

New Hope Creek Corridor Advisory Committee

Minutes of Meeting of January 9, 2014

(Present: Berndt, Goebel, Healy, Welch, John Kent, Ed Harrison, Bo Howes, Brendan Moore, Helen Fischer, Stan Bukowski, Helen Youngblood)

- (1) Sandy Creek Park. Goebel met with Rosetta Radtke and Tania Dautlich regarding the remainder of the DOST matching grant. The existing picnic tables were found to be ADA accessible, saving us the considerable cost of additional tables. Parks and Recreation is now picking out cooking grills. The Bike/Ped program of city is donating a bike rack. Goebel and Healy are going to visit Cary's Hemlock Bluffs Park next week to meet with their sign designer with the goal of ordering about a dozen interpretive signs for the park. Each sign will have (small, in one corner) a QR code that will link with the newhopecreek.org web site and will allow those with scanning cell phones to get additional information. Moore expressed concern about vandalism resistance of the new signs. Goebel said that we plan to cover signs with a thin layer of Plexiglas to protect from spray paint and weathering. Goebel said Hoffman Nursery has donated native grasses, which will be planted on the (now mulched) steep slopes in June. We will also plant various shrubs on the slopes so that they will not have to be mowed. There will also be plantings to support waterfowl and butterflies, especially milkweed for the Monarch butterflies, which are having a very bad year. There may be opportunities to get some plant material free, but donations for this are welcome. Goebel said that Sandy Creek is the #1 park for Trees Across Durham. We will have service projects for volunteers during Creek Week, March 15-22. The Sierra Club is looking for projects and we will work with them.

Several committee members have seen the Durham Police Department and the Sheriff's Department (and perhaps other law enforcement entities) training their dogs in the park. Sometimes they do this at night, and it was said that they discharge weapons so as to accustom the dogs to loud noises. There was a question over whether they ever discharge live ammunition. We will invite a Police Department representative to a future meeting to discuss their use of the park.

- (2) Moore reported that Old Chapel Hill Road park was “mushy” after frequent winter rains. He will take Bill Houppermans of URS Consulting (environmental impact consultant to TTA) for a tour of the park as soon as things dry out.
- (3) Hollow Rock Park. Federal grant of \$200,000 for parking lot and bridges on trails due to be finalized January 27. The inter-local agreement between Durham and Orange Counties will be updated. The park is mainly in Durham and Orange Counties, but 2 acres are in Chapel Hill. Orange County, which will manage the park, will have its own style of signs, so we are unlikely to have uniform sign style across parks, unless we are allowed uniformity in educational signage.
- (4) Berndt said Chapel Hill Town Council is reworking its advisory board structure. The current Greenways Commission will report to Council on January 27 on a \$48 million parks and greenways plan. There is great emphasis on upgrading existing facilities. Berndt noted that one property up for sale is an open space owned by the Town of Chapel Hill. Harrison spoke in favor of keeping the Greenways Commission in any future advisory structure. He also said that large master plans should include more specific investments. He said that Council is planning a new Environmental Commission. A joint Durham-Orange County-Chapel Hill elected official Work Group meets four times a year. It deals with a range of issues, but its work includes open space and greenways. It provided the initial forum for working out how to proceed with what became Hollow Rock Park and created the committee that drew up the park’s plan.
- (5) Natural Heritage Inventory. Harrison said the Durham Inventory Review Committee first met in 1984. The Inventory, done with state funding help, was published in 1987 and revised in the 1990s by Steve Hall and Liz Pullman. Nothing has been done to update the inventory for 16 years. There have been calls from several directions—state staff, People’s Alliance, Harrison himself—for revision and correction of the inventory.
- (6) Korest noted that recent clearcut timber harvest north of 15-501 west of Garrett Rd. may have intruded into the New Hope flood plain. She said this was undesirable, but legal.