

**Meeting Notes: Thursday, June 5, 2014 WCWCP**  
**Venue/ Medium: Face to Face Mtg. at Walnut Creek Wetland Center**  
**Submitted by: Emily Bieda McCartha**  
**Date Submitted: July 7, 2014**

**1. SUMMARY**

The group discussed the recent events around the walkable watershed and what the next steps of the group should be including: engaging the community, forming communication strategies, raising funds and establishing structure for the committee to moving forward. The group agreed to meet via both phone and in-person meeting before the next forum in September.

**2. Participant and self-introductions:**

Sherry Graham [WCWC director]

Louie Rivers [Faculty Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management]

Deidre Crumbley [ Prof: AFS]

Emily Beida McCartha [ PHD Students/ Public Admin]

Christy Perris [NCSU Extension]

Norman Camp [ PEJ Chair]

Keon Pettway PHD student [Digital Design]

**3. KEY POINTS OF ENSUING DISCUSSION-- REFLECTING WORKING AGENDA**

**Walkable Watershed and Fund Raising**

**Community involvement and competition**

**How Residents Imagine the Wetland/ “sees” their relationship to it**

**Focus Groups Formation via wetland churches**

**Walkable Watershed and Fund Raising:**

A description and update was provided regarding the City of Raleigh’s “Walkable Watershed Plan”.

The Walkable Watershed Program had several community and policy meetings. It is an Interdepartmental effort between the planning department, community development, sustainability, public works (9 in total)

City of Raleigh wrote a grant and received a \$30k “in kind” grant from Skeo Solutions based in VA

End-result is an “action plan” to improve walkability and waterflow. Public input wasn’t overwhelming but decent. The consultants offered “opportunities” to make change like sidewalk and drainage improvements. End of the interdepartmental meeting, the group identified low hanging fruit and July is the target for the action plan.

At the same time, a park system plan is being submitted and added to “parks bond” (in N&O’s June 4<sup>th</sup> newspaper), which is \$106 million. (The Walnut Creek Wetland Center was part of a bond).

It will be important when it comes time to apply for grants to show some staying power of people and partnerships involved in the wetland

### **Community Involvement vs. Community Competition**

Question: What about **community involvement**?

Discussion: 15 people attended the first meeting and then consultants also went to a CAC and RCAC meeting. 30 kids were surveyed. Most of the opportunities presented in the interdepartmental meeting came from the first meeting.

The second did not have any attendees from the neighborhood... other interested parties came. This is an issue – input missing from neighborhood residents. Sheila Lynch and Dwaine Patterson worked with the CAC's, and Sheila went to all of the churches in the area and left flyers with information about the meeting. Maybe part of the issue is that a lot of the churches are 'commuter' churches.

Our neighborhood has a lot of people that move in and move out. Also, there may be an issue where the adjacent neighborhood near Chavis Park sees money going to the wetlands as funds that otherwise would be spent on chavis.

Seems like there's a thread about preservation that is present that matters to people. Is there a way to help build a bridge?

Chavis's \$23 million Master Plan was accepted.

Regardless of the competition from outside, there's the issue of input from the inside.

3 ladies from Rochester Heights talked about flooding at a meeting. What are some of the ways we can get support from people who live in the wetland?

Best thing this committee could do is get youth involved – distributing information on the greenway and nature. We need to attack funding from foundations or universities... engage educational institutions

It makes sense to create connections with Shaw University

We've connected with their biology department

Maybe we should look for funding first, then approach people from universities.

Grants for environmental education or experiences are available, ways to get universities involved.

There's a need for after-school programs. Hard to get parents to fill out applications or there's the issue of kids being too diverse in ages to form full groups in nature-based programs. Parents need help. Once the summer hits we will have kids here from open until close.

**Discussion: Determining Resident's Image of the Wetland: Churches as Focus Group Sources/Venues**

So reaching the youth isn't the problem. Let's think of an issue parents would pay attention to – minority health? If we walk in there and say wetland people will say no, but we can try to appeal to something they're interested in. Focus groups could help us ID this

Yes, I think focus groups would help us identify the important issues

What about schools?

With our staff and funding, we can't take in more kids

Social imagination of wetlands – tap into what people think. Ask what they see and what they think?

How do we get neighboring residents to come to the Wetland Center?

We should contact churches and create focus groups, but what can we offer them now?

Louie, you talked about minority health issue that seems like a good place to start

An exchange, if you get x amount of people to come, what can we do for you? Must create a two-way street of research.

There's a wealth of things happening that we can communicate, communicate and interact

Sept 27<sup>th</sup> is the Festival in Motion – this year it will be a festival from the wetlands to Chavis (10am-2pm). There's enough time to work our efforts into theirs

Need to go to churches a few times to establish trust/connections. It's good to have Sept 27<sup>th</sup> as a goal

PEJ created a great relationships with Fuller Elementary, Dr. Flanagan has a youth group at St. Ambrose

Found a guide to engaging community in the Chesapeake Bay Community that could be helpful – has a spiritual component

Africana Studies offered to allow us to be a part of their annual forum at NCSU, entitled "University in the Community". Is this something we want to do?

*Group agreed yes*

#### **4. SETTING OBJECTIVE EXERCISE**

Group worked to arrange goals on notecards in terms of grouping by theme and importance (people got up and moved the pre-written goals sent in by people and we added new goals as well)

#### **Engage Community Residents**

- Involve adults and parents through issues (e.g. health) that attract adults to engage in WCWC activities
- Program of focus groups of residents ("*sooner rather than later*")
- Address community perceptions of nature and the wetlands that result in a disconnect between residents and the land
- Engage local institutions (Shaw and other HBCUs) – "communiversity"
- Additional residents and neighborhood champions see the benefit in participating in this group. These residents help create goals for the wetland and identify issues.
- We are able to successfully collaborate with both the City and neighbors, resulting in on-the-ground improvements and/or events
- Consider having events for community like parking lot party outside WCW Center with food
- "*Go to the residents*", using churches, to find out what residents want

#### **Communication Goals**

- Build a website to help communicate information about wetlands
- Communicate with wetland community residents about the wetland through listening and providing information about wetland benefits and projects
- Long-term strategy to publicly communicate what makes the wetlands valuable, distinct, and similar in relation to other similar locations in Raleigh

#### **Wetland Usage: Goals**

- People feel safe using the greenway
- People are drawn to the wetland center and nearby greenway at all times it is open

- Enhancement of outdoor facilities that make it more enticing (seating, public art, interactive exhibits)
- Engage youth in nature-based activities
- Wetland center becomes a place for nearby residents to celebrate their family events and enjoy nature at the same time

#### **Funding Objectives**

- Get funding to support focus groups and tap into what adults “see” in the wetlands
- Funding from foundations and universities to help increase educational efforts.
- Grant writing for funding for WCWCP
- This group is successful in obtaining funds to engage community
- Raise funds/seek donations to hold community “intro” events at the wetland center

#### **Committee-Related Goals**

- A wetland forum this fall 2014 at NCSU
- Annual wetland forum at NCSU (as part of an enduring interface between NCSU and wetland community)
- Formulate a sustainable organizational structure to keep the project moving forward
- Form a strategic plan of collaborative action between the community, local government, and other institutions (NCSU, NGOs)

#### **5. UPCOMING IMPORTANT DATES**

**July 8th, 11am** - Phone meeting with the group (I will send # and passcode closer to the date)

**August 27th, 12pm-2pm** - In-person meeting held at St. Ambrose

**SEPTEMBER 4<sup>TH</sup> AND 11**, the 2014 Wetland forum is tentatively scheduled on an evening during that time block at the NCSU, to help build momentum for both “Big Sweep” and “Festival in Motion” – both held later in the month in the Walnut Creek Wetland

**Sept. 20th** - Big Sweep cleaning day at wetland (just fyi)

**Sept. 27th** - Festival held in the wetlands (just fyi)