

**Agenda Item 1.2.1**

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS BRIEFING PAPER**

**Topic: Matthews/Winters Park - Braun JCOS25-13**

**Presented by: Hillary Merritt, Shared Services Director, Parks & Open Space**

**Date: 1/27/2026**

For Information

For Discussion/Board Direction

Consent to Place on Business/Hearing Agenda

**Issue:**

Jefferson County Parks & Open Space (JCPOS) proposes to acquire approximately 347 acres of vacant land adjacent to the western boundary of Matthews/Winters Park for \$7,300,000.

**Background:**

Located in north-central Jefferson County, in the heart of the Front Range Mountain Backdrop/Foreground Preservation Area, acquisition of the approximately 347-acre Braun property (the Property) would connect two currently disconnected sections of Matthews/Winters Park, protect important big game habitat, buffer Golden eagle nests, and open new possibilities for recreation.

Acquisition of the Property advances several initiatives in the 2026-2030 Conservation Greenprint, including Preserving Land, Stewarding Ecosystem Health and Enhancing Nature-Based Experiences. The Property is adjacent to Matthews/Winters Park, a popular destination for avid hikers and mountain bikers. This acquisition would connect the western side of the Park to Mount Morrison in Denver's Red Rocks Park, offering opportunities for new trail connections. The Property includes portions of three Potential Conservation Areas and is an important wildlife linkage for big game species, including elk, mule deer, black bear and mountain lion. Additionally, several State Wildlife Action Plan Tier 1 and 2 species occur on or within one mile of the Property, including Hops Azure Butterfly, Preble's Meadow Jumping Mouse, Mottled Dusky Wing Bat, and Fiddleleaf Twinpod.

**Discussion:**

JCPOS is working with the Conservation Fund (TCF) to preserve the

Property. The landowner has agreed to a purchase price of \$7,300,000, a value which is supported by an appraisal. A grant request for \$2.3 million from Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) was submitted in January 2026 and the remaining funds would come from the Open Space Fund. If the grant is successful, the County will work with a willing public entity to hold GOCO-required Covenants, Conditions and Restrictions (CCRs) that protect the Property's natural, scenic, open space, wildlife habitat, and passive recreational values. TCF will acquire the Property before it is transferred to Jefferson County pursuant to a Purchase and Sale Agreement between Jefferson County and TCF. TCF's contract with the seller includes a provision allowing the seller to continue cattle grazing and hay production on the Property at the same level as historic operations through December 31, 2026.

On January 8, 2026, the Open Space Advisory Committee approved Resolution #26-02 recommending the project to the Board of County Commissioners for approval.

**Fiscal Impact:**  yes  no

\$7,300,000, less any amount granted by GOCO for the Property, plus title insurance, due diligence and closing costs paid with \$5 million of Open Space Funds from the adopted 2026 budget and \$2.5 million as a supplemental budget increase from the Open Space Fund balance

- Year(s) of impact: 2026
- Existing grant or project: None
- New grant or project: None
- Requested in adopted budget: \$5 million in the 2026 adopted budget
- Ongoing or one-time: One-time
- General Fund impact: None
- Staffing impact: None
- Match requirements: None
- Mandate/Contractual obligation: None

**Budget & Strategy Review:** Brett Deady, reviewed January 15, 2026. Support, no concern. Funding for the acquisition is provided from the 2026 adopted budget in the Open Space Fund and a budget supplemental.

**County Attorney Review:** Anne Kelson, reviewed and approved January 15, 2026.

**Facilities Review:** Support, no concern. Mark Danner, January 14, 2026

**BIT Review:** Support, no concern. Andy Corbett, January 15, 2026

**Fleet Review:** Support, no concern. Janice Mayer, January 14, 2026

**County Human Resources Review (new FTE or Total Rewards Request):** None

**Recommendations:**

That the Board of County Commissioners consider the recommendations made by JCPOS Staff and the Open Space Advisory Committee in Resolution #26-02, approving the acquisition of the 347-acre Matthews/Winters Park - Braun property for \$7,300,000 and authorizing execution of the required documents and a budget supplemental of \$2.5 million coming from the Open Space Fund at a future hearing.

**Originator:**

Hillary Merritt, Shared Services Director

**Contacts for Additional Information:**

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