Members Present: Not Present:

Michael Dionne, Chair Kevin Sullivan

Mark Jennings

Jack Hackett

Deborah Shigo

Michael Kirwan

Merry Lineweber

Barbara Soley

Staff:

Seth Creighton, Chief Planner

The chair convened the regular meeting at 6:30pm.

Mr. Dionne welcomed everyone to this public hearing and then read the following into the record:

“Pursuant to the provisions of RSA 36-A:4, RSA 36-A:5, and RSA 675:7, Section 11.21 of the Rochester’s General Ordinances the Conservation Commission is holding a public hearing this evening to discuss and vote on using Conservation Fund money toward the acquisition of a 160+/- acre conservation easement on the “Gauthier Farm”, Bernard Rd, Map 226 Lot 2 and Map 227 Lot 18.

Through “non public” sessions, the Conservation Commission has:

1) Collaborated with the land owners/land owner representatives, South East Land Trust, and Truslow Resource Consultants.

2) Walked and evaluated the land.

3) Hired Truslow Resource Consulting LLC to provide consultation to the Commission, meet with/educate the land owners, conduct a Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment and conduct field sampling; the sum of these were approximately $4,451. The TR investigation’s findings have helped shape the parameters of the conservation easement boundaries.

3) Hired (in conjunction with the property owners) Knight Appraisal to appraise the property. The combined cost of this was $4,000. This appraisal has determined that the effect/value of the conservation easement is $400,000.

4) Reviewed South East Land Trust’s estimate for total project costs, which sum to approximately $468,000.

5) Supported South East Land Trust’ successful in applying to and receiving commitment from Natural Resource Conservation Service’s Agricultural Land Easement grant program. NRCS ALE has committed to providing $200,000 towards this project.

6) Been informed by Chief Planner Seth Creighton that $103,000 are available via the City’s Conservation Fund, and agreed that no more than $100,000 of this be considered for devotion to this project.

7) Been informed and provided copies of draft easement language.

Tonight I ask that Conservation Commission briefly discuss the value of this land and this project and then call for a vote to proceed with contributing to the acquisition placing it in a conservation easement. Additional funds beyond those which are immediately available will be required to close on this acquisition, therefore the motion should include that a request be made to the City Council to ask for $93,000 plus $68,850 (the $68,850 amount could be requested as a transfer of unexpected federal monies received in relation to another conservation project).”

Mr. Creighton noted that member Mr. Sullivan was absent and suggested that alternate member Ms. Soley be seated as a voting member, Ms. Shigo motioned to move support this, Mr. Jennings seconded; the motioned passed.

The Conservation Commission members jointly vocalized many of the reasons why this easement is important, the reasons included: providing public access; floodplain protection; wildlife habitat corridor expansion; connectivity to other conserved lands; continued reclamation of previous site disturbances; preservation of a working farm protection; ability for the land to an active farm destination (such as a vineyard); preserving open space in the time of high development .

The Gauthier family was present and said they are excited to see this project moving forward and are grateful for the ability to continuing farming this land.

Jeremy Lougee from South East Land Trust (SELT) said that he is looking forward to continuing working with both the Gauthier’s and the City of Rochester. Mr. Lougee congratulated the Gauthier’s and Conservation Commission on the efforts to date.

Mr. Jennings motioned to spend up to $100,000 of the Conservation Commissions fund and request that City Council contribute $161,850, and combine that with the grant money secured by SELT and any other funds needed to close on this easement. Mr. Dionne seconded. The motioned passed unanimously.

Mr. Hackett motioned to adjourn; Ms. Shigo seconded. The motion passed.

Respectfully submitted,

Seth Creighton, Chief Planner