

City Council Comments on Lepkowski Resolution

February 19th, 2019

Griswold:

- Cooperation from Washtenaw County and Northfield Township is a “good faith effort.”

Hayner:

- “Slow though it may be”, sounds like township is putting forth an effort to bring more funds to projects.
- Supports in relation to climate action plan.
- Okay with “contributing more than the City should” but also “warning to the future” that if low scoring properties are brought to the table he may not be amenable..
- Says one-third contribution “is in the ordinance.”
- Benefit of Greenbelt will really be reaped in 20-30 years.

Grand:

- Pleased to see support from the community inside and outside the City.
- Unfortunate timing of new Council and new staff transition and that caused confusion
- Staff pleased to work with Council to answer questions and pleased to host a work session if desired.

Ramlawi:

- Appreciates Council’s willingness to reconsider
- Didn’t have all the information needed to make the decision at the time
- Bearing a high cost because of township’s lack of millage funds
- This put light on that issue, which was worthwhile
- Mutually beneficial outcomes of the Greenbelt
- Townships might benefit from Greenbelt, but City was the one that passed it
- It should not be weaponized to force others to start millages
- Learned a lot about the federal funds and the history of those funds
- Learned that RCPP funds can only be used in a small area
- Excluding due diligence on closing costs it is a 50/50 split.
- Above average property in scoring system and fits into sustainability goals.

Lumm:

- Been 15 years and 59 projects until first rejection
- Healthy to reject and have an occasional conversation about program
- Was grateful to have time to have time to read the federal grant and scoring more carefully – and it was not provided the first time

Note: Many comments are paraphrased. See recording of Council meeting for exact statements.

- Can't exclude closing, endowment and due diligence costs from total calculation because they are substantial
- Northfield Township and County now see the City is serious about the need for them to pony up matching funds
- Campaign literature says 1/3rd – the “City’s campaign literature that was sent out”
- Even though it was scored in the upper half of applications, it does not have the characteristics the Greenbelt aims to protect – scenic value, natural features, etc.
- Was shocked Northfield Township wasn't aware of the project until the night of the Council vote
- Staff needs to inform townships
- Halfway through the program, and seems like the pace and quality of the projects are decreasing.
- Should ask voters if it is appropriate to spend millage funds on other projects like the Treeline.

Smith:

- Views Greenbelt projects as they relate to climate action goals
- Wants to know what the function of a farm is and what they do: is it a CAFO, is it corn, soybeans, etc. What does that mean in terms of carbon neutrality
- Is the food entering the Washtenaw County food economy? That matters.
- It is time to reevaluate the questions we're asking to score projects by.
- Supports project because Northfield Township hasn't been a great partner in planning and other efforts regionally. Expects them to be a better partner in the future and increase communications on regional planning.
- Moving forward wants to see other measure of the impact of a farm or property on the local environment and economy.

Grand:

- The 1/3rd concept has been mischaracterized
- Reads from ordinance – “the land’s appraised value”
- Makes case for City paying 50% of the conservation easement value
- Parks Department is aware of maintenance costs and cautious to add more land if there isn't maintenance funding there, so that is why there might be slowing acquisition in the City of Ann Arbor

Bannister:

- Ward 1 folks wanted to see more leverage in the future.
- Looking forward to exploring the use of the 1/3 of the millage funds in the City

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