Officials will have hearings before decision is final

Jeff Bryan
Riverland News

After two weeks of debate, the Dunnellon City Council voted 5-2 to extend the Rainbow River Protection Ordinance.

However, before the seven-year-old ordinance can be completely rescinded, the city’s attorney will have to make sure there is no conflict with the city’s current comprehensive plan. If the river corridor ordinance and comprehensive plan have no connection, Marsha Segal-George, the city’s assistant attorney, said, then moving forward with plans to scrap the ordinance won’t be an issue.

Then, a new ordinance calling for a repeal of the current river protection ordinance will be drafted and go through two public hearings before it can be officially nullified.

Mayor Nathan Whitt spoke out against repealing the ordinance as a whole. He pointed out that the council had spent more than six hours and two workshops discussing the issue, with most of it laying the groundwork for the hearings.

Mayor Nathan Whitt, left, and Vice Mayor Dennis Evans clashed over the issue.

WHAT’S HAPPENING

Americana Music Fest set for April 20

The Boys & Girls Club Dunnellon branch, along with Swamp’s, will host the inaugural downtown River Run, Friday, April 19, from 1 to 4 p.m. at Swamp’s, 30499 E. Frontage Road.

The event will feature performances from Barbeque, a Marion County bluegrass band, Scott and Michelle Daniel, and Nathan Whitt, a local singer/songwriter, as well as mayors of Dunnellon. A percentage of food and beverage purchased at Swamp’s will go to the Boys & Girls Club Dunnellon branch on U.S. 41.

For information about the event, call Carroll Ponder at 352-690-7519, or emailponder@bgcofl.org.

Library to host special program

The Friends of the Dunnellon Public Library will host a special program, “Presidents and Their First Ladies,” featuring William and Sue Carswell Ponder, Thursday, April 11, in the Library Meeting Room.

The event is free. The Ponders are now in their 38th year of being honored to tell the stories of presidential couples. For information about the program, call 305-413-6664.

Donations sought for ‘Sneaker Project’

The Boys & Girls Club Dunnellon is seeking donations for its “Sneaker Project,” which provides shoes to school-aged children at Dunnellon and Bok Tower Elementary school.

Children’s shoes are always needed, according to organiza- tion’s founder, Marcia Hilty, director of the “Project” at Holy Faith Episcopal Church.

Donations can be mailed to 9042 W. Bluegrass Road, Dunnellon, FL 34432, or stop by the church office Mondays, Wednesdays or Thursdays.

For information, call 409-2069.

Students capture turtles, collect data for long-time study

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Dr. Peter Meylan, a professor of natural sciences at Eckerd College, talks with two of his students about the Rainbow Run, a study he’s led since its inception in 1990. “Not only did we catch a lot of turtles we can examine, we caught a lot of different species we can teach the students about.”

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Ben Atkinson, a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Florida, holds onto a common snapping turtle Saturday, which was found in the Rainbow River. Atkinson has been a part of the Rainbow Run for 10 straight years, wading into the waters of the Rainbow River. Atkinson also helped University of Florida student Chris Hartman capture one of two soft-shell turtles, the first year in which he’s helped bring one of the species to land for the study.

Above: Ben Atkinson, a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Florida, holds onto a common snapping turtle Saturday, which was found in the Rainbow River.