



Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission

MEMORANDUM

To: Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission
Through: Robert L. Tetens, Director
From: Agricultural Lands Preservation Advisory Committee (ALPAC)
Date: August 13, 2013
Re: Recommendation: Cort Property – Salem Township

Background

Ordinance No. 128 established the Natural Areas Preservation Program (NAPP) to preserve and protect unique natural areas within Washtenaw County and charged the Parks and Recreation Commission with responsibility for implementing the program. The Ordinance also established the Agricultural Lands Preservation Advisory Committee (ALPAC) to serve as an advisory body to assist the Parks and Recreation Commission in determining whether it should purchase the Development Rights on a particular parcel, as well as how much the County should pay for those rights.

In August 2011, two parcels of property in Salem Township were nominated for consideration by the Washtenaw County Natural Areas Preservation Program. The parcels are owned by Richard Cort, comprising approximately 101 acres. The property is located on the north and south sides of Six Mile Road at Tower Road. As primarily farmland, the property was reviewed by the Agricultural Lands Preservation Advisory Committee. Participating by Washtenaw County Parks & Recreation with Salem Township in acquisition will: 1) compensate the landowner for the cost of development rights, 2) establish an agricultural conservation agreement between the landowner and Washtenaw County Parks & Recreation Commission to keep the land in agriculture in perpetuity and 3) maintain the private ownership of the land.

Discussion

In addition to being submitted to NAPP, the Cort parcels were also submitted to Salem Township's Land Preservation and Conservation Board. That board sought and received a federal Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP) grant in 2012 for 49% of the cost of development rights on the parcels. After the Township Board approved moving ahead with acquiring the development rights on the Cort property, a change in board composition resulted in a decision not to pursue a conservation easements – including Cort – at least in the short-term. ALPAC was approached as a partner, both for a monetary contribution and with a request to act as successor holder of the easement. As Salem Township is the recipient of the FRPP award for

Cort, the Township must hold the easement first in the chain of title. The Townships wishes to immediately pass the easement to Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission to hold.

Requisite due diligence procedures have been concluded by Salem Township. A Phase I ESA investigation found NO evidence of recognized environmental conditions existing on the property. An ALTA survey has been completed. A July, 2013 appraisal of the property, commissioned by Salem Township and prepared by Mark Williams of Williams & Associates, Inc., identified the value of the development rights as \$206,000. The Cort FRPP award will fund 49% of this value, or \$100,940. At their March, 2013 meeting ALPAC unanimously passed a motion to make the recommendation below concerning the Cort property.

Recommendation

Based upon the review by the Agricultural Land Preservation Advisory Committee and staff it is my recommendation that the Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission; 1) contribute \$100,000 to the conservation easement on the Cort Property (Salem Township); and 2) serve as successor holder of the Cort easement, after Salem Township.

Attachments