

VILLAGE OF WESLEY CHAPEL  
SPECIAL MEETING – Carolina Thread Trail Informational Meeting  
WESLEY CHAPEL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
120 Potter Road, Wesley Chapel, NC 28110  
May 5, 2011 – 7 PM  
[www.wesleychapelnc.com](http://www.wesleychapelnc.com)

*ALL ITEMS ARE FOR DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION.*

The Village Council of Wesley Chapel, North Carolina, met in the Fellowship Hall of Wesley Chapel United Methodist Church at 120 Potter Road South, Wesley Chapel, North Carolina.

**Present:** Mayor Horvath, Mayor Pro-tem Bradford, Council Members Brotton and Ormiston

**Absent:** Council member Hess

**Others Present:**

Clerk/Finance Officer Cheryl Bennett; Planning/Zoning Admin. Joshua Langen

Concerned citizens: Chris Anderson, Julie Brown, Rosemary Cashman, Chip & Donna Sell, John Balles, Lee Maitland, Dave O'Brien, Bill Bennett, Marnie Holland

Meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM and a quorum was present.

Marnie Holland, member of the Parks and Rec Committee and on the Carolina Thread Trail Steering Committee, spoke on what the Carolina Thread Trail (CTT) designation on a Wesley Chapel trail means to Wesley Chapel. She defined a greenway as linear spaces, often containing trails that link parks, nature preserves, cultural features and historic sites with each other for recreation, transportation and conservation purposes. Ms. Holland quoted some statistics from the Wesley Chapel Master Plan Survey and Park and Recreation Survey: 75.71% felt it was important for bike trails, greenways and parks; 85.1% favor greenways along flood plains, creeks and waterways; 75.1% felt it was important to provide safe areas for walking and bicycling, 87.5% felt open space and outdoor recreational activities are important, and 80% felt it was important to have pedestrian and bike access to parks. The Wesley Chapel Parks and Recreation Committee was created in 2009 to define and implement Wesley Chapel's open space and outdoor recreations; they felt establishing greenways and parks was important based on the Master Plan and decided to define and create a park for their first project. The Local Area Transportation Plan (LARTP) was formed in 2007 by Wesley Chapel, Marvin, Weddington and Waxhaw, and created a unified transportation plan to deal with the increased congestion caused by the rapid growth in western Union County. Elements of the LARTP include roadways/intersections, bicycle and pedestrian amenities, land use policies and ordinance recommendations to promote more efficient land use patterns. The plan recommended trails in Wesley Chapel. Their recommendations were adopted by all participating towns.

The Wesley Chapel trails recommended by the LARTP follow a flood plain along Twelve Mile Creek and Price Mill Creek. Recreational facilities are allowed in a flood plain. Houses, accessory structures, garages, etc. on a flood plain require approval via a floodplain permit and need to be on stilts. These proposed trails are also the proposed trail segments for the Carolina Thread Trail.

Marnie Holland spoke on what it means if Wesley Chapel adopts the CTT. It will be up to Wesley Chapel to plan and build the trail within the town limits. Wesley Chapel will determine the type of trails to build (who will use it – bicyclists, hikers and/or equestrian riders; what will the trail surface be – paved or natural). Wesley Chapel will receive support from the CTT team in the areas of providing educational and technical resources for building trails, and helping us find grants to fund the design, land acquisition and the construction of the trail.

The proposed route is within a quarter mile swath so that Wesley Chapel has the flexibility to determine the best spot for the trail. The routes will be based on citizen input. This is a twenty year project. Wesley Chapel will only work with willing landowners. If landowners are unwilling to allow us to build the trail, we will find an alternative route. Ways to acquire land for the trail include building on public lands and acquisition of easements or right of way from willing land owners. Wesley Chapel has an initiative to connect the retail space to the new park with a sidewalk/trail. There are short route segments that could branch off from the CTT and connect to the retail space. This would enable residents to ride to the park from their neighborhoods if Wesley Chapel connects the retail space to the new park. Residents have expressed an interest in connecting their neighborhoods to the park with a trail. Eighty percent of the residents that responded to the Park and Rec Survey felt it was important to have pedestrian and bike access to parks.

Travis Morehead from the CTT spoke next. The CTT is a regional greenway and trail system, connecting fifteen counties in North and South Carolina and an estimated 2.3 million people. Most of the towns in Union County adopted resolutions of support for the CTT. Anson, Rowan and Cherokee Counties are in the outreach phase, Iredell, Union and Lancaster Counties are in the planning phase and the others are in the implementation phase. In Union County they surveyed 900 people in the open houses and found the most desired destinations are Cane Creek Park, Museum of the Waxhaws, JAARS, Mineral Springs Greenway, Wingate University and towns, parks and schools. The proposed CTT in Union County is 100 miles; within a half mile of the trail will be 22.2% of the children and 25.9% of the seniors, 28.7% of all residents and 32.6% of low income households.

Mr. Morehead discussed what adoption means; the plan could augment your existing planning documents and be used to help guide development, and qualifies the town to receive catalytic funding from the CTT but does not commit the town to fund implementation themselves. He went over common trail concerns. One is eminent domain; they don't support this for trails, they want willing property owners. Another is property values – they found values go up closer to the trails. Another concern is property liability – and he cited the Recreation Use

Statutes NC GS 38A 1-4, which mean you owe the lowest standard of care like that given to trespassers, that the plaintiff must prove “willful and wanton” misconduct of property owners. Another concern is crime, and he cited a 1995-96 study which showed only one mugging in two years out of 26 million users on 5200 miles of trails, three aggravated assaults and no murders. He gave an example that you are more likely to drown in the bathtub or be bitten by a shark in Florida than attacked on a greenway.

The meeting was opened to citizens’ questions. The town would determine the trail materials and maintain the trail and it would be on an easement or owned fee simple. In Gastonia there was a segment where most but not all wanted the trail; that segment won’t be funded. Mr. Morehead noted in some cases where a trail is built initially they see a fence, then the fence comes down; most are excited and look for this amenity. One thousand miles of trail are planned, 69 miles are on the ground, and they hope to add fifteen miles this year; it is a big vision. A citizen asked about when a trail goes through an existing HOA neighborhood; they approach the HOA for permission, and have to follow the bylaws to purchase. A question was asked about the quarter mile corridor; they are not yet at a parcel by parcel layer, this allows them to move the trail to find willing landowners. The grants program includes corridor grants up to \$20,000, land acquisition grants up to \$150,000, construction grants up to \$150,000 and natural surface trail construction grants up to \$60,000. A question was asked about the costs of a bridge should a path go over Twelve Mile Creek; the town will be responsible for the cost of the trail. Sondra Bradford asked if the grants require a match; Travis Morehead said they do not, but it is competitive amongst the towns. Other grants include Clean Water Management Trust Fund, Recreation Trails Program (RTP), Adopt A Trail, NC DOT has some funds, and Safe Routes to Schools has \$100,000 per division. Kim Ormiston asked the length of the route through Wesley Chapel; Marnie Holland will get that information. The two segments are “F” Twelve Mile Creek; and “E” Price Mill Creek. A ten foot wide paved trail runs \$600,000 per mile, and a natural surface trail runs \$4-5 per linear foot. This is construction cost, not acquisition. Acquisition can run \$6,000 per acre, or \$10,000 per acre in a commercial area. Easements are a fraction of that; twelve-hundred feet of easement may cost \$2,000. A question was asked on whether we have funds budgeted; Mayor Horvath said Council will discuss the trail at the May 9 and May 17 meetings, we have a CIP for the next few years and the Town Hall and Park will tie up our funds. Julie Brown asked about volunteerism; Travis Morehead said Trail Heads is being launched and there are adopt a trail programs, as well as Boy Scout projects. Julie Brown asked about educating the public on carbon footprint and economic impacts; Travis replied that there is CMAQ funding regarding air quality. Another citizen pointed out that it is hard to analyze that with so little information. The trail routes tend to follow streams and wetlands, and another consideration is how the trails from the different towns will inter-connect. Sondra Bradford noted Parks and Rec, Planning Board and Council will all review the plan. It doesn’t commit us to the exact corridor, or when to build, but does allow us to tap into funding. Travis Morehead noted the

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Carolina Thread Trail and Catawba Lands Conservancy work with the towns on different levels. Approving the trail through Wesley Chapel doesn't tie us to doing the construction; a future council could rescind the decision or sit on it. Depending on where the trail is you may have to get permits regarding environmental impacts. The average maintenance cost per linear mile is \$1,200. Mayor Horvath thanked Travis Morehead for his presentation, and the citizens for attending.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

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Cheryl Bennett, Clerk

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Mayor Brad Horvath