

New Hope Creek Corridor Advisory Committee

Minutes of Meeting of December 12, 2013

(Present: Edeburn, Goebel, Healy, Welch, Kent, Brendan Moore, Helen Fischer, Helen Youngblood, Terry Rackaway)

- (1) Old Chapel Hill Road Park. Moore said that he had a student draft copy for 4 interpretive signs in the park. He said that he recently, with the help of volunteers, completed the last 36 feet of boardwalk. Kent said that at this time of year, with no leaves on the trees, one can see deer and get better views of the forest itself.
- (2) Sandy Creek Park. Goebel said the wildlife viewing platform is completed, except for the wall of the blind, which will be painted by School of Science and Math students in March. A drawing of the wall, which depicts the wetland site, is available on the Friends of Sandy Creek Facebook site. The picnic tables and grill will be ordered at the beginning of 2014. During the next few weeks, volunteers will plant trees and native grasses on the steep hill above the bocce court. We will plant wild rice or other waterfowl attracting plants in the area by the viewing deck, so long as we can be sure they will not be invasive. Healy said that the blockage of the stream by debris at the 15-501 underpass has recently been cleaned out, which may reduce flooding of the trail during storm events. He is anxious to start promoting the park to groups working with people with movement limitations and noted that UNC had just moved its spinal cord injury clinic to the old Borders store on 15-501, only 10 minutes from the park. Kent said he had seen a very interesting EPA air quality monitoring station at the South Durham public library and suggested we try to get one for the park. He said that a flag is flown daily showing local air quality.
- (3) Hollow Rock Park. Moore said the federal grant is 99% certain and it is likely that there will be a contract by February. He said it will take about two years to complete the Erwin Rd. parking lot, formalize and improve trails, and other improvements. The project is complex because it involves both Durham and Orange Counties. Healy asked about the old store. Moore said that this grant does not deal with the store, though a site would be identified. Healy said that Preservation Durham has put considerable resources into stabilizing the store—he asked about an Orange County analog to Preservation Durham (Note: there is an Orange County Historic Preservation Commission). Moore said there is some vandalism in the park, even though it is not officially open.

- (4) Clearcutting near New Hope north of 15-501. There have been many inquiries and complaints to local government about several acres of clearcutting visible from the highway. Youngblood said this was done by the landowner under an approved forest management plan and appears to comply with legal requirements. She said no development plan has been filed for any of this property.
- (5) Terry Rackaway, who was for 14 years a staff engineer for Triangle Transit Authority, outlined a proposed alternative route for the Durham-CH LRT line. It would cross the New Hope corridor along Rt. 54 and would avoid Sandy Creek east of Garrett Rd., reducing environmental impact. It would also, he said, have fewer curves (a significant safety advantage), require crossing of fewer properties, offer more development opportunities and provide CH with faster service to Raleigh. He presented maps for the proposed route. Rackaway and Kent wanted this route added as an alternative for the forthcoming EIS. Healy said that the idea seemed worth discussing, but that the NHCCAC had told TTA during scoping that they were satisfied with adding analysis of a route following 15-501 in the corridor area. He said that the preliminary EIS will be coming out soon and that consideration of this idea, whatever his merits, would at this point best be introduced as a comment on the preliminary EIS. He said the NHCCAC would consider this alternate route after it read the analysis and recommendations in the preliminary EIS.
- (6) The committee reviewed the members of New Hope Creek Corridor Advisory Committee, who are appointed by the committee, but required to represent certain organizations or locations. Current members are

Durham Open Space and Trails Commission—John Goebel

Chapel Hill Greenways Comm.—Chris Berndt

Duke Forest—Judd Edeburn

Orange County Parks and Recreation Council—Floyd Bridgwater (inactive)

Friends of New Hope Creek (2 members)—Bob Healy, vacant

Durham County Landowner (2 members)—Walter Fowler, Charlie Welch

Orange County Landowner(2 members)—Billy Olive (inactive), vacant

“Advisors”—non members who come to most meetings and are helpful in various ways—John Kent (Streamwatch), Bo Howes (Triangle Land Conservancy), Ed Harrison (Chapel Hill Town Government)

Government employees who usually or often attend meetings—Brendan Moore (Durham County), Helen Youngblood (Durham City/County Planning), Jane Korest (Durham County), Rosetta Radtke (Durham Parks and Recreation), Helen Fischer (Sandy Creek Park neighbor), Rich Shaw (Orange County)

Healy said that we need to fill vacancies and replace inactive members who rarely come to meetings. He will begin the process of identifying new members, who will be presented to the Committee at a future meeting for debate and vote.