

Neshaminy Greenway Trail - Dark Hollow Park Citizens Advisory Design Committee May 2, 2022 – Meeting Minutes

- Attendees:

- Marie Carota – Pebble Hill Road resident

- Chris Cook – Bucks County Conservation District

- Judy Hendrixson – Doylestown Township Bike & Hike Committee

- Ken Jones, Neshaminy Creek Watershed Association

- Stephanie Mason – Doylestown Township Manager

- Greg Mester – Warwick Township Tree Committee

- Jeannine Mitchell – Doylestown Township EAC

- Curtis Sawyer – Doylestown Township EAC

- Louis Silberg – Buckingham Township Park & Recreation Commission

- Dan Sharapan – Warwick Township Parks & Recreation Director

- Diane Smith – Buckingham Township EAC/Bucks County Audubon Society

- Jim Walter – Penn State Master Watershed Steward

- Michael Baker, Inc – Engineering Consultant Staff:

- Chris Stanford, Bill Torr

- Bucks County Planning Commission Staff:

- Evan Stone, Rich Brahler, Paul Gordon, Christian Regosch

- The meeting began with Chris Stanford providing an overview of the overall trail alignment beginning with the Bucks County Water and Sewer Authority property and continuing with the segment at the Valley Road trail head.
- Paul Gordon then addressed the question regarding trail width raised by Greg Mester earlier. Paul stated that since the beginning of the project the trail has always been proposed to be a shared use trail given that it has the potential to be used by a variety of users simultaneously and that the wider width minimizes users having to step off the trail for others to pass. Chris Stanford reinforced that this is the prescribed engineering standard for shared use trails. Furthermore, the current grant funding is for a multiuse trail, not a walkway and the project is being designed to allow for future extension in accordance with the original plan, if and when that may become a reality.

- Greg Mester then inquired about the possibility of including resting areas/islands with benches so that trail users can sit and enjoy the creek views. It was agreed that in addition to the proposed ones at the terminating points of the trail, that the inclusion of additional seating areas would be explored. Stephanie Mason mentioned that these types of projects are well-suited for Eagle Scout projects and/or an opportunity to raise funding via honor/memorial benches.
- Chris Stanford continued his discussion of the trail including descriptions of many features proposed along the trail including:
 - The avoidance of several large trees as identified by the tree survey
 - The flagging of wetlands during the design process which helped minimize intrusion of the trail into these sensitive areas
 - The use of three – 50' sections of boardwalk for waterway crossings
 - Improvements to the heavily eroded drainage channel on the BCWSA property
 - The inclusion of a rain garden at the Valley Road trail head to help filter runoff from the parking lot
 - The inclusion of pollinator garden, as well as a kiosk featuring environmental education materials on one side and trail information on the other.
- Judy Hendrixson inquired as to the length and type of fencing proposed on the BCWSA property and its proximity to the trail. Chris indicated that there would be 400 feet of 4-foot-high black coated chain link fencing along the driveway and that some of the existing fencing in proximity to the treatment plants would be relocated/replaced as discussed with and agreed to by BCWSA.
- Marie Carota and Jeannine Mitchell then questioned the inclusion of the rain garden and pollinator garden at the Valley Road trailhead indicating that both would get washed away during a significant storm event and/or would not function as proposed. They indicated that the money would be better spent on providing additional tree and shrubs with solid root structures as well as the size of the proposed parking lot, noting that it was larger than the existing area. Jeannine stressed that this is not a garden and would prefer restoration of the existing natural area versus creating a garden that doesn't fit within the context of the project. Diane Smith also questioned the placement of the pollinator garden indicating that to be successful, they require more sunlight than would be provided by the parking lot. It was agreed that moving the garden uphill near the farm field area would make more sense and that versus it being a garden, consideration should be given to making it more of a grassland/meadow area.
- Marie also questioned the size of the parking lot noting that it was larger than the existing parking area and would result in the removal of trees. Chris Stanford agreed that the parking lot was larger to accommodate both turning movements and the ADA required parking spaces. He then discussed the tree replacements proposed in that area.

- As an alternative to the rain garden, the potential for a vegetative swale was discussed along with a discussion of appropriate planting material. Some of the plants cited as being suitable include red twig dogwood, willow, spicebush, sweet pepper bush, black willow, clethra, and black gums. Marie is concerned with washouts and erosion and stressed the need for trees with deep roots to hold the soil in place. Evan agreed and stated he would work with Chris to formulate a design.
- Chris and Evan then mentioned the inclusion of contingency planting as part of the plans and that once the trail has been developed and initial landscaping is in place, these contingency plantings can be installed on a directed basis in areas in need of additional plant material.

A discussion then ensued regarding the need to minimize soil compaction particularly around the roots of trees, as well as the need for deer tubes, tree protection fencing, and possible exclusionary fencing around certain areas of trees such as hickory seedlings.

- The removal and ongoing control of invasive species was discussed. Chris indicated that the initial plan calls for removal within 10' of the trail and that the recommendation would be to apply environmentally and animal friendly herbicides and pesticides. Jim Walter suggested that the most effective approach is "cut and paint" and indicated that the removal of invasives is another great opportunity for volunteer groups. Evan acknowledged that the control of invasives will be an ongoing challenge.
- Re-seeding along the edges of the trail was also discussed. Chris Stanford indicated that the current design calls for using a naturalized groundcover/wildflower mix. Marie and Jeannine both suggested that something tougher such as fox sedge be utilized and recommended contacting Ernst Seed who offers customized mixes. Other alternatives suggested for landscaping along the trail include ragwort and other strong native plants such as packera.
- Louis inquired as to the next steps of the project and Paul provided an overview of the public input process to be used and indicated that once we are ready to advertise the plans being available for public comment, that we would appreciate the assistance of the various groups represented on the committee to help spread the word about the public comment period.
- Paul indicated that prior to the public comment period, that the planning commission and the engineering/landscape team would meet to discuss updates to the plans based on the feedback received and then set up another meeting of the committee to update them on changes made to the plans.