

WORKSHOP ITEM SUMMARY SHEET
VILLAGE COUNCIL MEETING
June 3, 2026

Agenda Item:

Discussion on Conservation Easement “Swap” for West Bay Club. No action to be taken.

Background:

The West Bay community is a large 863-acre residential golf course development located at the end of Williams Road off US 41. The property was rezoned in 1996 by Lee County for 1,121 units, later reduced to 1,016 units.

A conservation easement was granted in favor of the County in association with zoning Resolution Z-96-005. The easement was recorded on April 30, 1998, prior to the Village’s incorporation in 2014.

The conservation easement is a legal agreement that protects land which has environmental value, including wetlands and uplands, habitat for bald eagles and gopher tortoises, and coastal scrub areas with “rare and unique” vegetation including protected plants and species.

Upon incorporation by the Village, the easement now runs in favor of the Village, not the County. It should be noted that the South Florida Water Management District and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (“FWC”) are third party beneficiaries of the easement.

There are 9 areas that were placed under conservation easements in West Bay.

As the easement now runs in favor of the Village, modifications are subject to review and approval by the Village.

Description:

West Bay Club is requesting the Village release 2.5 acres from Conservation Area 2 (adjacent to the golf driving range and chipping and putting area) in exchange for the

addition of 1.57 acres to Conservation Area 3 and 2.14 acres to Conservation Area 4. The length of the driving range is proposed to be increased from 250 to 300 yards for safety reasons and to meet industry standards. The applicant states in their attached letter that there is a safety concern as explained in the excerpt below:

This conservation easement amendment is needed to address public safety concerns with the West Bay Club golf course. The driving range was made two-sided and totals less than 250 yards in length, which was adequate over 25 years ago when the course was constructed. Now, the improved technology, improved strength and fitness of golfers, and improved golf balls, a 250-yard tee shot, is commonplace. As such, there have been multiple instances of golfers reporting nearly being hit by golf balls driven from the opposite side of the range. Similarly, the short game practice area is wedged into a space containing the cart path to the first tee and the practice putting green. Chip shots pitches, and sand shots can be erratic at any level, and West Bay Club has experienced countless near misses and some hits in the area. As such, the driving range and short-range areas need to be expanded to eliminate an increasingly dangerous situation.

The industry standard for a golf driving range is 300-330 yards in depth. Staff conducted a site check with the applicant's environmental consultant and observed numerous golf balls in the conservation areas adjacent to the driving range and short range.

To make up for the loss of 2.5 acres, two new areas will be added in other locations in West Bay to total 3.71 acres, a net increase of 1.21 acres, as shown on the attached map. The areas are equivalent in environmental value.

Financial Impact:

No financial impact

Prepared by: Mary Gibbs

Attachments:

1. West Bay Club Letter of Explanation
2. Project Location Map
3. Photos