

# **New Hope Creek Corridor Advisory Committee—Minutes of Meeting of May 11, 2006**

**Present:** Walter Fowler, Bill Bracey, John Goebel, John Kent, Bob Healy, Bill Olive, Sally Robertson, Hildegard Ryals, Charlie Welch, Wendy Jacobs, Ed Harrison, Joe Blackley (Olive & Olive), Emily Weingarten (writing a book about New Hope), Kristin Knight (KCI Engineering), Brian Hemel (KCI), Mike Schlegel (KCI)

- (1) Fowler reported on the Leigh Farm Earth Day event. About 100 people attended and got a good impression of the possibilities for the future park site. Jim Wise wrote a nice article on Leigh Farm for the Durham edition of the News and Observer.**
  
- (2) Durham Parks and Recreation Department will have a planning meeting on Leigh Farm Park on May 23, 7-9 pm at the Parks and Recreation main office (old PSNC building, 400 Cleveland St, downtown Durham). Several studies and surveys (e.g. archeology) have been done so far. There is \$300 K in the capital improvements budget for Leigh Farm for this year. A historic park planner is involved.**

**We need to emphasize the intent of the state legislature was to protect cultural heritage, not create a general use park. NHCCAC members are encouraged to attend the planning meeting.**

- (3) Brown tract (Mt. Moriah Rd.) restoration. Harrison mentioned that in his 1989 biological survey of the property he called it the “Brown meadows and woodlots”. Liz Pullman has also explored this area. Three staff members from KCI Engineering, of Raleigh, made a presentation on their plans to restore the part of the Brown tract closest to the creek. There are 46 acres under conservation easement, of which 27 acres of wetland/floodway will be restored and 3.3 acres of existing wetlands enhanced. The Browns will continue to farm the rest of their lands, along Mt. Moriah Rd., and will have very limited use of the land under easement. There is no provision for public access under the easement. The state of North Carolina owns the easement—the restoration work is being done under the Ecosystem Enhancement Program, which offsets wetlands disturbed elsewhere by NCDOT. KCI is doing a “full delivery project” in which they both design the restoration and carry out the work. The basic idea is to return the site from drained ag land, its state for the last 50-100 years, to its normal function as part of the New Hope seasonal floodplain. Earthmoving to remove old drainage channels will be done this summer, and trees and other plants put in place in fall. KCI will monitor the site for 5**

growing seasons. They will be removing invasives, which may take several seasons.

We hope that KCI will give us a tour of the site when they finish planting in the fall.

- (4) The group was happy to note and celebrate the fact that John Kent has been honored as Urban Conservationist of the Year by the Durham County Soil and Water Conservation District. Well done! John reminded us that this is National Wetland Month.
- (5) Bill Olive introduced Joe Blackley, a paralegal from his office, who will be helping with Bill's history of the New Hope. Bill is especially interested in learning about early history such as Native American and old mills. Joe may be interviewing many of us.  
Harrison said that one topic that might be covered is a huge Big Shellbark Hickory, the only occurrence in NC, which was discovered south of Old Chapel Hill Road by Harry LeGrand during his biological inventory in 1998. Harrison speculated that it might have come from a seed brought by Native Americans. He thought that Old Chapel Hill Road, which is built on a ridge, might have been an old trading path.  
Kent pointed out that there is a rip-rap bordered canal near Trinity School that might have been built by slaves.  
Ryals noted that we should not forget the early contributions to New Hope conservation of Shirley Marshall and Moses Carey.  
Healy suggested that high quality satellite images from Google Earth will provide a tool for discovering even more subtle human modifications of the New Hope landscape and will motivate further historical and archeological investigations.
- (6) Welch reported on his conversation with Dale McKeel regarding connecting Sandy Creek Trail with Garrett Road. Dale said this has been discussed by the Church of the Good Shepherd for several years. They would prefer to have it carved through the end of one of the existing streets. But there is the question of where hikers would park (but this might not be necessary if it were conceived as a through route rather than a starting point). Parks and Recreation will be reworking the artificial wetlands at Sandy Creek Park. We need to work along with DOST to make sure that trail access can be established on the west side of the Park.
- (7) Healy reported on the Land for Tomorrow effort, an attempt to put a \$1 billion bond issue on the November 2006 ballot for acquisition of land of natural and cultural importance statewide. A legislative meeting was held last week at which this was discussed; a bill will be introduced May 23. Healy will keep you informed about this effort.
- (8) Fowler commented on the multiple books being written on New Hope related topics (a Duke book on the history of the Korstian Division of Duke Forest, Bill Olive's book, and a proposal by Emily Weingarten [ph. 402-0160].) There is lots to be said, and he hopes they will not duplicate each other.

**Fowler recently gave a talk to Rotary on the New Hope and will make his slides available to us.**

**Next meeting--Thurs., June 8 at 5 pm, Forest**

**View School** Healy will be out of the country June 4-29 so Ryals will organize this meeting.