

**Henderson County
RAIL-TRAIL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Monthly Meeting
Wednesday, February 14, 2024**

The RTAC held a regularly called meeting on February 14, 2024, at 10:00 a.m. in the King Street Meeting Room and via Microsoft Teams. Voting members that were present online are denoted with the letter “O”.

Voting Member	Present	Not in Attendance
Chuck McGrady, Chair	√	
Chris Burns, Vice Chair	√	
Douglas Moon, at-large	√	
Selena Einwechter, at-large	O	
David Adams, at-large	√	
Dr. Ken Shelton, at-large	√	
Brent Detwiler, City of Hendersonville	√	
Nancy McKinley, Town of Laurel Park	O	
Mike Egan, Conserving Carolina	O	

Also present: Chris Todd, Business and Community Development Director; Autumn Radcliff, Planning Director; Lee Stevens, Planner III; and Marcus Jones, County Engineer.

Call to Order

Chairman Chris Burns called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

Public Comment

None.

Recognize New Chair and Appoint Vice Chair

Chris Todd recognized that Chris Burns was appointed by the Board of Commissioners to act as the RTAC Chair. Mr. Burns restated his thanks to Chuck McGrady for his service and all his help on the Ecusta Trail. The Chairman asked for a nomination for Vice Chair. David Adams nominated Selena Einwechter for Vice Chair. All members voted in favor. Ken Shelton requested that the Board of Commissioners appoint a new member to fill the at-large member vacancy. David Adams recommended Mr. Joe Sanders be considered. Dr. Shelton said that both he and Mr. McGrady recommended Mr. Sanders, but he has declined to serve at this time. The Chairman asked that if the RTAC has any other recommendations to send those names to him.

Approval Meeting Summary

Dr. Shelton noted one correction to the organization name of the public comment speaker, Marilyn Bailey. Her organization is Advocates for the Arts. No other changes were noted.

Updates

Conserving Carolina

Ms. Kristin Cozza stated that Conserving Carolina was working with Marcus Jones and the County on some property line clarifications, but there were no other updates at this time. Kristin also stated that Conserving Carolina no longer thinks it is necessary to have regular updates on the RTAC agenda. They will bring any future items to the RTAC as needed.

Friends of Ecusta Trail (FOET)

Mr. Mark Tooley reported that the operational group met and will continue to meet as needed. He stated that the role of FOET is still being determined and an MOU between FOET, Henderson County, and City of Brevard will need to be considered. He said that FOET is waiting on FHWA’s determination if funding can be used on amenities. He also reported that FOET is following up on the economic study with NC State, and the organization has agreed to fund the study. He did note that Henderson County Planning is working on data collection as well that could assist with the study.

Chris Burns noted that when the Ecusta was first being planned, there weren't any good economic studies on trails, and this information could assist other trails in their efforts.

Henderson County

Chris Todd noted the two articles that ran in both the Times News and the Hendersonville Lightning on the removal of vegetation during the first phase of construction. He stated that no vegetation has been removed on private property, only within the Ecusta ROW. Vegetation removal is necessary to address safety, trail alignment, and drainage. Dr. Shelton stated that some of the trees left on the Swamp Rabbit Trail caused issues by uprooting the pavement. The contact information for Marcus is public if anyone has specific questions about their property or the construction.

Mr. Jones reported that approximately fifteen people have contacted county staff, six of those were upset, and only three were still upset. This is a low number out of approximately one hundred property owners on the trail, especially since the trail has been under construction for three months. Mr. Adams and Mr. Burns stated they were impressed with County staff's quick response to citizen inquiries.

Trail Partners

Lee Stevens, Planner III reported that Planning staff, with assistance from Joe Sanders and other partners, will host another meeting for business owners adjacent to the trail to primarily discuss the Trail Partners & Supporters Program. She explained the purpose of the program to the RTAC and explained that the program is not in effect until the first phase of the trail is completed. Ms. Stevens presented the newest option of the program, which is a formal lease agreement between the County and a property owner for the entirety of an amenity like a parking lot or restroom that would allow the property owner to be covered under the County's liability insurance. The next meeting will consist of a discussion panel of business owners on the Swamp Rabbit Trail who will share their experiences with the group.

Construction Update

Marcus Jones, County Engineer, updated the RTAC on where NHM is in the construction process. Vegetation clearing has finished. He made it clear that what was cleared was only to make way for the trail itself or for safety reasons and that care was taken to limit the disturbance. All erosion control measures are installed, so now the contractors are replacing all cross-drainage pipes to the appropriate size. This will greatly improve drainage on and near the corridor.

Other Items of Discussion

Maureen Copelof, Mayor of Brevard updated the RTAC on the Transylvania side of the trail. They are currently producing 30% design and should have it completed in May of this year. Marcus Jones mentioned that the County is waiting on NCDOT approval to begin work with JMT for design of Phase II in Henderson County. Dr. Shelton asked for an update regarding grant eligibility from the Federal Highway Administration. Marcus responded that the County still has not received a final opinion from the feds.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:41 a.m.

This meeting was recorded and the MP4 file can be made available upon request. Please contact County staff.