



Legislation Text

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Status Update- Biosolids Land Application Site purchase (B)

GRU has been pursuing the purchase of the Whistling Pines Ranch as approved by the City Commission on 7/23/07. Prior to purchase, a Special Exception is being sought from Alachua County to allow the continued land application of biosolids at the Whistling Pines Ranch. Staff will provide an update on the Special Exception process, issues that have been identified through the process, and findings related to the issues raised. We continue to believe that land application of biosolids is a sustainable and cost-effective method for reusing biosolids and want to ensure that the City Commission continues to share that opinion.

Biosolids is organic material that is a by-product of the wastewater treatment/water reclamation process, composed primarily of cellular mass from the microorganisms that accomplish the biological portion of treatment. Biosolids are treated at both of GRU's water reclamation facilities by a process called aerobic digestion to reduce pathogens, and then land applied. The entire process including land application is highly regulated by the EPA and FDEP, and is beneficial to the farmer, GRU and the environment. Aerobic digestion and land application at the Whistling Pines Ranch is currently being practiced as it has been for the last 26 years.

On 7/23/07 the City Commission approved the purchase of the Whistling Pines Ranch to allow the continued land application of biosolids. The approved Purchase and Sale Agreement was contingent on GRU obtaining a Special Exception from Alachua County to allow the continued land application of biosolids on the site. GRU submitted the Special Exception package on 7/30/07 and obtained a positive recommendation from the Alachua County Planning Commission on 10/10/07. The request will ultimately be ruled on by the County Commission at a meeting in February 2008 at the earliest. Since the Special Exception process is taking longer than anticipated, and has generated some public interest and concern, we want to update the City Commission on the status of the Special Exception and Purchase of Whistling Pines Ranch.

We continue to believe that land application of biosolids is environmentally beneficial, safe for the public and the environment, and is a sustainable and cost-effective method for reusing biosolids. Issues identified by the public or reviewing agencies have been investigated and will be addressed during the presentation, which in some cases include additional Best Management Practices (BMPs).

As an alternative, the City Commission could direct Staff to pursue biosolids treatment options that do not include land application.

The City Commission: 1) Receive a presentation on the status of the purchase of the biosolids land application site. No further action is required for staff to continue pursuit of a required Special Exception from Alachua County and purchase of the Whistling Pines Ranch.

Funds are included in GRU's approved FY08 budget to purchase the Whistling Pines Ranch.

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