



Legislation Text

File #: 19-0417, **Version:** 1

Item:

Agricultural Lands Easement (ALE) Grant Award and 2019 Cooperative Agreement for the Len Needham Farm

Date of BOCC Meeting: September 23, 2019

Request for Board Action:

The Board is requested to approve a 2019 Cooperative Agreement between the County and the United States by and through the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC), for \$99,000 to provide federal grant support towards the protection of the Len Needham farm in northeastern Durham with a permanent conservation easement. The CCC is the federal entity that disburses grant funds under the federal Agricultural Lands Easement Program (ALE). The grant funds are awarded to reimburse Durham County for 50% of the approved appraised value for the acquisition of a conservation easement on 33 acres owned by Len and Cindy Needham.

The Board of County Commissioners previously approved the acquisition of a conservation easement on the Needham farm and corresponding grant submittal in April 2019. The funding for the county's share of the conservation easement was approved from the open space and farmland capital project at that time. The attached federal cooperative agreement award for \$99,000 will pay for 50% of the cost of the appraised value of the easement acreage at the time of closing. The federal ALE funds are distributed as a "pass through" from the CCC to the state's Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS) offices, which administers the program and awards the grants. The funds are paid at the time the easement on each farm is conveyed. The county's matching funds for the easement was previously set aside from the open space and farmland capital project account when the option to purchase the easement was previously approved by the Board, so no additional funding is needed for this easement.

Alignment with Strategic Plan: This conservation easement helps to implement Strategic Plan Goal 4, "Environmental Stewardship and Community Prosperity," by increasing the amount of open space and farmland that has been protected by Durham County. The federal funds in this cooperative agreement supports Goal 5 "Accountable, Efficient and Visionary Government" by leveraging additional funding to stretch county open space funding.

Resource Persons: Jane Korest, Division Head for Open Space & Real Estate; Celeste Burns, Open Space Coordinator, Peri Manns, Deputy Director of Engineering and Environmental Services

County Manager's Recommendation: The County Manager requests that the Board approve the 2019 Cooperative Agreement between Durham County and Commodity Credit Corporation for \$99,000; and to authorize the County Manager to execute the Cooperative Agreement and the corresponding conservation easements on the Len and Cindy Needham farm. A final budget for the farm easement will be brought back to the Board prior to closing

County Manager: _____