

City of Gainesville

Inter-Office Communication

City Manager's Office
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TO: Hon. Mayor and Members of the City Commission DATE: August 28, 1998

FROM: Wayne Bowers
City Manager

SUBJECT: Hogtown Creek Watershed Amendment Referral 971174

At the May 11, 1998 City Commission meeting, a report was submitted by staff in response to the effects of the Hogtown Creek Watershed Charter Amendment on the Hogtown Creek Greenway, as well as other City Recreation and Parks and Public Works projects located within the watershed area. At that meeting the City Commission directed staff to research and come back to the Commission at a later date with the following:

- 1) Clarification of the City's Commitment to Florida Communities Trust; 2) cost of earthen trail for the Phase IA area which extends from N.W. 8th Avenue to Loblolly Environmental Center at N.W. 5th Avenue;
- 3) ways to put a trail in place by reviewing other surface type materials; 4) full amount of the bond issues and other potential projects where the funds can be used, including reallocation of funds from the Greenway project to the CSX/6th Street project; and, 5) American's with Disabilities Act (ADA) access.

Furthermore, the City Commission asked the City Attorney to prepare substitute language for a future ballot that would clarify the issue of a paved trail on Hogtown Creek and on the definition of the Greenway. At the June 8, 1998 City Commission meeting, the City Attorney presented information on the Greenspace Charter Amendment to the City Commission. The City Commission authorized the City Attorney to draft an ordinance containing the ballot language for the charter amendment. In addition, the City Commission authorized the Clerk of the Commission to distribute the proposed language to specific individuals involved in the Hogtown Creek Greenway project.

At the June 22, 1998 City Commission meeting, the City Attorney brought before the City Commission for first reading proposed Ordinance No. 0-98-80 on the Greenspace Charter Amendment. This proposed ordinance would amend the Charter for the City of Gainesville, by permitting construction of paved surfaces for transportation and recreational facilities, except for the Hogtown Creek Greenway. After much discussion, this item was stricken from the agenda.

Listed below is the information pertaining to the referral items:

1. Commitment to Florida Communities Trust
On May 11, 1998, the City Commission directed staff to verify and seek clarification regarding the Florida Communities Trust (FCT) grant requirements for installation of paved trails. The FCT requested that City staff research the requirements outlined in the original grant application, the

Conceptual Approval Agreement, and the approved Master Development and Management Plan (MDMP). The results of the research were forwarded to the FCT (See Attachment 1). Although the approved MDMP proposed multi-use trails, the original Grant Award Agreement and application do not specifically require the construction of paved trails. Therefore, FCT has recommended that the City submit the proposed changes, when approved by the City Commission, to the MDMP in the form of a separate addendum to be approved by the FCT Governing Board. The FCT indicated they did not feel this project is in jeopardy as a result of the referendum and has confirmed this in writing (See Attachment 2).

2. Cost of Earthen Trail

The estimated cost of the construction for an earthen trail for Phase 1A (from N.W. 8th Avenue to Loblolly at 3315 N.W. 5th Avenue) is \$127,000. This cost represents trail system amenities (observation decking, bridge and boardwalking, landscaping, signage, trail preparations, archeological surveying, design and construction (\$69,000), additional landscaping per St. Johns River Water Management District (\$25,000); and, 300 additional linear feet of boardwalk per Corps of Engineers inspection (\$33,000). This does not include paving, 911 call box, N.W. 5th Avenue road improvements, parking lot paving and N.W. 8th Avenue crossing.

St. Johns River Water Management District was contacted to confirm whether the approved permits would allow for this modification in the plan. The two permits approved were the Notice General Permit and the Storm Water General Permit. Both permits are valid for (5) five years. The Notice General Permit is for crossing the wetland area with a bridge and boardwalk. If an earthen trail with a bridge and boardwalk, or, if a completely boardwalked trail was developed, the existing Notice General Permit would not be affected and the project could be completed without further approvals from the District.

The Storm Water General Permit covers the paved trails, parking lot and 5th Avenue improvements. If any portion of this work is to be completed, the existing Storm Water General Permit could be used. Modifications to any portion of the plan that are covered by the Storm Water General Permit will require approval from the District. The City would be required to submit a letter of modification to St. Johns River Water Management District to request approval for a non-substantial change to the original permit. This request would be noticed to the public and would be susceptible to being challenged.

A final determination needs to be made as to what Greenway improvements are to occur. Should any modifications be made from the original final Site Plan, the Community Development Department has determined that the Development Review Board will be required to review the modified plan. The revised plan will also need to be reviewed by the Building Inspection Department to address ADA renovations, change of use, and accessibility.

3. Trail Surface Alternatives

Stabilizer Surfacing - Stabilizer is a non-toxic organic soil additive for dirt or crushed stone surfaces. It is a colorless, odorless concentrated powder that is a natural glue. It is not harmful to plants, animals or humans. It is used as an alternative to concrete, asphalt, pavers and other hardscape surface materials and it works in all climatic conditions. It can be pre-blended or rototilled into existing materials. This stabilizing product at an estimated cost of \$8,000 for the Phase IA trail, plus the cost of construction for the earthen trail would total \$135,000.

If boardwalk is used instead of an earthen trail, this would add \$220,000 (2,000 additional feet of boardwalk @ \$110 per linear foot) to the project for a total of \$347,000.

4. Full Amount of Bond Issues and Other Potential Projects Where the Funds Can be Used:

Greenspace Acquisition/Recreation Project Funds:

As of June 30, 1998, there was a total of \$615,004 funds available (\$134,281 is made up of the General Capital Project Funds and \$480,723 made up in the Greenway Acquisition/Recreation Project Funds). A total of \$267,717 consists of outside commitments on this fund balance. This includes: the Elks Lodge bridge (\$88,000); costs for Westside Tennis Court resurfacing (\$70,300); appraisal and survey work for the CSX Rail Trail project (\$48,742); Loblolly ADA renovations (\$42,932); additional professional services for the Hogtown Creek Greenway Project (\$14,243); and, Ring Park restroom sprinkler costs (\$3,500). Of those costs, \$48,742 should be reimbursable by the State in regard to the CSX project. This would leave \$396,029 available for use.

Of the listed outside commitments, Westside Tennis Court resurfacing (\$70,300); appraisal and survey work for the CSX Rail Trail project (\$48,742); additional professional services for the Hogtown Creek Greenway Project (\$14,243); and, Ring Park restroom sprinkler costs (\$3,500) have been committed and/or spent. The Elks Lodge Bridge (\$88,000) and the Loblolly ADA renovations (\$42,932) have been designated but not yet committed.

Alternatives for use of Greenspace Acquisition/Recreation Project Funds were presented by the Finance Department and Public Works to the City Commission on July 23, 1998.

5. ADA Accessibility

Trail Access -The City Attorney's office analyzed the requirements of the American's with Disabilities Act (ADA) as well as consulted with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and Recreation and Parks Department as to accessibility requirements of newly created trails. Equal Opportunity Department has also reviewed the trail requirements of ADA.

Generally, newly constructed trails and parks must provide accessibility to persons with disabilities. However, paving a trail surface is not the only way to provide accessibility. The State has used alternative means of providing access to parks and trails such as ballooned tire wheel chairs and ground stabilization methods. If an earthen trail is approved, the City plans on acquiring a ballooned tire wheel chair that can be stored and used upon request at the Loblolly Environmental Facility.

Parking Access - The parking issues at Loblolly must also be addressed since the original proposed paved parking area will not be provided. In order to resolve this issue, the Planning Division has suggested that the Loblolly facility site be split off into a manageable size (one (1) acre) and have it rezoned to PS (Public Service). The PS zoning district is dedicated for public and semi-public projects. The District also allows the ability to include special development standards and criteria for proposed public projects. This would afford the options of including an appropriate number of parking spaces tailored to the needs of the facility. The rezoning could also include suitable surface for parking. This could be grass or some other appropriate surface material. The PS zoning provides an opportunity to be creative within the limits of the law.

The parking space within the right of way is of sufficient size to meet the standards for disabled parking (ADA and State). If this is utilized, then the ramp could be boardwalked from the edge of pavement to the front entrance at a maximum slope of 12:1. A level platform would be required as a part of the ramp at the edge of the pavement and at the door. Building Inspection has said this would be adequate to meet the accessibility requirements.

After you have reviewed these responses, the Commission may want to discuss these issues at a future Commission meeting. You may also want to pursue a public participation process as proposed by Commissioner Delaney. The staff is prepared to assist in any manner that you request. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Wayne Bowers". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Wayne Bowers
City Manager