

AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY SHEET
VILLAGE COUNCIL MEETING
June 15, 2022

Agenda Item:

Resolution No. 2022-11

A Resolution Approving a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Between the Village of Estero and the Coccoloba Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society; Determining that the MOU is for a Public Purpose, Authorizing the Mayor to Execute the MOU; and Providing an Effective Date.

Motion to approve Resolution No. 2022-11

Background:

The Coccoloba Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society (CC-FNPS) is a 501(c)(3) organization formed in 2001. CC-FNPS members are volunteers - there are no employees or contractors. The parent organization, Florida Native Plant Society (FNPS), organized in 1980, is also a 501(c)(3). The mission of both organizations is to promote the preservation, conservation and restoration of native plants and native plant communities of Florida.

The Coccoloba Chapter has been active in and around Estero with a wide range of activities. CC-FNPS helps stakeholders earn NPDES credits through community outreach and by operating a native plant nursery. Outreach programs promote the use of native plants which reduce or eliminate the need for fertilizer, which can result in runoff into our waterways and leaching into our aquifers. Additionally, homeowners, homeowner associations, condo associations, community development districts can learn ways to reduce or eliminate the need for supplemental irrigation. All these practices lead to improved water quality while creating improved habitat for Florida's wildlife. The parties are Village of Estero (Estero) and The Coccoloba Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society (CC-FNPS).

Description:

Village of Estero owns the 10-acre vacant parcel, commonly known as "River Oaks Preserve" at the east end of Broadway Avenue. This property is listed as 9531 and 9541 Broadway East, Estero, FL 33928, plus the 5-acre parcel east.

The parcel is of interest to the Village for several reasons.

1. Residents want the property as a passive recreation area. Village of Estero would like to preserve the natural and native character of the parcel.
2. The 2021-22 Budget contains an approved CIP project for a new Storm Water Pond and Bypass going around Country Creek to prevent backups and flooding during major storm events. During the IRMA Hurricane and related storm event the community had the most significant flooding in this area. Water backed up in the North Branch of the Estero River due to a constriction in the flow way in Country Creek that caused flooding and closure of Three Oaks Parkway. Estero's Storm Water Master Plan identified the new pond and bypass as the least costly corrective measure. This property is needed as part of that project.

This partnership will support Village of Estero's vision of a community that embraces its historic heritage and protects the environment while allowing for future development. It includes relevant cornerstones to ensure success including varied parks, public spaces, recreational facilities, and unique natural environments. It shows how parks are successfully incorporated into development and how municipalities can partner with non-government organizations (NGOs) and non-profits to save money and gain expertise while operating efficiently as "government lite." It will help residents understand the importance of living with nature and protecting the real Florida.

Estero's River Oaks Preserve will be a passive recreational area with a strong focus on concepts of simplicity, natural/native care of the land, sustainability, and being "one with nature." This property will also expose visitors to a lesser-known side of Florida - one where threatened and endangered species reside safely in developed areas. It will be the standard for marrying conservation with development.

This partnership allows residents, FGCU students, and other organizations to participate in hands-on activities to learn about the Florida environment. The revenues generated from the nursery will help fund the continuation of the project.

Action Requested:

Motion to approve Resolution No. 2022-11

Process and Timeline:

Financial Impact:

The Village will pay CC-FNPS an amount of \$3,000 per month for maintenance, plants for public areas, security and upgrades to the “Preserve”. Funds of \$150,000 were allocated by the Village Council for closing costs and initial maintenance of the parcel. In the future, the Village of Estero will need to expend additional funds for basic services such as utilities, exotics control, structures such as a building, a bridge, removal of septic systems, etc.

Prepared by: Steve Sarkozy

Attachments:

1. Resolution No. 2022-11
2. MOU FL Native Plant Society
3. COI