

## **Upper McAlpine Creek Greenway and the proposed Charlotte Mecklenburg Utilities Relief Sewer**

Gwen Cook is the planner for this greenway and can be contacted at (704) 432-1570 or [Gwen.Cook@MecklenburgCountyNC.gov](mailto:Gwen.Cook@MecklenburgCountyNC.gov) . Since there has been much misinformation being passed around, Park and Recreation feels it is important that the public have some facts. There was a public meeting concerning the sewer, the greenway and McAlpine Creek Park on Monday, February 7, 2011. Citizens were encouraged to attend and listen to the entire presentation before forming an opinion. Another public meeting will be held in the future, probably 2-3 years, to further refine any proposed natural surface trail routes.

### **The Facts:**

1. Park and Recreation values having facilities like Upper McAlpine Creek Greenway and the park that attract runners and walkers who prefer more natural surfaces.
2. We recognize that the park and greenway are attractive for both formal and informal events and uses because of these natural surfaces.
3. Charlotte Mecklenburg Utilities must install a large relief sewer which will destroy the existing greenway...it is a needed project and we are working with them to try to turn lemons into lemonade.
4. The sewer project will have some impact on the 5K trails; however we are working hard on scheduling of construction with Charlotte Mecklenburg Utilities and planning replacement of disturbed 5K trail consistent with its existing condition. Once complete, it is our intention that this trail function pretty much as it currently does but with somewhat improved starting options.
5. We must consider the significant impact of current design on the environment...a few years ago, during a season of frequent storms, huge amounts of pit gravel were imported to maintain the trail to standards required by our citizens. That gravel, a significant public investment, is now choking the limited aquatic life in our creek all the way into South Carolina. Having granular material in the open utility corridor does not work and is costing Park and Recreation a lot of maintenance money each year. We can do better for our public and the environment.
6. The approximately 3 miles of granular trail cannot be easily negotiated by everyone.
7. We have an idea that could satisfy both natural surface and asphalt trail proponents. It will be presented at the meeting and I hope you will join us with an open mind.
8. Park and Recreation has requested funding from the Board of County Commissioners for the rebuilding of Upper McAlpine Creek Greenway as a priority project; however, the funds will not be necessary for approximately 2-3 more years, depending on CMU funding schedule. CMU will provide and ABC stone base on an alignment that works for both organizations.

We are very appreciative of the many citizens who attended the presentation and participated in the discussion to be well informed. Their input will inform the process.

**Very brief summary of main points that were shared at the public meeting:**

1. The open utility corridor in the McAlpine Creek floodplain is extremely damaging to the granular greenway trail.
2. We cannot continue to dump gravel into McAlpine Creek; it is very damaging to the environment.
3. Huge amounts of gravel are required in some peak flood years to maintain the trail to the level required and expected by the citizens. That level of maintenance is no longer affordable and cannot continue. The cost per year, over and above the cost of the County standard asphalt trail maintenance, is an additional \$30,000- \$140,000 per year.
4. The County is working with Charlotte Mecklenburg Utilities (CMU) for CMU to provide a structural gravel base capable of receiving an asphalt surface, consistent with other greenways in the County system. This approach is very cost effective for Park and Recreation and will greatly reduce/minimize the amount of sediment entering the creek. It is anticipated that the entire greenway trail from Margaret Wallace Road to Sardis Road will be paved immediately after the stone base is placed by CMU. The schedule would be dependent upon CMU financing of the sewer project, but would not likely be earlier than 2014. Installation of the sewer line would take about 18 months.
5. CMU is willing to restrict their contractor to avoid working within the 5K trail area during the event season, approximately August 1 through December 1. The intent is to accommodate at least 90% of the 5K events without disruption from construction.
6. The runners prefer natural surfaces, long straight runs and mile-markers. They do not want the greenway changed.
7. The County is proposing to create a loop, including the James Boyce Park trail, that uses the old abandoned equestrian trail on the east side of the creek. A volunteer effort would likely be necessary to selectively clear the former trail. The final alignment has not been determined, but the entire loop would provide approximately 2.5 miles of natural surface trail in addition to the 3.3 miles that would still be available on the 5K course at McAlpine Creek Park. The citizens requested that these two natural surface trail loops be connected if at all possible. Mile-markers could be provided on the natural surface trails near Sardis Road.
8. It was requested that the County consider using a rubberized surface for the greenway. Greenville, SC has used this type of surface adjacent to and level with an asphalt trail. The cost of this product is 2-3 times more than an asphalt surface. The County might consider this product for a destination greenway at some point in the future, but McAlpine would not likely be the location. [Such an investment should be out of the floodplain and protected from sedimentation and water damage.] The floodplain at McAlpine Creek is massive and floodwaters are violent and rise many feet.

9. The County should consider building a 5K trail in another location. Additional facilities can be considered, but there is no funding for a new facility at this time.
10. The County, through Preston Buckman, Park and Recreation athletic recreation coordinator, will be sure to include in planning the coaches and athletic event citizens associated with the running events/usage in this area.