

Davidson County Horsemen's Association Request to Davidson County Board of Commissioners

Draft Dated: 8/01/06

Request

Davidson County Horse Association (DCHA) requests permission from Davidson County to partner with the Davidson County Recreation Department and the Davidson County Landfill to develop a trail system on buffered land at the Davidson County Landfill. Use of this trail system would be limited to recreational use by equestrians, hikers and mountain bikers from Davidson County as well as visitors to our County. No trail usage by motorized recreational vehicles would be allowed.

Background

A key recommendation in the recently approved Master Plan for Tourism and Recreation was the development of greenways and trail systems within our county for use by equestrians, biking enthusiasts and hikers. A long range recommendation includes a series of connected greenways and trails which would link our county and cities as well as linkages to neighboring counties. These greenways would serve to preserve the rural beauty of our County while also providing access for the enjoyment of residents and visitors alike. The Master Plan also recommends utilization of County or City property when appropriate and available.

Currently, our County has no greenway or trail system available to the horse or biking population. Davidson County Equestrians must use private land or haul their horses to other counties in order to enjoy their horses. There is a strong need for a local trail system that would enable county residents to remain in the County on weekends. This availability would also attract horse and biking populations in surrounding counties to come to Davidson County to ride thus providing increased revenue for support businesses such as gas stations and restaurants.

The buffered land surrounding the County Landfill could be made available for use for such a purpose. Preliminary discussions have been held with Charles Brushwood, Director of the County Landfill, and he supports the idea and to pursue this project further with county commissioners and State (Solid Waste Department) approval.

This pilot project would be an opportunity for Davidson County to learn the best techniques to implement a greenway system while providing a trail system at a low investment by using the open buffered land surrounding the County Landfill. This project could also tie-in to future greenway systems planned in the adopted County Recreation & Tourism master plan.

There would also be a favorable economic impact to the County. Although difficult to quantify a dollar amount, weekend riders in the surrounding area would find a local trail very attractive. At the least, the gas and food sales would be see an increase.

Liability Issues

With a trail system of this type being co-sponsored with the County Recreation Department, any liability claims would be covered under the Department's blanket liability for recreational events. In addition, N.C. law stipulates where trails are used at no charge, there would be no liability assigned to any parties providing the trails. See Exhibit 1.

Project Implementation

Trail Development/Maintenance

DCHA would agree to coordinate the development of the trail system with on-going approval from the County Landfill director and County Recreation director. DCHA would assist in providing volunteers to clear the appropriate areas for trails along with other volunteer organizations (4-H Club, Boy Scouts, etc.). DCHA would also coordinate the work on any on-going maintenance of the trails.

We would ask for the County to assist helping, if possible, to clear the trails and establishment of a parking lot. It is our intent to work to secure as many of the required materials as possible through donations from private businesses or individuals

Normally, restrooms would not be provided for day rides. If any organization has a scheduled trail event, they would be responsible for renting their own restroom facilities.

Management of Trail Usage

DCHA would provide maps and clear markings for the trails to insure everyone knows the boundaries and path of the trails. The trails would be designed based on the guidelines provided by the N.C. Horse Council's Equestrian Trail Action Guide. A bulletin board would also be placed at the parking lot which will state the trail guidelines that users should follow. See Exhibit 2 for a sample of these guidelines.

The monitoring of the trails would be on a volunteer basis and any issues that may arise would be reported to the County Recreation Department or Landfill Director. These departments would notify DCHA to see these reported incidents and individuals involved are known by anyone in DCHA. Otherwise, the incidents would be reported to the Sheriff's Department.

Availability of Grants for Trail Development

With this project falling within the County Recreation and Tourism Master Plan, there are several opportunities for grant funding for recreational trail development. Darrel McBane, the N.C. State Trails Coordinator has indicated the availability of grants for such projects as this one. See Exhibit 3 a letter from Mr. McBane.

About the Davidson County Horsemen's Association

The Davidson County Horsemen's Association (DCHA) started in the County in September, 1998. Our mission statement is:

The mission of DCHA is to unite, promote, educate and enhance the growth of the horse industry and horse recreation as an all-breed equine association.

Our activities include involvement in trail riding, horse shows, educational seminars, clinics, tourism promotion, and other horse related functions. As partners in our community and with respect for environmental concerns, DCHA is committed to the preservation and promotion of trail systems for all recreational use.

Our organization has been searching for ways to provide bridle trails for our members as well the regional horseback riders. Our membership is willing to provide volunteers to help develop the trails on this property and assist the County in ways of monitoring and controlling the usage of these trails.

Approval and Support from County Agencies

County Solid Waste Management Department

As noted above, Charles Brushwood, Landfill Director, supports the idea of the use of this buffer for trails and indicated approval will be needed from the State's Solid Waste department.

County Recreation Department

Discussions have been held with Charles Parnell, Director of the County Recreation Department. The Recreation Department has endorsed this concept and would join us in co-sponsoring the implementation and use of this trail system. (See attached letter of support)

County Planning Department

Discussions have also been held with Guy Cornman, Director of the County Planning Department. The Planning Department sees no issues with the County providing the use of this buffered land.

Tourism Recreation Investment Partnership

The TRIP organization has endorsed this project. This organization views the project as a significant step towards the Master Plan's economic objective of increasing tourism traffic within our County while providing recreational opportunities to our county residents. (See attached letter of support)

Davidson County Agricultural Department

Robert Lopp, Director of the Davidson County Cooperative Extension Service, has also endorsed this project. His department feels it has the potential to aid the growth of Agri-Tourism events in our County.

Exhibit 1

MEMO

To: Doug Meredith

From: Charles Parnell/Davidson County Recreation Department

Date: November 3, 2005

Re: Horsemen's Association

I would like to thank you for the interest you and the local Horse Association have shown in developing and planning a possible trail system at the land now included in the Davidson County landfill tract. This project would be a great way to provide for trails to be used by local and area horse owners as well as possible cyclists and hikers. I think this proposal would certainly fill a big void that presently exists in Davidson County. A trail of this nature would increase recreational opportunities for local residents, as well as attracting out of town riders. Equestrian trails have been identified as a facility that is in demand in this county and this project would go hand in hand with the recently completed Davidson County Parks and Recreation and Tourism Dev. Master Plan for Davidson County.

I would like to welcome the opportunity to work closely with the Horseman's Association to develop this trail possibility and believe we could strive to help this opportunity to become a part of our year – round programming planning. I would be happy to pursue the possibility of liability coverage with the County Risk Manager, Mr. Mark Holzer.

I am looking forward to working with you in this exciting proposal.

Charles Parnell

Additional information:

11/7/05

Doug,

I have discussed the liability situation with our risk manager and he has indicated that the liability insurance coverage for Davidson County will be in effect on the proposed riding trail located at the Davidson County landfill. Hope this clears up any confusion.

Thanks
Charles

Trail Usage Guidelines (Sample Draft)

This recreational privilege is offered courtesy of the County Landfill and Recreation Department. We request the following trail manners be observed out of safety concerns, respect for this privilege and for any adjacent landowners that may be affected by this trail usage.

- **Horseback Riders, Mountain Bike Riders and hikers must stay on the designated trails. The white circles blazes on the trees mark the trails.**
- **To prevent erosion, do not use the trails if they are muddy. Wait for a better day.**
- **Alcoholic beverages, firearms or drugs are not allowed.**
- **Camp Fires are not allowed but contained cooking grilles would be allowed.**
- **All parking areas close at dark.**
- **No horses may be ridden at night.**
- **No motorized RTV's or trail bikes are allowed.**
- **Please extinguish all smoking materials completely.**
- **Take only pictures! Do not litter! If you carry it in, carry it out!**

Davidson County Recreation Department, Davidson County Landfill and the Davidson County Horsemen's Association are not responsible for accidents, thefts, or any other incidents that may occur to people, livestock or property at the parking lots or on the trails.

Exhibit 3



North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources
Division of Parks and Recreation

Michael F. Easley, Governor

William G. Ross Jr., Secretary

Lewis R. Ledford, Director

November 4, 2005

Mr. Doug Owen
Lexington, North Carolina

Dear Mr. Owen:

I am so pleased to learn of your efforts to promote the planning, development and management of equestrian trails on property owned by Davidson County.

Please be assured that staff and I will do all that we can to support your associations efforts. We can offer some consulting and technical assistance with the planning of a trails system and, we manage the Adopt-A-Trail and Recreational Trails Program grants that both the association and Davidson County could apply for to help off set some of the costs.

I am also sure that the North Carolina Horse Council through its Trails Committee will also support your efforts.

Please just let me know how we can help.

I wish you success,

Darrell McBane

Darrell McBane
State Trails Coordinator