COEP Staff Recommendation: EPWU-PSB properties should not be rezoned to R-F (Ranch/Farm)

Basis of Recommendation:

- The City's *Green Infrastructure Plan* refers to establishing a more compatible zoning for undeveloped lands that do not have approved master plans or land studies. This *Plan* and recommendation is intended as a method to preserve lands that will ultimately be designated as open space. Not all EPWU-PSB properties will be designated as open space, and a substantive amount of the land has already been master planned. Additionally, there are EPWU-PSB properties that are zoned PMD (Planned Mountain Development District) which is a more restrictive zone than R-F (Ranch/Farm). City staff does not agree that R-F (Ranch/Farm) zoning is the most compatible zoning for the area and does not achieve the goals for smart growth development established by the City Council.

- A downzoning of all EPWU-PSB properties to R-F (Ranch/Farm) or the future NOS (Natural Open Space) zoning, will impact the site from an economic development perspective since these zones will result in minimal value of the area due to significant restrictions on use and development. This negatively impacts the EPWU-PSB's fiduciary responsibility to the rate payers and bondholders. It is staff's recommendation that only the areas to be designated and preserved for open space should be considered for downzoning, and that this occur at a much later date once the areas have been identified and surveyed.

- Master planning of EPWU-PSB land is the recommended approach in addressing future development and preservation of open space of these properties. The current EPWU-PSB policy, for lands deemed inexpedient to the water/wastewater system and available for disposition, requires master planning for sites of 50 or more acres before the land is put out to sale. This master planning effort requires submission, review and approval by the City Plan Commission. A proposed amendment to the existing policy will be presented for City Council consideration requiring the master planning of all property sales of 25 acres or more. Conversely, land sales less than 25 acres would also require City staff administrative review (through the Office of the City Manager) for deeming the appropriate zoning before the land is sold. This policy amendment allows the City staff to consider SmartCode and other mixed-use development zoning that allows for the type of new urbanism principles that the City Council has endorsed. Additionally, it allows review of the site at a technical level including planning, engineering, traffic, parks, street and other perspectives. Input from other agencies may also be solicited, including the MPO, TxDOT and the respective School Districts. The policy amendment is expected to be presented to the City Council within the next few months.

- There has been no negative impact caused by the current zoning of R-3 (Residential) existing primarily on the EPWU-PSB properties west of the Franklin Mountains State Park; which has existed since properties were annexed in the mid 1970's. This holding or default zone could be changed once areas of preservation are clearly identified.

- A rezoning of the properties, or any portion thereof, will require that a survey be conducted and submitted with the application – even under a City initiated request. This is a Code requirement that is at significant expense; estimated at approximately $300,000 - $600,000. No funds are available to undertake this effort.

- This year, work on updating the City's comprehensive plan will commence and the master planning efforts of the EPWU-PSB properties is to be incorporated. More detailed analyses on use and zoning of undeveloped lands should be conducted as part of this process, and any downzoning would be premature at this time.

- The *Green Infrastructure Plan* is a statement of policies that supplements the City's comprehensive plan. The recommendations in the *Plan* are intended to serve as examples to actively pursue preservation of open space in the community. They are not prescriptive actions, but rather guide decision making.