

October 12, 2009

Mayor Mark Chilton  
Carrboro Town Hall  
301 West Main Street  
Carrboro, NC 27510

**RE: Response to Letter from Phillips and Cors**  
Bolin Creek Greenway Alignment

Dear Mayor Chilton:

This letter is in response to a letter, dated October 2, 2009, and submitted to the Town of Carrboro by Mr. Dickson Phillips and Mr. Tom Cors. In this letter, Messrs Phillips and Cors have taken issue with the preferred routing and alignment for the Bolin Creek Greenway that is recommended by Greenways Incorporated. Below is our response to each of the issues and concerns that are raised in this letter.

- 1) The Phillips/Cors letter first states that the recommended Greenway alignment is based on preference of attendees at the May 20, 2009 workshop. It is true the workshop was part of the process; however it is one of many that we developed as part of the preferred alignment. The preferred alignment has been developed by first conducting a thorough analysis of the existing Bolin Creek Corridor landscape. This evaluation took into account adjacent landscapes, including land that is owned by the University of North Carolina. One thing that stood out to our team was the large and currently disturbed landscape corridor near Bolin Creek that has been used and continues to be used by walkers, joggers, bicyclists, as well as OWASA service vehicles and others. As I explained to the Carrboro Greenways Commission, the concern that we had about this denuded landscape was the amount of erosion and sediment that has been flowing from this heavily used area into the Bolin Creek corridor for many years.

Secondly, we have met with numerous stakeholders to consider a variety of possible alignments for the trail. We also met with Town staff and consulted the Town of Chapel Hill and UNC to consider coordination with their plans and efforts.

Third, we considered environmental impact to the corridor in addition to the denuded landscape that has been contributing significant pollution to the Bolin Creek channel. We considered the possibility of proposing a new corridor for future trail development within the project study area, which would cause further environmental disruptions. Along with our environmental consultant, PBS&J/EcoScience, we examined ways to minimize environmental impact that would occur from trail development.



Fourth, we wanted to collect the input of citizens in the community and therefore have held community workshops to share the results of our investigations. During the past 25 years, Greenways Incorporated has developed several means to solicit public input for our clients. We have found that utilizing a variety of methods is the best way to receive a diverse cross section of public input. Methods used for the public open house on May 20<sup>th</sup> included hard copy public comment forms, public comment "cards," and three map stations where the public were invited to draw and write on the maps, talk among each other, and discuss the project with Town staff, the Greenways Commission, and the project consultants. The results of these public input methods were summarized in a report that was prepared and presented to Town staff and the Greenways Commission. In addition to this public meeting, we have also had meetings with stakeholders, the Greenway Commission, and results from an on-line survey as methods to inform our recommendations. The Phillips/Cors letter only addresses some of the input and information obtained from one of those meetings.

Based on the results of all methods utilized to solicit input for the project thus far, Greenways Incorporated worked with Town staff and the Greenways Commission to propose a Preferred Alignment, which includes a combination of feedback from the May 20<sup>th</sup> workshop. The resulting recommended/preferred alignment combines elements of both the "Creekside Alternative" and an "Upland Alternative" that were presented at the May 20<sup>th</sup> workshop. This combined concept was presented to the public at the recent September public workshop for additional public input. The results from the September workshop are still being assembled and will be included in the master plan.

- 2) The second issue raised by Phillips/Cors is related to the amount of harm that they feel will happen to the Bolin Creek channel, in the event that a "hardened" trail is constructed along the length of the channel. Again, I respectfully submit for the Town's consideration the fact that a tremendous amount of harm has already been inflicted on the stream channel due to the existing altered landscape corridor that Town residents and visitors have enjoyed for many years. The existing surface of social trails in the corridor is so well worn that a substantial amount of sediment is washing into the creek channel every time it rains. Throughout North Carolina, the number one stream pollutant is sediment from soil erosion.

Our proposal for a hardened trail will help to a) organize trail use and confine it to a total tread width of 10 feet, as opposed to the numerous social trails along the sewer easement and creek, some of which have become extremely wide throughout the corridor; b) establish an all weather trail that Town residents can access and enjoy and that OWASA and UNC forestry management staff can use for accessing the sewer lines; and c) by confining



trail use to a defined trail tread, it will provide the Town with an opportunity to restore and revegetate the corridor.

At present, the Town has identified enough NCDOT funds to build less than 1/3 of the trail between Estes and Homestead. Because it is the only and largest source of funding at present, the Town did work with NCDOT staff to clarify what type of trail could be built. The Greenways Inc. plan called for a hierarchy of trails in the system, with the highest order trail - along stream corridors - expected to have a paved surface due to their ability to serve as transportation, recreational, and accessible trail for all users. Furthermore, both NCDOT and NCDENR offer funds for stream restoration should the Town choose to apply for these funds.

Regarding the amount of new pavement that would be added to the corridor, the calculations in the Phillips/Cors letter are accurate; however, trying to define this within the realm of a 50 foot buffer offers a very narrow and distorted estimation of impact. The narrow, 10-foot width of the trail will not, in and of itself, add anymore additional impact in either velocity or volume of stormwater than what is already being experienced by the existing impervious social trail that laces throughout the corridor along Bolin Creek. In fact, building a defined trail corridor, eliminating the social trails and completing environmental restoration will serve to improve the overall environmental health of the corridor and reduce the impact to the stream channel. As the Phillips/Cors letter points out, the proposed three acres of new pavement for the trail would be located within an approximate 1000 acre forested stretch of land.

Also, it is not necessary to restore forest in order to have successful landscape restoration. So even the OWASA easements can and should be restored with a vegetative cover that reduces soil erosion. And, with signage and education, social trails can be substantially reduced if not altogether eliminated. However, an alternative must be offered, in the form of an all-weather multi-use trail, to successfully discourage social trails.

- 3) We agree that this 1000 acre forested landscape is a wonderful ecosystem. It is however framed (surrounded) by lots of urban and suburban development. The impacts are already occurring and will continue to occur in the future. The responsible thing for the Town to do is to try to accommodate human use and work to restore landscape degradation that has occurred through the decades. The Greenways Incorporated plan recommends this action.

Further, Greenways Incorporated teamed with scientists from PBS&J/EcoScience to conduct an evaluation of potential environmental problems which served to inform the design of the proposed Bolin Creek Greenway. Disturbed areas as well as natural areas of the corridor were



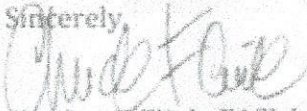
examined. Based on the results of EcoScience's research and fieldwork, disturbed areas along the corridor were defined as "open fields, maintained rights-of-way, and landscaped areas" and contained the least variety of natural communities. These disturbed areas may provide habitat to wildlife; however these species (such as white-tailed deer, raccoon, and American robin) have adapted to disturbance and habitat fragmentation.

- 4) With respect to trail development within 50 foot streamside buffers. Greenways Incorporated is very familiar with the Jordan Lake Buffer rules and the subsequent rules enacted by NCDENR to protect rivers and streams in North Carolina. We designed, permitted and helped the Town of Cary develop the first North Carolina greenway project where these rules were applied. The route and alignment for the Bolin Creek Greenway may have some elements developed within a portion of the 50-foot buffer, but we would certainly encourage the Town to move as much of the trail as possible outside the buffer. Also, the NCDENR buffer rules do allow trail development with the 50-foot buffer and trails can also cross these buffers.

As far as the "no practical alternative argument" - Greenways Incorporated and the Town of Carrboro have been working with project stakeholder UNC, landowners of the Carolina North Forest property. UNC property comprises a large majority of the Bolin Creek Greenway project corridor. Based on preliminary feedback from UNC representatives, trail routing outside of previously disturbed corridors was not preferred on the UNC property. Further, UNC representatives favored utilizing OWASA sewer easements for multi-use trail development due to the existing recreational interest and their previously disturbed conditions. UNC also favored using the sewer easement along the creek for its restorative prospects, due to the existing surface condition of the corridor.

I hope that this letter will serve to clarify issues and concerns raised by Mr. Phillips and Mr. Cors. The proposed Preferred Alternative for the Bolin Creek Greenway achieves the goals that were established by the Town of Carrboro and the Carrboro Greenways Commission at the start of this project. The Preferred Alternative has been prepared using the experience and expertise of my firm and our subconsultant, PBS&J/Ecoscience. I strongly believe that it offers the Town a functional and appropriate strategy for developing the greenway project. Please contact me should you have any additional questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



Charles A. Flink, FASLA  
President

Cc: Mr. Dickson Phillips