



Gaston commissioners give support to Thread Trail

[By Michael Barrett](#)

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Gaston County commissioners on Thursday promised that no greenways will ever be forced on any unwilling property owners.

After weeks of debate, the county board finally approved an embattled resolution supporting the proposed Carolina Thread Trail. But it added language to protect people's property rights.

The resolution's new wording specifies that "property and easements would only be acquired from willing property owners, and no condemnation would be used." Commissioners supported the new version unanimously.

The thread trail, a conceptual 15-county network of walking paths and greenways, has been a magnet for criticism here lately. Opponents fear the greenways will lead to a loss of property rights, morph into crime corridors and drain tax dollars for upkeep.

The Catawba Lands Conservancy has repeatedly stated that no areas will be compelled to participate in the thread trail that don't want to. But the issue of land rights has dogged the concept more than any other, said Commissioner Pearl Burris Floyd.

"There's still quite a bit of heartburn over property-owner approval," she said Thursday.

Before the board's vote, detractors spoke out once again during the public comment portion of the meeting.

William Ryan said he owns a farm that includes more than a mile of property along the South Fork River in southeastern Gaston County.

Ryan fears thread trail leaders will eventually put pressure on him to allow a trail through his land because going around it would be too inconvenient. And he doesn't buy the promises of current commissioners.

"Ya'll won't be here in 10 years," he said.

Dr. Robert Neunzig of Dallas opposed the thread trail categorically, citing crime as one concern.

"People who steal are not dumb," he said. "If you see it and you like and it's not chained down, you're going to take it, especially if there's a trail that takes you to it."

Gaston County and York County, S.C., have each received \$50,000 grants to pilot the thread trail project. Neunzig said Gaston should give the money back.

"Send this experiment someplace else," he said, "And in five or ten years, if we like it, we'll sign up."

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http://www.gastongazette.com/news/trail_17660___article.html/thread_property.html