



CITY OF CONCORD

REPORT TO THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Concord Conservation Commission

DATE: July 28, 2015

SUBJECT: Resolution authorizing the City Manager to submit a grant application to the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services Aquatic Resource Mitigation Grant Program for funds that will assist in the purchase of a 116-acre parcel off of Lakeview Drive and West Parish Road.

Recommendation

Adopt the Resolution authorizing the City Manager to submit a grant application to the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) Aquatic Resource Mitigation (ARM) Grant Program.

Background

In 2013, the City of Concord approached the Haller Family regarding the possibility of the City purchasing two lots (lots 103-1-33 and 103-1-22) containing 116 acres located off of Lakeview Road and West Parish Road. The project links other protected land in the area, adding to a block of conservation land totaling nearly 900 acres. The land located directly across Lakeview Drive is part of a 685-acre area owned and maintained by the City to protect the water supply. Other conservation land in the area includes the Emmons property, a 46-acre parcel that abuts the Haller property to the east, which was purchased in 2009 with the assistance of a DES water supply land conservation grant. Carter Hill Orchard is protected by a 155-acre conservation easement held by Five Rivers with an executory interest held by the City, and lies a short distance to the west of the Haller property. The Commission is also in talks with the Haller family about purchasing an additional 120 acres of their land nearby.

Acquisition of the Haller 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 its proximity to the water supply, 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 11, 2015, and supported the submission of the grant application to leverage the cost of the property. The appraised value of the property as of October 21, 2013 was \$600,000. The Commission is requesting \$300,000 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 2015 round of New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services Aquatic Resource Mitigation Grant applications is now open. A pre-application was filed in April 2015, and DES has determined that the project is eligible for the grant. The final application must be submitted by August 31, 2015. 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.