

New Hope Creek Corridor Advisory Committee

Minutes for August 9, 2012

(Present: Berndt, Edeburn, Healy, Kent, Welch, Brendan Moore, Helen Youngblood, Bo Howes, Helen Fischer, Stan Bukowski, Bill Webster)

- (1) **Sandy Creek Park.** Healy reported that thanks to the work of John Goebel, and a large number of volunteers, much has been accomplished in recent weeks and more is planned for the near future. A 1000 liter water tank has been installed, which captures rainwater from the roof of the restroom building. A large swing (for adults, not kids) is being built near the bocce court that will have a panoramic view of the center of the park. Ken Coulter's widow, Marlene, and son, Martin, have selected a rock that will be inscribed as a memorial stone at the Coulter Bridge and the rock has been transported to the sign shop. The bridge naming event is scheduled for Saturday, October 6. We also hope to have some environmental education activities that day, and a symbolic planting of a couple of plants in the 'butterfly garden' (main planting will be done in spring).

Dept. of Parks and Recreation has been supplying us with construction materials, but there is a real need for funding for other costs, including \$200 for the memorial stone. Please direct contributions to Friends of Sandy Creek Park via the Keep Durham Beautiful website. All those who knew Ken Coulter are encouraged to make a contribution, with even very small ones welcome.

- (2) **Hollow Rock Park.** Opening of the park has been frustrated by parking issues. Inability to close Pickett Rd. means that visitors cannot safely (and legally) park along the roadside. And the much-needed parking lot and entrance road off Erwin Rd. would cost an estimated \$60,000. An archeological survey (Native American and colonial road sites) will be undertaken in the Fall. Healy suggested that we simultaneously study the area's geology, identifying important sites, and laying the basis for a future geology trail. Both geology and archeology/history will be important parts of future interpretation in the park.

- (3) **Chapel Hill Greenways Master Plan.** Bill Webster, Assistant Director of Chapel Hill Parks and Recreation Department, gave a presentation on revision of CH Greenways Plan, which is part of overall City Master Plan. The Plan will go a public hearing on September 12 and to Town Council in November or December. A recent community survey ranked trails #1 as a citizen desire. The town has recently been quite successful with both land purchase (about 100 acres) and trail development. Several of the trails hold promise of becoming parts of a system that would serve both Chapel Hill and Durham. The part of the system affecting the New Hope corridor is primarily the area around Dry Creek. The fundamental problem, of course, is crossing I-40. Neither Erwin Rd. nor 15-501 now provide a safe bike/ped crossing of the interstate. Webster hopes that one day the Erwin Rd. crossing can have a bike/ped bridge to one side. There is also the possibility of a connection at New Hope Commons, but that would require a very expensive new bridge and is far in the future. It was noted that there is money for trails and bike routes in the new federal transportation bill, but it also allows governors to opt out and use the money for highways. It was observed that there is a large recreational bicyclist community that we should make links with. Finally there was an extensive discussion of security along trails and in parks, recently a problem on the American Tobacco Trail. Chapel Hill has had relatively little problem with security over the years.
- (4) **TTA Scoping.** Extensive comments on the environmental impact of the light rail corridor and stations between South Square and Patterson Place, including the resolutions passed by the NHCCAC at previous meetings and our correspondence with the NC Natural Heritage Program, were submitted to Triangle Transit Authority before their June 18 deadline. Many thanks to John Kent for his hard work on this, including suggestions for an alternative crossing of the NH corridor that would hew closely to 15-501. Scoping is a process that agencies go through as part of the NEPA process, identifying issues that should be covered in the Environmental Impact Statement.
- (5) **Development Applications.** In Durham County, a 336 unit apartment complex has been proposed as part of the Patterson Place development. It is located very close to the NH corridor and to the trail complex at Chapel Hill Road Park. Apparently no rezoning is needed because it was approved as part of the overall Patterson Place mixed use project. Nevertheless, it must go through the Development Review Board and a number of issues have been raised with regard to water quality and building on steep slopes. In

Orange County a proposal has been submitted for several dozen houses on 2 acre lots on a piece of land adjoining the TLC Johnston Mill Preserve. No rezoning is needed in this case. It was suggested that TLC work with the developer to see if impacts on the visual quality of the preserve and on water quality can be minimized, perhaps also offering the development a direct connection to the Preserve's trail system.

- (6) **DOST Matching Grants Program.** Moore said that after a two year hiatus, DOST has revived its program of matching grants to non-profits for parks and trails. Deadline is September 14. Healy said he would ask Goebel if we should write a proposal for Sandy Creek improvements. He added that we might instead/also ask for funds to build the three bridges necessary on the Durham side of Hollow Rock Park.

Please note: The Headwaters Group of the North Carolina Sierra Club will hold a "Get to Know You" picnic for SC members and the general public at Sandy Creek Park from 4-7 pm on Saturday, September 8. All are invited.