COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR
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TO: Jeff Irwin
Chair, Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners

THROUGH: Robert E. Guenzel
County Administrator

FROM: Anthony VanDerworp
Director of Planning and Environment

DATE: September 3, 2008

SUBJECT: Conant Farm Local Historic District Designation

BOARD ACTION REQUESTED:
It is requested that the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners consider adoption of the proposed Local Historic District Ordinance for the Conant Farm, which is located at 5683 and 5671 Napier Road in Salem Township.

BACKGROUND:
On June 5, 1974, the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners adopted by resolution (074-0266) the Washtenaw County Historic Preservation Ordinance, thereby establishing the Washtenaw County Historic District Commission with a mission to protect and preserve historic resources within the County. On July 13, 2004, the Salem Township Board of Trustees approved a resolution requesting the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners to conduct work on their behalf to determine the potential of Conant Farm to be nominated as a local historic district and authorized its Supervisor to execute a contract with Washtenaw County granting the County the authority to exercise jurisdiction granted by P.A. 169 of 1970 and the Washtenaw County Historic Preservation Ordinance #115 over the proposed Conant Farm Local Historic District.

On March 16, 2005, the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners considered this request and passed a resolution (05-0058) to appoint an Historic District Study Committee to evaluate the Conant Farm located at 5683 and 5671 Napier Road in Salem Township, and determine if it meets the criteria to be included in a local historic district. The Board of Commissioners is now requested to review and consider for adoption the Ordinance as discussed below.

DISCUSSION:

State of Michigan Local Historic Districts Act (PA 169)
Pursuant to the State of Michigan Local Historic Districts Act (PA 169 of 1970, as amended) herein referred to as the "Act", Section 399.203 (Historic districts; establishment; study committee; duties; public hearing; notice; actions; availability of writings to public) requires Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners to consider the following:

a) Whether a historic district commission has been established to oversee the proposed district, pursuant of Section 399.204 of the Act.

   On June 5, 1974, the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners adopted by resolution (074-0266) the Washtenaw County Historic Preservation Ordinance, and thereby established the Washtenaw County Historic District Commission. The ordinance was subsequently amended in 1975, 1988, 1999, 2000, and 2003 to remain in compliance with the Act.

b) Whether the proposed local historic district was examined by a committee containing a majority of persons who have a clearly demonstrated interest in or knowledge of historic preservation, and contained representation from 1 or more duly organized local historic preservation organizations.

   The Conant Farm Study Committee was established on March 16, 2005, by resolution (05-0058) of the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners. Committee members met or exceeded the requirements outlined in the Act.

   - ***Ina Hanel-Gerdenich (Chair and Principal Report Author)*** *– Ina Hanel-Gerdenich is a graduate of the Historic Preservation Program at Eastern Michigan University. She was formerly employed as the Preservation Planner for Washtenaw County, serving the Washtenaw County Historic District Commission, and has completed several grant-funded projects for the County.*
   - ***Kathy Holtz*** *– Kathy Holtz graduated with an M.S. in Historic Preservation from Eastern Michigan University. She worked for Washtenaw County in Historic Preservation on the award-winning HistWeb and Heritage Tours projects and was part of the team that surveyed Bridgewater Township farmsteads for HistWeb in 2004.*
   - ***Wilhelmina Lawson*** *– Wilhelmina Lawson is a resident and owner of a farmhouse in Salem Township. She is interested in the history of the local area.*
   - ***Shelley Griffith*** *– Shelley Griffith received a Bachelor of Arts in American Studies from Reed College in 1980. She is currently a graduate student at*

Eastern Michigan University in the History Department, and in that capacity, served as an intern with the Washtenaw County Historic District Commission during the Fall 2004 semester. She is presently a member of the Historical Society of Michigan.

- ***Olive Conant (Ex Officio) –*** *Mrs. Conant is a partner in the Conant Family Limited Partnership, which owns the Conant Farm property.*

- ***Donald Riddering (Ex Officio) –*** *Mr. Riddering is a former member of the Washtenaw County Historic District Commission.*

- ***Nancy Snyder (Ex Officio) –*** *Nancy Snyder has served on the Washtenaw County Historic District Commission for over twenty years, and is currently its Chair.*

- ***Melissa Milton-Pung*** *(Staff) - Washtenaw County Department of Planning & Environment*

c) Whether the Historic District Study Committee conducted an investigation of the proposed Conant Farm Local Historic District in a manner compliant with the Act.

The Study Committee researched the history and significance of the Conant Farm. Committee members consulted local history archives and libraries, conducted oral history interviews with knowledgeable family members, and engaged members of the local community for stakeholder participation in the investigation process.

A preliminary report was produced on February 14, 2008, which recommended local historic designation for the Conant Farm. The report was distributed to the Historic District Commission and public in hardcopy and electronic formats, posted online by the Department of Planning and Environment, and supplied to the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office, the Michigan Historical Commission, the Washtenaw County Historic District Commission, in accordance with the Act. As a matter of courtesy, the report was also furnished to the Washtenaw County Planning Advisory Board and Salem Township.

The Study Committee Report was finalized on June 18, 2008. It incorporates comments received from the public, Study Committee members, Michigan State Historic Preservation Office, Washtenaw County Planning Advisory Board, and the Department of Planning and Environment.

This report meets all requirements outlined in the Act.

d) Whether a Public Hearing was held in compliance with the Act not less than sixty days after the transmittal of the Preliminary Report and whether copies of the report have been made available to the public, the Michigan Historical Commission, and the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office.

The Preliminary Study Committee Report was transmitted to the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office and Michigan Historical Commission on February 14, 2008. The Preliminary Report was also provided to the Washtenaw County Historic District Commission, published on the Washtenaw County website, and made available to members of the public.

In accordance with the Act, a Public Hearing was held more than sixty days after the transmission of the Preliminary Report, on May 21, 2008 at the Jarvis/Stone School in Salem Township. Study Committee and the Department of Planning and Environment coordinated emailing lists and contacts for public notice of the hearing. Members of the Salem Area Historical Society and Salem Township also assisted in publicizing the event, which was attended by approximately twenty enthusiastic local residents.

Is it important to note that the Conant family has recently executed a conservation easement with the Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy, containing the entire 94.5 acre farm. In addition to members of the public, Committee members, and Washtenaw County Planning and Environment staff, staff of the Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy were also in attendance at the Public Hearing, to provide comment and answer questions regarding the complementary aspects of local historic district designation and conservation easements.

IMPACT ON HUMAN RESOURCES:
None.

IMPACT ON BUDGET:
None.

IMPACT ON INDIRECT COSTS:
None.

IMPACT ON OTHER COUNTY DEPARTMENTS OR OUTSIDE AGENCIES:
Guiding Principle No. 7 -- This project will encourage Washtenaw County Government, through the Historic District Commission, to work in cooperation with Salem Township and the Southeast Michigan Land Conservancy to protect the historic/architectural and open space resources of the Conant Farm.

CONFORMITY TO COUNTY POLICIES:
This action is in conformance with County policies.

ATTACHMENTS/APPENDICES:

Attachment A	Conant Farm Local Historic District Resolution
Attachment B	Conant Farm Local Historic District Ordinance
Attachment C	Conant Farm Local Historic District Report

A RESOLUTION ADOPTING AN ORDINANCE DESIGNATING THE CONANT FARM AS A WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORIC DISTRICT UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF THE WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

WASHTENAW COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

September 3, 2008

WHEREAS, the property at 5683 and 5671 Napier Road known as Conant Farm in Salem Township had potential to be nominated as a historic district; and

WHEREAS, in 2004, Salem Township asked the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners via the Washtenaw County Historic District Commission to have the property listed as a historic district; and

WHEREAS, under Michigan's Historic Districts Act (P.A. 169 of 1970, as amended in 1992), a historic district study committee must be established to evaluate the property and determine if it meets criteria to be included in a historic district; and

WHEREAS, under P.A. 169, the County Board of Commissioners has the authority to establish such a historic district committee; and

WHEREAS, on March 16, 2005, the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners passed resolution 05-0058 authorizing the Historic District Study Committee to study the Conant Farm; and

WHEREAS, the preliminary report by the study committee was issued on February 14, 2008 and on May 21, 2008 a Public Hearing was held in Salem Township to discuss the proposal; and

WHEREAS, on June 18, 2008 the Conant Farm Historic District Study Committee Final Report was issued incorporating comments from the Public Hearing, with a recommendation that the Board of Commissioners adopt an ordinance designating the Conant Farm as a Washtenaw County Historic District under the jurisdiction of the Washtenaw County Historic District Commission; and

WHEREAS, on August 14, 2008 the Washtenaw County Historic District Commission reviewed and recommended approval of the proposal to create a historic district for the Conant Farm; and

WHEREAS, this matter has been reviewed by Corporation Counsel, Finance, Human Resources, the County Administrator's Office and the Ways and Means Committee;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners hereby accepts the Conant Farm Historic District Study Committee Final Report, as on file with the County Clerk.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board of Commissioners hereby adopt the ordinance designating the Conant Farm as a Washtenaw County Historic District under the jurisdiction of the Washtenaw County Historic District Commission, as attached hereto and made a part hereof.