



Agenda Item Summary

File #: 23-00019

Agenda Date: 5/23/2023

Agenda Item Name:

Adoption Hearing for Changes to Codes Related to Landscape Irrigation, Water Quality, and Water Conservation 23-00019

Presenter:

Stacie Greco, Environmental Program Manager, Environmental Protection Department, 352-264-6829

Description:

The Alachua County Environmental Protection Department (EPD) is proposing to edit three existing articles and definitions to improve water conservation and water quality protection efforts.

Recommended Action:

Convene as the Land Development Regulation Commission and find the proposed amendments to the Unified Land Development Code consistent with the Alachua County Comprehensive Plan.
Reconvene as the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) and approve the ordinance.

Prior Board Motions:

During the 4/26/22 Regular BOCC meeting, EPD staff provided an update on our water conservation programs. A unanimous motion was passed requesting staff to bring back the Irrigation Design Code with improvements. On 4/4/23, the BOCC unanimously approved staff's request to advertise the proposed code changes to Chapter 77 and Chapter 406.

Fiscal Note:

Staff is proposing the creation of the Alachua County Water Conservation Fund, which is to be supervised and used by EPD for water conservation and resilient landscaping projects and programs to the extent money is available in the fund. The fund shall consist of all money recovered by the County in an action against any person who is found in violation of these articles. A new fund will be setup for this revenue if the changes to the ULDC is approved and adopted.

Strategic Guide:

Environment

Background:

Public Supply is the largest water use in Alachua County and is largely driven by residential water use. Landscape irrigation accounts for almost 60% of residential water use and is the main focus of EPD's current educational and regulatory efforts. The 2015 Landscape Irrigation Design Code (Chapter 77 Article VI) created an approval and inspection process for all new permanent landscape irrigation within unincorporated Alachua County. In 2019, this code was expanded to include the municipalities and a requirement for smart irrigation controllers or soil moisture sensors. A recent analysis by the

University of Florida (UF) Program for Resource Efficient Communities did not show significant water savings. Through irrigation inspections, tune-up, and analysis of water use data, it is evident that permanent irrigation drives up water use and that reducing the area of permanent irrigation is the key to saving water. Staff are proposing changes to the Irrigation Design Code to improve efficacy and to create a water conservation fund for fines collected for non-compliance.

Staff are also recommending changes to Article VIII Springs and High Aquifer Recharge Code, as the proposed changes to the Irrigation Design Code would create conflicting requirements. The final proposed code revisions are to Article VII Homeowner Association Florida Friendly Landscaping Design Standards. A provision has been added that all Homeowner Associations (HOA) that are governed by deed restrictions or covenants must keep a current contact on file with Alachua County. Having HOA contact information will improve compliance and educational efforts.

Lastly, staff are recommending that the changes to the Landscape Irrigation Design Code (Chapter 77 Article VI) take effect June 12, 2023. The irrigation approval process is migrating to CitizenServe and this delay is necessary to ensure the new platform is operational and data migration is complete. All other sections take effect immediately.