

MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Town Council

FROM: Tyler Steelman, Chair
Parks, Greenways and Recreation Commission

SUBJECT: Stillhouse Bottom Nature Preserve – Pledge

DATE: October 20, 2021

On October 19, 2021, the Parks, Recreation and Greenways Commission voted unanimously to recommend to the Mayor and Town Council that the Town authorize a \$100,000 pledge to the NC Botanical Garden Foundation (“Foundation”) so that the Foundation can purchase a 24.5-acre property to add to the Stillhouse Bottom Nature Preserve. This Preserve is a State dedicated nature preserve which is a part of the larger Morgan Creek Bluffs Significant Natural Heritage Area. This acreage is located in the southern part of Chapel Hill, within the Extraterritorial Jurisdiction (ETJ).

This action replaces the Commission’s June 2021 request that the Town provide a \$100,000 match towards a NC Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grant application prepared by the Foundation. Since the time of the initial request, a conservation buyer purchased the original 7-acre tract of land that was the subject for the grant application. The Foundation is now actively fundraising in order to acquire and preserve this larger tract.

The NC Botanical Garden reported that it has been contacted by the property owner's real estate broker about the owners' desire to sell the additional 24.5 acres. If the Foundation wants to acquire this land, they indicated that they need to move forward with an offer to expedite the purchase of the property. The Foundation is not pursuing the LWCF grant since the schedule for submitting and receiving the funding would not coincide with the owner's timeline. The Foundation is currently seeking public and private donations to move this acquisition forward.

If acquired, the land will remain undeveloped in perpetuity and will be publicly accessible. This action is consistent with the Commission’s interest in preserving open space and maintaining properties for passive recreation access.

Members Present: Tyler Steelman, (Chair), Leah Boucher (Vice Chair), Alice Armstrong (Orange County Representative), Jeanette Bench, Hallie Cherry, William Kaiser, Lydia Kivihya-Ndugga, Wesley McMahon, Renuka Soll and Emerson Krause (Youth Council Representative)

Subject property is highlighted in **red** in both graphics below.

North Carolina Botanical Garden & NC Botanical Garden Foundation Lands



