

INDIAN RIVER COUNTY
M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Jason E. Brown
County Administrator

THROUGH: Stan Boling, AICP
Community Development Director

FROM: Roland M. DeBlois, AICP
Chief, Environmental Planning

DATE: October 16, 2017

RE: Consideration to Approve a Grant Agreement with the Florida Communities Trust for Cost-Share Reimbursement of County Purchase of the Sebastian Harbor Preserve Conservation Area

It is requested that the Board of County Commissioners formally consider the following information at the Board's regular meeting of October 24, 2017.

DESCRIPTION AND CONDITIONS

The Sebastian Harbor Preserve is a county-owned conservation area located north of Englar Drive in the City of Sebastian (see attached map). The County acquired the 163-acre property in June 2007 with environmental land acquisition bond funds, with expectation of opportunity to apply for cost-share reimbursement through the Florida Communities Trust (FCT) grant program within a required 24 month application window following the acquisition date.

Indian River County submitted the project for cost-share reimbursement funding in the FCT's 2008 grant application cycle, but the project was not selected for funding. County staff then prepared an application to re-submit to the FCT for the 2009 grant application cycle, still within the 24 month period, but that funding cycle was cancelled due to the economic recession, as was the subsequent 2010 grant application cycle. In 2011, the County petitioned the FCT for a waiver to the 24 month post-acquisition deadline to allow for a 2011 FCT grant application, and the FCT granted the waiver. The FCT opened the 2011 grant application cycle to establish a list of ranked projects that would be funded (in ranked order) if and when the program received future funding for disbursement. In the 2011 FCT grant application cycle, the Sebastian Harbor Preserve project ended up ranked 18 out of 57 applications.

In May of this year, county staff was contacted by FCT and advised that \$1,167,405.82 in FCT Florida Forever funds is now available for reimbursement to the County for the Sebastian Harbor Preserve 2011 grant application. For the County to receive the funds, the County is required to execute a formal grant agreement, attached hereto for the Board's approval consideration.

ANALYSIS

When the Sebastian Harbor Preserve property was acquired in 2007, land values were at their peak prior to the economic down turn. The property was acquired at a price of \$13.7 million (\$84,220 per acre), which was 91% of the approved appraised value at that time. In the County's 2011 grant application, the County applied for \$5 million in FCT cost-share funds (36% of acquisition costs), which was the maximum amount allowed under an FCT grant cycle. Although the ±\$1.167 million that is now available for FCT cost-share reimbursement is substantially less than the amount originally requested, it is still a considerable amount of funding that can be put to use toward site improvements at Sebastian Harbor Preserve and towards conservation lands management in general.

In applying for the FCT grant in 2011, the County committed to providing certain public access improvements to garner points for project ranking and funding. Those improvements, which are identified in the proposed grant agreement, include:

- Construction of at least two recreational facilities (e.g., picnic pavilion and wildlife observation platform)
- Installation of trails (at least ½ mile in length)
- Construction of stormwater improvement facilities (doubling as a wildlife pond)
- Installation of a permanent recognition sign (acknowledging the FCT grant funding)
- Interconnection of trails and parking with the Sebastian Stormwater Park (to the south)
- Installation of Interpretative kiosks/signs

Under the proposed 2017 grant agreement, the County has until November 30, 2018 to submit a complete project plan, including an approved management plan (i.e., formalization of the conceptual site plan submitted with the 2011 grant application). In addition to the management plan, FCT staff has advised that an appraisal review and an updated Phase 1 environmental site assessment (ESA) will also be required. Although the management plan can be drafted by staff in-house, the appraisal review and ESA will need to be contracted, at a combined cost estimate of \$15,000 to \$20,000.

FUNDING

Funding for the appraisal review and ESA (\$15,000 to \$20,000 in expenditure prior to receipt of the grant reimbursement) is proposed to come from environmental land acquisition bond proceeds (Account #14514639-033190, "other professional services"). The FCT reimbursement, once received, is proposed to be earmarked for improvement costs at Sebastian Harbor Preserve and in general for conservation lands improvements and management funding.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Board of County Commissioners approved the Sebastian Harbor Preserve grant agreement, and authorize the Board Chairman to execute the agreement on behalf of the County.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Sebastian Harbor Preserve location maps and conceptual site plan.
2. County grant information form.
3. Proposed grant agreement with attachments.