



Legislation Text

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A Resolution Authorizing the Acquisition of Approximately 40 Acres of Real Property Owned by Justin Watkins and Melissa Watkins for the Purpose of Public Open Space and Trails as an Extension of Cheyenne Mountain State Park

Presenter:

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Summary:

On April 1, 1997, an ordinance implementing a sales tax for trails, open space and parks (TOPS) was approved by the citizens of Colorado Springs. This tax went into effect on July 1, 1997. In 2003 this ordinance was amended to extend the TOPS sales tax through 2025. The TOPS Working Committee is responsible for setting priorities and making recommendations for the expenditures of TOPS funds. The TOPS Working Committee has identified the 40-acre Watkins property located adjacent to Cheyenne Mountain State Park as having open space values that merit preservation. Acquisition of the Property would serve as an extension of Cheyenne Mountain State Park, and would provide future trail access for the Cheyenne Mountain Heritage Trail.

Previous Council Action:

N/A

Background:

The Watkins property, owned by Justin Watkins and Melissa Watkins, more specifically known as Tax Schedule Number 75000-00-228 ("Property"), consists of approximately 40 acres. The Property is located west of Highway 115 at the terminus of Rock Creek Canyon Road and adjacent to Cheyenne Mountain State Park.

The 2014 Park System Master Plan identifies this area as an open space candidate. The 1997 Open Space Master Plan identified this area as having some of the highest natural resource values in our community including unique geology, wildlife habitat and forests. The TOPS Program partnered with Colorado State Parks in 2001 to acquire the original 1,600-acre Cheyenne Mountain State Park. In 2008-2011 and in 2016, the City purchased additional property to the west of the Park to provide trail connections to the top of Cheyenne Mountain. This trail connection, known as the Dixon Trail is currently under construction. The Property provides an opportunity to advance the future development of the Cheyenne Mountain Heritage Trail, offering a truly unique trail experience circumnavigating the base of Cheyenne Mountain.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife has agreed to manage, maintain and operate the Property as an

amendment to the current Operation and Management Agreement between the City of Colorado Springs and Colorado Parks and Wildlife. This management responsibility is consistent with other City owned property that comprises Cheyenne Mountain State Park. Public access to the property would be provided through Cheyenne Mountain State Park, via the existing trail system within the Park. An existing easement provides access along the Rock Creek Corridor east and south of the Property for management and maintenance purposes to Cheyenne Mountain State Park. The existing easement does not provide for public access from Rock Creek Canyon Road.

The City has obtained a signed contract with Justin Watkins and Melissa Watkins to sell the Property for \$156,000, contingent on City Council approval. The acquisition will be purchased through the TOPS Open Space funds.

This item supports the City's strategic goal relating to investing in infrastructure by expanding the green infrastructure of the City's parks system through the addition of open space.

Financial Implications:

Acquisition of the Property will require funding of \$156,000 from the TOPS Open Space Category. Colorado State Parks will be responsible for management, operations and maintenance the Property. The City will amend the current Cheyenne Mountain Management Agreement between the City of Colorado Springs and Colorado State Parks to include the Property.

Board/Commission Recommendation:

On March 7th, 2018 the TOPS Working Committee voted unanimously to recommend the acquisition of the Property for the amount of \$156,000 with the TOPS Open Space Funds. On March 8th, 2018, the Parks and Recreations Advisory Board voted unanimously to recommend the acquisition of the Property for the amount of \$156,000 with the TOPS Open Space funds.

Stakeholder Process:

The TOPS Working Committee meetings (February 7th and March 7th) and Parks Advisory Board meetings (February 8th, and March 8th) provided opportunities for public comment. In addition, TOPS Staff has met with staff from Cheyenne Mountain State Park who supports the acquisition of the property.

Alternatives:

City Council could decline to approve the acquisition of the Property.

Proposed Motion:

Move approval of the acquisition of the Property as an extension of Cheyenne Mountain State Park in the amount of \$156,000 from the TOPS Open Space Category.

N/A