



Legislation Text

File #: 16-1240, **Version:** 1

Resolution to Approve Participation in 2016 Assistance to Upper Huron River Regional Conservation Partnership Program, U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service, to be Submitted by Legacy Land Conservancy

The attached Resolution authorizes the City of Ann Arbor to partner with Legacy Land Conservancy, the grant applicant, in the proposal to the United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service's (USDA NRCS) Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCP) for funding toward the acquisition of conservation easements in the Upper Huron River Watershed area of Michigan. Legacy Land Conservancy is pursuing proposal grant funding for the project in the amount of \$3,200,000.

On May 2, 2016, the City Council approved pre-proposal participation in 2016 Assistance to Upper Huron River Regional Conservation Partnership Program, U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service, to be submitted by Legacy Land Conservancy (Resolution No. R-16-180). That resolution approved the City's execution of a pre-proposal letter of support, the first stage of the grant process.

On July 22, 2016, the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service notified Legacy Land Conservancy that the pre-proposal was selected, and invited Legacy Land Conservancy to proceed to the next step in the application process and to submit a full proposal. The City is now being requested to execute a letter that would approve the City of Ann Arbor to participate in the Partnership with Legacy Land Conservancy.

Other Contributing Partners, in addition to the Greenbelt Program, would include Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission, Six Rivers Land Conservancy, Huron River Watershed Council, and Ducks Unlimited. Supporting Partners are Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation Division; Oakland County Parks and Recreation, and Pheasants Forever.

If Legacy Land Conservancy and the contributing and supporting partners are ultimately awarded a grant based on their proposal to RCP, the grant would provide the Greenbelt Program with funding source of support for the purchase of conservation easements; which conservation easements would be presented on a project by project basis to Council for approval in accordance with established City procedures. The City, as a partner, would be obligated to contribute up to \$2,000,000 of bonding funds over the five year program period to be matched at 49% by USDA NRCS, leveraging up to \$1,960,000 toward the acquisition of conservation easements. The City would commit contributing funds in the amount of \$100,000 for staff time (\$20,000/yr for 5 years), and \$100,000 for due diligence activities (appraisal, survey, title work, environmental assessments, closing costs, etc.) (\$20,000/yr for 5 years).

Passage of the attached resolution and participation in the pre-proposal submission for the RCP is recommended by staff.

Prepared by: Ruth Thornton, Greenbelt Program Manager, The Conservation Fund

Reviewed by: Derek Delacourt, Community Services Area Administrator

Approved by: Howard S. Lazarus, City Administrator

Whereas, Chapter 42 of The Ann Arbor City Code establishes the Greenbelt District and enables the City to purchase development rights on property within the district;

Whereas, Limited funds are available through the County Natural Area Preservation Program and Township land preservation funds;

Whereas, The Greenbelt Advisory Commission goal is to leverage the City's millage funds to protect as much land as possible throughout the 30-year life of the millage;

Whereas, The Greenbelt Advisory Commission strongly recommends a minimum of 25% matching funds on Greenbelt purchases, provided by either grant funds, other local matching funds, or landowner donations; and

Whereas, Legacy Land Conservancy's pre-proposal was successful, and invited the City to submit a letter of support as contributing partner, which, if successful, would obligate the City to provide up to \$2,000,000.00 of match from bonding funds, and appropriate \$200,000.00 in contributing funds (\$100,000.00 over 5 years in staff time and \$100,000.00 over 5 years in due diligence) to the purchase of conservation easements. In return, the City would receive up to \$1,960,000.00 from the USDA NRCS towards the purchase price of conservation easements over 5 years;

RESOLVED, That City Council approve the City of Ann Arbor participation as a partner with Legacy Land Conservancy in its Upper Huron River Regional Conservation Partnership Program Proposal to the United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service; and

RESOLVED, That the City Administrator be authorized to take all necessary actions to implement this resolution, including forwarding a certified copy of this Resolution to Legacy Land Conservancy and any other documentation required in support of the City's participation as a partner in the Upper Huron River Regional Conservation Partnership Program Proposal.