



City of San Antonio

Agenda Memorandum

File Number:16-1408

Agenda Item Number: 16.

Agenda Date: 2/11/2016

In Control: City Council A Session

DEPARTMENT: Parks and Recreation

DEPARTMENT HEAD: Xavier D. Urrutia

COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED: City Wide

SUBJECT:

Edwards Aquifer Protection Program - Conservation Easement Acquisition

SUMMARY:

This ordinance authorizes the payment of \$1,797,690.00, from Proposition 1 Edwards Aquifer Protection Sales Tax fund, for the acquisition of approximately 229-acre tract known as the Goodhorse Ranch located in Bexar County, to become part of Government Canyon State Natural Area, managed by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department; and in exchange the City will hold an aquifer protection conservation easement on said property.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

In November 2010, San Antonio voters approved the continuation of a 1/8-cent sales tax venue up to \$90 million known as the Proposition 1 Edwards Aquifer Protection Program (EAPP). The purpose of the EAPP is to obtain property rights by fee-simple purchase, conservation easements or donations of land over the sensitive zones of the Edwards Aquifer. The Goodhorse Ranch meets the requirements for the EAPP. It is located entirely over the Recharge Zone in Bexar County and the majority of the land is outside of the flood plain and suitable for potential residential development. The property appraised at a value of 16,000 per acre in August of 2015. However, the current owners of the land have agreed to sell the property at a discounted price of \$7,500.00 per acre. This discounted purchase price is approximately 46% of the appraised market value, and therefore is in line with what the City typically pays for a conservation easement on land over the aquifer. The City would contribute EAPP funds with title to be held by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD).

The property is adjacent to Government Canyon and is very close to several properties also protected by

conservation easements under the City's aquifer protection program, and would result in over 12,500 acres of contiguously protected land in northwest Bexar County. The City, in return, would hold a conservation easement on the property for aquifer protection purposes. The Conservation Advisory Board has reviewed and recommended this acquisition and conservation easement.

ISSUE:

The Goodhorse Ranch is located less than half a mile south of the Medina River and within the Medina River drainage basin, which is an important recharge contributor in the area. The property significantly contributes to surface water runoff quality, due to the current undeveloped state of the property. The Edwards Aquifer Authority issued a geological assessment of the site confirming that preservation of the Goodhorse Ranch would provide high water quality and moderate quantity benefits for the City of San Antonio.

An ordinance authorizing the payment of \$1,797,690.00 toward TPWD's acquisition of an approximately 229-acre tract known as the Goodhorse Ranch located in Bexar County, Texas to be held as part of Government Canyon State Natural Area (Government Canyon), and in exchange the City will hold an aquifer protection conservation easement.

ALTERNATIVES:

An alternative would be to defer acquisition until a later date. By not acquiring this conservation easement at this time, it may not be available at a later date or for the same purchase price. Additionally, by not acquiring this conservation easement at this time, the City and TPWD may miss out on the opportunity to acquire and protect one of the few remaining large acre parcels of undeveloped land over the Recharge Zone adjacent to Government Canyon.

FISCAL IMPACT:

This acquisition is a one-time expenditure in the amount of \$1,797,690.00. Funds for the acquisition of this conservation easement have been appropriated through Proposition 1 of the Edwards Aquifer Protection Sales Tax fund included in the FY 2016-2021 Adopted Annual Capital Budget. These funds will contribute to the purchase of the entire property. TPWD will take ownership of title at closing and the entire property will become part of Government Canyon. The City will hold a conservation easement on the 229 acres and will monitor the property annually to ensure compliance with the Edwards Aquifer Protection Program.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the payment of \$1,797,690.00 from Proposition 1 Edwards Aquifer Protection Sales Tax fund, for the acquisition of approximately 229-acre tract known as the Goodhorse Ranch located in Bexar County, to become part of Government Canyon State Natural Area, managed by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department; and in exchange the City will hold an aquifer protection conservation easement.