



## City of Gainesville Agenda Item Report

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**File Number:** 2023-806

**Agenda Date:** September 7, 2023

**Department:** Housing & Community Development

**Title:** 2023-806 Amended and Restated ConnectFree Resolution (B)

**Department:** Housing & Community Development

**Description:** Staff to provide recommendations to update, clarify, and streamline the ConnectFree Program. The proposed changes will facilitate more efficient administration of the program and even more timely expenditure of funding.

**Fiscal Note:** The ConnectFree Program currently has approximately \$2,000,000 in unencumbered funds.

**Explanation:** In accordance with Sections 27-128 and 27-169 of the Code of Ordinances, the City of Gainesville imposes a 25 percent surcharge on water and wastewater connection charges incurred beyond the municipal boundaries of the City. In 2003, the City created the ConnectFree Program, which is funded by these surcharges, to financially assist with the extension, construction, and connection to the City's water, wastewater, and reclaimed water systems. Since that time, the parameters of the Program have been amended several times, most recently on May 20, 2021 (Legislative File No. 201230).

In general, the purpose of the proposed changes is the following:

1. To direct funding to more closely align with actual demand;
2. To simplify and clarify uses for the funding; and
3. To simplify and streamline administration of the program.

More specifically, the proposed resolution makes the following changes:

1. Adds definitions of relevant terms;
2. Removes funding for reclaimed water connections. The ConnectFree Program has not received any requests for reclaimed water connections since the Program was reinstated on July 21, 2016;
3. Adds provisions for funding the costs of engineering and design;

4. Increases maximum funding limits to reflect current costs;
5. Removes the requirement that Septic-to-Sewer Projects are used in conjunction with grant funding provided by other entities; and
6. Clarifies that the City may impose reasonable conditions on projects in the awarding of ConnectFree funds. An example of such a condition would be the requirement for the execution of a Grant Agreement, or a Covenant with Deed Restrictions, to ensure that a project's residents are income-qualified and that project's rent or mortgage is affordable.

**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 adopt the proposed Resolution.