



Staff Analysis

San Felasco Addition (Weiss) Conservation Land Acquisition (B)

170024A

Presented by:
Steve Phillips
Director

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CITY OF GAINESVILLE STAFF ANALYSIS

Legistar No: 170024

Title: Weiss property - Look at Funding Availability with the County and Water Management District

Sponsor: Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs

City Staff Contact: Steve Phillips, Director

Summary of Issue

On May 4, 2017 City staff received a referral from the City Commission to look at the Weiss Tract and potential acquisition ideas as well as funding availability with the County and Water Management District. This item requests that the General Policy Committee consider available funding options and potential partnerships related to the San Felasco Addition (Weiss) Conservation Land Acquisition.

History/Background Information

At the November 15, 2012 meeting, the City Commission approved the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs (PRCA) Master Plan. The PRCA Master Plan calls for the City to acquire land adjacent to parks and centers in order to allow for future expansion.

Since 2009, the City has been attempting to acquire the top and second-priority properties on the approved Land Conservation and Acquisition list. Some landowners have been willing to sell, but others have not. Since many of the priority landowners are unwilling to sell or are at an impasse on price, staff evaluated undeveloped parcels within City limits and outside the City limits but within the urban reserve for potential acquisition. Thirteen (13) parcels of interest were approved to be added to the land acquisition priority listing by the City Commission on April 5, 2012. Twenty-one (21) passive/conservation parcels were approved to be added to the list by the City Commission on July 16, 2015. The San Felasco Addition project, Weiss property, was approved by the City Commission at this time. This property totals 711 acres and is adjacent to the City's San Felasco City Park. Six (6) additional parcels that will expand four parks and centers were approved by the City Commission to be added to the PRCA land acquisition list on March 2, 2017.

In November, 2016 Alachua County Parks and Conservation Lands staff contacted City PRCA staff asking if the City has an interest in partnering on the subject acquisition. County staff stated that Alachua County is prepared to match 50% of the purchase price. County staff stated that the property owner is asking \$6,500,000 for the property. Further discussions with County staff revealed that the Suwannee River Water Management District may have an interest in partnering to acquire the Weiss property. The other half of the funding needed would potentially be funded by the City of Gainesville and the Suwannee River Water Management District.

In accordance with PRCA Departmental policy on “Acquisition of Conservation Lands,” parcels worthy of acquisition are selected by the following prioritization criteria: a) expand an existing conservation area; b) connect existing conservation areas together, or c) are within a Strategic Ecosystem, or have sensitive habitat, or the potential for species that are listed statewide or nationally as rare, threatened, or endangered. In January, 2017, City and County staff conducted a joint site visit to the property. The subject property meets all of the listed prioritization criteria.

On January 9, 2017, the City of Gainesville’s Tree Advisory Board heard a presentation from Alachua County staff regarding the Weiss property acquisition. The Tree Advisory Board approved a motion to fund up to \$1.5 million from the Tree Mitigation Fund assuming there are sufficient funds available. By ordinance, Tree Mitigation funding is available for use if the project site is acquired and maintained as a conservation land. This would limit the land for conservation and passive recreation only. Other sources of funding, or a combination of funding, would need to be utilized if the property were to be utilized for another use, for example, active recreation. Other available sources of funding include the Greenspace and Community Development Funds.

There is currently an unencumbered fund balance in the Tree Mitigation Fund of \$2,109,895 and an unencumbered fund balance in the Greenspace and Community Development Fund of \$1,275,832.

Options

A. The City partner with Alachua County to acquire San Felasco Addition (Weiss) to expand San Felasco City Park for conservation purposes. The City designate up to \$1.5 million of Tree Mitigation Funds for this acquisition.

Pros San Felasco City Park will be expanded by additional acreage for conservation purposes to provide valuable functions including passive recreation, flood control, aquifer recharge, and facilitate wildlife movement.

Cons If the Tree Mitigation Funds were only used for the match, then the acquisition for conservation purposes would preclude other uses of the property.

B. The City partner with Alachua County to acquire San Felasco Addition (Weiss) to expand San Felasco City Park to provide a combination of conservation and other benefits including active

recreation. The City designate up to \$1.5 Million utilizing a combination of funding sources including Tree Mitigation Funds, and Greenspace and Community Development Funds for acquisition.

Pros San Felasco City Park will be expanded by additional acreage for conservation and other potential purposes to include active recreation. This would allow the City to seek active recreational areas for future development if the land acquired was suitable and there was a need based on the Praks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs Master Plan.

Cons Acquisition for multiple purposes including active recreation may not be practical due to the limited amount of uplands on the property.

Staff Recommended Option

Staff recommends **Option B**, to partner with Alachua County and other partners to acquire the property for expansion of San Felasco City Park and a multitude of conservation purposes such as passive or active recreation, flood control, aquifer recharge, and to facilitate wildlife movement. The City designates funding for the match from both the Tree Mitigation Funds and Greenspace Acquisition and Community Improvement Funds for the acquisition.

Attachments/References

1. Weiss Property Evaluation
2. Current PRCA Land Acquisition List