

Tompkins County
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND SUSTAINABILITY

121 East Court Street
Ithaca, New York 14850

Edward C. Marx, AICP
Commissioner of Planning and Sustainability

Telephone (607) 274-5560

Memorandum

To: Members of the Planning, Development, and Environmental Quality Committee
of the Tompkins County Legislature
From: Scott D. Doyle, AICP, Associate Planner
Re: **Use of Tompkins County Capital Reserve Fund for Natural, Scenic and Recreation Resource
Protection for Support of the Emerald Necklace/Charles Spencer Preserve Ott Tract Protection
Project**
Date: June 22, 2017

Requested Action

Support the use of \$25,000 from the Capital Reserve Program for the Emerald Necklace/Charles Spencer Preserve Ott Tract Protection Project in the Town of Newfield.

Background

Resolution Number 217 of 2005 (adopted by the Tompkins County Legislature on November 1, 2005) established the Capital Reserve Fund for Natural, Scenic, and Recreational Resource Protection. According to the Resolution,

“... the purpose of this fund is to support participation by Tompkins County in partnerships with other levels of government and private organizations to:

- protect and preserve the natural, scenic, and recreational resources found in the Agricultural Resource Focus Areas and Natural Features Focus Areas identified in the Comprehensive Plan;
- preserve and develop recreational trail corridors that cross municipal borders; and
- develop outdoor recreation facilities, within the focus areas, that are intended to serve all county residents.”

The Conservation Plan establishes the priorities for expending the Capital Reserve Fund. The guidelines were updated in 2017 to support the protection of lands that provide connectivity between important resources or protected areas.

Project Eligibility

The proposed project must meet all of the following minimum requirements:

- The property owner is a willing participant in the project.
- The County cost will be no more than half of the total project cost.
- Another party will be responsible for property management and stewardship, except for the addition of land adjacent to a county forest.
- The project is located in a NFFA or ARFA as identified in the Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan *or serves as a potential link to connect resources within these areas.* (Italicized wording approved by Planning, Development and Environmental Quality Committee on February 2, 2017.

Project Priority Criteria

The proposed project must substantially further at least one of the following objectives:

- Substantially protects land within the 330-foot buffer of a perennial stream.
- Provides public access to Cayuga Lake.
- Protects land that is adjacent to permanently protected open space, including both natural and agricultural lands.
- Protects land on an existing or potential intermunicipal trail corridor.
- Protects a high concentration of Prime Soils or Soils of Statewide Significance.
- Protects a Distinctive or Noteworthy view as identified in the Tompkins County Scenic Resources Inventory.
- *Protects corridor or habitat that can provide for connectivity between protected areas.* (Italicized wording approved by Planning, Development and Environmental Quality Committee on February 2, 2017)

Process

Project proposals will be accepted by the Tompkins County Planning Department on an on-going basis. Projects that meet the Project Eligibility Criteria and at least one of the Project Priority Criteria will be brought to the Planning Advisory Board (PAB) for evaluation. The project will also be presented to the town, village or city in which the project is located (unless the project is sponsored by the municipality). The PAB evaluation of the project will include consideration of how the project would contribute to implementing the Conservation Plan, as well as any input provided by the local municipality. Projects that are recommended by the PAB will be brought to the relevant committee of the Tompkins County Legislature and, ultimately, to the full Legislature for approval.

Proposed Project

The request is for a project that will secure open space that will serve as a habitat connection between the Wildlands and Forestlands Natural Features Focus Areas. This parcel was recently identified in our spring 2017 habitat connectivity study as important to help connect these areas. This land is also located in the Emerald Necklace Greenbelt (a priority project of New York State's Open Space Plan), is adjacent the Finger Lakes Land Trust's Charles Spencer Nature Preserve, and is in close proximity to Cornell University's Arnot Forest, the Newfield State Forest, and the Tompkins County Forest Lands. The funds would support the Land Trust's acquisition and easement development. The Tompkins County Planning Advisory Board (PAB) will be considering the recommendation to use Capital Reserve Funds in support of this project at their June 28th meeting. Updates from that meeting will be provided at the June 29th PDEQ meeting. Discussions between the FLLT and the Town of Newfield are pending and will be completed prior to bringing the resolution to the full Legislature for approval.

Budget Implications

The Capital Reserve Fund balance is currently \$75,023.06. This project proposes the utilization of \$25,000 of those funds to cover a portion of the FLLT's easement development and acquisition costs.

Contact Information

Scott D. Doyle, AICP / 274-5560 / sdoyle@tompkins-co.org

Attachments

- Proposed Emerald Necklace/Charles Spencer Preserve Ott Tract Protection Project Support Materials and Maps from the FLLT
- Proposed Emerald Necklace/Charles Spencer Preserve Ott Tract Protection Project EAF
- Emerald Necklace/Charles Spencer Preserve Ott Tract Protection Project Negative Declaration Resolution
- Emerald Necklace/Charles Spencer Preserve Ott Tract Protection Project Resolution

