

LEGISLATIVE

#110258I

January 9, 2013

Dear Mayor Lowe and City Commissioners,

Through liaison with city staff, the Nature Centers Commission (NCC) has been informed about the recent \$1 million proposal from Mr. Nathan Collier regarding the proposed disposition of approximately 5 acres of Loblolly Woods Nature Park adjacent to his property. We were made aware when a request from Mr. Collier was first brought to the City Commission in 2008 and have been provided updates from staff as they occurred. One of the central purposes of the NCC is to advise the City Commission on the management of designated nature centers, nature parks, greenways and other natural areas throughout the city, in keeping with the goal to preserve the native character and function of natural systems for the enjoyment and education of the people in the community. NCC has been working with City staff in the development of a City policy to address the broader issue of private purchase of public lands, since it is also our understanding that there is currently no approved City policy on how to proceed with disposing of lands designated for conservation purposes.

During its regular December 13th meeting, and as a result of the Recreation Cultural Affairs Committee meeting agenda item on Private Purchase of Public Lands at the November 26th, 2012, the NCC approved to send to you and the City Commissioners with its recommendations.

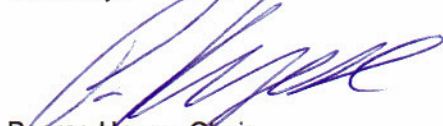
The NCC does not feel this proposal can be effectively discussed or decided upon without first having approved a policy on disposing of lands designated as conservation. Lands acquired for conservation purposes are presented to the public as being protected in perpetuity. The citizens of Gainesville have voted on multiple occasions for greater natural resource protection and regulations. We do not agree with considering the sale of conservation land without first having sound scientific reason for doing so. A disposition of conservation land policy was submitted to the Recreation, Cultural Affairs and Public Works Committee in early 2012, but the Committee has not yet voted on it or made a recommendation to the City Commission. We believe that this policy should first be approved before considering a proposal by Mr. Collier.

The NCC recommends not declaring the parcel surplus, and not selling the 5 acre piece to Mr. Collier. The parcel in question is an integral part of the Hogtown Creek Greenway and 2 known endangered plant species occur on the parcel.

If the City Commission does decide to entertain the disposition of this proposed site, the NCC recommends that the revenues generated be dedicated specifically for Natural Resource Management, infrastructure enhancements, land acquisition and improvements as outlined by the City of Gainesville's Comprehensive Plan.

We sincerely hope you carefully consider our recommendation.

Sincerely,



Pearse Hayes, Chair
Nature Centers Commission

Cc: RCAPW Committee Members
Nature Centers Commission Members
Russ Blackburn, City Manager
Paul Folkers, Assistant City Manager
Steven R. Phillips, Director PRCA
Linda Demetropoulos, Nature and Cultural Manager
Stefanie Nagid, Program Coordinator