

New Hope Creek Corridor Advisory Committee

Minutes of meeting of November 15, 2012

(Present: Fowler, Goebel, Healy, Kent, Welch, Bo Howes, Brendan Moore)

- (1) Sandy Creek Park. John Goebel suggested, and the committee agreed, that we submit a proposal for a \$10,000 DOST grant for park improvements (subject to a \$10,000 match by us). Goebel said that volunteer labor was counted as being “worth” only \$5 per hour when considered as part of a match. It was agreed that we should solicit contributions from park supporters via the Keep Durham Beautiful web link and should also approach nearby neighborhoods and institutions (Structure House, Forest at Duke, Durham Academy) for both financial help and volunteers. Goebel said the grant could most likely be structured so that we could draw from it as our “match” materialized, rather than having to provide details of the match up front.

Kent suggested, following up on an observation by water quality expert Ken Reckhow, that we look into the possibility of land or water contamination from the sewage sludge that was long deposited on the west side of the Sandy Creek bridge. Healy suggested that it would be useful to look first at possible impacts on water quality, perhaps part of a long term monitoring effort that could be part of our environmental education program. He also said that the problem was really “owned” by the Environmental Enhancement Program, which has a conservation easement on the site and which disturbed some of the land in the course of its replanting activities. He will contact EEP to see what kind of environmental analysis they might have done.

- (2) Durham Parks and Recreation Plan. Durham has been holding a series of public meetings to provide input to the committee doing a revision of the city P & R plan. Healy went to the Oct. 16 meeting (unfortunately, quite sparsely attended). He emphasized that outdoor, non organized activities

such as hiking, picnicking, and bird watching were recognized recreational activities—and in fact were among the ones in which the most people participate, according to surveys. He also said that the Durham Public Schools should make their facilities available after hours for organized and unorganized recreation. This would (1) encourage informal outdoor play by young people, with schools doing their part in what is increasingly recognized as a national public health emergency (2) save tax dollars by limiting duplication of facilities used at different hours (3) reduce impervious surface by sharing parking lots. Kent said he attended another session and emphasized education use of the parks.

Healy said he would investigate the school/park question, starting by contacting Durham School Board member Nancy Cox.

- (3) The Committee discussed how to recognize the early and exceptionally important contribution to the New Hope effort by Hildegard Ryals, who recently passed away. There are a number of community efforts to which we might want to sign on to. (For example, DOST is sending a resolution to City Council, requesting a mayoral proclamation in Hildegard's honor.) In order to provide flexibility in deciding how to proceed in the short run (with the idea that we will do some sort of memorial of our own, perhaps in the summer) the NHCCAC passed the following resolution:

“Hildegard Ryals was a tireless and successful advocate for New Hope Creek and for many other good causes. The NHCCAC authorizes its chair (or committee members subject to the chair's assent) to prepare or sign on to, on behalf of the committee, appropriate resolutions or other documents that would honor her life and contributions.”

- (4) 15-501 south development. Healy said he had been approached by the Haw River Assembly, asking that NHCCAC sign on to a letter to Corps of Engineers raising concerns over the impacts of 4 miles of new sewer pipe that would connect the development with the county sewage treatment plant. The pipe would cross about 1 miles of Corp's owned land, and other sensitive wetlands. Kent said he was following this situation closely and was not sure all the details of the Haw River Assembly letter were correct. He suggested that we might suggest that the Corps District Engineer hold a public hearing on the pipe. He also expressed concern over induced development that might result from such a sewer connection and its impact on land use adjoin the lake. The NHCCAC passed a resolution giving Kent the authority to sign such a letter, or an alternative draft, or to send our own letter, as he thought most useful, subject to consultation with the NHCCAC chair.

- (5) Patterson Place development site plan. Kent said he had spoken with Danny Coultra, planner in charge. The planning department has made comments on the second draft plan and the developer has yet to respond.

- (6) Orange County voters have approved the .5 percent sales tax for transit, as Durham had last spring. This will put it into effect. Healy later learned from Ed Harrison that parameters for the EIS will be finalized at the end of summer 2013, but the actual preparation of the analysis will take two years or more.

Next meeting, Thursday, December 13 at 5 p.m.