

# **New Hope Creek Corridor Advisory Committee**

## **Minutes of Meeting of December 11, 2014**

Present: Goebel, Healy, Erin Crouse, Welch, John Kent, Bo Howes (Triangle Land Conservancy), Allan Dippy (Durham Bike-Ped), Brendan Moore (Durham County), Helen Youngblood (Durham Planning), Kelly Meehan (Nicholas School—bike interest)

- (1) Healy said that he had just returned from the (very well attended) funeral service for our dear friend B.B. Olive. He asked for a moment of reflection on this wonderful man, who had done so much for the community in general and the New Hope in particular. He said that he had left a note on behalf of the NHCCAC in the remembrance book at the funeral home, with the hope that the family would see it.
- (2) Healy had asked Jarrod Edens, proposer of the “Candleshop Tracts” rezoning on Cornwallis and 15-501 to meet with us to brief us on his project and receive questions. He agreed to attend our November meeting, which we cancelled because of conflict with the Duke Forest Gathering. Healy called him regarding presentation at this (December) meeting and also sent him an email. There was no response. Youngblood said she thought the plan had been submitted to staff. Goebel said that the Colony Hill homeowners assn. had offered comments.
- (3) Sandy Creek Park Update. Goebel showed some of the 20 x 20 inch and 9 x 9 inch interpretive signs that will soon be installed on (already finished) posts in the park. He said that the park has been approved as both a National Wildlife Federation certified wildlife habitat and a Monarch Butterfly breeding area. He said that he will apply to the North Carolina Native Plant Society for designation as a refuge for native plants. Goebel said that we need someone to do a biological inventory of the park. Kent suggested a “bio-blitz” model in which a large group of experts do the inventory jointly and in a short time.

Bo Howes mentioned the Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count. He said that Sandy Creek is included in the inventory, but as part of a larger field unit. Goebel said that the Facebook site has been a great way to monitor vandalism in the park, such as the recent damage to our “meadow” by a pickup truck. Police and the Durham Parks Department are discussing how to sanction the perpetrators, who have been identified. New bollards and another chain have been installed by Parks and Recreation to help shut off remaining vehicular access. Goebel said the wildlife observation deck has been given a Golden Leaf award by the Durham Appearance Commission. The head of General Services for the city is reported to be interested in our proposed Americans With Disabilities friendly trail. Bob Shaw did a PowerPoint presentation on the trail that could be shown in the adjoining retirement communities. Youngblood talked about cross country track sports as another recreational possibility at the park, probably in collaboration with Durham Academy.

Healy said that protection of Monarch Butterfly habitats in the U.S. and Canada (especially plants like milkweed) was one of six priorities that came out of this year's meeting of the Presidents of Canada, Mexico and the U.S., required by NAFTA. He said that we might get help from the Mexican Consulate in Raleigh for a "Goodbye to the Monarchs" event that could be held late next September.

Goebel said that invasive plants are still a problem, particularly Japanese stilt grass, olive and privet.

Goebel proposed a March 14 dedication ceremony for work done to date.

- (4) Hollow Rock Park. Moore said the parking lot and bridges are still in the design stage. They should be built by Fall 2016, at which time the park could open. He said that volunteer projects in the park should await the park opening. He said there is money in the trails grant for entrance and wayfinding signs, but not for interpretive signs. Healy suggested that geological research could be done starting immediately so that we would be able to quickly move on signage and exhibits once the park is open. Moore said that other projects could include removal of privet near Trinity School, and closing of old trails and replanting to keep them closed.
- (5) TTA had several community meetings last month. The draft EIS on the rail project will appear in May or June 2015. Kent said that comments can be made only on the draft, not on the final document. He showed the committee a ballot-like comment card that was distributed at the meeting (Healy and Kent had submitted comments). He encouraged other committee members to comment, particularly on the alternative routings by which the Light Rail Transit might cross New Hope Creek and the location of the repair and maintenance facility.
- (6) Healy said that he had recently attended a meeting of about 75 bike enthusiasts, who had gathered to remember 3 experienced cyclists who had recently been killed by automobiles in Durham and Chapel Hill. He said that he hoped the cycling community would organize itself to help us seek safe and scenic bike/ped trails in the New Hope area. He said there is a new organization called Bike Durham. It was noted that Chapel Hill has disbanded its Bike/Ped Commission and replaced it with a "Transportation Connectivity Board".

Crouse said the Bolin Creek trail extension was going to bid and the Tanyard Branch trail was to be paved. A development proposal near Obey Creek proposes various bike/ped features, including a pedestrian bridge over 15-501 that would connect with Southern Village.

- (7) Youngblood reported on development proposals. (a) Dan Jewell's firm is proposing commercial rezoning of a tract at 15-501 and Witherspoon. One issue is the extent of removal of tree cover as viewed from the highway. (b) the "Candleshop" plan is expected to be submitted soon (c) the Sheets gas station proposal for the intersection of Hwy 751 and I-40 is moving forward.