
TOWN OF CARRBORO



STORMWATER ADVISORY COMMISSION – SUMMARY

Remote Meeting on April 8th, 2021, 6:30 pm (Zoom)

Commission Members		Candidates	Staff	Guests
John Cox (vice-chair)	Jeanette O'Connor (chair)	Margot Lester	Randy Dodd	Chris Sandt
Robert Dickson	Michael Paul	Satya Kallepalli (absent)	Emily Cochran	Barb Stenross
Jacquelyn Gist (Council)	Lauren Joca	Sarah Bloesch (absent)		Meg Molloy

Administrative Matters

The SWAC approved the March minutes unanimously.

319 Grant Opportunity

Randy provided an overview of the goal of the Bolin Creek Watershed Restoration project and directed Commission members to the website for more information (www.townofcarrboro.org/280/Bolin-Creek-Watershed-Restoration), as well as the nature of the 319 Grant. The EPA 319 Grant is a competitive funding opportunity for watershed restoration projects, which state and local governments, agencies, nonprofit organizations and educational institutions can apply for. The Town is applying for this grant due to impaired areas of the Bolin Creek watershed, in an effort to stabilize soils and control stormwater to prevent further degradation. The project will also be an opportunity for neighborhood collaboration. The grant application deadline is May 4th, 2021. Randy shared a map which identifies the proposed 319 project site in the context of Carrboro's jurisdiction and other conservation and restoration projects over the past several years; the map also shows the area where Bolin Creek becomes classified as impaired. Additionally, Randy showed a map that identifies the different planned stormwater features on the site.

Meg Molloy provided an overview of the history of the work pursued for a small catchment, as a resident of Bolin Forest Phase II. When erosion was first noticed in the development in 2017, Kris Bass was hired to determine feasibility of correcting the issue. In 2018, a tree fell on a neighbor's house due to erosion of the stream bank and came very close to injuring a child; this incident created interest among neighbors in addressing the issue. There was a collaboration between Orange County, OWASA, three HOAs, the Town, Friends of Bolin Creek and others to submit a grant application for a US Fish and Wildlife 5 Star Restoration Grant which, unfortunately, was not funded. Soon thereafter Chris Sandt, an Engineer with Orange County who also lives in the neighborhood, became involved to further study and begin to correct the channel erosion. In fall 2020 the group began discussing the 319 Grant opportunity. There have been community meetings with all HOAs (Phase II Bolin Forest, Phase III Bolin Forest and Forest Court) and many community partners—Town of Carrboro, OWASA, Orange County, Orange County Soil and Water, Mitch Woodward (NC State Watershed & Water Quality Specialist), Friends of Bolin Creek, Stefan Klakovich (Carrboro High School teacher), and UNC Institute of the Environment. The grant partners are also reaching out to the adjacent Bolin Forest Phase 1 and Ironwoods neighborhoods.

Chris Sandt also shared information about the history of the area and the technical side of the watershed restoration effort. The Forest Court subdivision was the first development in this area, followed by all four phases of Bolin Forest. These neighborhoods weren't designed with water quality or watershed protection in mind; the stormwater management goal was to get the stormwater off the properties as quickly as possible. Additionally, there are legal easements on the HOA properties to allow people to walk and bicycle near the creek. However, with additional pedestrian use, an increase in intense rainfall events over the past several years, and additional development, the ephemeral stream channel has become

more impaired. Bolin Forest Phase II HOA has done some work to create manage the erosion, but it is a temporary solution that will not permanently fix the problem.

The Kris Bass plan identified both stream channel improvements and SCMs, however the SCMs are not thought currently to be the best options due to cost, footprints, and maintenance requirements. The group is looking at options that will provide the most effective protection while requiring less maintenance, to allow stormwater runoff to infiltrate before reaching Bolin Creek. Level spreaders would be appropriate, however they need to be engineered and constructed perfectly to be effective. The biggest goal is low footprint, cost effective solutions to reduce nutrient loads and runoff volume. Chris emphasized that there is great optimism behind this project due to the collaboration between HOAs and the potential for environmental improvements. There will also be an educational component to allow other communities or neighborhoods to use this opportunity as a template for the future. The Town submitted a preliminary draft of the grant application to DEQ for courtesy review which did not identify major challenges.

The Commission asked the following questions regarding the grant opportunity:

- Jeanette reiterated that gaining collaboration from multiple HOAs is a major achievement to be celebrated.
- Jacquie thanked the group for their efforts and emphasized her support for educational workshops to share information about watershed restoration with various groups. Meg said that Mitch Woodward, one of the partners of the group, conducts similar workshops, so there may be opportunities to explore additional educational opportunities. There are plans to hire a professional videographer to record these workshops.
- Robert asked for additional details regarding the exact locations of the planned stormwater features; Chris provided specific information. Meg and Chris also reiterated that there is a large emphasis on homeowners making changes to their individual properties to hopefully slow down runoff.
- Jacquie asked if the group has contacted the Ironwoods HOA.
- Margot asked if anybody has reached out to the Bolin Forest Phase I HOA, and expressed interest on behalf of the neighborhood in joining the effort.
- Jeanette recommended that staff advertise the grant if it is awarded.
- Mike stated that the educational component will be key; the regenerative stormwater conveyance style of runoff control would be beneficial for other neighborhoods to take into consideration.
- Jeanette asked how to effectively duplicate the efforts of the group in other areas, who may not have individuals with the same expertise and knowledge. Meg said that demonstrating best practices in your own yard, designating street captains and providing educational opportunities can be effective. She also said that government and organizational partners have been very helpful, and recommended that staff include these contacts on the stormwater website.
- The Commission moved to draft a letter of approval for the 319 grant; moved by Mike, seconded by John.
- Commission members planned to take an informal tour of the site to examine the proposed areas.

Other Matters

Jeanette brought up the issue of residents neither “at the top nor bottom” who are receiving stormwater runoff from upstream properties but cannot effectively increase drainage on their property without adversely affecting downstream properties. Randy noted that this question is consistent with what was considered as part of the RainReady study conducted by the Center for Neighborhood Technology, and with the staff work plan for following up. He also noted the importance of accurately identifying the scale of flooding problems, e.g. watershed or subwatershed scale, as well as the intensity of the problem for a given property owner (finished floor level flooding vs. yard ponding), and the degree to which these are matters between private property owners or affected by the public stormwater infrastructure. Jacquie noted that she also receives similar questions from residents. Jeanette said it would be helpful to understand the Town’s perspective so they can more effectively answer citizens without referring them to staff. Margot stated that many of these questions can be answered in the recently created Homeowner’s Manual. Jacquie recommended that staff or the SWAC use a table at the Farmer’s Market to allow people to ask these questions. This topic will be added to a future agenda for further consideration.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 pm.