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Ann Arbor officials take action to add more farmland to Greenbelt

By RYAN J. STANTON

The Ann Arbor City Council took steps tonight to add another piece of farmland to the ranks of the city's Greenbelt Program, forever preserving it as open space.

The city will spend \$165,140 from Greenbelt millage proceeds for the purchase a portion of farmland in Ann Arbor Township owned by Kenneth and Joann Zeeb.

The parent parcel is about 83.7 acres and is currently being farmed. The landowner is excluding 2.12 acres - which includes the house and farm buildings - from the Greenbelt.

"The property is considered large enough to sustain agricultural production and is in a location that will encourage additional farmland preservation and agricultural preservation activities," Ginny Trocchio, one of the Greenbelt Program's administrators wrote in a memo to the City Council. "The property is adjacent to the Kapp Farm that was jointly protected by Ann Arbor Township and the City's Greenbelt program in 2006."

The property owners applied to the Ann Arbor Township Land Preservation program in 2008, and the township in turn applied for federal Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program grant funds. The township was awarded \$307,720, which covered half of the purchase of development rights to the property. The city



and township each paid another \$160,140, plus due diligence costs.

In other action tonight, the council voted to approve going after federal grants for two other Greenbelt purchases. That includes a 156-acre farm owned by the Whitney family along Farrell Road and Webster Church Road in Webster Township, and a 98-acre farm owned by the Honke family (no relation to City Council Member Carsten Hohnke) at the intersection of Northfield Church Road and Nollar Road in Northfield Township.

City officials recently announced 709 acres were added to the Greenbelt in 2009, bringing the total land protected by the program to date to 1,782 acres.