



Legislation Text

File #: 050196., Version: 8

Smokey Bear Park Acquisition (B)

This item involves an update on the proposed acquisition of the State's Division of Forestry property known as Smokey Bear Park located at the corner of NE 15th Street and NE 23rd Avenue.

On August 22, 2005, the City Commission heard a request to exchange a portion (10 acres) of the City-owned Wacahoota property with the State's Division of Forestry (DOF) property known as Smokey Bear Park. Smokey Bear Park consists of 9.83 acres of park land with an office complex, and a vehicle and maintenance compound located at the corner of NE 15th Street and NE 23rd Avenue. The matter was referred to the Recreation and Cultural Affairs Committee (now know as the Recreation, Cultural Affairs and Public Works Committee). In their referral, the City Commission specifically directed that staff bring back additional information on the proposed exchange and "that Alachua County Forever be given the opportunity to express their interest in the Wacahoota property."

On December 12, 2005, the City Commission heard the Committee report and approved a motion that indicated the City's intent to move forward with the exchange with DOF, unless the property were to be acquired through Alachua County Forever. However; on January 22, 2007, the City Commission directed staff to work with Alachua County Forever for the sale of the entire Wacahoota site, so the property exchange between the City of Gainesville and DOF did not occur.

During that time, City staff communicated in writing with DOF regarding the City's continued interest in acquiring the Smokey Bear Park property once it became available. Since that time, the DOF has acquired other lands for their new forestry office and is ready to surplus the property. During the discussion concerning the property exchange, the DOF property had an appraised value of \$449,000 as of September 2005. City staff is currently working with DOF and received a revised appraised price of \$469,000.

As part of the One-Half Percent Infrastructure Sales Surtax Capital Improvement Projects list, an estimated \$600,000 was projected for the land acquisition costs and park improvement of Smokey Bear Park. Funds for the acquisition and park improvements will be available in the Wild Spaces and Public Places Capital Improvement Fund. The closing on this property is to occur no later than July 31, 2009.

That the City Commission: 1) approve the purchase of Smokey Bear Park from the Division of Forestry for the appraised value of \$469,000 and the associated closing cost; and 2) authorize the City Manager to execute a Purchase Agreement with the Division of Forestry for Smokey Bear Park, subject to review and approval by the City Attorney as to form and legality.

Alternative Recommendation: The City Commission decline the opportunity for acquisition of Smokey Bear Park from the State's Division of Forestry.