



City of Rochester Hills
AGENDA SUMMARY
NON-FINANCIAL ITEMS

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Legislative File No: 2014-0305 ver 2

TO: Mayor and City Council Members

FROM: Gerald Carvey, Chair, GSAB and Keith Sawdon, Director of Finance

DATE: August 22, 2014

SUBJECT: Initial Funding of the Green Space Perpetual Care Trust

REQUEST:

The Green Space Advisory Board and the City's Finance Director are requesting that City Council approve the initial funding of the Green Space Perpetual Care Trust as presented.

BACKGROUND:

May 2005: A Natural Features Inventory (NFI) was conducted for the City of Rochester Hills (City) by Niswander Environment in 2004 and 2005. The NFI was completed as part of the Master Land Use Plan Update completed by McKenna Associates, Inc. The NFI identified steep slopes, floodplains, wetlands, watercourses, woodlands, and Natural Areas within the City. GIS-based maps of the City's natural features have been generated as part of the NFI. The NFI was undertaken with input from Oakland Land Conservancy, Oakland County Planning, Clinton River Watershed Council, Rochester Hills Planning Commission, City Council, and the public.

Sept. 2005: Residents passed a 0.3 mill 10-year millage to acquire and permanently preserve green spaces and natural features within the City of Rochester Hills.. City Council established a Green Space Advisory Board for the purposes of planning and developing strategies, recommending acquisitions, and maintaining the green spaces funded through this millage.

2006: GSAB developed a Property Evaluation Criteria for open space acquisition and evaluation of nominated properties based on the criteria, site visits, greenway connectivity, and how parcels fit into the Oakland County's green infrastructure network. To date, nearly 60 acres have been acquired and protected. In addition, GSAB has also undertaken a steady effort to research elements of a good stewardship program to protect the residents' investment in city-owned open spaces.

May 2009: GSAB made a presentation to City Council regarding four elements of a good stewardship program, which are: a good baseline assessment, a management plan, recruit and train a volunteer staff to implement a stewardship program, and implement a continual education and communication program with surrounding property owners and the community.

June 2010: An inventory and baseline assessment of physical features of green space properties was conducted by Niswander Environmental, LLC.

Spring 2011 and 2012: GSAB hosted "Discovery Hikes" to showcase and educate the public regarding city-owned parcels along the Clinton River Trail between Avon and Rochester Roads.

Fall 2011: GSAB began conducting pilot stewardship projects on the Harding Road city-owned parcel to remove garlic mustard, an invasive plant.

February 2013: GSAB defined stewardship as "the responsible managing of land to protect, conserve, and enhance biodiversity and natural features for the benefit of current and future generations." A stewardship plan should consist of:

1. Planning, which includes assessment, priority setting, action plan, and finances
2. Education, which includes public awareness, educational outreach, and promotion
3. Active participation, which includes volunteer opportunities and city/private contractors.

August 2013: City Council revised GSAB's scope of authority to include a vision and plan for a future stewardship management plan.

November 2013: Residents approved revising the permissible use of the Green Space Millage fund to include future stewardship in order to protect, care, and maintain, and improve pedestrian accessibility to and within green spaces and natural features owned, acquired, or controlled by City, in addition to funding the purchase of land and interests in open space land in Rochester Hills.

As the GSAB transitions from a board that made property acquisition recommendations to a board that recommends stewardship activity it become very apparent to the board that a perpetual funding source be put in place to secure stewardship activity for many generations to come. From that desire the Green Space Perpetual Care Trust was formed.

April 2014: City Council approved the recommendation of GSAB to create a perpetual care trust to provide a permanent source of funding to provide the stewardship needs supported by the residents. The trust would provide and maintain a funding source and grant match for many years into the future for stewardship activities without the need to use principal to fund those activities.

RECOMMENDATION:

In the continuous discussion of a stewardship management plan, which includes hiring an environmental consultant to create management plans and perform stewardship activities, along with considering a reasonable purchase price of the remaining open space parcels available for acquisition, GSAB recommended, at their July 22 meeting, an initial funding of \$4 million dollars to the Green Space Perpetual Trust, which will leave about \$3 million dollars for possible acquisition of the remaining open space parcels that fit the acquisition criteria. A worksheet of available fund balance has been provided by the City's Finance Director.

APPROVALS:	SIGNATURE	DATE
Department Review		
Department Director		
Mayor		
Deputy Clerk		