

CLAYTON COUNTY GREENSPACE TRUST BOARD

MINUTES

The Clayton County Greenspace Trust Board held a meeting at 5:00 p.m., on Tuesday April 1, 2008. The meeting was held in the Commissioners' Conference Room of the Clayton County Administration Building, located at 112 Smith Street, Jonesboro, Georgia. Notification was sent to *The (Clayton) News Daily* and later published in this newspaper. Those present at the Board Meeting were:

Members: Chairman Eldrin Bell, Ms. Libby Torbush, Ms Lucy Huie, James Jenkins and Jack Bruce.

Attendees: Andrew Adams, Nathan Parrott, Chuck Ware, Morgan Stallings, Kenneth Slack.

Chairman Bell called the meeting to order at approximately 5:03 p.m. He welcomed those in attendance and presented the minutes of the December 4, 2007 meeting for adoption. James Jenkins made a motion to adopt the minutes, Mr. Jack Bruce seconded that motion and hearing no objections or corrections the minutes were adopted.

The Chairman brought forth the first item on the Agenda. Mr. Morgan Stallings introduced himself and Kenneth Slack as Booz/Allen/Hamilton (BAH) team members creating the Ten-Year Master Plan for Clayton County's Department of Parks and Recreation, which includes the Trails Master Plan. Mr. Stallings began his presentation by pointing out both plans create ten year strategies and then moved into specifics of the Trails Master Plan. Mr. Stallings said they have interviewed a variety of Clayton County staff, as well as staff from other metro counties, to obtain a sense of what has been done in regards to park and trail planning. In addition, the BAH team conducted a needs assessment survey that found sixteen percent of respondents want more open-space, preservation and trails. In addition, the BAH team conducted four town hall meetings, one in each Commission District, as well as one senior focus group meeting. These preparatory steps were taken to create a "high level" trail map.

At this point Mr. Stallings illustrated how the "high level" trails map focused on incorporating key areas of interest around the county and proceeded to name a few. While incorporating the areas of interest, BAH consulted with the cities of Riverdale and Morrow to ensure the County's plan will be inclusive of theirs. At this point, Mr. Stallings began describing a Power Point slide depicting the "high level" course of the trail. In doing so he explained how the trail was broken into sections spurring from a hub in the center of the County. Each of these sections extends from the hub and goes toward different points of interest within the county. Mr. Stallings then explained the next slide providing examples of how the trail's course was determined by analyzing vegetated corridors in aerial photographs. Mr. Stallings went on to say the aerial photography analysis was performed to get a "high level" view of what made sense before site visits were performed to assess specific feasibilities. Then Mr. Stallings informed the Board that he and Mr. Nathan Parrott recently conducted site visits to determine the feasibility of key access points along the proposed trail.

After speaking of the feasibility assessments Mr. Stallings informed the Board that multiple trail types will probably be recommended, such as elevated boardwalks, soft surface trails and hard surface trails. Any one of the different trail types can be located along roads, streams or utility easements. With the methodology to determine needs and trail routing explained, Mr. Stallings moved on to present some tools they feel will be useful in implementing their recommendations. Once the proposed tools were explained Mr. Stallings opened the floor for questions.

The first question was from Mr. James Jenkins, in which he asked how Mr. Stallings foresaw the trail being used. In response, Mr. Stallings said he anticipates the trail to be utilized for both passive (walking) and active (running, cycling etc...) recreation. Mr. Stallings added that since the trail will link points of interest, it will encourage activity while an educational component should create environmental consciousness. Mr. Jenkins followed up by asking if Mr. Stallings saw the trail being used by children traveling to and from school. Mr. Stallings answered that question in the affirmative and supported it by informing the Board he and Mr. Parrott altered the trail's route to include nearby schools during their site visits. Mr. Jenkins posited another question by asking if additional funding was available for the inclusion of schools. In response to that question Mr. Stallings said they would be looking into funding opportunities in the near future and those opportunities would be included in the final report.

At this point Ms. Libby Torbush asked if the trail would connect to the Newman Wetland Center. Mr. Stallings said it is conceptualized to connect to the Wetland Center and Mr. Parrott said getting there will require access to Clayton County Water Authority's spray application land South of Freeman Road. Ms. Torbush followed that question by asking if Rex Mill was also included. Mr. Stallings said it was and it looked like a feasible inclusion, assuming cooperation from a few private land owners in the area. Ms. Torbush then asked if a timeline will be established for what sections should be constructed first. Mr. Stallings said they were planning on prioritizing the development process this month and that prioritization would be included in the Master Plan. At this point Mr. Parrott added that he anticipated developing the area directly South of Upper Riverdale Road first. Because, much greenspace has already been purchased in the area, making it "low hanging fruit" to show quick progress to the taxpayers.

With Ms. Torbush's questions addressed Mr. Jenkins asked the Chairman if he saw the trail enhancing commercial activity. The Chairman said not necessarily, however; he envisions health benefits and also believes a safe trail system can attract commercial development once it is established.

The Chairman then asked if we were keeping in touch with The Path Foundation, because he strongly wants us to follow their recommendations. Mr. Parrott said he and Susan Hood, of Dekalb County, decided Mr. Parrott should meet with The Path Foundation before Dekalb County and he is in the process of coordinating with them. The Chairman expanded by saying The Path Foundation will provide numerous services and he feels they should be incorporated in the Plan. The Chairman went on to say organizationally he sees the Greenspace Initiative as a part of the Parks & Recreation Department and therefore wants them involved in all future Greenspace meetings. The Chairman asked if there were anymore questions on this topic, with none raised the Chairman moved the board's attention to the next agenda item - the SPLOST.

The Chairman addressed SPLOST by saying he jealously protected the inclusion of greenspace funding within it. Furthermore, he stated the dispersal of SPLOST funding is currently being planned and he hopes to include the entire County in that process. Mr. Jim Jenkins asked the Chairman what amount of funding would the Greenspace Program receive from SPLOST. The Chairman couldn't recall the exact number, but he has located a philanthropist that wants to dedicate the money from the sell of his property to the Parks Department. The Chairman went on to say the County may sale bonds when the Greenspace Program begins undertaking larger projects, like Dekalb County has done. In addition, the Chairman directed Mr. Parrott to coordinate an opportunity for the Board members to view Dekalb County's trail system from The Gallery at South Dekalb Mall to Arabia Mountain. With that said, the Chairman moved on to the next agenda item – Reid Stephens Property.

Mr. Parrott took the floor to remind the Board of a grant request submitted late last year. Mr. Parrott then informed the Board the grant request was denied by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. In response the Chairman asked who the application was submitted to and Mr. Parrott informed him it was the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. Then the Chairman asked who the head of that department was. Nathan Parrott replied Noel Holcomb is the head of that Department. Concluding this topic the Chairman moved on to the Highway 138 Corridor Project's agenda item.

At this point Mr. Andrew Adams explained the Highway 138 Corridor Project was slowly moving forward. The Chairman reminded the Board that along the South side of Hwy. 138 there will be a twelve foot wide sidewalk running to International Park. The Chairman also informed the Board that he asked the hospital to connect their various functions and local neighborhoods with trails. Expanding on the topic the Chairman asked the Hospital to purchase a mobile medical unit to keep on the trail in case someone gets injured. On a side note, the Chairman stated he is encouraging new developments to install trail systems and the Clayton County Water Authority has agreed to allow trails over sewage easements. With that covering the Highway 138 Corridor Project the Chairman moved the Board's attention to Chuck Ware and the Memorial Gardens Cemetery.

Mr. Ware took the floor and informed the Board he was recently approached by a teary eyed Mr. James Williams who said he located his father's grave in the Memorial Gardens Cemetery. During their exchange Mr. Ware asked Mr. Williams to bring some pictures of the Williams family. In doing so Mr. Williams brought his sisters obituary, which stated she was a student at the Lodge Hall School and was buried at the Lodge Hall Cemetery. Mr. Ware continued to explain how important Mr. Williams visit was because it provided documentation proving the existence of the Lodge Hall School and associated cemetery. In addition, Mr. Ware spoke of a Clayton State University Archeologist's interest in Lodge Hall, as well as a partnership he is forming with the person in charge of refurbishing the Oakland Cemetery's recent tornado damage. Mr. Chuck Ware concluded by letting the Board know he is now a member of Georgia Municipal Cemetery Association and has formed a Lovejoy Cemetery Committee to involve the public in the Lodge Hall Cemetery Project. With Mr. Ware's presentation completed the Chairman brought the Board to the agenda item addressing the Villages of Ellenwood.

Mr. Parrott told the Board he was in contact with the County's inspector for this project and it is on schedule. Mr. Parrott elaborated by saying the Wal Mart is scheduled to open in May and they are building two separate phases of the residential portion. The Chairman joined in to say the Wal Mart's façade is drastically different from the standard big box and convenient timing allowed Clayton County to push for that different design. The Chairman went on to say this Wal Mart is now winning awards and is the very first of its kind. General information was exchanged in regards to the new Wal Mart design and then the Chairman moved the Board on to Trust Board nominations.

Once the floor was opened for nominations there were some questions for clarification, but no nominees were put forth.

With no further agenda items the meeting was adjourned.

Meeting adjourned at 5:56 PM