



Concord greenway projects lead council discussion

By Eric C. Deines

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CONCORD - Just in time for spring, greenways - and the construction thereof - dictated much of the agenda at Thursday night's Concord City Council meeting.

First, council received an update from the city's Parks and Recreation Department on a \$1 million greenway planned to connect historic downtown Concord with McGee Park.

The project will also provide residents with an 11-acre nature-viewing area, which, according to Parks and Recreation Director Bob Dowless, will make it "more than just a greenway."

Dowless said the city was able to acquire more open space than originally planned for the project, making for an easy escape to nature for downtown visitors and business people.

"Instead of having 'another greenway trail,' we now have a very good one," Dowless said.

The three-quarter-mile trail will run from McGee Park to McCachern Boulevard, just across the street from the downtown post office.

After a meeting with environmental officials next week and the bidding process, construction on the greenway may begin in June or July.

Also at Thursday's meeting, council approved a contract with Greenways Incorporated for the design of Rocky River Greenway Phase I, which will run from Weddington Road to U.S. 29.

The preliminary design process will cost the city \$48,620.

Dowless said the officials with Greenways Incorporated will study the area and recommend a route to City Council, at which time the city will begin to acquire rights-of-way.

The process, Dowless said, will take an estimated seven months.

The city also passed a resolution supporting the Carolina Thread Trail, which will be a regional trail network that will eventually reach 15 counties and over two million people.

Upon casting his vote to approve the resolution, Councilman Jim Ramseur said city council has discussed the city's greenways joining a larger, statewide network of greenways for many years.

So far, the regional effort for the Thread Trail has raised \$17 million of the \$40 million goal. Duke Power, Bank of America and Wachovia Bank have contributed up to \$4 million each.

"Now, we walk the talk," said City Manager Brian Hiatt of the city's funding of the Rocky River Greenway design, which came directly after its support of the Thread Trail.

Also at the meeting:

- City Council approved the certification of five speculative buildings planned for International Business Park. The buildings, which vary in size, will make for a total investment of \$10.87 million on the part of developer Beacon Partners.

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