

New Hope Creek Corridor Advisory Committee

Minutes of Meeting of April 10, 2014

(Present: Goebel, Fowler, Healy, Kent, Helen Youngblood, Jane Korest, Bo Howes, Jeff Fisher)

We are back to meeting at clubhouse of the Garrett Farms development, which has now been repaired after a mid-winter water line break.

- (1) Sandy Creek Park. Goebel said that wildlife observation deck was finished (final painting) by a volunteer group last Sunday. Dedication must be scheduled. 140 bird and butterfly attractive shrubs have been planted on the hill at the entrance to the park and enormous amounts of mulch laid down. John bought some beautiful bare root seedlings for only \$1.25 each and those that were planted are already growing well. Next projects are installation of cooking grills at the developed picnic area and educational signage, which will use the materials and format used in Hemlock Bluffs Park in Cary. We will add QR codes to the signs—the idea is that the signs will have relatively few words, and great pictures, and those interested in more information can use the QR codes to access material we will put on the Web. Goebel said the wetlands will be planted with native food plants in the fall so as to attract more waterfowl. He said that the beavers have raised the water level in the upper pond by about 8 inches, with unknown effects on aquatic plants. Korest asked if beavers might eat our new shrubs. Kent asked what it would cost to create the new signs. Goebel said it would be about \$100 for each of the 8 x 8 signs and \$200-300 for the large 20 x 30 signs. Tania Dautlich of Keep Durham Beautiful has been concerned about graffiti on the large green tanks and has raised the possibility of murals. The City applied for a grant for a handicapped accessible trail but it is thought unlikely to be approved in this cycle. Youngblood said there is some momentum for this idea. It was noted that the new cooking grills will be accessible.

Youngblood said that one of the two streets that dead end at the west side of the park is likely to be closed. The committee thought that this would be acceptable, since there would still be two access points to the park from Garrett Rd.

- (2) Chapel Hill Road Park. The boardwalk, badly damaged by a succession of floods, has been repaired several times but is still not open. Kent said that in some places a flagstone trail might be better than a boardwalk. Korest will ask Brendan Moore if another volunteer work day would be helpful. Healy said that we should work on interpretive signs, particularly because this area is perhaps the most environmentally unique and important part of the whole New Hope corridor and was so identified in the

original Durham Inventory. Korest said the county might pay for signs and Fisher said that his organization, Unique Places, could also help. Healy said that we should organize the tenants in the new apartments being built nearby into a Friends organization and we should establish a Facebook page, as we have done at Sandy Creek.

(3) Hollow Rock Park. Triangle Land Conservancy is about to complete sale of the house and small property they own to Orange County. Healy suggested that we inject into the long term planning process possible use of the house, or a replacement structure, for rest rooms, space for volunteers and additional interpretation area. Fowler said that there is a barn full of old farm equipment on the property of the late Sue Whitfield, some of which may be relevant to interpretation in the NH corridor. This includes a grinding stone that may be part of the original mill. Gail Boyarski and Judd Edeburn are working with the Whitfield family to try to identify and secure relevant items. Healy said that we should begin soon with planning for interpretive signage and educational trails so that we will be ready to accommodate the public when the parking lot is built and the park opens.

(4) Signage at stream crossings. Youngblood said that the Ellerbe Creek Association has secured signs along roadways at virtually all stream crossings. We should see what NCDOT is willing to do with stream labeling and should also see if a New Hope Creek Corridor sign might be feasible.

(5) Chapel Hill Report. [By email from Chris Berndt] *I was pleased to read in the minutes that a sidewalk and bike lane is being proposed for Erwin Road through the MPO. This is something our Greenways Commission has advocated for in the past. Chapel Hill news to report: Still no word on the future of the Greenways Commission in Chapel Hill. My term will end on June 30th, and I am not eligible for reappointment, having served 7 years already. So if the omission continues, there will need to be a new Chapel Hill appointee to the New Hope Committee. The Town Council is considering a form based Code for the Ephesus Fordham area. Projects would not go through a special use permit process, but simply meet the design specifications of the Code. The Greenways Commission has recommended that if the area is redeveloped at Eastgate in the future, that Booker Creek be daylighted and restored to its natural flow. Council could vote on the form-based Code in April or May. There is a proposed Bike Plan for Chapel Hill. There will be a Council public forum on Monday, April 28th at 7 pm at the Southern Human Services Center. The plan link is:*

<http://www.townofchapelhill.org/index.aspx?page=2145>

(6) Korest said that we need to come up with a consistent list of names for our various access areas. She said that Hollow Rock Access Point is “lame”. Healy said that the Chapel Hill Road Trail needed a more descriptive name—he suggested that the whole

area be called the New Hope Bottomlands or 15-501 Bottomlands. We need to brainstorm and discuss.

- (7) Jeff Weisner of TTA has asked to be put on the agenda of the May meeting. The committee agreed to give him 40 minutes. The committee also asked for a copy of his formal presentation/maps in advance of the meeting so we can review.
- (8) Committee Membership. We need someone to replace Chris Berndt as representative of Chapel Hill Parks and Recreation Board (or successor) Healy said he has asked Rich Shaw to get Orange County Environmental Board to appoint a successor to the Floyd Bridgwater seat. We also need an Orange County landowner to replace Bill Olive, who has been unable to attend meetings. Walter Fowler and his wife, Gail Boyarski will alternate attendance at meetings (also OC landowners).