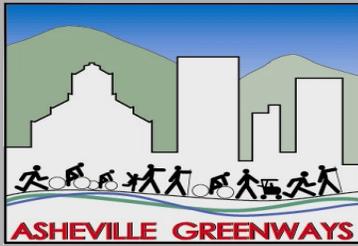


## GREENWAY COMMISSION MEETING



February 9, 2012

**Members Present:** Jim Grode, Glen Locascio, Susan Barlow, Stephen Jones, Mary Weber and Chris Pelly, Council Liaison.

**Staff Present:** Al Kopf, Superintendent of Planning & Development, Blake Esselstyn, Planning. Martha McGlohon, Legal Liaison, Barb Mee, Staff Liaison, Janet Georgemurr.

Jim called the meeting to order at 3:30.

### **1. Review and approval of January 12, 2012 minutes:**

Sue Barlow moved to approve the January 12, 2012 minutes with a minor change in correcting the name of Phyllis Stiles; Glen Locascio seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

### **2. Welcoming New Members to Greenway Commission: Ally Donlan Wilson and Mary Weber:**

- Jim stated that Ally Donlan Wilson was unable to attend today's meeting due to a Warren Wilson Board of Trustees Meeting. Jim and Ally have exchanged messages and Ally is very excited to be a part of the Greenway Commission.
- Jim welcomed Mary Weber to the Greenway Commission. Mary gave a brief background: landscape architect; lived in Asheville for 21 years; first job was in the Planning Dept and now has her own practice for the past 16 years and worked on a lot of park projects; playground and greenway projects. At this time, she is on the design team for the BC Greenway Master Plan project. Mary has a long standing interest in greenways and also lived in communities that had a lot of great greenway systems such as Seattle. Mary would like to see Asheville having a better Greenway system as well as pedestrian and bicycle facilities.
- Barb Mee is staff liaison and filling in for Mariate for this meeting.
- Martha McGlohon introduced herself as the legal liaison now that Greenway Commission is under the Transportation Dept.

### **3. Staff Updates:**

#### **Transportation Update:**

Barb informed GC that Mariate sends her regrets that she is unable to attend this meeting due to attending the NC Legislative Committee with Public Transportation Association in Raleigh.

#### **GC Retreat and Field Visit - Barb Mee:**

- Barb asked the commission if they wanted to do field visits and a retreat, and suggested doing them on separate days. The commission agreed, and decided on a half-day retreat format. Jim Grode will work out details with Mariate. Staff will try to schedule the field visits for March 25 or earlier and schedule the retreat for April. Commissioners can expect to see an inquiry about dates for each part via one of the scheduling web sites. The commission decided to visit sites with the most potential for development and only include an existing greenway if there is a good lesson to be learned from it. GC Members will visit other existing greenways on their own time.
- Items about the visit or retreat were brought up by Commissioners:

1. Staff was asked to provide an explanation of how a greenway became one from conception to completion,
2. Commissioners want to consider reprioritizing some items on the master plan, and want to know what staff thinks are challenges ahead.
3. Staff was asked to provide a list of the greenway projects from the last 5-10 years with dates to illustrate how greenways have changed. Commissioners would like this before they visit greenways.
4. Priority on future greenway.
5. To include the Armory as one of the field visits during the retreat.

**Lake Craig - Azalea Rd Project Update - Barb Mee:**

Barb reported from the Bike/Ped Task Force last meeting where Barb asked for their oversight/advisory function as to where the design is at this point and to make sure that there were not bike issues. The design is for a federally funded project, so it is going through the NEPA process where the alternatives are judged by looking at the environmental impact as well as which design is best suited to other purposes. The next public meeting is March 1 from 4-7 pm at the RENCI at UNC Asheville office downtown Asheville in the Grove Arcade at One Page Avenue. Most of the project will be about flood mitigation but it will also better connect the Nature Center Park and the Soccer Field and accommodate future greenway development. Barb encourages GC to attend the meeting. A number of roadway options are being considered. Stephen stated that he attended the October meeting and that a signal light is crucial in controlling the traffic at the intersection of Azalea Road. Barb stated that there have been consultations with DOT discussing this issue. DOT has a check list if a request warrants a traffic light as the right tool: does it meet the volume; does it meet the crash rate; and others. It was made clear that the traffic count would have to include a soccer season on Saturdays and not just during the week. When DOT made the original decision, they did not consider the potential use of that street on the weekend. Barb stated that the area residents had made suggestions to the designs, which were presented at the November meeting, that the surrounding residents were not able to get out of their driveways during soccer season. Mary Weber stated the worst times are when the whole group uses the four fields where 8 teams are leaving as the next batch is coming through. Also, it was noted that taking a left turn onto Azalea, there is a cliff that blocks the view. Glenn voices the same sentiment with Mary.

**STRIVE NOT TO DRIVE (SNTD) - Barb Mee Reported:**

SNTD will be in May and the City is a participant. We encourage GC to get involved and to call Gwen Wisler, who is coordinating volunteers. Under consideration is the possibility of a leadership bicycle ride that combines a bike ride and looking at greenways. Jim Grode stated that his wife is on the SNTD Committee that Jim will make that connection. The date of SNTD week is pending sometime in May, 2012.

**PRCA Update - Al Kopf Reported:**

1. **Reed Creek Greenway** - The footings for the bridge are underway; the contractor had to de-water 3 to 4 times due to excess rain; the bridge abutments will be completed in a month's time and the pre-fabricated bridge installed later this winter.
2. **Town Branch and Clingman Forest Greenway** - The RFQ for design on the Town Branch and Clingman Forest Greenways that are being funded by the TIGER Grant were submitted to the federal government via Jeff Staudinger and Judy Daniels. Hopefully the TIGER Grant RFQ will be reviewed by early next week. The planning and partial construction design project will go the length of Clingman Forest from Aston Park, down to the River Art District, down to Depot Street, following Choctaw going north to intersection with McDowell; and Southside of the planning and construction design.
3. **Beaucatcher Greenway** – Staff will be releasing an RFQ by the end of the month. The greenway will extend from the hospital zone all the way to the I-240 cut for the greenway component, with trail heads in strategic areas where there are future parks that are anticipated. The scope of work will not

include designing the parks, but, focusing on the greenway development. At the top of the reservoirs at either end there will be parking at the trail heads that will be designed but not picnic tables and other amenities in the area.

**Question:** In the preliminary designs was there any use of the curbing that ended up on the reservoir at the top of the Beaucatcher Mountain in a dumping ground? Could that be used creatively?

**Answer:** Parks has been looking for its use in various, possible park projects. There were some used in parks for ornamental garden beds and edging but most of it is used along the streets. The pieces that are still there are 2 to 3 feet in size. The history of this: the granite was removed from the Montford neighbourhood and a few downtown streets. The granite curbing was removed in the 80's and taken to the reservoir when Public Works was replacing them using concrete curbs which are a lot easier to replace time wise. Then staff realized it was a mistake to discard the granite and ever since crews recover the granite and reuse it in the historical districts and appropriate streets downtown, but some of the granite is still there would be difficult to recover.

**Question:** Reed Creek Bridge was delayed due to the design not being approved.

**Answer:** Al stated that the DOT has to sign off due to grant funding. There was a transition in staff at NCDOT when the construction drawings were submitted for approval. The approval was received 1 1/2 months ago and we have to wait a six to eight weeks to get the one piece bridge manufactured.

**Question:** Regarding the greenways that are being funded by TIGER II grant, will this cover the construction cost or the design?

**Answer:** Al stated that this includes the environmental study, planning and construction drawings. Right now the grant would pay for 65 to 70% construction drawings and he feels confident that funding could bring all of the construction drawings to completion. Funding can not be appropriated towards construction.

**Question:** Is Parks looking at new grants for the next stage of actual construction?

**Answer:** Once the construction drawings are completed there will be better cost estimates. This will help to begin to understand how much money needs to be secured through the Capital Improvement Project (CIP) funds from the City and/or DOT funds. The parks are designed to DOT guidelines and DOT is very interested in partnering with the City. In this way staff can get a better picture of what kind of sources of funding we need to seek. Al stated that he doesn't think that Parks will be able to incorporate PARTF Grants in any of these because most of the projects are solely greenways and not fitting into the 3 minimum park activities required by this grant source.

**Question:** Is there a possibility of having park activities at Dr. Grant Center?

**Answer:** Al stated that there is a request in for next stage of development for park activities. It will be a year process before the drawings are completed and the cost estimate completed before Parks would be ready to seek further funding.

### **Planning Update - Blake Esselstyn**

Blake reported:

- ❑ Staff is moving forward in preparing a Complete Streets Policy for Council's consideration, which includes new and existing streets to work for all users, including pedestrians, cyclists, transit as well as motorized vehicles. Many other cities are working on multi-modal transportation and not only designing streets primarily for automobiles.
- ❑ An increasing number of conversations the topic of Affordable Housing and the importance of location in determining Affordable Housing to be centrally located to transit in order to commute for low-income housing.
- ❑ The UNCA Foundation purchased the property off of Broadway. In the most recent Montford Neighborhood newsletter there are at least 4 reports related to greenway projects. Which covers the

purchase of the Broadway property; Riverlink is making efforts to raise money; also article on Reed Creek greenway. Copies of the Montford Newsletter are available on the 5th floor.

- ❑ City closed on the Falconhurst property which is off Patton Avenue near Louisiana Avenue next to Armory of 7.7 acres to include walking trails. When the property was donated to the City, the owner had a restriction to leave the property undeveloped. The trails will be mulched and not paved; it is landlocked and access from the Armory property. The lease is coming up soon and the City will want to add parking with access.
- ❑ The City has sold the Reid Center to the Housing Authority for \$254,000, which will go towards the Dr. Grant Center facilities. There are plans for a splash park similar to the Pack Park, as well as other improvements.
- ❑ Pearson Bridge site and the City owned property. Nikki Reed is working on a lease arrangement of a nominal yearly fee with flexibility of future projects where either party can withdraw.
- ❑ Question on the Complete Street Policy: is it practical in connecting to the main corridors? Blake stated that on Choctaw Ave was one of the complete street corridors which was funded by AARA. Barb thinks of Complete Streets as balancing the needs of the users on all modes; or context sensitivity.
- ❑ Question on the Complete Street overlaying maps of the greenways, bike lanes, bike plans, transit and all multi-modal. Blake stated that IT is working on an online GIS mapping application. The Active Mapper will be placed on the City's website in the near future under Map Asheville.

#### **4. Community Outreach Committee Report - Sue Barlow:**

- ❑ Sue invited the new Greenway Commissioners to participate in the Community Outreach sub-committee. The mission is to educate the public about the Greenway system. She will contact them by email.
- ❑ Reed Creek - will be completed sometime this spring and it will give us an opportunity to invite the public. It would be nice to have a similar event to the one held at the French Broad River Greenway Extension, May 14, 2010. There was a ribbon-cutting with the Mayor, refreshments, etc.
- ❑ Sue asked now that the GC is under the Transportation Department whether she would be dealing with Al or Barb or both. The project will take pre-planning with publicity and scheduling. She stated it was not too soon to be thinking about working on it.
- ❑ Sue reported that Jim Grode volunteered to provide information on the City Greenway's for the National Girls and Women's Sports Day at UNCA on February 11th.
- ❑ Sue also discussed the Greenway Commission having a table at the Realtors Exposition again this year. She will have more specifics and a date by next month's meeting.

#### **5. Asheville-Buncombe Bicycle Pedestrian Task Force Report—Jim Grode**

- ❑ Jim stated that no one from the Commission attended the meeting.

#### **6. Asheville Parks and Greenway Foundation Update—Glen Locascio**

- ❑ Glen reported that the Asheville Parks and Greenway Foundation had a staff retreat the day after the last GC meeting. Three hours was spent at the Dr. Grant's Southside Center which is a great facility. We introduced six new board members totalling 18 foundation members. There is a lot of new energy there. The Foundation will have two committees, a Public Relations Committee and a Development Fund Committee. Glen will be working with the Public Relations Committee. There is good talent on the foundation and the main projects focusing on are:
  1. Dr. Grant's Southside Center and the future development including the splash pad as well as add-ons. Hopefully, the foundation will be to contribute some additional funding.
  2. Beaucatcher Mountain has been talked out for sometime now as the main greenway project of interest. Glen will keep everyone posted on this project.
  3. People did express an interest with new folks in seeing the greenways and facilities too. There may be too many people to get on tours, but, Glen will "put it out there" because of the interest to seek the sites and learn about them.

**9. Buncombe County Greenway Commission Update—Sue Barlow Reporting on behalf of Marcia Bromberg:**

1. The Buncombe County Greenway Commission will not meet in February.
2. One of the items that were discussed at the last meeting was the updates to the Master Plan
3. Susan Hackett who is the coordinator for the Promotion Program updated the Commission.
4. Susan asked if anyone has seen the "Say Cheese, Please" on the BC website, which is the ability to download photos of the greenways. Sue encourages the GC to submit their photos. This new process will help with involving the public and getting the word out for the greenways.
5. Jim stated that Marcia has been in touch with Brother Hug about a possible scheduled date of 3/10/12 for a clean-up project on Hominy Creek Greenway. Jim or Marcia will send an email to everyone when the date is confirmed.

**10. New Business: Charlotte Street Corridor - Mary Weber:**

Mary Weber stated on Monday (2/9) night there was a community meeting regarding Charlotte Street Corridor - North of 240; and the possibility of converting it to three lanes. Chris Pelly attended as well as approximately 150 people.

**Points of Interest:**

- ❑ Charlotte Street Committee of 6 residents and 6 business owners.
- ❑ A survey was completed of the immediate neighbours as to what they would like to see on Charlotte Street.
- ❑ At this time, there is no design or plan but very preliminary, but only to talk about this process and answer questions and feedback.
- ❑ To make Charlotte Street have better community feel with emphasizes on pedestrians and bicycle safety.
- ❑ Discussion of the possibility of three lanes and what could be accomplished with the 10 fee wide extra space.
- ❑ Issues with the existing sidewalks with not having curbs in a lot of places and trouble with curb cuts which are dangerous like the gas station near 240.
- ❑ The issue of obstructions in the middle of the sidewalk like power poles and fire hydrants.
- ❑ A range of opinions where people are very concerned about the possibility of 3 lanes; mostly concerned about safety with making left turns.
- ❑ Other people are concerned about slowing down the traffic and length of drive time;
- ❑ A business was concerned about loosing business. But other people say that they would gain business from neighbourhood oriented like the Bakery and the Chop Shop and the Ultimate Ice Cream and Seafood stores.
- ❑ Most touching comment was a woman at the end of the meeting who was in a wheelchair who was hit by a car on Hendersonville Rd and is now paralyzed. She talked about the importance of needing to make our streets safer and that really hit home.
- ❑ Few vocal opponents most people saw the need of safety whether that is three lanes or sidewalk improvements.
- ❑ There was a consensus to not have on street parking that was one idea in the conceptual plan a long time ago.
- ❑ Generally most people wanted a change to increase ped/bike safety and also reflect a more neighbourhood context.
- ❑ It was mentioned that the City may divide the project into two study areas - one north of Chestnut and one south of Chestnut to 240.
- ❑ Mary will continue to go to the meetings to report back to GC.

**Administrative request:** Sue Barlow requested to send an update list of GC member list from staff. Janet will email updated list to the GC members and staff.

Jim adjourns at 4:30.