



Legislation Text

File #: 22-0249, **Version:** 1

Resolution to Approve a Grant Application to the USDA-NRCS Lake Erie Conservation RCPP for Purchase of a Conservation Easement on the Fishbeck Property

This resolution authorizes a grant application to the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) through the Lake Erie Conservation Partnership Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) for the purchase of a conservation easement on the Fishbeck property located in Superior Township.

Applications to the USDA-NRCS RCPP program are for funds up to 50% of the appraised fair market value of the conservation easement. This resolution also approves a preliminary agreement for purchase of the conservation easement on the property, which is required for the grant application. This preliminary agreement provides that the purchase is contingent on the following:

- A. Establishment of a fair market price for the conservation easement to be determined by an appraisal and approved by the City and the RCPP Program,
- B. Conveyance of good and marketable title of the conservation easement;
- C. Acceptable environmental site assessment of the property, and
- D. Acceptance of the conservation easement by Ann Arbor City Council and the RCPP Program.

An appraisal will be completed for each property and, if awarded grant funds, a complete budget along with a purchase agreement will be submitted to Council for approval.

Matching grant funds are through the USDA-NRCS's RCPP Program, awarded through the FY21 Lake Erie Conservation Partnership RCPP, which is led by the City of Ann Arbor. The City's share is from the Open Space and Parkland Preservation Millage proceeds.

A brief description of the Fishbeck Property for this grant application is as follows:

The farm is approximately 63 acres and is located along Joy Road in Superior Township. The property is considered large enough to sustain agricultural production and is in a location that will encourage additional farmland and agricultural preservation activities. It is adjacent to an existing Greenbelt conservation easement. The property scored in the 93rd percentile of all Greenbelt applications in the scoring system developed and approved by the Greenbelt Advisory Commission. The protection of this property is a priority for the Greenbelt Program due to the size and quality of the farmland, proximity to other protected properties, and possibility to leverage funds from federal and other local sources of funding. The property also meets the priorities for both the Greenbelt Program and RCPP Program.

The Greenbelt Advisory Commission recommended submission of the grant application for this property at its November 4, 2021 meeting.

Prepared by: Remy Long, Greenbelt Program Manager, The Conservation Fund

Reviewed by: Derek Delacourt, Community Services Area Administrator
Christopher Frost, Senior Assistant City Attorney

Approved by: Milton Dohoney Jr., Interim City Administrator

Whereas, Chapter 42 of Ann Arbor City Code establishes the Greenbelt District and enables the City to purchase conservation easements on property within the district with Open Space and Parkland Preservation Millage proceeds;

Whereas, At its August 16, 2021 meeting (R-21-307), City Council approved a Programmatic Partnership Agreement with the USDA-NRCS, under which the City would be lead partner in the Lake Erie Conservation Partnership RCPP along with contributing partners consisting of Washtenaw County Parks & Recreation Commission, Scio Township, Ann Arbor Township, Webster Township, Legacy Land Conservancy, Six Rivers Land Conservancy, Huron River Watershed Council and the Washtenaw County Conservation District; and

Whereas, The owner of the property described in the memo attached to this resolution has expressed a willingness to grant a conservation easement on the property that conforms to standards established by the City of Ann Arbor and the Natural Resources Conservation Service;

RESOLVED, That City Council approves a grant application to the USDA-NRCS Regional Conservation Partnership Program through the Lake Erie Conservation Partnership RCPP for matching grant funds for the purchase of a conservation easement on the property described in the memo attached to this resolution, including required agreements; and

RESOLVED, That the City Administrator is authorized to take all appropriate actions to implement this resolution, including execution of required documents and agreements.