



Legislation Text

File #: 20-1426, **Version:** 1

Resolution to Approve a Grant Proposal to the USDA-NRCS FY 2020/2021 Regional Conservation Partnership Program (up to \$3,145,000.00)

This resolution approves the submission of a proposal for grant funding to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) - Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) FY 2020/2021 Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), in partnership with Washtenaw County Parks & Recreation Commission, Ann Arbor Township, Scio Township, Webster Township, and others for the purchase of conservation easements in the Huron River and River Raisin Watersheds. City funds would only be expended for purchases within the City's Greenbelt District.

This RCPP grant proposal provides an opportunity for the City of Ann Arbor to expand upon the success of two prior RCPPs in the Southeast Michigan region: the \$1.8M "Huron River Initiative" RCPP (FY 2017, R-16-358, \$1M City commitment) and the \$1M "Ann Arbor Greenbelt: Saving Michigan Farms" RCPP (FY 2018, R-18-200, \$326K City commitment). Combined with City, local partner and NRCS RCPP funds, those RCPPs represent over \$5.6M deployed for conservation in under 5 years. With the success of those prior RCPPs positioned to surpass target deliverables and garner continued interest from landowners eager to participate, this proposal represents the combination and expansion of that critical work to (1) conserve natural lands and green infrastructure vital to the overall health of our waters, and (2) conserve and enhance productive soils vital to regional food system resiliency and security.

It is expected that the City and local partners together will commit over \$11,500,000.00 in cash and in-kind matching fund over the five-year RCPP period - June 2021-June 2026. If successful, these local funds would be matched by \$10,000,000.00 in RCPP funding. The City would contribute up to \$3,145,000.00, including \$3,000,000.00 toward the purchase price of conservation easements, \$80,000.00 for due diligence activities (appraisal, survey, title work, environmental assessments, closing costs, etc.), and \$65,000.00 for administration and staff time.

In all, the grant would result in the coordinated deployment of over \$21,500,000.00 in regional conservation activities. More specifically, it is anticipated that the Greenbelt Program will leverage these RCPP matching funds to protect an additional 800 acres within the Greenbelt District, and with a net RCPP impact of 2,600 acres permanently protected within the project area.

If the proposal is accepted, Council will be asked to approve a grant agreement with USDA-NRCS and an agreement with the City's funding partners. Individual purchases under the RCPP will come to City Council for approval on a project-by-project basis.

Approval is recommended by both the Greenbelt Advisory Commission and by staff.

Prepared by: Remy Long, The Conservation Fund

Reviewed by: Derek Delacourt, Community Services Area Administrator

Approved by: Tom Crawford, 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;

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

Whereas, The USDA-NRCS FY 2020/2021 Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) has matching grant funds available for up to 50% of the purchase price of conservation easements on eligible land for the grant period June 2021-June 2026;

Whereas, City staff have proposed submitting a grant proposal, in partnership with the Washtenaw County Parks & Recreation Commission, Ann Arbor Township, Scio Township, Webster Township, and others to commit a total of approximately \$11,500,000.00 in cash and in-kind matching funds to be matched by up to \$10,000,000.00 in grant funds;

Whereas, The City's share of matching funds would be up to \$3,145,000.00, including \$3,000,000.00 toward the purchase price of conservation easements, \$80,000.00 in due diligence costs, and \$65,000.00 in staff time;

Whereas, At their October 1, 2020 meeting, the Greenbelt Advisory Commission recommended that City Council approve submission of the grant proposal;

RESOLVED, That City Council approves submitting a grant proposal to the USDA-NRCS FY 2020/2021 Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) with the City proposing a contribution of up to \$3,145,000.00; and

RESOLVED, That the City Administrator is authorized to take all appropriate actions to implement this resolution.