

March 19, 2018 Dick and Willie Trail Neighborhood Informational Meeting

Martinsville City Council held a community informational meeting on March 19, 2018. Those present were Mayor Gene Teague, Council Member Kathy Lawson, Vice Mayor Chad Martin, and Council Member Jennifer Bowles. Council Member Hodge was not in attendance. Staff present included City Manager Leon Towarnicki, Assistant City Manager Wayne Knox, City Attorney Eric Monday, Clerk of Council Karen Roberts, Public Works Director Chris Morris, and Police Chief Eddie Cassady. Mickey Powell of the Martinsville Bulletin was also present.

The informational meeting was held at Druid Hills Elementary School, 746 Indian Trail, Martinsville, VA beginning at 7:00 PM, with Mayor Gene Teague presiding. Mayor Teague opened the meeting at 7:00 pm. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the extension of the Dick and Willie Trail from Spruce Street to Smith River Sports Complex.

Mayor Teague asked that those in attendance be respectful of others opinions and respectful of City Council Members and City Staff. Teague polled the room to see who wanted to speak as well as who was for or against the new proposal.

City Council thanked residents for attending and explained that there were maps of both trail proposals throughout the room. City was made aware of the County's plan in December 2017. At the January 9, 2018 meeting it was obvious that many residents were not happy with the trail being built so close to their home. The County began to look into acquiring additional property to allow the trail to be shifted to a different location. The City took no action on the County's request for an easement to build a trailhead near Spruce Street. Residents and employees in support of the trail asked the City and County to pursue additional trail options. The newest proposed trail location would move the trail from behind resident homes to the front of their property in line with the street and would create a multiuse lane beside the road. The option of a trailhead will probably come back to Council in the future and the option to provide the easement is still an option.

James Spivey, 1003 Country Club Drive asked if there was any research on the value of the trail in the area. Mayor Teague said a study was referenced in an article about trails in general and the economic impact.

James Wilson, 1109 Country Club Drive said the width of the road now is approximately 33 feet and the recommendation width even without the multiuse path is 36 feet. Therefore there will not be sufficient space for walkers and bikers without creating a safety hazard. He asked if a study had been done relating to the blind driveways and the slower reaction of the elderly residents on that street. Wilson asked if the City was willing to add no parking zones to the side of the streets or if they are willing to lower the speed limit. The liability of property damage would be shifted to the residents if a lane is added for walking or biking. City Manager Towarnicki explained that the street is 30 feet minimum and typically

March 19, 2018 Neighborhood Tour and Meeting

for a residential street would be 10-12 foot lanes. Even with 6 feet of walking lane, there is still an acceptable width of driving area.

Hugh Gerlach, 803 Corntassel Trail explained that when his family travels they specifically look for areas that have bike trails, especially those that go through residential or wooded areas instead of through cities. Gerlach said he prefers the original plan and doesn't understand how anyone can tell a property owner what they can or cannot do with their property even if it affects those neighbors close by.

Bill Moorefield, 1424 Spruce Street Ext. said he is glad that the City Council is allowing an open dialog regarding the issue. Moorefield says he rides the trails often. He has not seen a feasibility study but he has had multiple conversations with people who visit the trail from other counties. When the trail from Stuart to Danville is complete it will bring a lot of residents to the area.

Giles, Smith, 1101 Country Club Drive says his complaint is not knowing anything in December and now there seems to be some big rush to get it completed. Smith asked if the options presented are the only options available. He wants those in attendance to consider how it would feel if the trail was put in their neighborhood and brought an increase in traffic.

Mayor Teague assured attendees that the County would be solely responsible for the maintenance of the trail, not the City. The County will build the trail at least to the end of Country Club Drive but from there, Council is uncertain which route the County will take. Teague feels that the County is trying to work with resident concerns.

Dennis Reeves, 106 Courtney Terrace says he walks a 2 mile route each day. He is an advocate for change and says his ski club travels to the Creeper Trail in Damascus often and can confirm that there is a positive economic impact on that area. He hopes the trail will also increase the value of his property. Reeves explained that unless things are done in this area then young people will not want to return to this area. Reeves is in favor of a trailhead and especially a trail through woods.

Ellen Jessee, 701 Starling Ave is supportive of the trail at either location. Trails are the way of the future especially for any City with an eye on economic development. Companies want to locate in areas that provide amenities to their employees. Jessee says she bicycles the trail with friends from other counties once a week and they will eat in a City restaurant and will shop local grocery stores before they go home. Study after study has been done and trails do not decrease land value and she knows people who purchase homes specifically because it may have trail access. Jessee says she feels much safer cycling on a trail instead of a road.

Sherry Wilson, 1109 Country Club Drive thanks Crystal Cardwell and Mark Hardison for bringing this proposed trail to residents' attention and acknowledges that it does affect their privacy and safety.

Mark Hardison, 1303 Country Club thanked Council and staff for holding information meetings and would like to say if these are their only options, then he supports the second

March 19, 2018 Dick and Willie Trail Neighborhood Informational Meeting

option to run the trail along the road. He respects the opinions of those who are in support of the trails, he is grateful that there have been alternative options presented.

Brad Kinkema is a Collinsville resident who supports the most recent option to run the trail along the road because of the terrain of the original proposed trail.

Gloria Smith, 1101 Country Club Drive was the first person to build a house in that area so their children could play in the yard and have privacy.

Brian Williams, 130 Plandome Court has a trail in his backyard and wanted to address Mrs. Smith's concerns. He works for an organization that's been building trails in this area for 13 years. In 2010, the plan was to extend the Dick and Willie trail however it would need to go through properties and those owners won't provide an easement. There is over 18 miles of trail in Henry County. The original proposed trail has only a small section that is 17% grade which is less than the existing Silver Bell trail. The plan to extend the trail in this area has been around a long time and was designed with residents in mind. Williams said his research guarantees that trails can increase the value of homes 7-10%.

Mayor Teague said he wants to see any future proposals better communicated, just because reports are out there it doesn't mean that residents are aware of it.

Jim Frith, 1200 Sam Lions Trail said a customer contacted him in relation to the importance of the trail. Frith read a statement regarding population with diabetes and the effects of exercise and cost of treatment. 55% of Martinsville residents are pre-diabetic and 30% are obese. Frith explained that he can't get enough employees because so many residents are unable to do the job physically. He sees many people using the trail to make changes to their health. Frith begs Council to go forth with the approval of the trail. Frith asks that Council include Mr. Williams in any future trail plans.

Mayor Teague read a segment relating to the Creeper Trail and its economic affect.

Danny Smith, 1201 Country Club Drive is 100% for the trail and prefers to see it in front of the house instead of the back side. Smith appreciates Council taking the time to meet and work with residents.

Mayor Teague explained that Council has the final say on granting the easement. Henry County has the final say on the location of the trail, however if Council grants the easement it should include requirements that could affect the County's decision

Jim Woods, 815 Clark Road took his daughter to the bike barn, rode the trail, and discussed tonight's meeting. The peace that the trail provides is priceless and is an asset to his family. He would find the trail more enjoyable if it follows the original route.

Elizabeth Walsh 1336 Root Trail loves trails, especially in the woods but her concern is the runners that travel Country Club Drive on the road are being chased by dogs. Police Chief said he would be happy to address that issue with her.

March 19, 2018 Neighborhood Tour and Meeting

John Dykes, 1915 Dundee Lane doesn't feel that the 6 foot travel lane will work with walkers and bicyclists. He recommends that pedestrians walk on the left and ask cyclists to follow the traffic pattern.

By building a trailhead, it would prevent cars from parking on the side of the road or in the cul-de-sac

Crystal Caldwell, 1303 Country Club supports the trail however she doesn't understand why the sections in the middle of the trail are not complete, why not start from one end and go through to the end. She wants information on the timeframe for completing that gap. She is more in favor of the route following the road.

Council Member Bowles thanked residents for attending. She thinks everyone can agree that the trail is important to the community and the positive impact on the community. Bowles asked if the Transportation Safety Committee can look into reducing the speed limit. Public Manager Chris Morris said a road study could cost tens of thousands of dollars. No parking signs could be enforced by the police department.

Mayor Teague confirmed that the City can look at approving the trailhead for Spruce Street. City Manager Towarnicki said his guess is that option 2 to move the trail back further into the woods is probably no longer an option. Teague polled the room again of who supports the Country Club street option, those that support the backside of Country Club, those that would support either option, and those who don't want the trail built regardless. For those who live on Country Club drive only, Teague asked how many supported which option.

Police Chief Eddie Cassady encouraged residents to contact them if there are problems with dogs.

Mayor Teague explained that the easement would be added to the next Council meeting with those four conditions specified tonight. Mayor Teague thanked everyone for remaining civil and for their input and suggestions.

The meeting adjourned at 8:40pm.

Karen Roberts
Clerk of Council

Gene Teague
Mayor