

New Hope Creek Corridor Advisory

Committee—Minutes of Meeting of Oct. 9, 2008

(Present: Berndt, Jacobs, Welch, Healy, Kent (voting for Hildegard Ryals), Youngblood, Dan Clever, Bob Zumwalt, Craigie Sanders)

- (1) Hollow Rock Planning Group—no recent news
- (2) Meeting with new city manager, Tom Bonfield. Healy reported that the manager had agreed to meet with us and exchange views on the role of open space and trails as part of a “great city.” Welch is trying to secure space at the Church of the Good Shepherd some time in late fall. The NHCCAC will invite all other organizations working on New Hope issues.
- (3) Letter commenting on proposed changes to section 7 of federal Endangered Species Act. The committee vote unanimously to send a letter of comment, prepared and signed on our behalf by Ryke Longest, our attorney at the Duke Environmental Law Clinic, commenting on changes proposed by the Department of the Interior that would weaken ESA. We point out in the letter that had these changes been in effect in the Turkey Farm Road bridge replacement, there would be much less chance that NCDOT would have done a survey for federally endangered mussels. A PDF of the letter is sent as a separate attachment. Also attached are two letters to NCDOT, one regarding our understanding of the final settlement in the bridge case, and the other referencing our attendance at the pre-construction conference with the contractor, to be held Oct. 22.
- (4) Meals Tax. Jacobs asked the Committee to endorse the proposed Durham Restaurant Meals Tax, which will be on the ballot in November. She presented information sheets on the tax, and noted that it has been approved by the city and county elected bodies, and the state legislature. One handout showed the distribution of estimated revenues, and the projects they would finance, including New Hope parks and trail development. The Committee unanimously passed the following resolution:

Whereas, the proposed Durham meals tax provides funds for civic amenities that are otherwise difficult to fund and,

Whereas, the proposed budget to 2016 calls for \$12.3 million in meals tax revenues to be used for recreation and trails funding, including \$1.2 million for New Hope parks and trails,

The New Hope Creek Corridor Advisory Committee endorses the tax and commends it to the voters of Durham.

(5) Car dealership at 15-501 and Mt. Moriah. Bob Zumwalt, the project's designer, explained changes made to the proposal in response to our earlier discussions and our site visit. These include:

- moving the water retention pond from behind the site to beside it, reducing the disturbance of sensitive areas;
- further reducing light leakage visible offsite;
- providing more plantings in the buffers;
- using native vegetation, rather than standard decorative plantings, where the rear section of the project disturbs the natural area.

There was considerable discussion of the location of a bike/ped trail near the site. The preferred location would be along the existing service road, but this may in the future be closed if the planned widening of 15-501 is implemented. Even if this were to occur, there would probably be sufficient space to retain a trail, but NCDOT has been shown to object to this kind of use. Moreover, the current design of the future highway would include an interchange that would block connection of the trail to Mt. Moriah Rd. Healy suggested that if a trail were built before the road widening, it would establish a strong public constituency that could exert a countervailing political force to NCDOT. Berndt expressed concern about connectivity with a future Dry Creek trail, and connection to Chapel Hill. Healy noted that Harrison had said that even a foot trail through the natural area at the rear of the site would be disruptive. There was general support for having a paved bike/ped trail as close to 15-501 as possible, with the unpaved nature trail following another route, perhaps along the sewage easement. The committee agreed to ask the developer to consider dedicating a 12 foot trail easement on the southwest property boundary, to be used for a bike/ped trail only if the future interchange blocks a route on existing road right-of-way. Healy noted that a car dealership, or other retail user, would benefit from public use of a trail adjoining the property.

There was also discussion of how the proposed project fits into a larger context. This included (1) concern for future use of the small property on 15-501 to the north of the current project; (2) future use of the large tract on the western boundary, including issues of where a future access road might be; (3) future use of all currently undeveloped land in the Dry Creek basin. Point (3) should be addressed, Berndt suggested, to general approval, by a small area plan that would implement the New Hope Plan in a more specific way. Healy said he will mention this larger context in the letter that NHCCAC eventually writes on the current project.

(6) Schuster said that he has been doing trail marking south of Hollow Rock, down to Trinity School. Youngblood mentioned that Durham is revising its trails plan and will soon send a draft to the Durham Open Space and Trails Commission. The committee agreed to have a hike, the first of several trail reconnaissance efforts, October 26 at 9 am, meeting at the now-closed Mexican restaurant at Oak Creek Shopping Center (corner Garrett Rd. and 15-501).

(7) Youngblood mentioned that the New Hope film, made several years ago, is now available on the Web. Several NHCCAC members also have copies that could be

borrowed. She said that the planning department is working on environmental aspects of the zoning ordinance and wants representation from stakeholder groups.

Next meeting Thursday, November 13 at 5 pm. **Note that place is tba, as the Southwest Library will be closed for construction.**