Legislation Details (With Text)

File #:	14-0756	**Version:**	1	**Name:**	5/19/14 Grant Applications for USDA ALE Program for PDR Properties in Superior Twp
Type:	Resolution			**Status:**	Passed
File created:	5/19/2014			**In control:**	City Council
On agenda:	5/19/2014			**Final action:**	5/19/2014
Enactment date:	5/19/2014			**Enactment #:**	R-14-157

Title: Resolution to Approve Grant Applications to the USDA Agricultural Land Easement (ALE) Program for the Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) on Properties in Superior Township

Sponsors:

Indexes:

Code sections:

Attachments: 1. Rock LLC ALE Map

Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result
5/19/2014	1	City Council	Approved	Pass

Resolution to Approve Grant Applications to the USDA Agricultural Land Easement (ALE) Program for the Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) on Properties in Superior Township
Attached for your review and action is a resolution to approve grant applications to the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Agricultural Land Easement Program, formerly known as the Farm and Ranchland Protection Program (FRPP), for the purchase of development rights (PDR) for two adjacent properties located in Superior Township.

The Greenbelt Advisory Commission recommended submission of the grant applications at its April 1, 2014 meeting. The protection of these parcels is a priority to the Greenbelt 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 farm parcels consist of property on either side of Vreeland Road location shown on the attached map. Two applications will be submitted to USDA ALE program - one for the portion on the north side of Vreeland Road (120 acres) and one for the portion on the south side of Vreeland Road (140 acres). The property is currently in agriculture production. The landowners are interested in selling the property. If an easement is completed on the property, farmers in the area have expressed an interest in purchasing the property. The property is considered large enough to sustain agricultural production and is in a location that will encourage additional farmland preservation and agricultural preservation activities. Additional properties under the same ownership, adjacent to the farmland parcels, have also been nominated to the City's Greenbelt program for consideration located both north and south of the farm parcels as identified on the attached map.

The property is located just west of large block of protected land along Prospect Road, referred to as the Superior Greenway. This block of land consists of several projects, which the City has contributed funds including the acquisition of the Meyer Preserve and the Jack R. Smiley Preserve

and the Schultz conservation easement completed in 2012 with City and FRPP funds. Cherry Hill Nature Preserve is located just north of the property.

The City was officially notified on May 1, 2014 that a round of funding is available for 2014. Completed applications must be submitted by June 6, 2014. It is anticipated that a request for acceptance of grant funds, if awarded, will be presented to City Council in August 2014. In addition, an appraisal will be completed and if awarded grant funds, a request to approve the purchase of the conservation easement, and appropriate funds will be submitted to Council for review and action, subsequent to Council accepting the grant funds.

The attached resolution also approves Voluntary Agreement for the Sale of Agricultural Land Development Rights for the farms. The Voluntary Agreement for the sale of the development rights (pending offer) is contingent on the following:

a. Establishment of a fair market price for the development rights to be determined by an appraisal and approved by the City and USDA.
b. Conveyance of good and marketable title to the development rights by Farmland Development Rights Easement.
c. Acceptable environmental site assessment of property.
d. Acceptance of the Farmland Development Rights Easement by Ann Arbor City Council and the USDA.

The new Farm Bill, which was recently passed in February 2014, consolidated several agricultural easement programs into one umbrella program, now called the Agricultural Land Easement (ALE) program. As a result, the Farm and Ranchland Protection Program, which the City has received funding since 2005, now falls under the newly created ALE program. Applications to the USDA ALE program are for funds up to 50% of the appraised fair market value of the development rights to a maximum of $5,000 per acre. The ALE program is voluntary and provides matching funds for local governments to acquire development rights on farmland. The landowners retain the right to use their property for agriculture.

Attachment: Location Maps
Prepared by: Ginny Trocchio, The Conservation Fund
Reviewed by: Sumedh Bahl, Community Services Area Administrator
Approved by: Steven D. Powers, City Administrator

Whereas, USDA Agricultural Land Easement (ALE) program has matching grant funds available for up to 50% of Purchase of Development Rights on eligible agricultural land not to exceed $5,000 per acre;

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, Purchase of Development Rights may be funded through the Open Space and Parkland Preservation Millage proceeds;

Whereas, The owners of two parcels, one on the north side of Vreeland and the other on the south side of Vreeland, shown on the attached map, agree to establish a Farmland Development Rights Grant of Easement that conforms to standards established by the City of Ann Arbor and the Natural

Resources Conservation Service; and

Whereas, The Greenbelt Advisory Commission approved a motion recommending approval of applications for the said parcels at its April 1, 2014 meeting;

RESOLVED, That City Council approve the grant application to the Agricultural Land Easement Program for matching grant funds for the Purchase of Development Rights for the properties as indicated on attached map.