



Agenda Item Summary

File #: 24-00834

Agenda Date: 10/8/2024

Agenda Item Name:

Sewer Line Extension Outside Urban Cluster for Florida Fish & Wildlife Research Lab on SW Williston Road

Presenter:

Ben Chumley, Principal Planner, Growth Management Department (352) 374-5249

Description:

Request approval for extension of sanitary sewer lines outside the Urban Cluster, pursuant to Policy 3.1.5 of the Comprehensive Plan's Potable Water & Sanitary Sewer Element, to connect existing Florida Fish & Wildlife research lab on SW Williston Road to Gainesville Regional Utilities (GRU) sanitary sewer system.

Recommended Action:

Approve the attached Resolution for the extension of GRU sanitary sewer lines outside the Urban Cluster to serve the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission wildlife research lab site on SW Williston Road.

Prior Board Motions:

N/A

Fiscal Note:

There is no cost to Alachua County associated with this item.

Strategic Guide:

Environment

Background:

The County received a request on August 29, 2024 from DRMP on behalf of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) to extend Gainesville Regional Utilities (GRU) sanitary sewer lines to serve FWC's existing Gainesville Wildlife Research Lab located on SW Williston Road. The site is located just outside the County's Urban Cluster boundary on the south side of SW Williston Road just east of US 441 (SW 13th Street). The site is located at the northern end of Paynes Prairie State Preserve. The FWC research lab has been in operation at this location since 1972. Wastewater service for the site is currently provided by four septic systems. The proposal is to connect the existing development to GRU's sanitary sewer service and eliminate the four septic systems from service. The site is already served by GRU's potable water.

Alachua County Comprehensive Plan Policy 3.1.5 of the Potable Water and Sanitary Sewer Element provides that proposed extensions of potable water or sanitary sewer lines outside the Urban Cluster in the unincorporated area shall be subject to approval by the Board of County Commissioners. According to Policy 3.1.5, approval of such extensions shall be based on one or more of the following findings:

- (a) The Alachua County Board of County Commissioners finds that the absence of such facilities would result in a threat to the public health or safety; or
- (b) The Alachua County Board of County Commissioners finds that the extension of such facilities is necessary to enhance the safe, effective, and efficient delivery of central potable water or sanitary sewer service within an existing urban service area; or
- (c) The Alachua County Board of County Commissioners finds that the extension of such facilities would serve a purpose consistent with the Alachua County Comprehensive Plan, such as the retention and expansion of existing business and industry or the attraction of new business and industry in accordance with the Economic Element of this Plan, or the service of institutional or tourist/entertainment uses consistent with the Future Land Use Element; or
- (d) The Alachua County Board of County Commissioners finds that the extensions of such facilities is needed as part of a comprehensive expansion of public services to encourage urban development in a new area as part of a comprehensive plan amendment. In this case, such a finding must be consistent with Policy 3.1.6.

County staff believes that the finding in Policy 3.1.5(c) is the most applicable basis for the Board of County Commissioners to approve this request.

The potential finding in Policy 3.1.5(c) refers to the extension of potable water or sanitary sewer lines serving a purpose consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, such as the service of Institutional uses consistent with the Future Land Use Element. In 2010, the County approved a Special Use Permit for a government facility for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Lab on the subject site. Government facilities such as the existing research lab are considered Institutional land uses pursuant to the County's Comprehensive Plan (see Policy 5.1.2, Future Land Use Element), and may be permitted in all land use categories through the special use permit process. The FWC Research Lab is an existing Institutional land use that is consistent with the Future Land Use Element, and therefore the finding in Policy 3.1.5 (c) would be a potential basis for approval of the sanitary sewer line extension.

In addition, the potential finding in Item (a), that the absence of potable water or sanitary sewer facilities would result in a threat to public health or safety, is relevant although not directly applicable. While the four existing septic systems on the site are not failing and there is no immediate public health threat, the elimination of these systems in favor of connection to GRU's sanitary sewer system would have a public health benefit in terms of reducing the potential for surface and groundwater contamination associated with traditional septic systems. This public health benefit has particular significance given the site's

location adjacent to Paynes Prairie State Preserve, nearby wetlands, and flood prone areas.