



# CITY OF CONCORD

## REPORT TO THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** Beth Fenstermacher, Assistant City Planner, on behalf of the Conservation Commission

**DATE:** June 21, 2018

**SUBJECT:** Resolution authorizing the submittal of an application to the NH Department of Environmental Services Aquatic Resource Mitigation Grant Program for funds to assist in the purchase of 234-acres of land off of District 5 Road for conservation purposes.

### **Recommendation**

Adopt the Resolution authorizing the submittal of an application to the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) Aquatic Resource Mitigation (ARM) Grant Program.

### **Background**

In 2017, the property owners approached the City of Concord regarding the possibility of the City purchasing two lots identified as 55/Z 1 and 55/Z 17 located off of District 5 Road, totaling 234 acres. The Commission's 2017 Conservation Open Space Plan identified the Country Hill Estate parcels as priority land to be conserved. The project area links other protected land in the area, adding to a large contiguous block of conservation land totaling over 1700 acres. Rossvie Farm, which is a 546.5± acre property under conservation easement with the NH Division of Forest and Lands, is located adjacent to the northeast, east, and southeast of the parcel. Other adjacent conservation land includes the Desjardins Property, an 86 acre City-owned parcel of conservation land to the south. These conservation properties link the property to other conservation land in the area, such as Carter Hill Orchard, Dimond Hill Farm, and the Penacook Watershed conservation properties.

Acquisition of the Country Hill Estates land will provide permanent protection for the property, which includes intermittent and perennial streams as well as palustrine wetlands and vernal pools.

The ARM Fund grant program is aimed at protecting or restoring lands within the Merrimack River watershed to mitigate the loss of aquatic resources in the watershed. The grant utilizes compensatory funds that were collected in lieu of other forms of wetland mitigation. As a recipient of the grant, the City would be obligated to protect the upland and wetland functions on the property.

The property qualifies for the grant program because of the presence of vernal pools and wetland resources, wildlife habitat, and its proximity to other protected lands. A map of the proposed property is attached for your review.

## **Discussion**

The Conservation Commission discussed the property acquisition at their meeting on March 14, 2018, and supported the submission of the grant application to leverage the cost of the property. The appraised value of the property as of February 23, 2018 was \$705,000. The Commission is requesting \$350,000 from the ARM fund, and anticipates providing the remainder of the purchase price from the City's Conservation Trust Fund, contingent on a public hearing and vote of the Conservation Commission.

The 2018 round of NHDES ARM Grant applications is now open. A pre-application was filed in April 2018, and DES has determined that the project is eligible for the grant. The final application must be submitted by August 31, 2018. If selected, the Conservation Commission intends to manage the property for passive recreation (hiking, skiing, snowshoeing trails) and resource protection, as it does other open space property under its jurisdiction.