

**Item Title:** Accept and Appropriate Reimbursement and Stewardship Funding for Freeman Garcia Farm from the NC Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund

**Specific Action Requested:**

**That the Board of Commissioners accepts \$15,686.34 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 May 5, 2025, the Board of Commissioners authorized the County Manager to execute an agricultural conservation easement on Freeman Garcia Farm. This included reallocating \$486,204 from the appropriated reserve of the 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 \$15,685.81 of the County's expenses associated with easement acquisition are eligible for reimbursement. These expenses include costs for the survey, environmental assessment, legal fees, and closing costs.

The Freeman Garcia Farm Agricultural Conservation Easement was a recipient of stewardship funds totaling \$13,796 from the NC Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund (NCADFP). These funds were to 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 \$13,796 of Deferred Agricultural, Horticultural and Forestlands Tax set aside for farmland preservation was appropriated for this purpose. In discussions with the State regarding the previously mentioned reimbursement funds, the County learned that the amount of stewardship funds had slightly increased. Both the County match and the appropriation for anticipated grant funds need to increase by \$0.53 to match the actual amount provided by the State.

**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: \$15,685.81 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. An additional \$0.53 of NCADFP will be accepted and appropriated into the Agricultural Conservation Easement Stewardship unit of the Parks, Greenways, Recreation and Open Space CIP Element of the County Capital Fund. The additional County match of \$0.53 will be reallocated from the appropriated reserve of Deferred Agricultural, Horticultural, and Forestlands Tax set aside for farmland preservation 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 28-acre Freeman Garcia Farm agricultural conservation easement is a family tree farm, with a wildlife habitat focus. The farm is comprised of predominantly woodland with mixed hardwood forest and loblolly pines. The property contains over 800 linear feet of stream and sensitive, wetland wildlife habitat. The Wake Soil and Water Conservation District has certified that roughly 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.

The table below provides a detailed breakdown of the requested change to the easement's stewardship budget. Since the State grant funds are increasing by \$0.53, the \$0.53 of additional NCADFP revenue will need to be appropriated into the CIP. The \$0.53 of County match does not need to be appropriated, only reallocated from the appropriated

reserve of Deferred Agricultural, Horticultural, and Forestlands Tax set aside for farmland preservation.

### Stewardship Costs

<i>Stewardship Budget</i>	<i>Approved May 2025</i>	<i>Requested Increase</i>	<i>Total</i>
County Cash	\$13,796	\$0.53	\$13,796.53
NCADFP Revenue	\$13,796	\$0.53	\$13,796.53
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$27,592</b>	<b>\$1.06</b>	<b>\$27,593.06</b>

### Attachments:

1. May 2025 BOC Item Summary for Freeman Garcia Farm
2. CIP Budget Memo – FY 2026 County Capital PGROS