in the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. ADDITIONS AND / OR DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA

LAAC Member Tammie Gurgiolo requested the committee discuss Horsepens property.

Rebecca Jetton requested to discuss the State less-than-fee program.

These items will be discussed between Items VI. C & D.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Approval of meeting minutes for the August 6, 2025 meeting.

Howie Arnold motioned to approve the minutes. Tammie Gurgiolo seconded the motion. Motion passed unopposed.

VI. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

A. Review of FY 25/26 Village Budget

Peter Frezza provided a brief update on the Council's decision not to acquit \$1M of budget funds for Land Acquisition. Member of council, Deb Gillis, suggested that if the village had capital, it may be used to acquire land.

B. Monroe County Land Authority Acquisitions Update

Peter Frezza provided an update on three properties currently under discussion with the Land Authority. Appraisals and offers have been made for each property as follows:

Samurai-Owned Property — The property owner was not interested in selling, stating the offer was too low. The Land Authority noted that it can only purchase properties at the appraised value.

MM 87.5 Property — A discussion was held with the property owner, who is asking \$1 million for the site. The Land Authority believes this amount likely exceeds the appraised value. Recommendation: Wait until the Village obtains additional allocations before proceeding with the appraisal.

Smith Property — An offer was made, but the property owner has not responded. Peter also attempted to contact the owner without success. The owner is currently in discussions with the Planning Department regarding a potential land use change and has been advised by his attorney not to engage in further discussions at this time.

Van Sant Property (Next to CVS) — An offer was made, and the owner expressed interest in selling. However, the owner is dealing with private business. The owner plans to contact the Village at the beginning of the year to discuss next steps.

Additional Discussion: Land Swaps with Monroe County

Peter also provided an overview of potential land swaps with Monroe County. There are currently 11 properties located within the Village that could be included in these discussions.

Peter presented a list of the properties, and members discussed which parcels might be of interest for potential exchange.

Further discussions with Monroe County will take place at a later date.

C. Anchorage Builders Potential Land Acquisition

Anchorage Builders Discussion:

Peter Frezza reported that he had been in contact with property owners in the Venetian Shores neighborhood who had expressed interest in selling. He had planned to draft a vacant land contract and present it to the Council at the November meeting. However, the owner's agent contacted Peter last week to inform him that the property owner is no longer interested in selling and may be considering a land use change instead. Peter will follow up with the owner at a later date.

Added Items to the Agenda:

Horsepens:

Members reviewed the Horsepens property using an aerial map for reference. Greg Dully, who also serves on the Local Planning Agency (LPA), provided an update on the discussions held during the recent LPA meeting regarding this property.

Committee members discussed the possibility of purchasing the property from the current owners. They noted that the committee could potentially apply for FTC funding to support the acquisition. If purchased, the land must have a recreational area, potentially including public trails or other amenities.

State Less-than-fee program:

Rebecca Jetton provided an overview of an agreement between the Florida

Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the Land Authority to allocate \$5 million for land acquisition. She noted that for the current year, DEP received \$15 million in funding for the Wildlife Corridor initiative and \$250 million for agricultural land preservation.

Rebecca spoke with staff from the Division of State Lands about expanding the Less-Than-Fee Program to include the Florida Keys. They encouraged her to attend the December 11th public meeting of the State Land Acquisition Committee to deliver a three-minute presentation highlighting the high cost of land in the Village and the need for program expansion.

Additional points discussed included:

The possibility of the Village and Land Authority bundling property closings to seek DEP reimbursement, a process commonly used for fee-simple acquisitions. A state staff suggestion to pursue the purchase of 500 lots for approximately \$5.6 million to expand available conservation and funding opportunities.

Rebecca asked whether the committee would support presenting this idea to the Council and having Member of Council, Deb Gillis, or Village Manager, Ron Saunders, advocate for it at the Village level.

It was suggested to prepare a one-page briefing sheet outlining the proposal for distribution to the Village's lobbyists to share with state legislators.

Deb Gillis expressed support for the initiative, noting it could provide an additional tool for land preservation as long as it does not impact staff management responsibilities.

Following local Council review, the proposal would be submitted to the State Land Acquisition Council (ARC) for state-level approval.

Village Manager, Ron Saunders, recommended presenting the proposal to the Village Council at the December 9, 2025, meeting.

Motion by: Howie Arnold to present the proposal to the Village Council and apply to the State ARC at the next available opportunity.

Seconded by: Frank Derfler

Vote: Motion passed unanimously.

D. Village Acquisition Letter

Committee member, Alan Cockerham, previously requested that the committee review and update the wording of the letter to be sent to all property owners on the Florida Forever list.

Peter Frezza presented the current version of the letter for review. The committee discussed its content and suggested several revisions to improve clarity and effectiveness.

E. Next Meeting Date

Next meeting is scheduled for February 4, 2026 at 9:30am.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

The group adjourned at 10:57am.

Angy Rivas, Recording Secretary

Date

Greg Dully, Chair

Date