



MECKLENBURG COUNTY
A Joint Meeting of the Greenway Advisory Council
and the South Park Region Advisory Council

MINUTES

February 7, 2011 (rescheduled from January 10, 2011 due to snow)
The Fletcher School, 8500 Sardis Road, Charlotte NC 28270

GREENWAY ADVISORY COUNCIL

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Ed Barnhart, Chair
Bob Carter
Aubin Guinness
Mark Loflin
Brian Malec
Dick Winters

ADVISORY COUNCIL

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Ron Gentry
Owen Sutkowski
Kevin Walsh

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT

W. Lee Jones, Division Director, Capital Planning
Patricia Poteat, South Park Region General Manager
Chris Matthews, Manager, Natural Resources
Gwen Cook, Planner

GUESTS & OTHERS PRESENT

Steve DeConti
Arnold Jarrell
James Lyon
Chuck Shue
35+ citizens

SOUTH PARK REGION
ADVISORY COUNCIL

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Ed Barnhart, Chair
Aaron Beck
Bob Brisley
Doug Burnette
Paula Fickle
Hermes Goudes
Michael Mulder
Sarah Waterrose
Kim Weissinger
Charlie Williams
Classie Worthy

SOUTH PARK REGION
ADVISORY COUNCIL

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Thomas Bagger
Robert Busbee
Dorothea Dawkins
Henk-Jan Van Etteken
Vernon Frost
Michael Jones
David Jones
Michelle McDonald
Betty H. McGill
Alicia McKenzie
Carolyn Millen
Rodger Nolden
Roger Raymer
Gary Rhinehart

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:04 PM.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Ed Barnhart, Chair, led the Pledge of Allegiance

WELCOME

Ed Barnhart welcomed all guests present including Arnold Jarrell and Cam Coley of Charlotte Mecklenburg Utilities, Chuck Shue and James Lyon of McKim & Creed, Steve Deconti, and County staff Lee Jones, Patricia Poteat, Gwen Cook, Chris Matthews, and Jay Higginbotham.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

1. Proclamations and Awards – None.
2. Public Hearings-

Impact and Opportunities presented by the proposed McAlpine Relief Sewer Project on Upper McAlpine Creek Greenway and McAlpine Creek Park

Arnold Jarrell, project manager for Charlotte Mecklenburg Utilities (CMU) presented the scope and nature of the sewer project. It will be undertaken in 5 phases. Phases 1 and 2 are completed up to Colony Road from south of Hwy 51, Phase 3 will extend the project to Sardis Road and Phase 4 to just east of Independence Blvd. Relief sewer installation on Irvins Creek in McAlpine Creek Park is also being planned so work within the public facilities can be completed during one construction project to minimize the time construction is underway in McAlpine Creek Park.

The large (36"-66" from upstream to downstream) pipes must be installed very deep with the top of pipe 2' below the creek bottom. This means most trenches will be 20'-25' deep and the width of disturbed area will be 60'-80' wide. Because the sewer must be located between an existing sewer and gas pipeline ROW north of Sardis Road, it will be constructed where the existing Upper McAlpine Creek Greenway is currently located. The disturbance will extend from Sardis Road north to just beyond Independence Boulevard and all greenway or 5K trail near the creek and within the sewer easement will be demolished.

CMU is working with Park and Recreation to limit construction activities in McAlpine Creek Park, especially near the 5K course, to avoid conflict with 5K events each year of sewer construction.

Gwen Cook, Planner with Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation (MCPR), acknowledged the significant impact the sewer project will have on the greenway and park, even with efforts to minimize those impacts; however the relief sewer is a needed project. The disruption of the greenway trail actually provides a needed opportunity for making the function of the greenway trail and the 5K course even better overall.

- a) The granular trail is sought after by runners in the community, yet the pit gravel surface is constantly

damaged by floodwaters that deposit the granular material into the creek. This pollutant is carried into South Carolina, choking the life out of our creeks. Sediment is our number one pollutant in Mecklenburg County.

b) The granular trail require an enormous on-going maintenance effort by MCPR staff to meet the expectations of the citizens using it. The additional cost, over and above what an asphalt trail would cost to maintain, ranges from \$30,000 to \$140,000 annually. The range reflects the amount of flooding that may occur in a given year. Park and Recreation can no longer afford this expense.

c) The granular trail is not accessible for all greenway users, particularly when it is not in top condition. This is one of the reasons that asphalt trails are the standard for the greenway system.

d) Park and Recreation is planning to follow behind CMU and provide a paved asphalt trail for the approximate 3 miles from Sardis Road up to Margaret Wallace Road on Campbell Creek Greenway. Park and Recreation value the natural surface trails necessary for the 5K and extending on to Sardis Road, but the open utility corridor beside the creek is not maintainable due to the violent flooding that occurs there. When maintenance is reduced, few will want to run there.

An abandoned equestrian trail exists in the woods east of McAlpine Creek. MCPR wants to work with the coaches and runners engaged in this greenway to plan a natural trail route using the James Boyce Park trails and connecting them to a new natural surface trail that uses the former equestrian trail. Environmental study would need to be done on the site to determine the feasibility of the concept, but Park and Rec believes it is an achievable goal and could provide at least a 2.5 mile run.

Public Discussion:

Several questions were posed by the citizens in attendance. These fell generally into the following categories:

1) Trail surfaces

Some citizens were opposed to changing the pit gravel trail surface. Runners are attracted to this particular greenway because of the unpaved surfaces. Why not use rubber track surface here?

Response: The sewer project provides a cost-effective opportunity to convert the granular trails to the asphalt trail, which are the standard of the greenway system. There are three critical reasons for doing this at this time. The first is that the sediment washed into the creek from granular trails that would require constant gravel replenishing is contributing to the degradation of the creek. Sediment is the No. 1 pollutant in Mecklenburg County creeks. The second is the very high cost of maintenance for Park and Recreation. This level of maintenance to meet the expectation of the citizens is not affordable. Since the sewer project effectively removes all three miles MCPR plans to provide asphalt for the main greenway trails and at least 2.5 miles of natural surface trails which would include the existing trails at Boyce Road Park and new trails created in the woods east of the creek along an abandoned equestrian trail.

Rubber surfaced trails are two to three times the cost of asphalt and such an investment, even if it

could be afforded, would not be made in the floodplain. Other locations may be considered at some point in the future as destination greenways or trails in parks.

2) 5K Trail Issues

The 5K Trails should remain undisturbed. Events at this location generate revenue. If the 5K events are disrupted, the sponsors will move the event and never return.

Response: MCPR values the 5K events and amenities at McAlpine Creek Park. The construction sequencing will be planned to avoid construction during the 5K event season. Staff, including Preston Buckman, athletic coordinator, has been working closely with CMU on this issue. Most of the 5K trail will not be disturbed by the construction. Only the starting area, existing greenway and trail paralleling Independence Blvd (CMU access) will be removed. A natural surface route for the 5K events will be replaced, allowing for the new paved greenway to parallel it. The design will be developed to allow compatibility between greenway and 5K trails.

3) User Issues

If bikers use the new paved trail, they will travel very fast. Dogs are often off-leash and this is a problem.

Response: These issues are raised at several greenways. The solution lies in respectful consideration for other modes of travel. A city-wide ordinance required that dogs be on leashes 6' or shorter. Enforcement of this ordinance is somewhat difficult... education and respect for other is needed.

4) Connectivity

Several runners expressed a strong desire for the proposed natural surface trail loop at James Boyce Park/former equestrian trail to connect to the 5K trail entirely on a natural surface. The coaches and runners want to be included in the planning process.

Response: This is a great suggestion. MCPR will first study the environmental opportunities and constraints in a particularly wet area that might make a connection difficult. MCPR will invite the coaches and runners present to participate in a planning session for the route of natural trails. MCPR values the attraction of this area for citizens seeking natural surface trails.

5) Construction south of Sardis Road

Construction is occurring south of Sardis Road. Is this greenway construction? When will the greenway be extended south and what will the surface be?

Response: Current construction south of Sardis Road is Charlotte-Mecklenburg Storm Water stream restoration. No greenway work is underway, as it is not funded and must occur after the relief sewer installation. When the greenway is constructed, it will be an asphalt trail.

6) Equestrian Trail

Will the new trail accommodate horses? Why would a natural surface trail work on the equestrian trail but not as an additional trail on the gas line easement?

Response: The equestrian trail was active 20+ years ago when horse farms still existed in the area. MCPR does not plan to activate this natural surface trail for horses. The gas line easement is in the open utility corridor adjacent to the creek where the full force of floodwaters would impact whatever trail is placed there. Even asphalt trails must be carefully constructed to minimize exposure of the edges to the water force. Placing a trail in the woods allows it to be slightly higher in the floodplain, reducing the number of storms that would affect it, and allowing the forest to block or slow the flood water. The trail is more protected at this location.

7) Sewer construction issues and schedule

How many trees have to be removed from Colony Road to Sardis Road? Sardis Road to Independence Blvd? When will construction happen? Will the greenway be closed? How long will it take? Will trees removed for sewer be chipped and remain?

Response: CMU stated that their temporary construction easement for most of their project is 80' wide, the permanent easement will be 40' wide and the edges allowed to re-grow to the edge of this permanent easement. South of Sardis Road, this means that in general, trees will remain from the creek's top of bank for a distance of 40', then an 80' width of trees must be cleared for sewer construction. Most likely, these trees will be chipped and left on site. The Army Corps of Engineers will not permit the chips or any other significant amount of fill to be placed in wetlands. MCPR does not anticipate additional clearing for the greenway, when constructed.

The relief sewer will affect few trees if any going north of Sardis Road.

8) Wayfinding

The wayfinding signs are deteriorated and difficult to read. New wayfinding signs are needed. Runners need mile markers.

Response: MCPR agrees that wayfinding is important and the existing signs require replacement. A wayfinding system is being introduced into the greenway system. This more permanent signage would be best installed after the CMU project is complete. That system could include mile markers along the natural surface trails.

9) Weirs

What can be done about the weirs and the trash that they collect? Can it be part of this project?

Response: Replacement of the weirs with bridges was part of the 2008 citizen approved bond referendum, but the bonds cannot be sold at this time. It would be ideal to do this work as part of the greenway reconstruction. We have a few years to consider how this might be done. At this point, MCPR is working hard to keep cost as low as possible.

10) Cost

How is this renovation to be paid for??

Response: CMU will provide, as part of their project, a structural stone base for the renovated

greenway on an improved, slightly curved alignment. MCPR must be prepared to place the asphalt surface as CMU completes their work. MCPR has requested funding for this effort a few years out. Timing will be related to CMU's construction schedule. The CMU schedule is dependent on their funding as well.

Another public meeting will be held once the plans are firmed up. Coaches and runners attending this meeting will be invited to participate in a planning session to discuss possibilities for the natural surface trails when more is known about the site environment.

Naming of the Wedding Pavilion at Colonel Francis Beatty Park

Steve Deconti, husband of Lynn Ellen Odden, made a presentation and a request to rename the wedding pavilion, The Lynn Ellen Odden Memorial Wedding Garden and Pavilion in honor of her life and her commitment to helping and improving the lives of others and shaped Mecklenburg County, including this pavilion, through public construction projects for 25 years. The motion was approved unanimously.

CONSENT ITEMS

3. Consent Items were all approved as presented.

BRAINSTORMING

4. Brainstorming discussion was deferred.

STAFF REPORTS AND REQUESTS

5. Lee Jones provided an update on the Four Mile Creek Parking lot at Read Road and Bevington Place. The project returns to the zoning committee on March 2.
6. Lee explained that a list of projects for development had been submitted to the County Manager for Board consideration. A decision on any expenditures will not be made until the budget is determined. Some of the projects are not for the upcoming fiscal year.

UPCOMING EVENTS

1. **Monday, March 7, 2011 at 6:00 pm** - Greenway Advisory Council Meeting in Mahlon Adams Pavilion at Freedom Park, 2435 Cumberland Avenue
2. **Monday, April 11, 2011 at 6:00 pm** - Greenway Advisory Council Meeting in Mahlon Adams Pavilion at Freedom Park, 2435 Cumberland Avenue

3. **Tuesday, May 3, 2011 at 3:00 pm** - Celebration of Toby Creek Greenway, Hwy 49 to Mallard Creek Greenway. Location will be in the campus core beside the greenway. Details to follow.
4. **Monday, May 9, 2011 at 6:00 pm** - Greenway Advisory Council Meeting in Mahlon Adams Pavilion at Freedom Park, 2435 Cumberland Avenue (This is bike week...possible substitution of a bike event or tour on May 7 or 21)

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:00 pm.