

# **Greenway Commission**

## **July 14, 2011**



### **Members present:**

Jim Grode, Chair  
Marcia Bromberg, Vice Chair  
Glen Locascio  
Stephen Jones  
Sue Barlow  
Marc Hunt

### **Staff present:**

Megan Shepherd, Special Projects Coordinator  
Al Kopf, Planning Superintendent  
McCray Coates, Public Works Department  
Barb Mee, Transportation Department  
Blake Esseltyn, Planning Department

### **Guests present:**

Don Kostelec, Buncombe County

Jim called the meeting to order at 3:31 p.m.

### **1. Approval of June Minutes**

Marcia motioned to approve the June minutes, Marc seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

### **2. Lake Craig Project**

McCray Coates from the Public Works Department explained that the Hurricane Recovery Act opened the door for the City to address flood mitigation. Funding from that act has allowed staff to study the Swannanoa flooding event that occurred several years ago and explore prevention mechanisms. Consultants evaluated the projects and determined that Lake Craig was the greatest opportunity for flood mitigation.

This Lake Craig Project will involve installing a new water line to the Azalea Park complex, redesigning the roadway, and reengineering the stream. The Recreation Park area is a big draw and regional resource, making this a very important project. The City is partnering with the Army Corps of Engineers and the State of North Carolina, among others. A private firm, McGill Associates, will do the design and engineering work. McGill proposes a one-way-in/one-way-out facility with traffic coming in across the dam. This would involve construction of a second bridge. The transportation redesign will provide bike and pedestrian connectivity to the soccer complex and swimming pool.

The natural material that will be moved for the flood mitigation will be used in the roadway construction. Over the next 4-6 weeks staff will start evaluation of the current dam. We don't have a lot of information about this structure at this point. The goal is to back up water to reduce flooding impact to downstream land owners and residents. Staff should have more information over the next 4-6 months and would be happy to provide updates.

Al added that this project has a possible greenway component, allowing for connectivity to the Nature Center area. Marcia asked exactly where the planned greenway is located, and Al showed on the map where a corridor could go. There is no engineered path now, though there is an area along the stream that people currently use for walking. This corridor is already in the plans, and part of it dovetails with the Wilma Dykeman Plan.

Marc asked if car traffic lanes would have bike lanes. McCray said his team will work on this, with consultation from Al. Marc wanted to make sure there will be enough bike connectivity along Swannanoa, and he'd like to see the bike lanes as protected pathways separated from the road by a median or grassway. Staff said this will depend on available width and the possibility is being looked into.

Jim asked for a description of the Lake Craig area. McCray said that the banks are steep and curving, so erosion is a problem. Therefore, staff is looking at reengineering the stream to prevent erosion and also facilitate better access.

Glen asked if this project will help protect Biltmore Village from flooding, which is one of the primary project goals. Stephen asked if McGill Associates gives any specific metrics for flood mitigation goals. McCray said at this point it's hard to pin down specifics; the goal is to reduce the flood level as much as possible. Closer to the project, we should have more definite statistics for flood reduction. Stephen emphasized this is important for the public to know. McCray said there is no guarantee that there will be no future flood damages; rather, the goal is to minimize future damages.

Sue asked for the timeframe. City Council approved the contract in June, and much from here on out depends on the funding timeline. Staff hopes to be officially in the contract in a few weeks.

### **3. Buncombe County Planning Process**

Don Kostelec, project planner for Buncombe County greenways, gave the background on the County's greenways planning efforts. The upcoming Greenway Commission public comment session will be a good opportunity for City and County to align efforts to reach out to the public. The Buncombe County plan will involve 6-7 community meetings in the October timeframe, followed by technical work in winter and then the roll out of results in spring and ideally finishing the plan by summer. He expressed his desire to maintain good communication between the County and the City and Greenway Commission during this process. He added that the County will hold a 2-day stakeholder workshop in mid-September.

Marcia added that the next agenda item is about the public comment session at the August Greenway Commission meeting; that would be a good opportunity for communication. Don said the County is considering holding an open house in September or October, and asked if the City would be interested in presenting the comments from the input session at that event. Jim said we won't have time for the Commission to fully evaluate the recommendations until mid-October. Don thought that timeline might still work.

Marcia thought the most important discussion will be the location of the City/County connection points. Lucy Crown and other County representatives will come to the August 11th Greenway Commission meeting to hear what the public is saying.

#### **4. Capital Improvement Planning Process**

Staff and board members outlined the procedure for the upcoming public comment session regarding the greenway CIP priority list. The legal requirements for the public comment period include advanced notice at least a week ahead of time, including an agenda item on the August agenda (and a motion today expressing that), and sending out related documents a week in advance.

The ideal date for the public comment period is the regularly scheduled Greenway Commission meeting on August 11. The Commission would have a shortened meeting, then open the floor for the public comment period after that (running about an hour long, until 6 p.m.). Then, based on what comes out of that public comment period, a subcommittee will look at the proposed priority list around August 15, then pass that list to staff, who will have around a month to vet the proposals. Staff might conduct site tours as part of this, which Commission members would be invited to. Staff's report would then go to the subcommittee, to be presented to the full Commission at the October Greenway Commission meeting. After that, the report would go to the Recreation Advisory Board for review in November.

Marcia asked if the Commission has always reported to the Recreation Advisory Board, or if it reports directly to City Council in these matters. Al stated that he isn't aware of precedent for public comment sessions. The procedure was outlined in the Master Plan for issues such as this to pass through the Recreation Advisory Board, but the Greenway Commission disagreed with that. Al explained the Recreation Advisory Board is an advisory board, so it has no "veto" power, but it is the designated board to recommend and vet CIP projects for the Department as a whole.

Marcia felt that the Department has created a separate CIP category for greenways, among other projects, and doesn't understand why the Commission doesn't make recommendations directly to City Council on greenway CIP projects. She explained that in the County, the County Greenway Commission and the County Parks & Recreation Board have liaisons, but that's not the case with the City.

Marcia requested that Roderick attend a future meeting to explain this issue. Marc felt that in this case the appropriate action is for the Greenway Commission to provide recommendations to the Director. If the Recreation Advisory Board's mission is to make recommendations on CIP, that's acceptable. It isn't a step between the Greenway Commission and City Council, it's more of an informational process.

Jim said this does raise the question of if the Commission should have more communication with Recreation Advisory Board. Al said this was looked at during the Master Plan process. Marcia said we should reach out to them and invite them to the public comment session. Megan agreed to send Greenway Commission the contact information for Recreation Advisory Board.

Marc noted that promoting the public input session through neighborhood associations will be crucial. It will also be important to provide enough background on the project and process. Glen suggested providing large reference maps at the session. Jim thought the public notice should include a link to the Master Plan Greenways Recommendation Map. Stephen wondered about the possibility of getting news reporters to cover this.

Jim wondered if we should take this to City Council, or if it should end at staff. Marc added that the previous meeting's discussion with Roderick addressed some of these issues, and it was determined that the product of this process should be permanent changes to the CIP priority list, not the Master Plan.

Sue said this is a short timeline so members will have to work quickly. Marcia agreed and said it's necessary in light of the Buncombe County process. Al added it's important for the CIP timeline, too. Al said staff can go ahead and research some greenways that have already been brought up for discussion over the past year.

Marc explained to the Buncombe County representatives that corridors in the Master Plan and corridors in the CIP priority list might not match. He stressed that we want to make sure overarching planning efforts capture both of these. Jim saw this as a stop-gap measure until the next Master Plan update. Marcia said Buncombe County has a master plan just for greenways, which she thought made more sense than a department-wide master plan including cultural arts, recreation, etc.

Stephen moved to accept the proposed timeline, Marcia seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Marcia moved to add to the August 11 meeting an agenda item for a public comment session regarding updating the greenways CIP list at 4:30-6:00 pm. Jim seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Jim called for a volunteer to work on drafting the content of the public input session and the public notice requirement. Sue felt that it was an outreach activity and agreed to work with Jim and Al on it. The notice will go out through official channels, but will also be supplemented via email distribution to neighborhood associations, a press release, and

distribution to staff and member contact lists. He asked for other ideas for how to make the public aware.

Marcia suggested including a list of current greenways projects in the announcement materials, in addition to a map link. Jim suggested making it clear this process is both to add and remove projects from the list. Stephen said if we're removing a project from the priority list, we have a responsibility to let the public know. Marcia agreed we should use the term "reprioritizing" instead of "removing." Al said we should be sure to note this is for CIP projects in 2012-2013. Regarding the session format, Jim and Marcia said they thought a brief presentation followed by a drop-in period with materials available was best. Marc suggested stations where people can get information about various components. Al said we could have a comment sheet to record what is said.

Marcia and Sue volunteered to be on the subcommittee. Jim said he is willing too, but he will be out of town Aug 11-15. They asked for Al's participation too, especially to prepare materials.

Marc suggested that Sue call the head of each neighborhood association in addition to the City's outreach efforts. Members brainstormed a list of organizations that might help with promotion, including RiverLink, Asheville GreenWorks, Asheville on Bikes, Buncombe County, Blue Ridge Bicycle Club, Friends of Hominy Creek Greenway, Asheville Design Center, and the Bike/Ped Task Force.

Glen asked if the Wilma Dykeman Plan shows up on the big map, which it does.

## **5. Staff Updates**

Planning: Blake reported that several projects that had been put on hold are returning. The residential development adjacent to Beaucatcher Mountain Greenway and Overlook Park project has renewed interest. Also, the Riverbend site that originally was going to be an urban village is now back as a proposed multifamily rental area. Health Adventure is moving to the Biltmore Mall, freeing up the previous site on Broadway for a greenway or other development.

APRCA: Al reported that progress is being made on Reed Creek Greenway—Phase II. Contractors are currently doing storm water, subsurface work, and a retaining wall. The RFQ for Beaucatcher Greenway is about 80% finished and will be going out this month, including trailheads. The draft RFQ for Town Branch and Clingman greenways is being prepared by a large committee for a Tiger II grant.

Staff met with Brother Hug this week to discuss operations and CIP projects in the Hominy Creek area. Marcia added that Brother Hug is looking at the Sulphur Spring area.

## **6. Reports**

Asheville Parks and Greenway Foundation: Glen reported that he connected a Foundation member with Marsha Stickford and Brother Hug to volunteer at Hominy Creek. A small group met to discuss fundraising plan and is meeting with AI for a tour of the new recreation center.

Community Outreach Committee: Sue reported that this is a busy time and she wants to focus on the public comment session for the next few weeks.

**7. Other Business**

Dan, intern at Asheville Design Center, introduced himself and said ADC is interested in a design project of Smith Mill Creek and will attend the public comment session.

Meeting adjourned at 4:54 p.m.