

Item Title: Accept and Appropriate Reimbursement and Stewardship Funding for TLC Williamson Triangle Farm from the NC Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund

Specific Action Requested:

That the Board of Commissioners accepts \$17,462.06 of NC Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund funding from the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and appropriates funds into the Parks, Greenways, Recreation and Open Space CIP Element of the County Capital Fund.

Item Summary:

Purpose: In accordance with the North Carolina Local Government Budget and Fiscal Control Act, the Board of Commissioners must approve all amendments that increase the budget for a fund.

Background: On July 8, 2024, the Board of Commissioners authorized the County Manager to execute an agricultural conservation easement on the TLC Williamson Triangle Farm. This included reallocating \$30,000 from the appropriated reserve of Deferred Agricultural, Horticultural and Forestlands Tax set aside for farmland preservation to acquire the easement. It has been determined by the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services that \$17,462.06 of the County's expenses associated with easement acquisition are eligible for reimbursement. These expenses include costs for the legal fees, closing costs and stewardship endowment.

The TLC Williamson Triangle Farm Agricultural Conservation Easement was a recipient of stewardship funds totaling \$11,762.06 from the NC Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund (NCADFP). These funds will be used for stewardship costs in perpetuity. Stewardship costs include the expenses of monitoring and ensuring compliance with the terms of the conservation easement. This grant required an equal amount of matching County funds, and \$11,762.06 of Deferred Agricultural, Horticultural and Forestlands Tax set aside for farmland preservation was appropriated for this purpose. The remaining \$5,700 to be appropriated represents reimbursement for legal fees and closing costs associated with the project.

Strategic Plan: This action supports Growth, Land Use and Environment Goal 3: Protect 1,000 acres of green space, including open space, parks, greenways, farmland and forests by 2029.

Fiscal Impact: \$5,700 of NCADFP funding will be accepted and appropriated into the Future Agricultural Conservation Easements unit of the Parks,

Greenways, Recreation and Open Space CIP Element of the County Capital Fund. This supports the same use as the County funds originally used for the easement's acquisition. The remaining match funds of \$11,762.06 will be accepted and appropriated to the Agricultural Conservation Easement Stewardship unit. The additional County match of \$11,762.06 will be allocated from the appropriated reserve of Deferred Agricultural, Horticultural, and Forestlands Tax set aside for long-term monitoring and stewardship into the Agricultural Conservation Easement Stewardship unit.

Additional Information:

The June of 2022 Farmland Preservation Ordinance confirmed the County's commitment to farmland preservation and established the Wake County Agricultural Advisory Board. Later that year, the Board of Commissioners committed annual Deferred Agricultural, Horticultural, and Forestlands Tax funding to farmland preservation and Agricultural Conservation Easements, to be administered by the Wake County Agricultural Advisory Board and Soil and Water Conservation Department staff. Staff established an open Request for Proposal (RFP) process for farmland preservation projects and evaluate applications on a rolling basis.

The Triangle Farm is a 35-acre farm in Wendell in eastern Wake County located adjacent to the Williamson Preserve owned and managed by Triangle Land Conservancy. The property includes about 33 acres of open cropland. The Wake Soil and Water Conservation District has certified that 94% of the farms' soils are considered prime farmland, or farmland of statewide importance.

Wake County holds the agricultural conservation easement, and the Wake Soil and Water Conservation District has a right of entry for monitoring and enforcement of the conservation easement. Stewardship costs include the expenses of monitoring and ensuring compliance with the terms of the conservation easement. These funds may not be needed if the easement does not incur enforcement costs, but the budget capacity is needed to ensure the easement terms can be enforced.

The North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services' NC Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund (NCADFP) grant provides matching funding towards stewardship budget capacity. There are no reporting requirements for the NCADFP funding, and the County will keep the funding in perpetuity or for the life of the easement.

Attachments:

1. July 2024 BOC Item Summary for TLC Williamson Farm
2. CIP Budget Memo – FY 2027 County Capital PGROS