



# City of San Antonio

## Agenda Memorandum

**File Number:**15-3351

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**Agenda Item Number:** 26.

**Agenda Date:** 6/18/2015

**In Control:** City Council A Session

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**DEPARTMENT:** Office of EastPoint & Real Estate

**DEPARTMENT HEAD:** Mike Etienne

**COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED:** City Wide

**SUBJECT:** Edwards Aquifer Protection Program - Conservation Easement Acquisition

### SUMMARY:

An ordinance for the Edwards Aquifer Protection Program authorizing \$833,947.37 to Texas Heritage Title Company as escrow agent for real property interests, due diligence and closing costs for a conservation easement on a 433 acre tract of real property known as the Calvert Ranch located in Medina County, Texas.

This ordinance, necessary under the Proposition One Edwards Aquifer Protection Venue Project, authorizes the execution of documents to accomplish said acquisition.

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

In May of 2000, voters approved the first program, a 1/8-cent sales tax venue up to \$45 million, for the acquisition of lands over the Edwards Aquifer, for parks and watershed protection. That program, referred to as "Proposition Three," ran from 2000 through 2005, was limited to Bexar County and acquired more than 6,500 acres as Natural Areas for the City of San Antonio.

The current program is an extension of that initial endeavor, although the scope was narrowed to watershed protection funds can be expended outside of Bexar County due to a change in state legislation. The purpose of the Edwards Aquifer Protection Program is to obtain property rights by fee-simple purchase, conservation easements or donations of land over the sensitive zones of the Edwards Aquifer. This Program, referred to as "Proposition One," also is funded with the 1/8-cent sales tax up to the amount of \$90 million.

The purchase of a conservation easement on the Calvert Ranch is presented for consideration to the City Council under the Proposition One Edwards Aquifer Protection Venue Project, which was approved by the voters in November 2010. The City Council-approved Conservation Advisory Board has reviewed and recommended this acquisition. The Calvert Ranch is located over the Recharge Zone in Medina County. Much

of the land is located outside of the flood plain and suitable for residential development.

The Calvert Ranch first was targeted through use of the Scientific Evaluation Team's GIS-Spatial Model (SET Model). Subsequent site visits identified previously undocumented recharge features on the property. All of Calvert Ranch is located within the Hondo Creek drainage basin, which is an important recharge contributor in the area. In fact, approximately 3,000 feet of the Hondo Creek flows through the western portion of the property, with approximately one mile of additional drainage channels flowing toward and into Hondo Creek. The property significantly contributes to surface water runoff quality, due to the current undeveloped state of the property, and the Edwards Aquifer Authority issued a geological assessment of the site confirming that preservation of Calvert Ranch would provide both high water quality and quantity benefits for the City of San Antonio. This ranch is adjacent to other properties also protected by conservation easements held by the City and would result in the protection of almost 2,000 acres of contiguous land within the Hondo Creek watershed under conservation easements with the City of San Antonio. Several thousand additional contiguously protected properties lie due east and southeast of the Calvert Ranch.

The proposed Calvert Ranch would constitute the 62<sup>nd</sup> conservation easement acquisition under the current program. Inclusion of the proposed 433 acres would bring the total of protected lands under the City's aquifer protection program to 134,394 acres.

#### **ISSUE:**

An ordinance for the Edwards Aquifer Protection Program authorizing \$833,947.37 to Texas Heritage Title Company as escrow agent for real property interests, due diligence and closing costs for a conservation easement on a 433 acre tract of real property known as the Calvert Ranch located in Medina County, Texas.

All of Calvert Ranch is located within the Hondo Creek drainage basin, which is an important recharge contributor in the area. Approximately 3,000 feet of the Hondo Creek flow directly through the western portion of the property, with approximately one mile of additional drainage channels flowing toward and into Hondo Creek. The property significantly contributes to surface water runoff quality, due to the current undeveloped state of the property, and the Edwards Aquifer Authority issued a geological assessment of the site confirming that preservation of the Calvert Ranch would provide both high water quality and quantity benefits for the City of San Antonio.

The acquisition of this property is necessary to accomplish the Proposition One Edwards Aquifer Protection Venue Project.

#### **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.

Another option would be not to acquire the conservation easement; however, this would be counter to the goals of the Proposition One Edwards Aquifer Protection Venue Project.

#### **FISCAL IMPACT:**

This is a one-time expenditure in the amount of \$833,947.37 for this acquisition. It will be funded by the 1/8-cent sales and use tax in the Edwards Aquifer Protection (Proposition One) Sales Tax funds included in the Fiscal Year 2015-2020 Capital Budget.

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends authorizing \$833,947.37 to Texas Heritage Title Company as escrow agent for real property interests, due diligence and closing costs for a conservation easement on a 433 acre tract of real property known as the Calvert Ranch located in Medina County, Texas.