

CITY OF SANTA ROSA
CITY COUNCIL

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
FROM: JASON NUTT, ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER
SUBJECT: THOMAS FLORIAN FRAZIER PROPERTY ACQUISITION BY
COUNTY OF SONOMA/SONOMA LAND TRUST

AGENDA ACTION: RESOLUTION

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended by the Transportation and Public Works Department that the Council, by resolution, support the County of Sonoma's appropriation of \$75,000 from the Sonoma County Park Land Acquisition Fund for the acquisition of the Thomas Florian Frazier property (APN: 038-261-010) by Sonoma County and the Sonoma Land Trust, which would expand Sonoma County's Taylor Mountain Regional Park within City limits.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Sonoma County, through its Regional Parks Department (Regional Parks), and Sonoma Land Trust (Land Trust) are working to acquire the Thomas Florian Frazier property (APN: 038-261-010), a 54-acre parcel in southeast Santa Rosa (Attachment 1). The project will expand neighborhood access to Sonoma County's (County) Taylor Mountain Regional Park and enable future connections between the park and planned urban trails while protecting the riparian habitat of Cooper Creek. Regional Parks and the Land Trust have been successful at acquiring several grants to acquire the Frazier property, which has been valued at \$1,350,000. The grants require local matching funds and Regional Parks is intending to use a combination of park mitigation fees, and Parks for All Measure M funds. The County is also requesting a resolution from the City supporting the County's appropriation of approximately \$75,000 from the Sonoma County Park Land Acquisition Fund to support the acquisition. It is the City's understanding that Regional Parks will provide for long-term operation and management of the Frazier property (including initial cleanup of the site, park maintenance and programming, and park safety enforcement and patrols) as a part of the 1,100-acre Taylor Mountain Regional Park and Open Space Preserve.

BACKGROUND

Sonoma County Regional Parks and the Sonoma Land Trust have been actively working for some time to acquire the Thomas Florian Frazier property (APN: 038-261-010), a 54-acre parcel in southeast Santa Rosa, for the purpose of expanding neighborhood access to Taylor Mountain Regional Park and enabling future connections between the park and planned urban trails while protecting the riparian habitat of Cooper Creek. Negotiations between Regional Parks and the property owner began in early 2018 and have recently concluded with an agreed upon sale price of \$1,350,000.

Regional Parks and the Land Trust were successful in being awarded two major state grants, a major grant from Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District, three smaller non-profit grants and plan to use park mitigation fees and Parks for All Measure M funds as local match. In addition, Regional Parks is requesting a resolution from the City supporting the appropriation of approximately \$75,000 from the Sonoma County Park Land Acquisition Fund as local match.

The Sonoma County Park Land Acquisition Fund was established through a settlement agreement (Agreement) numbered 67791 recorded on June 22, 1970, in Book 2468 Pages 220-231 (Attachment 2) relating to the property disposition and transfer of portion of the Santa Rosa Plaza, known today as Old Courthouse Square in Santa Rosa. Section 4 of the Agreement created the Sonoma County Park Land Acquisition Fund (Fund) with a deposit of \$50,000 received from the City of Santa Rosa as compensation for the property rights and title to the east side of the Santa Rosa Plaza.

The purpose of the Fund is as described in Section 4 of the Agreement:

Such trust funds, together with all interest and income that shall accrue therefrom, shall be used for the sole and exclusive purpose of County providing matching funds therefrom to the cities, towns, districts, or other appropriate local entities within Sonoma County which are authorized by law to acquire, maintain, and operate park or park and recreation facilities, for the purchase of mutually approved park sites at a time when that city, town, district, or other appropriate local entity is prepared to pay fifty percent (50%) of the park site purchase costs plus undertake improvement and operation of a park on such site.

With respect to the Frazier property, the County and the Land Trust are the “local entities” that will pay the fifty percent (50%) of the park purchase costs and undertake the improvement and operation of the park. Transportation and Public Works’ recommendation that the City support the County’s appropriation of money from the Fund towards these Regional Parks and Land Trust efforts is also based on the understanding that that the County, through Regional Parks, will provide for long-term operation and management of the Frazier property (including initial cleanup of the site,

THOMAS FLORIAN FRAZIER PROPERTY ACQUISITION
PAGE 3 OF 5

park maintenance and programming, and park safety enforcement and patrols) as a part of the 1,100-acre Taylor Mountain Regional Park and Open Space Preserve.

In 1974, an additional \$60,000 was deposited in the Fund for a total of \$110,000. During the 1970's and 1980's the following appropriations were made out of the fund to fund park and trail projects that served both county and city residents:

- \$15,000, City of Sonoma - Depot Park (1974)
- \$2,750, City of Healdsburg – Unknown project (1977)
- \$15,000, City of Rohnert Park – Crane Creek Regional Park (1976)
- \$12,000, City of Sebastopol – Joe Rodota Trail (1980)
- \$111,437, City of Santa Rosa - Southwest Community Park (1980)
- \$1,250, County of Sonoma – Unknown project (1980)
- \$75,930, City of Petaluma – Tolay Lake Regional Park (2005)

There are no records available to determine which project was funded in Healdsburg, but four of the six projects were County park and trail projects constructed in unincorporated areas to serve both city and unincorporated area residents. The individual amounts of the appropriations from the fund appear to reflect the size of each city's population in 1970 when the fund was established. For example, a project benefiting the City of Santa Rosa, which has the largest population in the county, received proportionally more funds than a project sponsored by the City of Sonoma. The cities of Cloverdale and Cotati have not requested or drawn funds from the Trust Fund.

PRIOR CITY COUNCIL REVIEW

On August 14, 2018, Mayor Coursey sent a letter on behalf of the Council supporting the acquisition of the Frazier property (Attachment 3).

ANALYSIS

The General Plan has the property zoned as PD – Planned Development and the GP Land Use map identifies very low density (0.2-2.0 units per acre) for housing development. A prior development was described in the 1993 Southeast Area Plan and identified 21 estate homes proposed for this property.

Since then, earthquake fault mapping has encumbered nearly the entire site, with the exception of the southwest corner. The appraiser working for Sonoma Land Trust has worked with the City in understanding the development potential of the property, in order to appraise the property. After extensive research with City staff, the appraiser reached the conclusion that the “highest and best use” and the development potential would be only 1-2 estate homes in the southwest corner, outside of the fault zone

There are several General Plan policies that support the acquisition include the following:

OSC-A-4 Encourage the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District to appropriate funds for acquisition of open space within and surrounding Santa Rosa. Priorities for acquisition include:

- Community Separator between Santa Rosa and Rohnert Park
- Taylor Mountain
- Areas west and north of the Urban Growth Boundary
- Santa Rosa Creek corridor

OSC-B Conserve the city's open spaces and significant natural features.

OSC-B-1 Prohibit development on hillsides and ridgelines where structures would interrupt the skyline.

OSC-A-8 Coordinate with public and private entities to link open spaces with a network of paths and trails, including Sonoma County Water Agency access roads and the Bay Area Ridge Trail.

OSC-F Construct trail corridors and other recreational opportunities along local waterways.

OSC-F-1 Accommodate connections to regional trail systems that enhance or support the creek trail system s network.

OSC-F-2 Cooperate with various public and private entities to create new public access trails along creeks to park and open spaces within the Urban Growth Boundary, as well as connections to regional trail systems.

FISCAL IMPACT

Approval of this action does not have a fiscal impact to any City fund accounts.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

This Council action is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) because it is not a project which has a potential for resulting in either a direct physical change in the environment, or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Sections 15378 and 15061(b)(3). Any future project will be subject to environmental review at such time that it is initiated.

BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This item was discussed at the Board of Community Services on January 22, 2020, and again on February 19, 2020.

NOTIFICATION

Not applicable.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1 – Cooper Creek Addition, Expanding Access to Taylor Mountain Regional Park
- Attachment 2 – Agreement between the County of Sonoma and City of Santa Rosa, Agreement Number 67791 recorded in Book 2468, Pages 220-231
- Attachment 3 – August 14, 2018, letter of support from Chris Coursey
- Attachment 4 – January 15, 2020, General Plan Consistency Letter
- Resolution

CONTACT

Jason Nutt, Assistant City Manager
jnutt@srcity.org, 707-543-3810