



## Legislation Text

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### **Authorization to Utilize ConnectFree Funds for SE 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue Septic to Sewer Project (B)**

This is a request for the City Commission to authorize expenditure of ConnectFree funds of up to \$200,000 for the SE 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue Septic to Sewer Project.

In conjunction with the ConnectFree program, GRU and general government staff have been working to implement a targeted septic to sewer program. The program specifically targets existing homes with septic tanks that have been identified by the Florida Department of Health Alachua County (DOH) and/or Alachua County Environmental Protection Department (ACEPD) as having either confirmed or high potential for causing bacteriological impacts to urban creeks. Other factors being considered include customers' desire to connect, ease of connection, homeowner income, and ability to leverage grant funding.

A neighborhood consisting of six homes located on SE 13<sup>th</sup> Ave adjacent to Sweetwater Branch has been identified. The DOH has determined that one home has confirmed impacts to the creek and the other five homes have a high potential for impacts to the creek. Additionally, several of the homeowners have reported backups in their septic systems during wet weather and a strong desire to connect. Housing and Community Development staff have determined that the homeowner with confirmed impacts meets low income criteria. Connecting the home with confirmed impacts is the highest priority. However, it is proposed to connect all of the homes in the neighborhood since the other homes have a high potential for impacts, other homeowners have expressed a strong desire to connect, and there is the opportunity to use state grant funding to help pay for the proposed sewer extension.

GRU has been awarded cost share funding for this project from St. Johns River Water Management District, which will pay up to one third of construction costs up to \$47,000. Additionally, the City was awarded cost share funding of up to \$100,000 from the state legislature in 2020. ConnectFree funding will be used as local match and to cover portions of the project not covered by the cost share grants.

As is often the case for homes near creeks, it is not feasible for GRU to serve the homes using conventional gravity sewer. Staff proposes to use a low pressure "grinder pump" type system to connect the neighborhood. Although these systems have been well-proven in other areas, GRU will need to develop standards for integrating these type systems in conjunction with this project. In addition to the environmental benefits provided, the project will serve as a pilot project for GRU for using low pressure systems for serving existing neighborhoods. With these type systems, the grinder pump stations and associated plumbing installed on each customer's property are a substantial portion of the overall cost. In order to make the project viable, a portion of the ConnectFree funds used for the project will need to be used to pay for installation of "grinder" pump stations, abandonment of septic tanks, and associated plumbing on homeowners' properties for both low income and non-low income participants.

The preliminary estimate of project cost is \$200,000 to \$300,000. Staff is requesting authorization for expenditure of up to \$200,000 in funding from ConnectFree for the project.

Funding for the project will be provided from the ConnectFree fund which includes a balance of \$286,300 allocated to septic to sewer. Additionally, the city has obtained cost share grant funding from the St. Johns River Water Management District and the state legislature which will be used to the maximum extent possible.

The City Commission authorize expenditure of up to \$200,000 from the ConnectFree program funds for the proposed SE 13<sup>th</sup> Ave septic to sewer project.