

**CITY COUNCIL RESEARCH DIVISION
LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY**



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Bill Type and Number: Ordinance 2023-87

Introducer/Sponsor(s): Council President at the request of the Mayor

Date of Introduction: February 14, 2023

Committee(s) of Reference: NCSPHS, F, TEU

Date of Analysis: February 16, 2023

Type of Action: Authorization to execute purchase and sale agreement; designation of oversight agency

Bill Summary: The bill authorizes the execution of a purchase and sale agreement between the City and RP Sports Investment, Inc. for a parcel of City property between A. Philip Randolph Boulevard and Georgia Street just north of the Mathews Bridge Expressway. The Real Estate Division and the Office of Economic Development are designated as the City's oversight agency for the transaction.

Background Information: In February 2020 the City granted RP Sports Investments an option to purchase an approximately 5-acre tract of vacant City property north of the Jacksonville Fairgrounds property and the Mathews Bridge Expressway, bounded by A. Philip Randolph Boulevard on the west, Albert Street on the south, Georgia Steet on the east and Grant Street on the north (generally encompassing Parking Lots X and XX). RP Sports has exercised its option to purchase the property for \$1, which will be deed restricted and may only be used for the construction and operation of buildings (minimum 25,000 square foot office building), a soccer stadium (minimum 2,500 seats) for soccer events and other related ancillary events, and a minimum 100 parking spaces by RPS, its successors and assigns. The option also provides that before closing, RPS will have "created a not-for-profit corporation whose purpose is to assist with the rejuvenation, renovation, education, health and wellness of the East side community located in Jacksonville, FL." If the facilities are not substantially completed by July 31, 2025, the City may require RPS to pay the current fair market value of the property. The City commits to making good faith efforts to obtain consent from the Athletic Associations of the University of Florida and University of Georgia to either exclude the subject property from the list of available parking areas included in the contract for the Florida/Georgia game or to otherwise amend that game contract to address this parking area.

RP Sports Investments is owned by Robert Palmer, the owner of the Jacksonville Armada which competes in the National Premier Soccer League as an Under-23 team and formerly competed in the North American Soccer League before that league folded several years ago. The team played for several seasons in the Baseball Grounds before relocating to Hodges Stadium at UNF. Another ownership group – JAXUSL - formed in 2022 and has been awarded a franchise in the United Soccer League to begin play in 2025. That organization has recently announced the hiring of a sports consultant to advise the team on locating the best site to construct a 15,000-seat soccer stadium somewhere in Northeast Florida.

Policy Impact Area: Property sale; downtown stadium construction

Fiscal Impact: RP Sports paid \$5,000 for the purchase option to be exercised for a sales price of \$1.

Analyst: Clements