

A Greenways Oak Ridge report from Dan Robbins

(As published in The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking column on November 9, 2010)

I hope you have enjoyed the series of articles on the history of Greenways Oak Ridge. I have learned a lot about our forested areas. I have asked Dan Robbins to write an update for us. Dan has graciously provided the following synopsis of the status of greenways in Oak Ridge.

"The present status of the greenways is quite healthy. The City Parks and Recreation Department, under the supportive leadership of Josh Collins, does an excellent job of keeping the paved greenways (Melton Lake, Emory Valley) clear and safe.

"The Department of Energy has been a strong supporter of the greenways concept. The DOE Real Estate Officer, Katie Kates, was a member of the original Greenways Task Force and remained a supportive member of Greenways Oak Ridge for many years. Under her leadership several of the patrol roads on the Reservation were designated greenways (Gallaher Bend, North Boundary). Through a licensing agreement between DOE and the City, DOE is responsible for the upkeep of these greenways.

"DOE's involvement continues today under the leadership of Gerald Boyd and Cindy Finn, the current Real Estate Officer. Several years ago Gerald Boyd, the City, and Greenways Oak Ridge dedicated an extension to the west end of the North Boundary Greenway to extend it to the Wheat Community's George Jones Memorial Baptist Church. Greenways Oak Ridge is currently in discussion with DOE and the City to create a temporary greenway from the West End Guard Shack to the entrance to the trail that crosses East Quarry Road on the CROET land and connects to the North Boundary Greenway.

"Each of the greenways has a Greenways Oak Ridge member who serves as a trail steward. They are the ones who keep an eye on the greenways and report fallen trees and other issues needing attention to the City, DOE, or often organize outings to attack the problem. An example of this approach is the annual mustard pull on the Wildflower Greenway (located behind the South Hill - former Garden Apartments).

"After Cedar Hill and Gallaher Bend the first paved greenway was the Melton Lake Greenway, the first phase of which was the result of the City Development Department Head, Bill Issel, preparing an 80-20 grant proposal for the funding. The US Government, through the TN Department of Transportation, provided 80% of the funds, matched by 20% City funds and in-kind labor resources. This has also been the model for the subsequent phases (II - IV) of the Greenway's extension, as well as the Emory Valley Greenway.

"A key player in creation of all the greenways has been City Council. All applications for grants, City funding, and assumption of liabilities require approval of the Council. From the beginning, and continuing today, Council has been extremely supportive of greenways.

"In my 15 Year Report to Council on the history and needs of Greenways Oak Ridge in 2008 I requested the City resume its annual designation of funds for future greenway development in its annual update of the Capital Improvement Plan. We hope to see this become a reality in the near future.

"Greenways Oak Ridge's vision for the future continues our original vision: a system of trails and bike paths, linking the community of Oak Ridge, where citizens can enjoy nature's beauty while preserving the environment and promoting health. For the near term we look forward to extending the Melton Lake Greenway under Edgemoor Road bridge, along Old River Road beside the river to Old Edgemoor Road, to the Life Development Center, and then along the wood line south of Edgemoor Road to the parking area at the west entrance to Haw Ridge near Solway Park.

"The current officers of the Board of Directors of Greenways Oak Ridge are:

Chairman: Dan Robbins
Vice Chairman: Roger Macklin
Secretary: Liz Robinson

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Treasurer: Peggy Mitchell

"The organization meets the second Wednesday of each month at 7:00 PM in the training room of the Municipal Building. All interested parties are welcome to attend and participate in this ongoing effort.

Dan mentioned it briefly, but I want to say more about one of the most unusual aspects of the more recent additions to the greenway trails in Oak Ridge which has come about because of the willingness of the Department of Energy to designate trails within the federal reservation. Examples are the Gallaher Bend Trail that leads off Clark Center Park and the North Boundary Trail that includes 16 miles of trails throughout the western portion of the reservation between the white historic K-25 guard checking station on the Oak Ridge Turnpike and the intersection of state highways 95 and 58 near the K-25/East Tennessee Technology Park's Heritage site.

The Gallaher Bend Trail was actually designated in 1997 after Cedar Hill and was the first trail on the Department of Energy's reservation designated for public use. It was somewhat of a trial experiment to see if the public could be allowed on the department's property and there be no problems associated with allowing that. It was so successful that other opportunities have been sought through the years.

When I spoke with Josh Collins, Recreation and Parks Director, and asked him what he wanted to be sure I included in the history of Oak Ridge's effort to create greenway trails, he quickly said that the Department of Energy's cooperation was a key element in the creation of some of the major greenway trails in our city. I agree with Josh, the trails on the federal reservation are without equal. The addition of these trails has added immeasurably to the overall quality of our greenway trails.

I hope you are enjoying these articles on the history of Greenways Oak Ridge and the growth of greenways in our city. I hope we can continue to see them completed until the vision is a reality. Meanwhile, join me in enjoying the very excellent trails we already have and support future development.

I just learned that Josh Collins has succeeded in his search to find someone who knows the whereabouts of the Bob Ogg plaque intended for the Cedar Hill Greenway. The plaque was intended to commemorate Ogg's active involvement in the initial effort that has resulted in the greenways we have today.

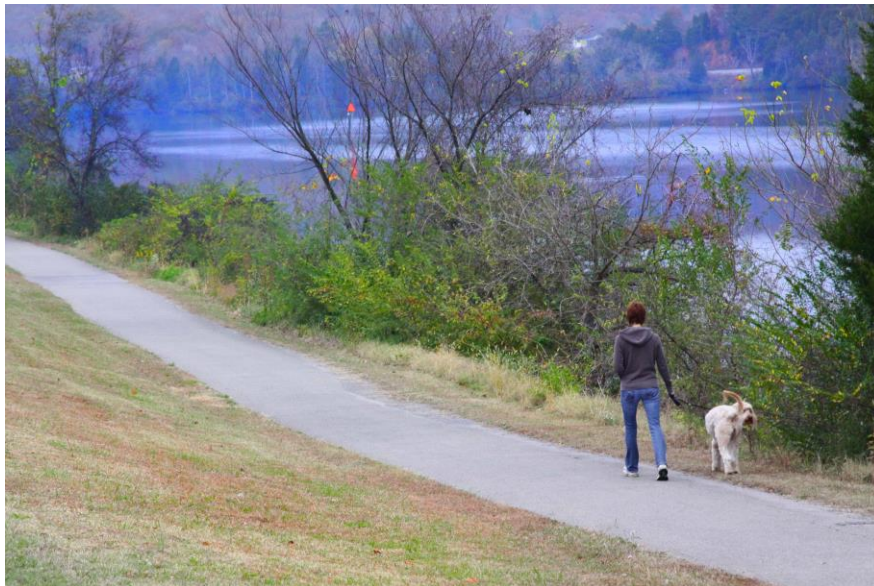
I also learned that a fairly large number of trees bordering the North Ridge Trail have been cut. What a shame that someone would destroy what others have spent years protecting and cultivating for the benefit of all citizens of Oak Ridge and others who use the beautiful, scenic and unique North Ridge Trail.

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Dan Robbins stands at the point where Phase IV of the Melton Lake Greenway will extend the present greenway trail on farther south and under the Edgemoor Bridge to the Haw Ridge parking area near Solway Bridge.



A young lady and her dog enjoy a peaceful early morning walk along Melton Lake Greenway, one of the most heavily used greenway trails and one of the most attractive