



Legislation Text

File #: 19-1607, **Version:** 1

Resolution to Submit Renewal Proposal and Application to the USDA FY 2020 Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCP), in Partnership with Washtenaw County, Legacy Land Conservancy, and Others, to Secure up to \$1,000,000.00 in Additional Federal Grant Funding for Conservation Easements

City Council Resolution R-18-200 approved a memorandum of understanding with USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service and local partners and accepted a grant of up to \$1,040,000.00 under a Regional Conservation Partnership Program for the acquisition of conservation easements.

This resolution authorizes the City to approve the submission of a renewal proposal and application for the USDA FY 2020 Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCP), in partnership with Washtenaw County, Legacy Land Conservancy, and others, to secure up to \$1,000,000.00 in additional federal grant funding for the purchase of USDA Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) conservation easements in Washtenaw County. The additional grant funding would provide further leverage to Greenbelt Program 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 renewal proposal (due September 15, 2019) is selected by NRCS on November 15, 2019 for a provisional renewal, the City will be invited to submit a full renewal application by December 31, 2019. If the full renewal is funded, an RCP renewal agreement would be executed by March 31, 2020, which would add these funds to and extend the original RCP until 2025.

In addition to the City's existing RCP grant (up to \$1,040,000.00), if the City's application is successful, the City would become eligible to receive up to an additional \$1,000,000.00 in federal matching funds over the program period (up to \$2,040,000.00 total). USDA would match City funds spent toward purchase of eligible agricultural conservation easements in the RCP area at 1:1, effectively doubling the City's purchasing power. The City of Ann Arbor would also be required to contribute up to \$50,000.00 for staff time and \$40,000.00 for due diligence activities (appraisal, survey, title work, environmental assessments, closing costs, etc.) over the life of the RCP, resulting in an effective minimum leverage ratio of 1:1.09 when all costs are included.

Approval of this resolution to submit the renewal proposal and application for the RCP is recommended by staff.

Prepared by: Remy Long, 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 Ann Arbor City Code establishes the Greenbelt District and authorizes the City to purchase conservation easements on property within the district with Open Space and Parkland Preservation Millage proceeds;

Whereas, The Greenbelt Advisory Commission's 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 City presently participates with Washtenaw County, Legacy Land Conservancy, and several townships and conservation entities in a Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) funded by the United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS);

Whereas, The City has the opportunity to apply to extend the RCPP and, as lead partner, receive additional 50% matching funds of up to \$1,000,000.00 from the USDA-NRCS for the purchase of eligible conservation easements in the RCPP area over the next 5 years, bringing the total available federal grant funds to \$2,040,000.00; and

Whereas, If the City's renewal proposal submission is successful, the City will be invited by USDA-NRCS to submit a full renewal application;

RESOLVED, That City Council approve submitting a renewal proposal for the RCPP to the USDA-NRCS;

RESOLVED, That City Council approve submitting a renewal application for the RCPP, if invited by USDA-NRCS to do so after their review of the renewal proposal; and

RESOLVED, That the City Administrator be authorized to take all necessary actions to implement this resolution.