

BOARD OF ALDERMEN

ITEM NO. D(2)

AGENDA ITEM ABSTRACT

MEETING DATE: April 20, 2004

TITLE: Creation of a Morgan Creek Trail Planning Committee

DEPARTMENT: PLANNING	PUBLIC HEARING: YES ___ NO <u>X</u> ___
ATTACHMENTS A. Resolution B. Excerpt from 1994 Carrboro Parks and Recreation Master Plan C. Excerpt from Vision 2020 D. 12-16-03 Resolution on Greenways	FOR INFORMATION CONTACT: Dale McKeel – 918-7329

PURPOSE

The Town of Carrboro has secured funding from the Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro MPO to develop a plan for a greenway trail along Morgan Creek. The attached resolution would authorize the creation of a Morgan Creek Trail Planning Committee to assist with this plan.

INFORMATION

A greenway trail along Morgan Creek between Smith Level Road and University Lake was envisioned by the 1994 Carrboro Parks and Recreation Master Plan (Attachment B). As development has occurred in the vicinity of Morgan Creek over the past decade, several public access easements adjacent to Morgan Creek have been dedicated to the Town.

Carrboro Vision 2020, adopted in December 2000, includes support for a network of greenways along streams that would serve as nature trails, biking and walking trails, and wildlife corridors (Attachment C). More recently, voters in the November 2004 bond referendum authorized the Town to borrow up to \$4.6 million for construction of sidewalks and greenway trails, including funding for a greenway trail along Morgan Creek.

Through the Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro Metropolitan Planning Organization (DCHC MPO), the Town has secured funding for greenway trail projects over the next several years using STP-DA (Surface Transportation Direct Attributable) funds. These funds include \$40,000 for design and \$480,000 for construction of a trail along Morgan Creek. The use of these funds requires a 20 percent match from the Town.

As part of a December 16, 2003 resolution specifying next steps related to the greenways, the Board of Aldermen voted to “allocate \$10,000 either directly from the first sidewalk and greenway bond issue or seek reimbursement from that source, to provide the match for the design/development plan for Morgan Creek West greenway trail” (Attachment D). It is

anticipated that the Town would hire a consultant to assist with the preparation of a conceptual plan.

DISCUSSION

Chapel Hill Conceptual Plan. The Town of Chapel Hill is currently developing a conceptual plan for a 10-foot asphalt or concrete trail along Morgan Creek that will connect Smith Level Road to the current terminus of the Fan Branch Trail at Culbreth Road, with a smaller natural surface trail that would provide access east to the Merritt Pasture. Near Smith Level Road, 200 feet of this trail is in Carrboro's jurisdiction. The Town of Chapel Hill has worked closely with Carrboro to determine the point of connection with the future Carrboro trail system and the best location for crossing Smith Level Road.

Chapel Hill's Morgan Creek Trail Conceptual Plan Committee is developing a draft conceptual plan that eventually will be presented to the governments of Chapel Hill, Carrboro, and Orange County. The Committee is currently recessed awaiting a revised study of the Morgan Creek floodway. Their work cannot proceed until the new flood data is complete in late spring of 2004. The Committee hopes to be able to make recommendations in late 2004.

Morgan Creek Trail Preliminary Functional Plan: Carrboro's portion of the Morgan Creek Trail is proposed to run between Smith Level Road and University Lake. Funds from the MPO will be used to develop a preliminary functional plan that would determine the best location for the trail. This plan would show connections to residential areas, streets, and public facilities.

Once a preliminary functional plan is completed, it will be used as a guide in making subsequent decisions related to land acquisition, easement acquisition, and other related decisions. It may be necessary for some detailed engineering information to be gathered at the preliminary functional plan level because of the physical obstacles found in the Morgan Creek valley. The study would also determine the best locations and costs of future pedestrian bridges.

Proposed Planning Committee: It is recommended that the Aldermen appoint a committee to investigate options for locating a greenway trail in the Morgan Creek valley from Smith Level Road to University Lake. The Town of Chapel Hill appointed a committee to oversee the development of a plan for their portion of the Morgan Creek Trail, and this arrangement has worked well. Town staff from the recreation and parks, planning, and public works departments will provide support to this committee.

The attached resolution would authorize Town staff to recruit applicants for the committee. Town staff recommends that the membership should include representatives from the organizations and groups listed below. The suggested numbers of members from each group is in parentheses. It is recommended that the Carrboro neighborhood representatives be selected by the Aldermen and other representatives be selected by the respective organizations.

- Board of Aldermen (number to be determined by Board)
- Planning Board (1)
- Recreation and Parks Commission (1)
- Environmental Advisory Board (1)

- Transportation Advisory Board (1)
- Neighborhood representatives (3)
- Frank Porter Graham School (1)
- Morgan Creek Valley Alliance (1)
- Orange County (1)
- Town of Chapel Hill (1)
- OWASA (1)
- University of North Carolina (1)

If the Board of Aldermen agree, Town staff will advertise for applicants and bring back recommended committee nominations for consideration by the Board in September 2004.

Schedule: While the committee members are being recruited, Town staff will begin the steps to hire a consultant to assist with the preparation of a preliminary functional plan. Town staff has begun preparing a request for proposals (RFP) for the preliminary functional design, which will include a proposed scope of services. Once a consultant is hired, similar plans have been completed in a period of 6 to 12 months, depending on the complexity of the issues.

FISCAL IMPACT

On December 16, 2003 the Board of Aldermen voted to “allocate \$10,000 either directly from the first sidewalk and greenway bond issue or seek reimbursement from that source, to provide the match for the design/development plan for Morgan Creek West greenway trail.”

RECOMMENDATION

The Administration recommends that the Board of Aldermen adopt the attached resolution which would authorize town staff to recruit applicants for a Morgan Creek Trail Planning Committee.