

BOARD OF ALDERMEN

ITEM NO. D(2)

AGENDA ITEM ABSTRACT

MEETING DATE: Tuesday, December 16, 2003

TITLE: Worksession on Greenways

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| DEPARTMENT: PLANNING | PUBLIC HEARING: YES ___ NO <u>X</u> |
| ATTACHMENTS: A. Resolution B. Excerpt of Minutes, October 28 and November 11, 2003 C. Staff Memo- Follow-up on Greenways and Attachments | FOR INFORMATION CONTACT: Patricia McGuire – 918-7327 |

PURPOSE

In discussions following reports on greenway planning on October 28 and November 11, 2003, the Mayor and Board of Aldermen determined that it would be helpful to hold a worksession to evaluate and select the strategy for updating and enhancing greenway planning efforts.

INFORMATION

There is often some confusion associated with the term “greenway” as may be the case with terms that are fairly broad in their use. The Town’s use of this term has almost always focused on the connected segments, principally along stream corridors that are acquired to provide public access for recreational and transportation purposes. It is towards this purpose that the Town has obtained offers of dedication, easements and/or fee simple ownership to linear segments along Tom’s, Morgan, and Bolin Creeks that now total over 4 miles.

Board members have expressed some interest in evaluating whether “greenway planning” specifically, should be expanded to include other functional elements, such as wildlife corridors and open space/natural areas for wildlife habitat, unique flora. In this regard, it has been noted that it is after the determination of function that other decisions, such as access, levels of use, and types of improvements, maintenance needs and responsibility, follow. Board members have also noted the ongoing community dialogue regarding the appropriate design and surface material for developed greenway trails. Supporting information is provided in *Attachment C*.

Greenway Planning and Related Matters

Recent discussions of these matters have not yet come to a close and there are three proposed projects that are ripe for action. An excerpt of the minutes of the October 28, and November 11, 2003 meetings are attached (*Attachment B*). Action statements related to these matters are presented below.

- **Greenway Trail Master Planning.** The Board of Aldermen approved updating the *Recreation and Parks Comprehensive Master Plan* on November 11, 2003. The greenway trail element should be expanded to include additional creek corridors (i.e. Tom’s and the

branches of Bolin Creek and tributaries that are included in the *Facilitated Small Area Plan for Carrboro's Northern Study Area*). In addition, since the original document did not provide specificity on trail types, include a set of trail standards and assign the standards to the identified trail segments throughout the Town's network of greenways.

- **Morgan Creek West Greenway Trail Design.** Decide to allocate funds for the match needed to hire a consultant to prepare the design/development plan for the greenway trail between Smith Level Road and University Lake. The design process will include an in-depth examination of the site conditions and the specific location and design of the trail and will include participation from citizens, advisory board members, staff and interested entities (i.e. Chapel Hill, OWASA, Morgan Creek Valley Alliance, and Orange County). The design process is expected to take about a year. The funding schedule -- funds for greenway construction will become available in federal fiscal year 2006 (October 2005) -- suggests that the Town could begin this project in fall 2004. Depending on the scheduling of the Recreation and Parks Master Plan/greenway element update, the design process may have a greater or lesser emphasis on deciding the trail surface for the Morgan Creek West greenway. In any event, trail surface will be determined in conjunction with a number of factors, including details and locations of trail surface(s), level and type of expected use, construction and maintenance costs, and funding sources. The plan would also include details on points of access and connectivity.
- **Bolin Creek Corridor.** It must first be noted that the Friends of Bolin Creek (FOBC) proposal is much broader than either a specific discussion of greenway trails or even a discussion of the other possible greenway functions, such as riparian protection, wildlife corridors, et cetera. This is so because the FOBC suggest that the master plan includes open space and land preservation strategies on a larger scale than what might be encompassed within a "corridor" per se. This item has been included here because of the FOBC communication related to greenway planning and because of the overlap of the resource areas under discussion. Under any of the three strategies noted below, the Board of Aldermen may wish to consider formally acknowledging the value and commitment of FOBC activities and seek to integrate these efforts and other partnerships into ongoing Town projects; including greenway trail planning, stream buffer ordinance modifications, and National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit activities. The staff has identified three options from which the Board of Aldermen may wish to choose for further action on this topic:
 - 1) Direct staff to develop an outline for a charrette process that would yield a guide to the existing policy, regulatory, and budgetary measures associated with the Bolin Creek corridor ("corridor" includes the creek corridor, associated floodplains, tributaries and associated stream buffers).
 - 2) Direct staff to develop an outline for the master plan process described in the County's ERCD report from June 2003 and restated in the FOBC letter of November 25, 2003.
 - 3) Find that existing plans, policies, regulations, and implementation strategies related to the Northern Study Area, open space, tree protection, stream protection, and land use and development within the Town's jurisdiction collectively constitute a master plan for Carrboro's portion of the Bolin Creek basin.

The staff recommends that the Board strongly consider the third strategy as most appropriate.

FISCAL IMPACT

The inclusion of a greenway trail standards component of the Master Plan update is expected to be accomplished with the resources that have been allocated to date for that effort (\$20,000), although specific details on this will follow the conclusion of the Request for Qualifications process and negotiation with the top candidate. The Morgan Creek West greenway trail requires \$10,000 in local match towards the \$50,000 project.

Staff has suggested that the Board of Aldermen set aside funds from the first bond issue for the trail design and construction that is scheduled through federal fiscal year 2006. The charrette and master plan options in response to FOBC involve staff resources and would require a cash contribution as well, although the magnitude is not known. It may be noted that the Town allocated \$20,661 between 1997 and 2000 to the Shaping Orange County's Future, the most recent multi-jurisdictional planning effort. Costs for that county-wide effort were distributed based on population percentages for each of the participants.

ADMINISTRATION'S RECOMMENDATION

The Administration recommends that the Board of Aldermen adopt the attached resolution (*Attachment A*) regarding future greenway planning efforts.