



## Agenda Item Summary

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**File #: 26-00210**

**Agenda Date: 4/14/2026**

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**Agenda Item Name:**

**East Newnans Lake – Putz & Romero Tract Option Contract to Purchase Real Property**

**Presenter:**

Andi Christman, Environmental Program Manager – Environmental Protection Dept., (352) 264-6803

**Description:**

Staff Requests the Board of County Commissioners (BoCC) approve and exercise the attached Option Contract to Purchase the 54.94-acre East Newnans Lake - Putz & Romero property from Francis Putz and Claudia Romero through the Alachua County Forever program.

The execution of this Contract to purchase Real Property, is the final BoCC action on the acquisition of this project.

**Recommended Action:**

1. Approve and authorize the Chair to exercise the East Newnans Lake - Putz & Romero Option Contract to purchase Real Property, subject to the County's rights to conduct due diligence inspections and notice Seller of Title Defects and Environmental Defects as set forth in the Contract; and
2. Delegate to the County Manager the authority to decide whether to accept or reject title exceptions #3, #5, #6, #7 and #8 based on the County Manager's evaluation as to whether said title exception will substantially impair the County's proposed use of the property; and
3. Delegate to the County Manager the authority to decide whether to close the acquisition subject to title exceptions #3, #5, #6, #7 and #8 based on the County Manager's evaluation as to whether said title exception will substantially impair the County's proposed use of the property; and
4. Authorize staff to execute additional documents as necessary to close the transaction.

**Prior Board Motions:**

On February 25, 2025, the BoCC placed East Newnans Lake – Putz & Romero property on the Active Acquisition List (Full Price List).

On June 28, 2022, the BoCC adopted Resolution 22-66 amending the process for selecting and acquiring Environmentally Significant Lands purchased using Wild Spaces and Public Places local government infrastructure surtax proceeds. This authorizes the acquisition of lands through fee simple and less-than-fee means and provides the process for such.

**Fiscal Note:**

There is \$656,380 available in the FY26 approved budget to complete this acquisition.

From the WSPP Surtax Fund: 140.41.4160.537.61.00 (land); Project: 6194101 (WSPP Land Acquisition) - East Newnans Lake – Putz & Romero. Due Diligence costs will be paid from 140.41.4160.537.31.00 (professional services); Project: 6184160 (WSPP General Operating & Due Diligence) and transferred to the acquisition project upon successful completion of the purchase.

See Exhibit 6 (Acquisition and Stewardship Costs) for additional details.

**Strategic Guide:**

Environment

**Background:**

Staff has negotiated the attached East Newnans Lake - Putz & Romero Option Contract to Purchase Real Property (Option), Exhibit 1, and it was executed by the Manager on April 4, 2026. The Option requires transmittal of a signed Notice of Exercise of Option by the BoCC Chair, to the Sellers by March 30, 2026, the date the option period ends. (Exhibit 1)

During the Inspection Period, the County shall have 120 days after the BOCC exercises its Option to conduct all due diligence on the property. The County may exercise its rights to resolve any due diligence matters pursuant to the terms of the contract within those 120 days and to extend the closing date if necessary.

The Putz & Romero property (ACPA Tax Parcel: 17991-000-000 & 17993-000-000) totaling 54.94 acres is located in the central portion of Alachua County, between the City of Gainesville & Hawthorne. The Putz & Romero tract is within the East Side Newnans Lake Strategic Ecosystem, East Newnans Lake Alachua County Forever Project Area, the Florida Wildlife Corridor, and the Ocala-to-Osceola Wildlife Corridor (O2O). The property is also on the edge of the Lake Pithlachocco Canoe Site cultural resource area, and falls within the Orange Creek Basin Management Action Plan Area.

The Putz & Romero parcels rest along the southeastern shoreline of Newnans Lake (Lake Pithlachocco). Other than the lakefront the Putz & Romero property is surrounded by private property owned by one landowner (the Zetrouer family). Not far to the northeast of the Putz & Romero tract is the St. Johns River Water Management District’s Newnans Lake Conservation Area (South Tract).

The Putz & Romero parcel’s natural community typed consist of basin swamp, baygall, mesic hammock, mesic-scrubby flatwoods and pine plantation. The natural community conditions range from good to fair conditions. No buildings are on-site, but the remnants of a historic citrus packing house foundation are apparent. It’s believed that the historic “Alachua – St. Mary’s Road” went through the property, but it at least passed to the east, close to County Road 234. Coral ardisia was the primary invasive species observed during the Putz & Romero site visit. Additional information can be found in the attached property evaluation. (Exhibit 3 & 4)

There are no Permitted Exceptions in the Putz & Romero Option Contract, but these non-standard Title Exceptions are noted: #3, #5, #6, #7 and #8.

- #3. Any Owner’s Policy issue pursuant hereto will contain under Schedule B the following exception: Any adverse ownership claim by the State of Florida by right of sovereignty to any portion of the Land insured hereunder, including submerge, filled and artificially exposed lands,

and lands accreted to such lands.

- #5. All matters contained on the Plat of Newnan's Lake (Orange Grove) of the Estate of J.A. Kennedy, as recorded in Deed Book Q, Page 126, Public Records of Alachua County, Florida. This property includes one lot of a mostly undeveloped plat in the area.
- #6. Terms and conditions as set forth in easement contained in instrument recorded October 1, 1987, under O.R. Book 1677, Page 166, Public Records of Alachua County, Florida. This easement provides access to the property.
- #7. Coverage is excepted as to riparian and littoral rights; the possible right of the public to use the beach area and/or waterways; and any Land insured herein that was formerly or is currently submerged, including any filled lands, artificially exposed lands; and lands accreted to such lands, for the rights of the United States Government and the State of Florida. If the Navigational Servitude Endorsement is attached to this policy and made a part hereof, the coverage afforded thereby shall not extend to any portion of the Land subject to a claim of ownership by the State of Florida by right of sovereignty. Commitment exception #3 is hereby deleted in its entirety.
- #8. Notwithstanding Coverage Risk #4 of the jacket of this policy, this policy does not insure any right of access to and from that portion of the subject property described in Parcel 2 as stand-alone parcels, whose access is only provided through common ownership with Parcel 1.

Some of the title exceptions could be deleted prior to closing based on additional title examination or the survey. (Exhibit 5)

Legal and functional access on the Putz & Romero parcels is provided through the 1987 thirty-foot wide non-exclusive ingress/egress easement leading to County Road 234. The access easement will not allow public access to the Putz & Romero parcels. Any road maintenance improvements made on the private dirt road will be paid for by the easement grantee.

A boundary survey and phase I environmental assessment are the next steps of due diligence that will be initiated after the Option is Exercised by Alachua County. Closing transactions would occur once there has been a determination by the County Manager that there are no title, survey, or environmental defects.

Comp Plan Reference:

Acquiring the East Newnans Lake – Putz & Romero Tract fulfills multiple objectives endorsed within the Alachua County Comprehensive Plan. Specifically, Policy 6.0 Land Conservation Program within the Conservation and Open Space Element, states “Establish and maintain a land conservation program for the purchase, preservation, and management of natural areas and open space to complement the regulatory approaches identified in other section of this element.”