



## Legislation Text

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### **Weiss Property - Look at Funding Availability with the County and Water Management District (B)**

#### **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**

At the November 15, 2012 meeting, the City Commission approved the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs (PRCA) Master Plan. This 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 come from 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 Weiss 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.

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.

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 Acquisition Fund of \$1,275,832.

The General Policy Committee: 1) hear a presentation and consider available funding options and potential partnerships related to the San Felasco Addition (Weiss) Conservation Land Acquisition; 2) approve staff's recommendation of Option B from the Staff Analysis which states, "The City partner with Alachua County to acquire San Felasco Addition (Weiss) to expand San Felasco 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 Acquisition and Community Improvement Funds for acquisition."; and 3) provide staff with direction regarding next steps.