



City of Gainesville Agenda Item Report

File Number: 2023-836

Agenda Date: September 7, 2023

Department: Gainesville Regional Utilities

Title: 2023-836 Letter of Support for GRU's Sweetwater Branch Bank Stabilization Project Grant Application to 2023 Resilient Florida Program (B)

Department: GRU Water/Wastewater

Description: GRU has submitted a cost-share grant application to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection Department (FDEP) under the 2023 Resilient Florida grant program for the Sweetwater Branch Bank Stabilization Project. The grant program requires a letter of support from the City Commission for the project in order to be considered for receiving funding.

Fiscal Note: The total project cost is estimated at \$5.5 million, and the grant program requires a 50 percent local match. Funding to cover the local match of \$2.75 Million for the project has been forecasted in GRU's wastewater system capital budget for FY25-27. If the project is awarded grant funding GRU may need to move the project up sooner to meet grant deadlines. This can be done by rescheduling other projects as needed without negative fiscal impacts.

Explanation: The project is needed to address creek bank erosion in Sweetwater Branch which is occurring adjacent to the GRU Main Street Water Reclamation Facility (MSWRF). The erosion is an on-going issue, which is exacerbated by storm events. If not addressed, the erosion would eventually threaten to undermine portions of the MSWRF. The proposed project will stabilize approximately 1,200 ft. of creek bank of Sweetwater Branch which will protect MSWRF from being undermined. Additionally the project will allow safe access to the creek for GRU and regulatory staff and members of the public touring the MSWRF. The project will also reduce the release of sediment which smothers downstream creek habitat and results in accumulation of sediment at the Sweetwater Wetlands Park downstream.

The Resilient Florida Grant program provides cost share funding to enable municipalities, counties, and special districts to address risks of flooding or sea level

rise on critical infrastructure. GRU was awarded \$4.75 Million in cost share funding under this program in 2021 for its Wastewater Lift Station Force Main Resiliency SSO reduction project, which includes several improvements to the wastewater collection system. Although this grant program is highly competitive, staff is hopeful that the Sweetwater Branch Bank Stabilization Project will be competitive.

Strategic Connection:

- Goal 1: Equitable Community
- Goal 2: More Sustainable Community
- Goal 3: A Great Place to Live and Experience
- Goal 4: Resilient Local Economy
- Goal 5: “Best in Class” Neighbor Services

Recommendation: The City Commission authorize the mayor to execute a letter of support for the project grant application.