



STAFF REPORT

CITY OF GREEN COVE SPRINGS, FLORIDA

TO: City Council Regular Session **MEETING DATE:** March 3, 2026
FROM: Mike Null, Interim City Manager
SUBJECT: Approval of Memorandum of Understanding with the Green Cove Springs Preservation Society, Inc. regarding the Rivers House. *Mike Null*

BACKGROUND

Background from January 20, 2026 Council Meeting:

When the property located at 219 Spring was advertised for sale in 2020, the City purchased the property with the intent of controlling the future of the property since it abuts Spring Park.

Since then, there has been no clear direction from the City Council as to what the final use of the property should be. The only consensus from the City Council was to not demolish the house. In 2021, the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) was tasked with developing suggestions for a final use for the property to be reported back to the City Council. The attached list titled "Rivers House Sub-committee" was presented to City Council on May 3, 2022. The list of proposed uses included eco-tourism, community center, small business incubator, or a small café.

In January 2023, staff proceeded with removal of lead and asbestos from the house in preparation for future restoration. Much of the siding was removed as part of the abatement process and the house sat partially exposed for over a year. The second document titled "Rivers House" was presented to City Council on March 21, 2023. City Council directed staff to move forward with gathering data for pricing and use. City staff proceeded with a limited structural review which was presented to City Council on July 11, 2023.

Based on Council direction, staff published a bid in September 2023 to make certain repairs, to which there were no responses received. In April 2024, a second bid was published. One response was received, but not by a licensed contractor so it was rejected. Then in June 2024, staff published a bid for contractors to make exterior improvements including:

- Make repairs to the front porch
- Remove the sleeping porch
- Demolish an addition on the right side of the building
- Reclaim as much siding as possible
- Paint the exterior
- Complete limited structural repairs underneath the building.

One bid was received from Bourre Construction, who was awarded the contract. During the construction process, replacement of the roof and the exterior siding was added to the scope of the project. This project was completed in January 2025.

In June 2025, an RFP (Request for Proposals) was published with the intent of receiving submittals from potential tenants to occupy the building. One proposal was received from Steven Kelley representing the Rivers House Welcome and Adventure Center. The proposed funding source was CRA funding or other grant funding to be secured by the City, Clay TDC Grants and private funding. The budget for this project is approximately \$500,000.

Update:

At the January 20, 2026 Council meeting, the GCS Preservation Society expressed interest in working with Steven Kelley to possibly join efforts in renovating and operating the Rivers House. City Council was generally receptive to this idea.

Presented this evening is a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Green Cove Springs Preservation Society to renovate the Rivers House for future operation. Generally speaking, there will be little to no cost impact on the City except for assistance with grant applications where the City would need to be the qualified applicant. Also presented for discussion is a tentative project timeline. Staff recommends approving this MOU with the GCS Preservation Society.

FISCAL IMPACT

Minimal.

RECOMMENDATION

Approve the Memorandum of Understanding with the Green Cove Springs Preservation Society, Inc. regarding the Rivers House, and authorize the Mayor to execute same.