Atascadero City Council
Staff Report - City Manager’s Office

Request for Funding Commitment to Assist in Purchase of Property by the Atascadero Land Preservation Society (8300, 8350, 8400 Toloso Road)

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Council:

1. Approve the request for funds from the Atascadero Land Preservation Society, in the amount of $250,000.00, to cover the remainder of the purchase price for the Davis property, at Highway 41, near the three bridges; and,

2. Authorize the Administrative Services Director to appropriate $50,000 from the Tree Fund, and $200,000 from the Open Space Acquisition Fund to cover the remainder of the purchase price for the Davis property, at Highway 41, near the three bridges; and,

3. Authorize the City Manager to execute a Deed of Conservation Easement and Agreement Concerning Easement Rights with the Atascadero Land Preservation Society, to guarantee open space status on this property in perpetuity.

DISCUSSION:

Background: The Atascadero Land Preservation Society (ALPS) is a local, private, non-profit conservation organization committed to preserving the natural areas in Atascadero. ALPS was founded in 1989 by local residents concerned with maintaining Atascadero’s natural beauty.

ALPS purchases land by using grants and cash contributions. Landowners can also donate their land to ALPS and retain the right to live on it throughout their lifetime.
ALPS obtains title to open space or sensitive land, and then they preserve the property for future generations.

ALPS goals include:

- Expansion of the number of people involved with ALPS and with otherwise preserving natural space in Atascadero.
- Stewardship of our existing land, including preservation of our watershed.
- Acquisition of open space or sensitive land in our City.
- Fundraising for purchase of appropriate properties through local donations and grants from outside sources.
- Continued cooperative relationship with the government of the City of Atascadero.
- Openness to working with commercial interests to plan public open space in future development.
- Working with the Army Corps of Engineers to control erosion in and enhance public access to Atascadero Creek.
- Working with the Upper Salinas Resource Conservation District to provide trail access and connections and to provide small public picnic areas.

Commitment Request: ALPS is interested in purchasing the approximately 103-acre parcel south of Highway 41 in the area of the three bridges, currently owned by the Davis family. The purchase price of the property is $1,750,000.00.

ALPS has applied for a grant through the California River Parkways Grant Program, in the amount of $1,500,000.00. If they are successful with their application and receive the grant money, they will still need $250,000.00 to purchase the property. They have already had a site visit with grant representatives and have scored well. They were informed that they would be in a much stronger position to receive the grant if they had the entire purchase price accounted for by the time the final decision is made towards the end of May.

The Atascadero Native Tree Association (ANTA) has sent a letter to the City supporting the purchase of this property, and the use of Tree Fund monies to complete the transaction.

The City would require the execution of a Deed of Conservation Easement and Agreement Concerning Easement Rights should the City Council decide to commit funds to this purchase. The purpose of a Conservation Easement would be to achieve protection of the ecological and scenic values of this property, and to guarantee its open space status. ALPS is willing to execute such a document.

ALPS’ Vision for the Property: ALPS envisions development of a trail for hikers, equestrians, and non-motorized mountain bikes, stretching from Highway 41 to the ridge abutting the Eagle Ranch property. It is hoped that when Eagle Ranch is developed, a trail easement through Eagle Ranch can be acquired, which would connect this property to the Los Padres National Forest.
ALPS plans to keep the existing swimming hole available to the public. The California River Parkways Grant Program is particularly interested in this water feature, as they want to increase the public’s awareness of, and enjoyment of, California’s waterways.

ALPS intends to seek grant money to fund any capital costs, and if necessary will appeal to the public and business community for support. Also, ALPS plans to establish an endowment fund for the ongoing operations and maintenance for the land.

This purchase of Open Space property would comply with the intent of the City Council’s goal of a Natural Resources Program. Also, this purchase would fulfill many of the General Plan goals listed under Open Space Policies, including:

- **Goal LOC 5** - Preserve the contours of the hills.
- **Goal LOC 6** - Preserve natural flora and fauna and protect scenic lands, sensitive natural areas, historic buildings and cultural resources.
- **Goal LOC 7** - Tree-covered hills shall be preserved to retain the distinctive scenic quality of the community.
- **Goal LOC 8** - Watershed areas of Atascadero shall be protected.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

$50,000 from the Tree Fund, and $200,000 from the Open Space Acquisition Fund.

**ALTERNATIVES:**

1. Council may deny the request for funds.
2. Council may alter the amount of funds to commit to the purchase of this property.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. ANTA letter
2. Deed of Conservation Easement and Agreement Concerning Easement Rights