

New Hope Creek Corridor Advisory Committee

Minutes of Meeting of October 8, 2009

(Present: Fowler, Goebel, Healy, Kent, Welch, Greg Schuster, Jane Korest, Bo Howes, Chris Smith, Kent Fiala [Carolina Bird Club])

- (1) Copies of brand new version of Hollow Rock Master Plan handed out. The Plan will first go to the Durham City Council, which must consider its position on the closing of Pickett Road. The NHCCAC needs to prepare comments on the plan for transmission to the involved local governments. Since the bulk of development in the park is in Orange County, site development and ongoing management would be done by Orange County Department of Parks and Recreation. Director of the department is Lori Taft. Orange County, concerned about safe parking and liability, has posted the property against general public use. The committee expressed concern about impact of this policy on planned used by Forest View School, but were told that they could seek special permission. Durham County's policy for developing a park property is to keep it closed to the public until the park is formally planned and developed. This policy is for purposes of safety, liability, and protection of natural resources. Staff recognize low levels of informal neighborhood use of preexisting social trails on the property. They do not want use levels to increase prior to opening because of the sensitivity of the resources on the site and the need to develop a better trails. Durham County staff recognize the current limited access to the Githens Trails but anticipate this will change with the City's Chapel Hill Road Park. The committee noted that there is extensive use of informal trails on the Durham side of Hollow Rock, and that the environment would be better served if volunteers were to build a trail that followed Greg Schuster's carefully laid out route. .
- (2) Environmental education. Katie Rose-Levin is working on interpretation for the New Hope bottomlands trail (Githens trail) under direction of Jane Korest. Chris Smith has been working on interpretation at Hollow Rock. Korest suggested that Chris investigate how state curriculum relates to possible educational use of the creek. She also suggested that he look at the big picture of all access points in the area south of Hollow Rock. Jeff Fischer has an intern from UNC, presumably working on the store.
- (3) Goebel said that, based on a recent visit, Leigh Farm was not being well maintained. We will make a visit to see the problem areas.
- (4) Three copies of the Hollow Rock music album have been sold and the monies given to Healy for deposit in our Suntrust checking account. Smith will investigate whether we can get permission to include brief sound bite from the album on our website. Given that we have some possibility of obtaining funds from sale of the album and Emily Weinstein's book, there was a general feeling that we should make a token payment to our hard-working and

creative Webmistress, Sally Robertson. Healy later sent Sally a check for \$125, leaving us with a checking account balance of

- (5) Sandy Creek Park. Healy said that informal trails have already been constructed by neighbors between Garrett Road and the center of the park. They appear quite heavily used. Welch said that the white blazed spur ends at a neighborhood cul-de-sac and the yellow blazed spur ends at the parking lot of Good Shepherd Church on Garrett Road. Healy said that the park could become a major attraction for bird watchers, given the diversity of habitats, including water bodies. He said that he had seen several birders using the park. Kent Fiala, who edits "The Chat" for the Carolina Bird Club, has prepared a list of birds that might be seen in the park. Healy suggested that we put up a mailbox or other simple dispenser near the park sign that could contain copies of the list as well as a book in which birders could list unusual sightings. Korest said that we should ask permission from Rosetta Radtke, senior planner at Durham Parks and Recreation.

The ponds at the park are due to be reworked. Healy will check with the contractor to see if bird habitat could be improved by changes in water level and planting of appropriate native plants. Fiala suggested that wood duck boxes be put up. There is a need for a trail spur that leads closer to the main ponds, and possibly an observation blind. Schuster suggested that we ask city parks and recreation to do a use survey for the park.

- (5) Duke Forest Sewer Line. The proposal is for a pumping station and new sewer line near Erwin Rd. and 751. The danger with this proposed project is that a power outage would shut off the pump, causing a sewage spill. On the other hand the right of way might be useful as a trail. Duke has to give an easement for this and we should find out what conditions they might require to minimize environmental impact. Korest said that this line has precedential implications for other sensitive areas and way of limiting impact should be investigated, such as making right-of-way narrower.

Corrected Nov. 13, 2009