

November 30, 2011

Greenbelt Group Recommends Land Deal

At a special meeting called for Nov. 30, 2011, the Ann Arbor greenbelt advisory commission spent most of the 30 minutes in a closed session to discuss possible land acquisition. When commissioners moved back into the public portion of their meeting, commissioners unanimously passed a resolution recommending that the city partner with the Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy and Washtenaw County to preserve a parcel of land within the greenbelt.

The property was identified only by application number – #2005-27. The location of the properties and their owners aren't revealed until resolutions are voted on by the Ann Arbor city council. However, the property discussed by GAC at its Nov. 30 meeting was likely part of an initiative mentioned briefly at GAC's Nov. 9 meeting, which was attended by Jack Smiley, former executive director of the Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy. He had indicated that the conservancy hoped to partner with Ann Arbor's greenbelt program and Washtenaw County's natural areas preservation program on preserving property in the Superior Greenway – land between Ann Arbor and Detroit that's protected from development.

The resolution passed on Wednesday recommended that the city contribute up to \$168,300 for acquisition costs on a conservation easement. In addition, the recommendation calls for the city to be named as secondary grantee on the easement, and to recover 50% of the sale price – or at least the amount contributed by

the city – if the land is ever sold to a private individual. No other details were made public.

During the open session, commissioner Laura Rubin asked Ginny Trocchio – a Conservation Fund staff member who's under contract with the city to provide support for the greenbelt program – to let commissioners know if the property owner agrees to the “extra terms.” Trocchio indicated that if there's a counter-offer, GAC would have time to discuss it at their next regular meeting, on Dec. 14.

Trocchio also told commissioners that the city council will likely discuss the deal during a closed session at the council's Dec. 5 meeting, then vote on the proposal on Dec. 19.

Responding to a follow-up query from The Chronicle, Trocchio said that Wednesday's special meeting was necessary in order to complete the deal before the end of the year. There was no discussion during this special meeting about another greenbelt issue that's being considered by the city council. At its Nov. 21 meeting, councilmembers initially approved expanding the greenbelt's boundaries – a move that had been previously recommended by GAC. The council is expected to take a final vote on that measure on Dec. 5.

Six commissioners attended the Nov. 30 meeting: Peter Allen, Tom Bloomer, Mike Garfield, Catherine Riseng, Liz Rother, and Laura Rubin. Absent were Dan Ezekiel and Carsten Hohnke.