

New Hope Creek Corridor Advisory Committee

Minutes of Meeting of June 13, 2013

(Present: Goebel, Healy, Kent, Harrison, Korest, Howes, Helen Fischer)

- (1) Sandy Creek Park update. The Durham County Commission, meeting on June 9, approved the \$10,000 grant approved under the DOST community matching grant program. There was great supportive testimony from DOST members, from Ellerbee Creek Assn, and from two park neighbors. The vote was 4-1, with Comm. Foster dissenting (he had taken the item off the consent agenda two weeks before). These funds, combined with the \$5000 we have raised and hundreds of volunteer hours, will finish the wildlife observation deck, install wheelchair friendly picnic tables, fence the “meadow” to prevent automobile us and pay for interpretive signage. However, we cannot expend funds nor count volunteer hours until county sets up a drawing account, something Helen Youngblood is trying to expedite. Goebel will be in charge of design and volunteers, but needs much help from all friends of the park. Healy will put together a committee on interpretive signs with the idea that many of them can be used in other parks. He is especially interested in a geology sign that would explain the Carolina Slate Belt/Triassic Basin difference and how it has affected ecosystems and land use.

The butterfly garden looks great and we have gotten almost complete survival of trees planted in the last two years. The park is drawing lots of visitors—notable among them are K-9 units from Durham and Chapel Hill, which use the meadow for training (the ultimate crime deterrent!), birders, and even the Durham Fire Department, which recently held a rescue exercise using one of the sewage tanks.

- (2) Hollow Rock Park. Korest said that county had received word that a \$200,000 proposal to federal recreational trails program for a parking lot (gravel) off Erwin Rd. and three bridges had been moving forward and was now being considered in Washington. The required \$50,000 match is already in the budgets for Durham and Orange counties. We should hear by August and construction could start as early as November. Howes said that Orange County was in the process of purchasing the two acre TLC tract and house.
- (3) A trail maintenance volunteer day will be held at the trail in Old Chapel Hill Road park on Saturday, June 22, at 9 am.
- (4) Patterson Place townhouses. Plan has not yet completed approval process. One of the buildings has been moved farther from the wetland area, which is a significant improvement. Kent is trying to persuade designer to slightly alter trail route so as to preserve more native vegetation. The NHCCAC authorized Healy to write a letter to John R. McAdams Co. requesting this. Healy said that, before sending the letter, he and

Kent would request an informal meeting with designer to see if trail location alternatives could be brainstormed.

- (5) I-40 widening EIS. Kent is pushing, on behalf of the NHCCAC, the idea that widening by two lanes between 15-501 and I-85 include (a) design of box culvert carrying New Hope Creek under I-40 to permit wildlife movement, and perhaps bike/ped movement (b) improvements to 15-501 and Erwin Rd. bridges over I-40 to permit bike/ped use (c) high standards for construction to protect excellent current water quality and water related species in Old Field Creek and New Hope Creek. The next step is for the NHCCAC to write NC Department of Transportation asking that the agency prepare an Environmental Assessment for the project instead of just a Categorical Exemption. Kent said that Steve Hall recently made a very good presentation about “guilds” (interrelated groups) of species, using New Hope Creek ecosystems as examples.