

Item Title: Public Hearing on Parks and Recreation Trust Fund Grant Application for Turnipseed Nature Preserve

Specific Action Requested:

That the Board of Commissioners:

- 1. Holds a public hearing regarding the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund grant application for the Turnipseed Nature Preserve project; and**
- 2. Authorizes the Chair to sign the completed Parks and Recreation Trust Fund grant application.**

Item Summary:

The North Carolina General Assembly established the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) in 1994 to fund improvements in the state's park system, to fund grants for local governments, and to increase the public's access to the state's beaches. The local government grants are dollar-for-dollar matching grants that can be used to acquire land and/or to develop parks and recreational projects that serve the general public. The Parks and Recreation Authority, a nine-member appointed board, reviews grant applications and allocates PARTF funds to grant recipients.

Staff has prepared a PARTF grant application for the Turnipseed Nature Preserve project. Turnipseed Nature Preserve is a 265-acre open space tract along Mark's Creek, near the towns of Wendell and Knightdale. The site includes a stand of Michaux's Sumac, a federally endangered species, as well as exceptional and outstanding natural characteristics, as defined by WakeNature. The North Carolina Heritage Program recognizes Mark's Creek as a significant natural area.

Wake County purchased the parcels comprising the property with open space bond funds over the course of eight years and this property is one of three being developed as a nature preserve for the public to enjoy. The first phase of Turnipseed Nature Preserve is focused on access, trail development and a pedestrian bridge crossing the Gin Branch water system. This phase of the project is expected to be complete in the summer of 2015 and will be paid for with County open space funds.

The second phase of Turnipseed Nature Preserve is the focus of the PARTF grant. If approved, Phase II will continue development with a secondary access, expanded trails, and picnicking. Turnipseed Nature Preserve promises to be an ideal site for preserving North Carolina natural heritage and it will serve as a venue for stewardship demonstrations, environmental education, and an outdoor learning laboratory.

The estimated cost for Phase II of Turnipseed Nature Preserve is \$724,141. Based on the PARTF funding rules, staff proposes the following match:

Source of Funds	Amount
PARTF Grant Award	\$362,070
County Match – Turnipseed Nature Preserve	\$362,071
Total	\$724,141

If the PARTF grant is not approved, Phase II will not be built until additional funding is identified at some point in the future.

In order to complete the application process, the Board of Commissioners needs to take two formal actions:

1. **Hold a public hearing.** Staff and the project designers held two open houses to get public input on the designs for all three nature preserves. Both open houses were well attended but because we had not decided whether to apply for a PARTF grant at that time, those public meetings do not meet the grant requirements. Holding a public hearing at today's meeting to supplement the previous open houses will ensure that the County meets the grant requirements.
2. **Sign the application.** The PARTF grant requires that the Chief Elected Official in the applicant's jurisdiction sign the grant application. When finalized, staff will forward the application for the Chair's signature.

The PARTF grant is due on May 1, 2016. The Parks and Recreation Authority meets in early fall of 2016 to select grant recipients and will notify all applicants of their status shortly thereafter.

Attachments:

1. PowerPoint Presentation
2. Turnipseed Area Map
3. Phase II Site Plan