

Agenda

12/03/2024

Subject

Approve Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between Rural and Family Lands Protection Program (RFLPP) of the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, and Polk County to facilitate the acquisition of a perpetual conservation easement on EL-104-23 Raley Groves (Property). (one-time expense \$1,500,000)

Description

In February 2023 the Board adopted Resolution No. 2023-009 which created the Polk County Conservation Land Acquisition Selection Advisory Committee (“CLASAC”). The creation of CLASAC was in response to a bond referendum approved by voters in November 2022 to finance capital projects related to the acquisition, preservation, protection, management, operation and restoration of environmental lands, water resources and important fish and wildlife habitat. CLASAC reviews and evaluates properties nominated by property owners and provides a recommendation to the Board as to whether staff should pursue the acquisition of the properties for the program.

One such nomination was made for EL-104-23 Raley Groves, a large tract of land located along the northern shore of Lake Annie, or near and to the east of, Hwy 27 and Lincoln Ave and just outside the Town of Dundee, Florida. The properties are located on either side of the roadway of Southern Road and contain a total of approximately 418 acres. The properties were evaluated by CLASAC which recommended approval and in November 2023 the Board approved staff to pursue the acquisition of the properties.

RFLPP has also determined the Property is eligible as a perpetual rural lands protection (conservation) easement due to its significant agricultural attributes. As directed by CLASAC and the Board the County looks for partnership funding opportunities whenever possible. This MOA recognizes the mutual conservation efforts and responsibilities of each agency. The MOA facilitates the acquisition of a perpetual conservation easement on the Property. Through this MOA RFLPP agrees to contribute an amount not to exceed of \$7,000,000 and the County will contribute \$1,500,000, where the final may be adjusted based on receipt and review of the final certified acreage of the surveys. In addition, the County agrees to cover the two appraisal and review appraisals, and RFLPP will cover all other costs attributable to the Buyer.

The funds for this project, \$1,500,000 are available in the Parks and Natural Resources CIP through the Environmental Lands CIP Ridge to River Corridor project.

Recommendation

Approve Memorandum of Agreement between Rural and Family Lands Protection Program (RFLPP) of the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, and Polk County to facilitate the acquisition of a perpetual conservation easement on EL-104-23 Raley Groves.

Fiscal Impact

Funds are budgeted and available Parks and Natural Resources CIP through the Environmental

Lands CIP Ridge to River Corridor project.

Contact Information

Tabitha Biehl, Land and Water Natural Areas Manager

Parks and Natural Resources Division

(863) 534-7377

tabithabiehl@polk-county.net