

New Hope Creek Corridor Advisory Committee—Minutes of Meeting of July 12, 2007

Present: Edeburn, Fowler, Goebel, Healy, Kent, Ryals, Welch, Greg Schuster, Helen Youngblood, Jane Korest, Mark Bowles and Rob Coleman (Trammell Crow Residential)

- (1) Web page (www.newhopecreek.org)--new material posted, check it out! Includes new link to TLC New Hope page, people to contact to become a trail volunteer or “trailwatcher” and start of new page with information and contacts for teachers. Webmistress Sally Robertson requests additional information and corrections to writeup on Hollow Rock store. Healy suggested that John Kent put his valuable long term water quality data on line. We would then link it to the New Hope Creek page.
- (2) Water quality hearing for Jordan Lake. A hearing on proposed nutrient rules for Jordan Lake watershed is being held today in Carrboro, with Ed Harrison among those attending. Healy noted that our New Hope protection efforts over the years have had a watershed protection function, even though we were repeated told in the early years that Jordan Lake was not a water supply reservoir. (On checking the original law establishing the Lake, Healy found that water supply was indeed one of the statutory purposes.
- (3) Update on Hollow Rock and Leigh Farm planning. Korest said that the Hollow Rock planning group would start meeting in early September. She also reported that the request for proposals for the archeological survey of the area would go out soon.

Rosetta Radtke, planner with Durham Parks and Recreation Dept., sent the following report on the status of planning for Leigh Farm park:

Piedmont Wildlife Center has completed its admin office move to Leigh Farm. They are using one of the non-historic buildings Parks had formerly used as storage. They have also relocated their pre-release and release programs for baby birds to the property, and the birds are doing well. By the end of the year, they plan to house some staff and interns in the renovated slave cabin currently leased to tenants so that they will have a 24/7 presence at the Farm. Longer term goals are to move their sanctuary clinic and environmental ed programs there as well. Their Board is exploring options for doing this.

An exciting new partnership in the making is with S.E.E.D.S., South East Efforts Developing Sustainable Spaces, Inc. They are a non-profit community garden group whose goal is to teach people to care for the earth, themselves, and each other through a variety of garden-based programs. They are interested in helping us recreate the old garden next to the big house, using old plant varieties and methods like Old Salem does, and in clearing some land to put into sustainable agriculture. They are also considering a farmers market and educational programming at Leigh Farm.

The City is in the process of going through annexation which will allow us to tie into water and sewer at the property line which is the first step toward getting restroom facilities of some sort at the site. By the end of summer, we should have a 10-12 car gravel parking lot installed just outside the historic core (where two non-historic houses are being demolished) off the entrance drive.

The disc golf folks have been in discussion with us about possible sites outside of the historic core for a disc golf championship course.

We have a caretaker living full time again in the big house and are close to putting out an RFQ for proposals to stabilize chimneys and foundation in the big house, restore the slave cabin with stick-built chimney, and make several needed repairs to the other buildings.

We are about to begin the process of reactivating a Friends group and look forward to getting that up and running as soon as possible. We're working on a number of other strands as well, but these are the ones coming together at the moment. We will keep you updated and hope you will want to join us in the new Friends group. Please let me know if you'd like more information about anything or have any questions.

- (4) Presentation by Mark Bowles and Rob Coleman (Trammell Crow Residential) of final plan for apartment project on Garrett Road. Slated to go to Planning Commission in August. The proposed development contains more units than did the Centex development, a project which we had opposed and which was turned down by City Council, but the TCR site plan is far more sensitive to impacts on the New Hope. In particular, much of the vegetation on the sides and rear of the site will be retained. A stub road will connect to the shopping center next door, allowing residents to walk to the center and providing for eventual opening of a street connection if and when the center is redeveloped. Provision is made in the plan for a sidewalk and bike lane along Garrett Road in front of the property. A bicycle trail could go through the shopping center, up Garrett, then cross into the paved road behind Mark Jacobsen Toyota, eventually connecting with the (paved) Sandy Creek trail. Several committee members walked the TCR site earlier in the year, and agreed with DOST that there is no need to ask for vertical access for a nature trail between the New Hope and Garrett Rd. through this site, given the existing access easement between the New Hope and Garrett Rd. that exists on the north boundary of Alexan Farms. The developer was quite cooperative in keeping us up to date on changes in its plans, and in giving us access to the property.

Trammell Crow cannot build in the New Hope floodplain and Bowles expressed the intent that the land eventually be conveyed to a public agency. The Committee expressed some concern that, at present, the only public access provided as a committed element in the development proposal is a north-south trail immediately to the rear of the property. This is useful, but we may also want a future trail connection farther into the floodplain—this awaits future planning and design studies. If the floodplain land is retained by the developer, there might be future difficulties in securing such access. Bowles offered to include a public access easement on the entire property as a committed element of their proposal. (On July 18, committee members received an email from Bowles that stated “We will be adding language to the committed elements to allow all the land west of Mud Creek to be publicly accessible, regardless of who is the ultimate owner.”)

The Committee unanimously passed the following resolution:

The New Hope Creek Corridor Advisory Committee endorses the final zoning plan that will be submitted by Trammell Crow Residential for its Garrett Road apartment project. We commend the developer for its consideration of environmental quality and plans for future trails and for involving and communicating with us from the beginning of the design process.

In our letter to Mark Bowles, the following language will appear. “The Committee is actively working on plans to build recreational trails in the New Hope Creek floodplain. We commend you for offering public access to the Mud Creek portion of your property as a committed element of your zoning plan. We believe that access to future trails in the New Hope basin, as well as what we hope will be an eventual connection of the bicycle trail at the front of your property to a larger system of walking/biking trails, including access to Sandy Creek Park, will prove a popular amenity for the residents of your development, as well as a benefit to the whole community.”

- (5) Duke School Expansion. Youngblood showed plans of a proposed expansion of Duke School for Children, which lies along Erwin Rd. between 751 and Cornwallis. The expansion was made possible through a land swap involving the school, Duke University, and a neighboring landowner. Duke University is giving up a piece of Duke Forest research lands and will gain land at Duke School’s current lower school campus, which is in the middle of its Central Campus development.

It is unfortunate that we have not been given the opportunity to participate in review of this project at an earlier date. As it stands, the project requires only a “Minor Special Use Permit” and only a single public hearing will be held before the zoning board of appeals. The project does not encroach on the floodplain, though it comes close. Moreover, the land swap means that the NE corner of Erwin and Cornwallis is in private hands, rather than part of Duke Forest, and potentially subject to a future development proposal.

Next Meeting, Thursday, August 9 at 5 pm location to be announced