



Legislation Text

File #: 050915, Version: 1

Gainesville Regional Airport - Request for Recording of Conservation Easement (B)

This item involves staff follow up on a request from the Gainesville Regional Airport regarding the proposed recording of a conservation easement in favor of the St. Johns River Water Management District on approximately 129 acres of the Gum Root Swamp property. In furtherance of this request, proposed conservation easement language and the supporting environmental report, have been provided to City staff for review.

Since notification by the St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD) in December, 2002, Gainesville Alachua County Regional Airport Authority (GACRAA) staff has been working with representatives of the SJRWMD staff to resolve non-compliance issues regarding: 1) unauthorized land clearing reported to have taken place on Airport Property sometime between 1995 and 2000; and 2) failure to record a conservation easement associated with prior permitted taxiway improvements in 1992.

An originally proposed plan to locate a replacement conservation easement between existing runways met with opposition when reviewed by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) due to safety considerations associated with the potential attraction of hazardous wildlife. Consequently, GACRAA staff then contacted City staff to explore the possibility of providing the replacement conservation easement on a portion of the Gum Root Swamp property. City staff did indicate initial staff support for the use of the Gum Root Swamp property for the recording of the conservation easement in January, 2004. Based upon this communication from City staff, GACRAA subsequently moved forward with preparation of a required environmental report designed to determine a suitable substitute and ecologically equivalent portion of the property.

It is reported by GACRAA staff that the proposed conservation easement on Gum Root Swamp property, in addition to resolving the aforementioned non-compliance issues, may impact future development projects planned for Airport property.

City Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs staff indicates that the proposed location of the conservation easement at Gum Root Swamp Park is acceptable based upon staff maintenance responsibilities and future plans for the Park. SJRWMD staff was contacted and indicated that the proposed location of the conservation easement is acceptable with respect to resolving GACRAA's aforementioned non-compliance issues. The proposed conservation easement and consent order will need to receive approval from the District's Governing Board.

It is reported that the City owned portion of Gum Root Swamp was purchased utilizing a funding allocation consisting of a 75% grant from the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) and 25% from the City of Gainesville in 1993. City records indicate a financial contribution of approximately \$118,000. Furthermore, records indicate that this portion of the Gum Root Swamp Park is not being carried as an asset on the City's books.

Recommended Motion: The City Commission: 1) hear a brief presentation on the proposed recording on the conservation easement; and 2) approve the proposed recording of the conservation easement in favor of the St. Johns River Water Management District subject to approval by the City Attorney and authorize the Mayor to execute and the City Clerk to attest the pertinent conservation easement documents.

Alternative Recommendation A: The City Commission 1) approve the proposed recording of the conservation easement in favor of the St. Johns River Water Management District subject to compensation provided to the City in the amount of \$118,000 or the proportionate share (25%) of the current appraised value, whichever is less, subject to approval by the City Attorney and authorize the Mayor to execute and the City Clerk to attest the pertinent conservation easement documents.

Alternative Recommendation B: The City Commission takes no action.