



Legislation Text

File #: 17-1145, **Version:** 1

Resolution to Approve Full Proposal Application to the USDA-NRCS FY 2018 Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), in Partnership with Washtenaw County, Legacy Land Conservancy, and Others, to Secure Funding to Complete USDA-NRCS Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) Purchases of Development Rights (PDR) Conservation Easements (up to \$1,000,000.00)

The Attached Resolution authorizes the City of Ann Arbor to approve the submission of a Full Proposal to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) - Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) FY 2018 Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), in partnership with Washtenaw County, Legacy Land Conservancy, and others, to secure funding for the purchase of USDA-NRCS Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) conservation easements in Washtenaw County.

On April 17, 2017, City Council approved a pre-proposal application to the USDA-NRCS FY 2018 RCPP in partnership with Washtenaw County, Legacy Land Conservancy, Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy, Ann Arbor Township, Scio Township, Augusta Township, and The Conservation Fund, for funding towards the acquisition of ACEP Agricultural Land Easements in Washtenaw County. The pre-proposal amount requested from USDA-NRCS for all partners was up to \$3,913,520, with up to \$1,000,000 requested by the City of Ann Arbor towards the purchase of conservation easements.

On July 7, 2017, the USDA-NRCS notified the City of Ann Arbor that the pre-proposal was selected, and invited the City back to proceed to the next step in the application process and to submit a full proposal, which, if successful, would obligate the City of Ann Arbor to enter into an agreement with USDA-NRCS for the RCPP. Subsequently, the City of Ann Arbor would enter into an agreement with the remaining partners to define each partner's role in the RCPP.

If the City's Full Proposal is successful, the RCPP would provide the Greenbelt Program with funds to support the purchase of conservation easements. Individual projects will still seek City Council approval on a project by project basis.

If the City's Full Proposal is successful, the City would contribute up to \$1,000,000.00 of bonding funds over the five-year program period to be matched at 50% by NRCS, leveraging up to \$1,000,000.00 towards the acquisition of conservation easements. The City of Ann Arbor would commit contributing funds in the amount of \$40,000.00 for due diligence activities (appraisal, survey, title work, environmental assessments, closing costs, etc.), and \$30,000.00 for administration and staff time over the five-year RCPP period.

The purpose of the acquisition of the development rights utilizing this funding is for Open Space Preservation and Agricultural Land Preservation.

Passage of the attached resolution and approval of grant application to the RCPP 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, Legacy Land Conservancy, 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 20% matching funds on Greenbelt purchases, provided by either grant funds, other local matching funds, or landowner donations;

Whereas, The City's pre-proposal was successful, and the City was invited to submit a full proposal as leading partner, which, if successful, would obligate the City to provide up to \$1,000,000.00 of match from bonding funds, appropriate \$70,000.00 in contributing funds (\$40,000.00 in due diligence costs and \$30,000.00 in staff time over five years) to the purchase of conservation easements, enter into an agreement with the USDA-NRCS, and enter into agreements with the remaining partners to the RCPP; and

Whereas, The City, as lead partner, would be eligible to receive matching funds of up to \$1,000,000.00 from the USDA-NRCS towards the purchase price of conservation easements over five years;

RESOLVED, That City Council approves submitting a Full Proposal to the Regional Conservation Partnership Program 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.