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FRANKLIN COUNTY COMMISSIONERS SUPPORT THE BIRDS AND THE BEES

The Franklin County Commissioners today voted to accept a grant from the Franklin County Soil and Water Conservation District that will fund a Pollinator Garden at the county's International Harvest Community Garden on Frank Road. The 1-acre Pollinator Garden will employ a custom seed mix of native Ohio prairie grasses and wildflowers to support pollinator insects, birds, small mammals, and other local wildlife.

"Poverty continues to be a challenge faced by too many in our community," said Commission President Marilyn Brown. "Community Gardens and Pollinator Gardens are a great way to encourage the pollination and local production of healthy, affordable foods for families, especially those gardening right next door at the International Harvest Community Garden. I applaud the work of our Public Facilities Management team and the Franklin County Soil and Water Conservation District to address one of the county's top priorities of stabilizing the local food system."

The project will begin with the environmentally responsible removal of non-native and invasive plants, and the county will then contract with a local farmer to till the soil several times over the summer. Seeding will be done in the fall, and the garden will reach maturity in 2-3 years.

"We know that 40% of our food supply depends on pollinators," Commissioner Brooks said. "It is not an overstatement to say that it's our patriotic duty to protect these beautiful creatures, and we can have fun and enjoy community and family time doing so."

The Franklin County Commissioners partnered with the County Engineer's office in 2014 to populate 9 acres with similar wildflowers and prairie grasses at Holton Ditch, and is exploring other options to support pollinators and add beehives to county property.

"The Franklin County Commissioners have long been committed to supporting local food producers and encouraging the local food movement," said Commissioner John O'Grady, who sponsored the County's partnership with the City of Columbus and Local Matters on the Local Food Action Plan. "The creation of another pollinator garden is another great opportunity to expand upon the efforts already underway to increase the availability of fresh, nutritious and locally sourced foods."

In addition to providing space for International Harvest and a community garden downtown, the commissioners partner with the City of Columbus to support more than 250 community gardens around Central Ohio. The amount of the grant is \$1,300, and tilling at the new pollinator garden site is expected to begin later this month.

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