

New Hope Creek Corridor Advisory Committee

Minutes of April 9, 2015

(Present: Crouse, Fowler, Goebel, Healy, Welch, Kent, Korest, Howes, Youngblood)

(1) Sandy Creek Park Update. Healy said that Creek Week was a great success citywide, with four major events at Sandy Creek Park. These included a guided bird walk, an evening “frog event” (thanks Nikki Cagle and Ron Grunwald, scientists from Duke!), a stream cleanup, and dedication of park improvements attended by three members of the county commission. Healy attributed much of the success to the early start of planning (in October 2014) and to our cooperation with the Sierra Club and other organizations to put on and publicize events. The stream cleanup got a spot on Channel 7 news.

Goebel said that a proposal has been developed for a handicap accessible trail that will follow an old road bed around the meadow and the adjacent small pond. It has the support of the city’s General Services Department and Parks and Recreation. It is mostly a paving project, though the sidewalk near the restroom must have its grade lessened to accommodate wheel chairs. A second phase of the project would build a longer, unpaved trail that would go to the observation deck. A third phase would be an even longer trail.

Goebel said that planting of wetland plants for waterfowl food took place with 24 volunteers on the preceding Saturday. There are plans to put out native, non-invasive food plants in all three major ponds.

Planning for the fall Farewell to the Monarchs Festival needs to start right away. Goebel said he has a source of milkweed sees (Prairie Moon Nursery) and has had good success in growing plants from seed. Korest said that Southern High School has a horticulture program that might propagate plants.

(2) Hollow Rock Update. Korest said that this has been a busy planning month for the park. The interlocal agreement is to go to the respective governments in May. The site plan for the bridges has been approved and the project is almost ready to go out for bids. Durham is handling the bridges; Orange Count the parking lot. There has been debate about the park’s name—it is now the Hollow Rock Access Area, which is non-standard and confusing. Greatest support seems to be for Hollow Rick Nature Park. There has been continued public resistance to closing Pickett Road. There is also an issue of whether the county will accept maintenance responsibility for the sidewalk that NCDOT

has offered to build along Erwin Rd. to connect Forest View Elementary with the park. (The county later agreed to this.)

- (3) Trail Maintenance. There are still problems with the trail in the New Hope Bottomlands and a need to figure out how to deal with very high water (flagstones? boardwalks?) Korest showed a map of the floodway as it relates to the trail. She said that flooding is a winter issue—in the summer the trees soak up the water. Healy said that the lessons learned will be valuable as we plan trails in the Mud Creek and upper New Hope areas, such as behind Trinity School. Youngblood suggested looking at trails in other areas. Korest said she would send out a Doodle poll to arrange a site visit to the New Hope Bottomlands to discuss trail alternatives.

The portion of the Sandy Creek unpaved trail between the bridge and Garrett Rd. has also been damaged by water, though spreading of more mulch would help in the short run. Goebel said that there may be a need for some trail adjustments and that he is getting expert advice.

- (4) TTA and Light Rail Route. TTA is having meetings on station development plans. This is run by Durham Planning rather than TTA. TTA requested a meeting with Durham Planning regarding a 4f determination (a federal law treating transportation impacts on parks.) We will have 45 days to comment.
- (5) Candleshop Property. Goebel said the developer/applicant walked the property with him and Helen Youngblood. The applicant said he was willing to donate trail easements on the east side of the property.
- (6) Chapel Hill. Crouse said the Town Council was scheduled to accept a bid document for extension of the Bolin Creek Trail. A \$5 million greenway bond is being considered for the November ballot. Kent reminded the committee of our previously expressed wish to have a cantilevered bridge or underground connection for bike/ped use in crossing I-40, to be sought in conjunction with the proposed lane additions.