

City of Vancouver Conservation Futures Proposal – Fenton Acquisition Conservation Futures Background and Recommendation

Request

The City of Vancouver is requesting \$1,000,000, of Conservation Futures funds, or the maximum that may be available, to assist in the purchase of 44.78 acres in the northeast portion of the city for a future community park. The appraised value of the property is \$5,725,000, with a negotiated purchase price of \$5,165,895. Incidental costs (appraisals, due diligence studies, closing costs, and Level 1 improvements, etc.) are estimated at \$176,102.

The city is committed to purchasing the property through a mix of park impact fees (\$3,495,724), donated land value of the wetland area (\$334,000), and a ten-year loan from the city's general fund (\$1,846,273). The executed purchase and sale agreement calls for closing of the acquisition between January 15, 2019, and February 15, 2019, unless extensions are agreed to in writing by the parties.

The City of Vancouver has been granted a waiver of retroactivity by the State of Washington allowing the submittal of grant applications in the next two Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program grant rounds (2020 and 2022) to leverage local revenues to support the acquisition.

Conservation Futures Resources

Built into the Conservation Futures \$7,000,000 bond issue completed in 2018, is an annual allocation of \$250,000 that is available for projects that were not anticipated, or not fully developed for consideration by the Parks Advisory Board and County Council in 2017. Those are the only resources currently available to allocate to the City of Vancouver. The rest of the bond revenues are reserved for the ten projects recommended by the Parks Advisory Board and adopted by County Council. Progress has been made on each of those acquisitions, with some closings expected in 2019. In the event that some of these projects are not realized, the City of Vancouver requests the opportunity to apply for additional funding for this project in the future if additional resources become available.

Consistency with the Conservation Areas Acquisition Plan

The Fenton property is in the southern portion of the Upper Lacamas Creek priority area. The forested wetlands and white oaks on the property are identified as high value conservation areas in the plan. Further, the plan calls for Clark County and project partners to explore "opportunity" projects that preserve high value riparian and upland areas along the extensive network of small streams.

Recommendation

Staff is aware of how difficult it is to locate and acquire land suitable for community and local parks within city limits. Staff recommends that the Parks Advisory Board recommend that County Council allocate \$250,000 of Conservation Futures Revenues to the City of Vancouver to assist in the Fenton acquisition and reserve an opportunity for the city to apply for supplemental funding if available. This recommendation is subject to the following findings:

1. The proposal meets the legislative purpose of the Conservation Futures Program per RCW 84.34;
2. The proposal is consistent with the objectives of the Conservation Areas Acquisition Plan;
3. The proposal has significant value for wildlife, water quality, recreation, farm, forest and/or other conservation benefits;
4. The proposal supports high-quality recreational features/opportunities;
5. The proposals include significant non-conservation futures cost sharing;
6. It is urgent to acquire the property now, before it is converted to competing uses.