

Agenda June 11, 2015

New Hope Creek Corridor Advisory Committee

Minutes of Meeting of June 11, 2015

(Present: Crouse, Goebel, Healy, Welch, Brendan Moore, Jane Korest, Alan Dippy, Helen Youngblood, John Kent)

(1) Hollow Rock Park update. Moore said bids for bridges on Durham side close June 30, with construction anticipated in late August. Contracting for the parking lot off Erwin Road is slightly delayed but the actual completion date should not change. Korest said the interlocal agreement has now been approved by all the jurisdictions. It was noted that we should start thinking about interpretive signs. The federal grant will only pay for signs stating rules and directional signs.

(2) Inspection hike on New Hope Bottomlands trail and follow-up plans. Korest and Moore led several members of the NHCCAC on an inspection hike of the Bottomlands boardwalk and trail. About 10 people braved thunderheads and saw that large portions of the trail alternate between a flooded and a dry state. Moore noted that the whole central portion of the trail was subject to flooding, especially in winter when vegetation is not taking up water. Youngblood said there is clear evidence of lots of use of the trail. She also noted the great biological significance of the area. Several suggestions for follow-up were made: using flagstones on the higher elevations, using flagstones or other stones that had a rough or scarified texture to avoid slippery conditions, using crushed stone in some areas, routing the trail so that one could close off sections during times of flood without having to close the whole loop.

(3) Long range trail planning—Gobel observed that there is currently little money for new trails in the City of Durham budget for the next 10 years. This puts in jeopardy the long range hopes we have for trails along Dry Creek, Mud Creek, extension of the Sandy Creek Trail, etc. Moreover, while we have a fairly good idea of the route of the Sandy Creek extension, there are no specific plans for the other trails. This is made more complicated by the extremely wide floodplains in the Dry Creek, Mud Creek, and New Hope Creek areas. Goebel suggested that we involve an experienced trail planning firm. He said there was \$5000 in funding for a Mud Creek Trail at Keep Durham Beautiful. Youngblood said that planners from throughout the RTP region are starting to talk together about trails and open space.

Crouse said that Chapel Hill is looking at a part of Dry Creek off Erwin Road as the site for a “fully accessible playground.”

Youngblood brought up the issues of the relation of bike/ped trails to the LRT route. Healy said that we should make common cause with the bike/ped organizations as well as interested individuals.

(4) Sandy Creek update. Goebel said that private money has been raised for the plan for a paved handicap-accessible loop that would go around the meadow, behind the easternmost settling tank, and through the butterfly garden down to the picnic shelter. He said that there may be city funds available for trail construction. Goebel said that Blue Ridge Trailworks may help with the longer handicap trail. Goebel would also like for us to improve the Garrett Road trail outside the conservation easement. The butterfly attractive plants are now in magnificent bloom. A committee has been meeting to plan for the October 10 "Farewell to the Monarchs" celebration.

The NHCCAC voted unanimously to forward the resolution below to Durham's City Council and County Commission.

(6) Last week, Kent and Healy attended a TTA presentation on their EIS work, including the status of the LRT route in the New Hope corridor. TTA has concluded that the original LPA route ("cross country" in the New Hope Bottomlands) is no longer feasible and is recommending route 2A. The NHCCAC is very happy that the bottomlands route is no longer being pushed, but is concerned about the impact of route 2A on the wetlands on the east side of Garrett Road. We plan to look very closely at the draft EIS when it is released in late summer.

Resolution of Support for the "Farewell to the Monarchs" Celebration

Sandy Creek Park, October 11, 2015

Whereas, the annual migration of Monarch Butterflies from their breeding grounds throughout the Eastern U.S. and Canada to their winter habitat in central Mexico is one of nature's most impressive phenomena and profound mysteries;

Whereas, the Monarch Butterfly is a recognized symbol of the environmental collaboration among Canada, Mexico and the U.S. under the NAFTA side agreements;

Whereas, the Monarch is threatened by habitat loss in both its summer and winter habitats;

Whereas, the planting of milkweed and other butterfly-friendly vegetation in the U.S. and Canada is crucial to maintaining healthy Monarch populations;

Whereas, Durham’s 103 acre Sandy Creek Park has been recognized by Monarch Watch as an important “waystation” by virtue of both its natural vegetation and hundreds of planted milkweed plants;

Whereas, each Fall, hundreds of Monarchs leave Sandy Creek Park for a long migration to a tiny area in the mountains of Central Mexico;

Therefore, the city/county of Durham proclaims October 10, 2015 as “Farewell to the Monarchs Day” and encourages all residents to join in the celebration to be held that day in Sandy Creek Park.