

New Hope Creek Corridor Advisory Committee

Minutes of Meeting of December 13, 2012

(Present: Fowler, Goebel, Healy, Kent, Edeburn, Bo Howes, Ed Harrison, Helen Youngblood, Brendan Moore)

- (1) Sandy Creek Park. Goebel reported on the considerable progress with construction of amenities at Sandy Creek Park. The NHCCAC is getting ready to submit a proposal to DOST for a \$10,000 matching grant for further improvements at Sandy Creek, including a wildlife observation deck additional landscaping, eradicating invasive species, bike racks and cooking grills, fencing to keep vehicles off the grassy area and signage (like that on Duke golf course trail). For the match, we need a combination of volunteer hours and cash. We have raised about \$3000 thus far, with major contributions by Blue Cross/Blue Shield, Hawk's Nest townhouses, and Durham Academy. Proposal is due Jan. 7. One problem is that, if funded, we would not receive monies until perhaps April, and our building permit for the bridge has a six month time limit.

About 30 adult volunteers will be coming to Sandy Creek on Jan. 12 to start eradication of privet and other exotic plants. Harrison said we should worry especially about Russian Olive, given that it likes sandy areas. We need help in training volunteers in identifying the various exotics.

Another suggestion for Sandy Creek is an ADA-compliant loop trail. This would be level, but not paved. A video about this kind of trail at Crotched Mountain Rehabilitation Center, Greenfield, New Hampshire, is available on YouTube

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ff2JPAWljHQ>

- (2) Healy said that even as we make improvements to the physical infrastructure of New Hope parks and trails, we should pay attention to the "software": interpretation and education. He noted that we already have links with several schools, including Durham Academy, Forest View Elementary School and Trinity School. He suggested that we use our already established practice of a spring and fall event to bring infrastructure on line (e.g. dedication of the observation platform, planting of the butterfly garden) as well as adding to our capacity for environmental education for all ages.

We have twice participated in the county-wide Creek Week in March (our Bird and Butterfly Festival) and might focus a fall event around the national Earth Science Week,

October 13-19, which is sponsored by a consortium of professional geological associations. Healy is about to become co-president of the Chapel Hill Mineral Club and hopes to involve the club and its members in geological interpretation initiatives. It was suggested that we involve students in earth science at Duke (and presumably UNC). Possible activities include a geological trail at Hollow Rock Park, where two geological provinces (the Carolina Slate Belt and the Triassic Basin) literally meet at the park boundaries and some interpretation at Sandy Creek (why is the creek sandy? What is its drainage area and what are possible sources of pollution and of natural water treatment?)

Goebel suggested that we ally with organizations that are attempting to bring kids into closer contact with nature: Sierra Club "Mission Outdoors Program"

<http://sierraclub.org/missionoutdoors/>

"Children and Nature Network"

<http://www.childrenandnature.org/directory/campaigns/>

and "Outdoors Alliance for Kids"

<https://sites.google.com/site/outdoorsallianceforkids/about/partners>

Healy observed that with the butterfly garden and an ADA compliant nature trail, we could build links to a variety of disability groups, including veterans who may be in rehabilitation at the nearby VA hospital.

- (3) Healy said that, pursuant to our vote at the November meeting, we have signed on to the letter by the Haw River Alliance, Northeast Creek Association and other groups concerned with water quality in Jordan Lake that asks the Corps of Engineers to take a close look at the environmental impact of the sewage main that is proposed to be built, across miles of Corps lands, between the 751 Assembly development and the Durham County sewage treatment plant. Kent said that since this would be a trunk line, it would encourage further development in a broad area, warranting even more scrutiny. It was also noted that to the extent wetlands are disturbed by the pipeline, mitigation might have to be provided by the developer.

Youngblood said that the Patterson Place apartments were still in a situation in which the developer was yet to respond to the second round of Planning Department comments. Harrison brought up the proposed Montclair development in SW Durham (outside our planning area but very much in the New Hope watershed). It would stretch the urban growth boundary and was very close to Jordan Lake. A pump station is proposed for its sewage, a technology prone to failure, Harrison said.

Kent said that he had spoken with Chris Berndt at a meeting on transportation planning of the Metropolitan Planning Organization about including a sidewalk along Erwin Rd. The idea of an underpass beneath I-40 in the Dry Creek trail region was broached. Kent also reiterated the strong preference of the NHCCAC that any Light Rail Transit corridor follow either Old Chapel Hill Rd. or 15-501 in the New Hope bottomlands area.