

TO: Huntington Select Board
FROM: Huntington Conservation Commission
RE: Maple Wind Farm Conservation Project
DATE: August 27, 2012

The HCC met on July 25 and August 23 to discuss a proposal to help fund a conservation easement for the Maple Wind Farm on Carse Rd. This proposal requests \$35,000 to support the VT Land Trust's purchase of a permanent conservation easement on the farm. The proposal (see attached) came to the HCC in mid-July.

At the August 23 meeting, the HCC voted (4-1) to recommend that the Select Board approve the proposal for \$20,000. A summary of the discussions from the two meetings is listed below.

- 1) HCC reviewed the Criteria for Use of Huntington's Conservation Fund and compared these criteria to the proposal. In general, half or more of the criteria were met in each of the categories of general criteria, agricultural resources, and natural resources:
 - a. General criteria – proposal meets a) contributes toward the acquisitions or perpetual protection of agricultural resources in Huntington; c) leverages additional funds; and d) facilitates the vision for Huntington. There were questions about b) whether or not the project is financially sustainable. The project does not meet e), as it is not the largest, most at risk, or only example of agricultural resources in Huntington.
 - b. Agricultural Resources – proposal meets b) located in proximity to other protected areas; d) has potential for diversified agricultural uses; e) farm buildings and equipment are suitable; and f) uses local farm support services. There were questions as to whether or not the proposal meets a) is economically sustainable; and c) located on prime agricultural soils (the soils are statewide).
 - c. Natural Resources – the proposal meets b) maintains open and green spaces; d) is scenic; and f) preserves forest resources. The proposal does not meet a) restores biodiversity; c) provides recreational opportunities; or e) preserves wetlands and water resources.
- 2) The primary concerns for the project were whether or not the farm is economically stable, and if not, what the chances are for another farmer to purchase the farm and be successful (the land is not tillable).
 - a. The current farmers lease quite a bit of additional land in and outside of Huntington to sustain the farm. In fact, approximately 1/3 of their storage feed comes from land outside of Huntington.
- 3) Other concerns stemmed from not wanting to deplete the conservation fund too much in order to have sufficient funds for high priority, large scale conservation projects.

- 4) The primary support for the proposal came from wanting to support agriculture in Huntington, where there are very few remaining working farms, permanently protect land from development, and wanting to support ecologically sustainable farming practices.

Based on the above concerns and support, the HCC therefore decided not to recommend funding for the full amount of the requested \$35,000. The amount of \$20,000 would be replaced in just over a year of tax revenue, and therefore would not have a large impact on the conservation fund's ability to be available for larger scale projects.

Thank you for considering this recommendation.