

Walnut Creek Wetland Community Partners Meeting

Monday, Sept. 28, 2015

John Chavis Memorial Park, Community Room

Participants: Ashley Martin, Diedre Crumbley (NCSU), Laura Garcia (NCSU), Emily McCarthy (NCSU), Emily Berglund (NCSU), Kevin Boyer (Raleigh), Frances Carmichael (Wetland Center), Christy Perrin (Water Resources Research Inst.), Father Jemonde Taylor (St. Ambrose), David Shouse (Raleigh)

Brief summary of the meeting follows:

The group discussed two potential proposals ideas, and how to move forward as a group. The first proposal idea is for a “Lightening Rod Event” funded by NCSU College of Humanities, which could involve bringing a speaker like Majora Carter to talk about community and environmental sustainability. The group is interested in supporting such an event, though a leader is needed to coordinate and write the grant for it to move forward. The second idea is for working together to engage community members in identifying “green infrastructure” projects (like rain gardens, rain barrels), and installing them in the ground. The project could be used to create awareness about natural resources, empower people to take action, and to engage youth. The group liked these ideas, and requested that a small, doable project (like a rain garden) be the focus. Community members should be involved in selecting the type and location of the project- we can use the Walkable Watershed Plan as a resource for sharing possibilities. Many options exist for leveraging resources, including City of Raleigh resources. The idea of holding a forum for all the groups working in the community to share and better coordinate was raised. Christy will move forward with letters of inquiry to some funding sources.

Christy, Louie, and Emily M. will share coordination duties for the partnership. Christy will create a website at the Water Resources Research Institute to house our mission, meeting summaries, and a list of partners/projects. Emily M. and Diedre will revise the mission statement for use in proposals.

Following is a detailed summary of the group’s discussion:

1.) “Lightening Rod Event” proposal:

Deidre shared with the group an opportunity for funding out of the College of Humanities and Social Science. The proposal provides up to \$20,000 for bring in a speaker or hosting an event that catalyzes discussion and/or action around a multi-disciplinary topic. Deidre suggested hosting a talk by Majora Carter, regarding sustaining the environment and communities at the same time. Feedback included:

- Participants were interested and supportive of the idea
- Yes to inviting Ms. Carter or somebody similar if she is not available for the timeline and/or budget.
- Frances mentioned she had a connection with Ms. Carter and could check on her potential availability.
- Christy mentioned that her colleagues at WRRRI are working with NCSU event planners to try to bring the Nile Project for a concert and workshop, likely in March 2017, and wondered if there was a potential synergy between the two ideas.

Draft Walnut Creek Wetland Community Partners Sept. 28 meeting summary

- Other NCSU CHASS faculty have expressed interest in supporting the proposal (Dr. Craig Brookins, Dr. Sheila Smith McCoy).
- A College of Natural Resources partner on the proposal would strengthen it.
- To move forward, she needs somebody who is interested in leading the proposal writing and project.

Actions:

Christy will send an email to the listserve to see if anyone is interested/willing to take the lead on developing and submitting a proposal to host an event.

Frances will check on the logistics of inviting Majora Carter to Raleigh for an event, and whether the grant's potential budget would support it.

2.) Green infrastructure proposal(s):

Christy shared a handout with draft project objectives, potential activities, and potential funding sources. It included:

Suggested grant/project objectives:

- Raise awareness among youth and adults in the community around the wetland center of the benefits of experiencing and protecting local natural resources
- Empower participants to take action to experience and protect natural resources
- Engage community residents and youth to help select, design, and install "green infrastructure" projects that protect natural resources while meeting local goals
- Provide work/early career experience in the natural resources to one or more youth

Potential activities:

- Work with 1-3 landowners to design and install "green infrastructure" (low impact development or "LID", like rain gardens, cisterns, possibly community gardens). Potential project sites - identified in the "Walkable Watershed Plan", Carnage Middle School, area churches, Passage Home, City of Raleigh greenway right of way, other?
- Engage youth by funding an internship, Americorps worker, or part time student job to provide on-the-job experience
- Engage youth by working with area students
 - by working with Carnage Middle School possibly as one of the sites (need teacher buy in)
 - Work with Neighborhood Ecology Corps to help conduct outreach
- Engage and educate surrounding residents
 - through focus groups, door to door outreach, and/or attending community meetings, holding service events to plant sites
 - seek opinions about priority locations, what the sites could look like, how they could help meet local interests, how to reach out to neighbors, type of educational activities
 - recruit volunteers in planting and maintaining the sites

Participants shared feedback about the proposal ideas:

- Yes, they are good objectives
- Yes to getting tangible projects in the ground.
- Focus on opportunities of the projects to provide services to the community
- Durham Soil & Water Conservation District started and runs a high school program – pay students to raise plants and install rain gardens. I'd like to hear about it.
- Neighborhood Ecology Corps- ideas for student involvement (Randy Senzig sent the following feedback by email)
 - kids and parents would support paying young people to improve neighborhoods through rain gardens and natural projects such as urban community gardens and planting trees in senior citizen yards(an ongoing project with Raleigh Urban Forester)
 - Working with H.S. students to train them to go into neighborhood schools to teach about the natural world
- Can we host a forum to get together all these different groups who are working in the community on sustainability? Purpose would be to:
 - Identify needs for helping
 - Identify overlap between groups/activities
 - Coordinate among each other
 - Seek synergies and ways to leverage our resources
- The City of Raleigh has funding that can be used for stormwater projects
 - Stormwater quality cost share funds- people apply for them, the funds pay for up to 75% of the cost, the applicant (or a partner to the applicant) pays for 25%.
 - Capital funds may be used for projects on City property/ right of way
 - Street rights of way, for example Peterson St. may be a good location for street-side rain gardens
 - Projects identified in the Walkable Watershed Plan
- Look at the potential funding sources to see who has been funded, and what types of projects have been funded
- This is how it works (stone soup analogy)- you start with a little, everyone adds something to it until it becomes a stew!
- What about downtown Raleigh's contribution to the issues in the wetland community?
- Progress happens with small steps- we can engage the community of benefits of these types of projects by showing them something in the ground.
- The newly release RFP (request for proposals) from EPA for Urban Waters grants could be a good fit for the "Hub" ideas for bringing people together with common interests to see what happens.
- What about planning and community engagement to lead to something concrete for City of Raleigh to fund?
 - This was done at some scale for the Walkable Watershed planning project
- Youth engagement could involve Neighborhood Ecology Corps (a program of the Center for Human and Earth Restoration, NCSU College of Natural Resources)
 - CHER already works with Carnegie school

Draft Walnut Creek Wetland Community Partners Sept. 28 meeting summary

- If we apply and are funded for a Duke Energy Water Fund grant, it would require a fast turnaround as the grants are 1-year long.
 - We can do it!
- We should focus on one small project to show we can do something in the ground.
- We should engage community members in deciding which site to work on as part of the project, rather than pick the project before writing the proposal.
 - Use the Walkable Watershed Plan as a starting point/menu to choose from, but don't commit to any particular project
 - Include Carnegie school as a potential project on the list

Participants discussed the potential role of the Walnut Creek Wetland Community partners

- How to be relevant, given all the individuals and groups that are working in the community? Some described those who are forming the core of the group as providing a hub, where all the partners and activities form the spokes of a wheel.

What about the possibility of a watershed plan for Walnut Creek?

- Christy raised the idea of creating a watershed plan as a possible activity. EPA requires watershed plans that identify sources of a water body's impairment, and a plan to address them in order to access some pots of their monies.
- The City does not have existing watershed plans, though they do have a hydrologic study for Walnut Creek to identify capital stormwater projects to address flooding
- Emily Berglund, Laura Garcia (both with NCSU College of Engineering), and Louie Rivers submitted a grant proposal to WRRI to:
 - do some hydrology modeling and community engagement
 - identify where should we put low impact development/green infrastructure projects, how should they be designed?
 - Focus would be West of Hammond Rd., East of downtown to I40.
 - This info could feed into a watershed plan.
 - They will coordinate with us, particularly if we do receive a grant to implement green infrastructure projects

What about the timing of the Walnut Creek Wetland Center park Master planning process?

- David Shouse, City of Raleigh shared the process. The Bond proposal was for FY17, so in July 2016 the planning process would be presented to the Council for approval. The start date would depend on available staff time and the progress of other projects underway. At the minimum once started it would take 6 months until a contractor is hired. Then the project starts with a situation assessment, which involves the contractor contacting people in the community individually to determine the issues, who the stakeholder and stakeholder groups are. From this feedback the City would form a committee to guide the planning process. So the best case scenario is July 2017 as a potential start date for engaging the public in the planning process.

Moving forward as a group and making progress on results of our planning retreats

Draft Walnut Creek Wetland Community Partners Sept. 28 meeting summary

- Emily, Louie and Christy agreed to share in the coordinating of the Walnut Creek Wetland Community Partners at our last meeting.
- Emily is pulling together meeting summaries from our group meetings since we started a couple years ago.
- Christy will create a website that will be housed at the Water Resources Research Institute's website. This site can have our mission statement, and be used to house our meeting summaries, list of projects underway by the partners, and anything else relevant to our project.
- The mission statement needs to be revised to be more "user friendly".
- Christy is willing to take the lead role of coordinator if she can acquire some grant funding to cover her time.

Actions:

- Emily will send work with Deidre to revise the mission statement.
- Christy will write a draft outline of a letter of inquiry for Duke Energy Foundation Water Fund, Surdna Foundation, and potentially the NC Attorney General's office. She'll send it out for feedback before Oct. 14.
- Christy will work on a website for the group (after grant letters of inquiry are submitted!)
- Emily will compile all of our previous meeting summaries/materials for posting online.
- Walnut Creek Community Partners should look for an email from Christy with a grant proposal outline for review and feedback.