

# **New Hope Creek Corridor Advisory Committee— Minutes of Meeting Nov. 13, 2008**

(Present: Berndt, Fowler, Kent, Healy, Welch, Harrison, Goebel, Greg Schuster, Helen Youngblood, Craigie Sanders)

(1) Discussion of hike taken by Welch, Kent and Healy between Hollow Rock and 15-501 on east side of main stem of New Hope Creek. They discovered a low stone wall, at least 100 ft. long. There were large trees growing quite close to it, indicating it might be rather old. Various theories were advanced to explain its existence: foundation, field wall, levee.

Schuster said the main stem of the New Hope from Hollow Rock to an under bridge connection to Githens trail should be a planning priority. Wetness is a major issue. Schuster said he would like to have as few boardwalks as possible because of maintenance issues, as well as the possible need for wetland and FEMA permits. Kent pointed out that there will be a deer fence at the bridge that needs to be navigated. He also said that we need to find a way to get from the east to the west side of the creek near the bridge if a connection is to be made with the Githens trail. We need to coordinate closely with the DOST trails committee (Kelly Bryant is chair, Welch and Goebel are members, so communication should be good.) Youngblood said DOST is now doing an update of their trail plan. Youngblood asked us to GPS any future hike. Kent suggested that we use state plane system as well as latitude and longitude—this is used by Orange County in their land data base. Youngblood suggested that we look at the Mountains to Sea Trail for a good example of group trail construction. Another model is Little River Park, where trails meet sustainable design guidelines and have held up well to use.

There will be another hike Sunday, Dec. 14 at 9 am, meeting at the closed Mexican restaurant at White Oak shopping center.

(2) Proposed rezoning on 15-501 near Mt. Moriah/SW Durham Parkway. Sanders said the application was under staff review and would most likely not go to the Planning Commission until January. Healy offered the following draft comments, based on earlier discussions at NHCCAC meetings, and comments submitted to him by email.

## **Comments of New Hope Creek Corridor Advisory Committee on Proposed Rezoning (Project Z0800026) of 8 acre tract for automobile dealership at 15-501**

**near intersection with SW Durham Parkway     DRAFT**

*(1) The NHCCAC commends the developer, the landowner, and the site planner (John R. McAdams Company) for communicating with us early in the design of the project, providing all the information we requested, and responding to concerns as they came up in our deliberations. Several members of the NHCCAC walked the site on August*

*20 and had extensive discussions with the site planner. The final site design is a great improvement over the earlier version, and responds very well to concerns #2-#5 as detailed below.*

- (2) Location of water retention pond. The original proposal provided for a retention pond extending in the shape of a “lollipop” behind the property and into a sensitive vegetative zone. This has now been moved, as we suggested, to the front area of the development, and out of the sensitive zone.*
- (3) The New Hope Plan shows a line representing high quality native hardwood forest extending through much of the developed portion of the site. After walking the site, we agreed that the actual area of quality hardwoods begins farther from 15-501. The actual extent of this natural area is indicated on the new site plan—we agree with the new location of the boundary. Virtually all of the proposed development is outside of this line. For the very small area that is not, the developer has agreed to revegetate any disturbed area with native plants.*
- (4) The committee expressed concern with nighttime lighting of the site, and its impact on both esthetics and wildlife. The developer has proposed light leakage commitments that would substantially reduce this impact.*
- (5) There was considerable discussion by the committee, with input from Dan Clever, of the Durham Bicycle/Pedestrian Commission, of the location of a bike/ped trail near the site. The preferred location would be along the existing frontage 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 includes an interchange that would block connection of the trail to Mt. Moriah Rd. At the suggestion of the NHCCAC, the developer has agreed to dedicate a 12 foot wide bike/ped easement along the Mt. Moriah edge of the property, to be used only if future highway development makes a bike/ped trail on the front of the property impossible. We note that a car dealership, or other retail user, would benefit from the exposure associated with public use of a trail adjoining the property.*
- (6) The committee has continuing concerns about how this project fits into a larger context. This includes (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. We were pleased that the landowner has some awareness of this issue, and provided us with a conceptual plan for the rear portion of the site (major residential/institutional use). We are not satisfied that this is the best use of this property, which includes some very sensitive natural areas and steep slopes. We look forward to working with the landowner, with adjoining landowners, and with local governments, in finding the best combination of future uses for this extremely important part of the New Hope area.*

*In closing, the NHCCAC concludes that, although any development of the site will have some negative impacts on the New Hope corridor, we believe that the proposed development is far superior to the kinds of commercial uses that are permitted under current zoning. Although the specific design of the building is not the subject of a rezoning, we are intrigued by the possibility that any car dealership built on the site might position itself as the area's first "environmentally sustainable automobile dealership". This could include such features as an energy efficient building, additional non-structural features to reduce the quantity and increase the quality of water runoff, purchase of carbon credits to offset energy use, additional plantings (perhaps including roof plantings), bicycle racks, time-of-day lighting adjustment, etc. Given the current upheaval in the automobile industry, and the likelihood that many future models will be more energy efficient than in the past, this could confer market advantage, as well as being even more positive for the environment.*

After discussion by the NHCCAC, the following additional issues were identified:

- (1) Possible increases in the visual buffer along 15-501 by planting of additional trees or other vegetative barrier.
- (2) It was suggested that the stormwater pond be configured as a bioretention pond. Such facilities are in use at University Mall and at Patterson Place. They use native wetland plants as part of the stormwater treatment process. Berndt suggested that the vegetated area along 15-501 might be used for stormwater interception and partial treatment, perhaps using a ditch with native vegetation.
- (3) Considerable concern was voiced by the committee about future access to the lot (outside present application) along 15-501 to the east of the project. The committee is concerned that future access to the back of this lot would greatly disrupt slopes and natural areas. It was suggested that the applicant development provide an easement for access to the front of this property. The present frontage road could be extended, but it could be closed by NCDOT if the highway were widened in the future.
- (4) Healy shared a message from Dan Clever, chair of Durham bike/ped committee, which will be asking the developer for a dedication of a 15 foot easement on west side of the property for a future bicycle/ped trail if highway interchange construction makes use of the frontage road impossible.

The developer has taken these comments under advisement, and will make a response at our next meeting. The NHCCAC has thus put off a vote on our report on the project until the December meeting.

- (3) Kent and Healy reported on a meeting with NCDOT staff and the bridge contractor re. the replacement of the Turkey Farm Road Bridge. Many issues have been resolved, but we still seek use of a net to catch debris from demolition of the asphalt decking.

- (4) Welch showed us a draft of the Hollow Rock Plan, which is close to being adopted. It has options for having Pickett Rd. both open and closed. There will be an open house discussion of the plan on Dec. 3 at 6 and 7 pm at the New Hope Improvement Association.

**Next NHCCAC meeting, Thursday, December 11 5 pm  
PLACE TO BE ANNOUNCED**