

**CITY OF BELLE ISLE, FLORIDA
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET**

Meeting Date: August 20, 2026

To: Honorable Mayor and City Council

From: Rick J. Rudometkin, City Manager

Subject: Discussion on Canal Dredging – Venetian Canals

Background:

There are canals shown on the Venetian Gardens Plat recorded in 1925 (“Plat”) labelled as “Venetian Canal” that connect to Lake Conway chain of lakes. The complex issue of who owns and has maintenance responsibility for the Venetian Canal has been a reoccurring issue that has not been resolved. As a matter of law, the State of Florida Internal Improvement Trust Fund owns the submerged lands of Lake Conway below the ordinary high-water line. This analysis assumes that the canal is manmade and not a navigable water body or part of Lake Conway. It looks like the Town of Belle Isle approved the Plat as represented by the signature of the Town Clerk and Mayor.

There are no formal dedications to the public or City on the plat. However, plats that pre-dated 1970s did not necessarily have to the magic “dedication to the public” language like more modern plats in order to offer dedications to the public. The act of showing private lands as rights-of-way, canals, parks, etc. are presumed to be an offer dedication to the public unless words on the plat state a contrary intent. The canal is depicted in the same manner as the public rights-of-way. The canal is shown on the plat with 30-foot-wide dimensions and are outside of the lot lines. Therefore, the canals are presumed to be offered as public dedications. However, such does not necessarily mean that the offer of dedication of the canals was accepted.

There is no formal action by the City Council post-plat approval that can be found which specifically had the City accept the public dedication of the canals or agree to canal maintenance responsibilities. There is a history of Orange County dredging the canals, but not the City of Belle Isle.

If the City Council would like to formally accept the public dedication of the Venetian Canal, the City staff requests direction to bring back a resolution for formal acceptance of the Venetian Canal and a discussion about potential funding sources for such maintenance responsibilities. The City Council may consider directing the expenditure of money on a formal title search of the canal parcels to confirm the current state of title and identify any intervening conveyances, encumbrances, or competing claims before the City acts on formal acceptance of the dedication. Further, we should consider involving Orange County in this discussion to be sure that Orange County does not claim ownership and maintenance rights in the Venetian Canal through the County’s previous acts of maintenance.

Staff Recommendation: N/A

Suggested Motion: N/A

Fiscal Impact:

There is a significant cost for canal maintenance to be determined, pending further analysis of dredging requirements and consultation with qualified contractors.

Attachments:

Plat