

River Park Position Paper
November 4, 2017

Background

Ridgeview at Sweetwater Hills Homeowners Association purchased the 7.4 acre wooded area bounded by the 3.6 acre meadow, the French Broad River, and Sweetwater Creek in October 2016. The Board asked Ion Bonea to bush hog and clear the west and north perimeters on one day in April 2017. The purpose was to open a corridor so that the Members could see what the HOA had purchased and to better estimate the cost to clear a larger area. The HOA Board asked for volunteers to evaluate what should be done with River Park. Kenton Lawson agreed to lead a committee consisting of Bill Hogan, Danny Fulmer, Rhett Cathcart, Partrick Vernon, and Hank Mountain. This committee walked the site and exchanged ideas. The Committee recommended to the Board that Ion spend another three days clearing 3" diameter and smaller trees and removing damaged trees in July 2017. Ion completed the 4 days work for \$2400. The intent at that time was to organize a group of Member volunteers to collect the downed trees into piles, and to rent a 12" chipper to dispose of the debris on the forest floor. The Board authorized Ion to purchase a 15" diameter by 20' culvert and to build a ramp from the Ridgeview Hill Drive cul de sac to River Park to facilitate access for such large equipment. Ion completed this work in August 2017 for a cost of \$272.08. In addition to the above clearing on the 7.4 acre parcel, Ion mowed the 3.6 acre meadow five time for a cost of \$1375. The total spent on the 11 acre River Park in 2017 was \$4047.08.

Plans

Subsequently Kenton realized that it was not feasible to mobilize a sufficient crew of Member volunteers to remove the downed timber and debris. He submitted a request to the Board for approval to collect the material into smaller burn piles under the supervision of the Mountain Home Fire Department. Wet weather and flooding this fall has precluded burning.

Jim Price met with Wells Farm Goats Ron Searcy on September 2, 2017. Ron proposed to provide 50 goats to clear the vines and woody brush from the 7.4 acre wooded area during September 2018 for a cost of \$7090.50. The goats would be contained with a five-wire temporary electric fence. Ron recommended the fence be run on Super-Sod's side of Sweetwater Creek and around the east side of the 7.4 acre wooded parcel. Hank Mountain negotiated an agreement with Super-Sod to permit placing the fence on their property.

Ron advised that goats will eat the bark off trees up to 6" diameter, which can then be dropped. Goats will eat vines and woody brush up to 6' high. He said the area cleared by the goats might need to be browsed on a three-year basis so the annual cost is estimated at \$2400. He also volunteered that a farmer would pay the HOA a nominal amount for the right to harvest three cuttings of meadow grass. This would save paying a contractor to mow the meadow. The incremental annual cost of hiring goats to maintain the 7.4 acre wooded area and the combined income from a farmer for rights to the hay and the savings from not having to mow the 3.6 acre meadow is estimated at \$800 (\$2400-\$225-\$1375).

Vision

Kenton's River Park Committee envisions a natural park-like setting where Members and guests can see through the trees that are limbed 6' high. The intent is to maintain a walking corridor around the perimeter and to facilitate access to the River. Any further improvements planned for this area would require approval by the Members, and would require a Professional Engineer to sign off on the design of any structure that might impede floodwaters since it lies in a FEMA floodway.