

Virginia Recreation and Park Society's 54<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference/  
The Governor's Conference on Greenway, Blueways and Trails  
Greater Richmond Convention Center  
October 4-7, 2008

Trail Developers' Forum:  
Strategic Tools for Influencing Policy  
8:30-9:45 a.m. Tuesday, October 7

Presentation by Dr. M. Rupert Cutler, Roanoke  
Trustee, Virginia Outdoors Foundation  
Chairman, Board of Directors, Western Virginia Water Authority  
Member, Roanoke City Council, 2002-2006

Good morning. Mr. Slone and I look forward to summarizing our experiences convincing local elected officials that greenway trails are good for their communities. I will describe the general process and our experience in the Roanoke Valley. He will provide other examples.

My handout provides far more detail than I can give you orally in a few minutes this morning. We will leave time to respond to your questions and hear some of your experiences in this local government policy-making arena.

### **Where I'm Coming From**

My perspective is that of a wildlife biologist who became an environmental association administrator and then became a local elected official.

As a long-time advocate of trails, I appeared before Roanoke City Council to ask for city money and staff for trails. Later, as a member of Roanoke City Council, I worked to bring fellow Council members, the city manager, and city staff around to a supportive attitude toward trails and to win passage by Council of pro-trails resolutions and ordinances.

I've been described as having been green before green was cool. That's probably true—I was the only one in the entire large University of Michigan graduating class of June 1955 to be awarded an undergraduate degree in wildlife management—so I've been at this environmental conservation and outdoor recreation game for a long time.

If all politics is local, per late House Speaker Tip O'Neil--and I think he was right--then my career in influencing local political decisions peaked between 2002 and 2006 when I served on Roanoke City Council.

My biases also come from being a trustee of the Virginia Outdoors Foundation, or VOF, that holds open space conservation easements, and a board member of the Western Virginia Water Authority, that acquires rights of way for water and sewer lines.

### **Public Access to Private Land**

VOF staff members often ask potential private land conservation donors if they would like to include the public access “stick” from the property rights “bundle of sticks” among the rights they are donating to the state in the conservation easement under discussion.

Our regional water authority representatives have tried to include surface trail rights of way in easements they obtain for underground water and sewer lines.

They both have encountered considerable resistance from landowners to suggestions that public access and trail rights of way be given across private farms and backyards. As a result, trails are generally located on public (usually park) land. Exceptions (public trails on private land) require that special attention be given to the concerns of the trail’s private landowner neighbors. Mr. Sloan is an expert on that issue.

### **Value of a Community Organizer “Champion”**

I’ll start by noting that I have in common with Presidential candidate Barack Obama the fact that he and I have been community organizers. Like him, I disagree with Vice Presidential candidate Sarah Palin’s implication that the role of community organizer is not important.

My message is that the creation of a community system of recreational greenway trails is a perfect example of the classic American process of “grassroots” private citizen activism that leads to the creation of a publicly funded government agency to provide a desirable public service.

French commentator Alexis de Tocqueville described that process in his 1835 book, *Democracy in America*. He observed:

“Towns are like great meeting houses with all the inhabitants as members. In them the people wield immense influence over their magistrates and often carry their desires into execution without intermediaries. Americans of all ages, all stations of life, and all type of disposition are forever forming associations. In democratic countries knowledge of how to combine is the mother of all other forms of knowledge; on its progress depends that of all the others.”

Not much has changed in this regard in 173 years. Hoping I won't send you into cliché quote overload with one more, I'll remind us of Margaret Mead's aphorism, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

You'll need that small group of thoughtful, committed citizens to get your community trail system ball rolling.

A community organizer can expedite the process. That community organizer can be a representative of the main nonprofit conservation or recreation interest group that wants the trails built, or it can be an employee of a city or county playing the role of ombudsman to bring people together. Someone, as well as some advocacy group, needs to be the "champion" and lead the campaign.

### **I Was a Community Organizer**

I was a community organizer for The Wilderness Society in the 1960s. The Wilderness Act of 1964 created a small "instant" wilderness system of unroaded areas in National Forests. It also included a procedure to add undeveloped tracts within National Forests, National Parks and National Wildlife Refuges to the wilderness system through subsequent Acts of Congress.

Congress will not act to add an area to the wilderness system unless the Member of Congress in whose district the potential new wilderness is located is willing to sponsor such legislation. Thus, a community organizer was needed to go into the communities near such potential wilderness system additions and fire up the troops--hikers, nature lovers, science teachers, sportsmen--who would benefit from such a reservation and get them to form a local wilderness committee to lobby their congressman to introduce and work for passage of the needed legislation.

I did this in many communities. I worked through existing organizations when possible, such as the New Jersey Audubon Society that supported creation of the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge Wilderness in New Jersey. I helped create new local political support groups where none existed. An example is the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, still going strong 40 years after I helped form it to protect the "wild and wonderful" backcountry of the Monongahela National Forest.

I cite this personal experience only to illustrate the general point that public recreation and park programs, including greenway trail systems, typically have their genesis in the emotion-driven political activism of a small group of highly motivated private citizens.

Today's recreation and park professionals need to remember this fact. They owe their jobs to those emotional, lay "tree-huggers" who demanded, years ago, that their communities create park systems.

Local recreation and park agencies will continue to be funded well only if park and trail users sound off on the park agencies' behalf during the county or city budget process every year. Keep your constituents happy, and they'll support your agency during budget hearings, if you encourage them to do so.

### **Lucy Ellett Was the Champion of Roanoke's Trail System**

In the City of Roanoke, we can trace that pro-park citizen activism back to the fired-up group of women who formed a Committee on Civic Improvement and hired city planner John Nolen to write a report on "Remodeling Roanoke" in 1907—a century ago. Nolen's report identified Mill Mountain and the Roanoke River as two of the City's key environmental amenities that--as years went by and successive generations of garden club ladies and others kept up the pressure on City Council--eventually became city parks, with trails in them.

The same process was used 86 years later to initiate the successful Roanoke Regional Greenway System.

Let me go directly to the source and quote the champion of Roanoke's greenway trail system, Lucy Ellett, on the creation of that system. This is true "oral history," from her September 18, 2008, e-mail message to me describing "the creation":

"The whole thing began [in 1993] with a letter from Bob Fetzner [president of Building Specialists in Roanoke] to me, as President of [the] Valley Beautiful [Foundation]. I knew nothing about greenways, but Bob obviously did, and he thought that the update of the sewer system [a new interceptor sewer line along the Roanoke River] was a perfect opportunity for Roanoke to get started on greenways. I called Bob, he told me what greenways were, and then we discussed his suggestions at the [Valley Beautiful] meeting.

"You may remember that John Chaney was so enthusiastic that he (and his dog) hiked the Roanoke River all through Roanoke and some of Tinker Creek I think, and drew a wonderful map of exactly how he thought the greenway could fit on the banks. I think he still has the map, or perhaps he has given it to Liz [Belcher].

"[City of Roanoke Utilities Director] Kit Kiser came to the [Valley Beautiful] meeting to give an update on the sewer line project. Then Bill Hubbard and I and I think another person, perhaps you or Charlie [Blankenship], went to see the City Manager and Kit Kiser to see if greenways could be incorporated into the plans. You will remember that the answer was 'No'.

“That was the beginning. From there [Valley Beautiful] held two public meetings. One was at the Transportation Museum with Bob Fetzer's cousin, Davy Crockett from Knoxville, and a Mr. Roberts from Blacksburg to talk about their experience with greenways. Then we held another at Center in the Square with some local speakers. At both meetings people flooded in to express their support. The newspaper coverage was good.

“We got the attention of the City Administration and the City Council. The 5th Planning District provided some funding for a steering committee, we had dozens of meetings, and came up with a plan which involved all four governments [City of Roanoke, City of Salem, Roanoke County, Town of Vinton].

“I'm a little fuzzy on how we got the first money for Liz [Belcher]'s salary. [The Regional Commission obtained the funds through a special request to each participating local government. Liz was a staff member of the Regional Commission until the Greenway Commission was formed.] As far as I am concerned hiring her was the absolutely best thing we could have done. I am sure you agree.”

I do agree, and those of you familiar with the Roanoke Valley's greenways program and who know the program's one and only coordinator, Liz Belcher, know why. She has been the perfect person for the job.

### **2007 Update to the Roanoke Greenway Plan**

I will back up Ms. Ellett's recollection of the creation of our greenway program with another version, in the “2007 Update to the Roanoke Valley Conceptual Greenway Plan” produced by the Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission, because it includes additional details of the creation process:

“The Roanoke Valley greenway program arose as a citizen initiative to improve quality of life in the region. In 1993 members of the Valley Beautiful Foundation heard about the need to replace the sewer interceptor sewer lines along the Roanoke River and suggested that a greenway be built at the same time. They organized local informational and motivational meetings featuring speakers with greenway experience in other cities. At their urging, the local governing bodies for the City of Roanoke, Roanoke County, City of Salem and Town of Vinton appointed members to an Open Space/Greenway Steering Committee in 1994. This committee worked under the sponsorship of the Fifth Planning District Commission (now the Regional Commission) to visit greenway programs in other communities and persuaded the local governments to fund development of a greenway plan. Greenways, Inc. was hired to assist with public input meetings and development of the *Conceptual Greenway Plan, Roanoke Valley, Virginia*, which was completed in December 1995.

“After the 1995 Plan was written, the committee began exploring ways to begin implementation. In 1996 the four local governments provided funds for a full time staff position devoted to greenways. Liz Belcher started work as the Greenway Coordinator in the office of the Regional Commission in August of that year.

“The committee then began planning to establish a structure for implementing the 1995 Plan. The consensus was that the greenway organization should not be autonomous, as with an authority [such as our four-year-old Western Virginia Water Authority] but rather a regional partnership among the local governments and citizens. In 1997 the four local governments agreed to form a commission to direct the greenway program, established pursuant to Section 15.1-21 of the Code of Virginia. On Earth Day in April of 1997 greenway sponsors celebrated with a walk up Mill Mountain and the signing of an *Intergovernmental Agreement Establishing the Roanoke Valley Greenway Commission*. Prior to its dissolution when the Greenway Commission was established, the committee also helped volunteers organize a non-profit Pathfinders for Greenways.

The greenway program has been implemented as a regional partnership. The four local governments of the City of Roanoke, Roanoke County, City of Salem and town of Vinton established the Roanoke Valley Greenway Commission. In spring of 1997 each of the four localities adopted the 1995 Plan *as a component of its comprehensive or community plan* (emphasis added), with Roanoke County and the City of Roanoke also adopting additional policies. The four jurisdictions help fund the office of Greenway Coordinator on a per capita basis, match capital grants within their respective jurisdictions, oversee planning and construction projects, and provide extensive staff time and in-kind services for greenway construction and management. The greenways are owned and operated by the localities, and the respective parks and recreation departments have responsibility for management and maintenance. The Intergovernmental Agreement included an ex-officio position of the Greenway Commission for the Western Virginia Land Trust. The Land Trust was established in the fall of 1996 and is the partner which can assist with acquisition of rights-of-way and transfer of property.”

My personal roles in the foregoing tale included asking City Utility Director Kit Kiser, at the Valley Beautiful board meeting in 1993, why the City had not obtained surface rights of way for a public trail while it was acquiring rights of way for the new interceptor sewer--I knew other communities were doing that--and serving as the founding executive director of the Western Virginia Land Trust that accepted land for the Lick Run Greenway and gave the land to the City after City Council agreed to accept it.

## **Obtaining Trail Rights of Way Over Underground Utility Lines**

Obtaining rights of way for greenway trails over sewer and water lines is not easy, as Western Virginia Water Authority Executive Director for Wastewater Services Mike McEvoy explained to me in an e-mail on September 15, 2008:

“Greenway easements are a bit more difficult to obtain than water and sewer or other underground utilities [because] utilities do not have much of a lasting impact. Once buried, the facility is out of mind. A greenway easement requires the landowner to be comfortable with the public transiting the property. This may or may not be an issue, depending upon the particular owner. Generally, large landowners with buffer between the greenway and their residences are more likely to sign up than homeowners on residential lots. We have tried a few times to obtain greenway easements in conjunction with projects and have had very negative responses.

“Greenways can be put over water and sewer easements if the parties to the easements agree. For example, a third party wanting an easement would have to get the easement holder and the property owner to agree. The easement holder is going to want to make sure that it does not have liability for improvements made in the easement and clarity as to who is responsible for making repairs if the utilities need to be repaired or relocated. The property owner will have the same general concerns as stated above as well as liability questions.

“One difference between authorities chartered under Virginia's Water and Waste Act (as we are) and as a group cities, counties, and towns is that authorities are created for a specific purpose (water, sewer, stormwater, trash management) do not have the ability to hold recreational easements. Recreation and parks are authorized purposes for cities, counties, and towns.

“For example, the Town of Vinton did a sewer project several years ago and obtained both sewer and greenway easements from the property owners involved. We could not do the same. The Authority can agree to grant an easement on land it owns as the Authority has the same rights as any landowner. The Authority can allow (with the property owner's permission) another easement within its easement holding, but we cannot hold an easement for purposes other than for which we are chartered.

“We have talked in the past about [seeking passage of] enabling legislation to allow us to hold conservation easements. It is the same issue. The way around this is to have the local government (or a special purpose park agency like exists in Fairfax County) hold the easement.

“The Authority has built several water main projects on City of Roanoke property where the surface was restored as a trail. Because the land was City-owned, no greenway easement was needed.”

### **Legal Requirements**

I asked Roanoke City Attorney Bill Hackworth to lay out any legal requirements trail system advocates should be aware of as they prepare to campaign for local government adoption of a pro-trail system policy. This was his response on September 15, 2008:

“If a greenway is generally shown in a locality's comprehensive plan, and funding for it included in the locality's budget, then it is conceivable that no further action by a governing body would be necessary. Otherwise, I am not aware of any requirements for resolutions or ordinances creating a greenway, or of any specific ‘public notices’ that would have to be given. In the adoption of a locality's comprehensive plan, the planning commission has to advertise public hearings twice and conduct a public hearing, as does the governing body, before such a plan can be adopted. I don't know of any specific timelines or requirements of legal departments related to greenways.

“There are all sorts of related issues and requirements that may tie in to greenways--property acquisition, possible eminent domain, RFPs [request for proposals] for design (if an architectural and engineering firm is involved), IFBs [information for bidders] for construction (if the construction is being put out to bid), etc. These all have their own detailed requirements and may or may not require action by a governing body.”

Those are the general rules with respect to legal requirements. However, Roanoke City Council has made a large number of specific policy decisions regarding greenways over the past 15 years as greenways have been debated and created in the Roanoke Valley. All those decisions were influenced by vocal greenway-advocate citizens who “bent the ear” of council members and attended and spoke at City Council public hearings to show their support for pro-greenway action.

### **Examples of City Council Actions**

I asked Roanoke's City Clerk, Stephanie Moon, to copy for me all of the pages from the official minutes of Roanoke City Council meetings containing council discussions of greenways, beginning in 1995. She provided me with photocopies of 252 pages of council minutes. The action begins with the appearance of Fifth Planning District Commission Executive Director Wayne Strickland before Council on January 23, 1995, to request the appointment of three City representatives to a steering committee to develop an Open Space Plan for the Roanoke Valley because “local citizens have shown great interest in

greenways in recent months” and “the timing of this grassroots advocacy coincides with the timing of the Commission’s open space planning process.”

Strickland was referring to the fact that the regional commission had approved the preparation of a Valley-wide open space/greenway plan in May of 1994 and that Robert W. Fetzer and Lucy R. Ellett had made a presentation to Roanoke City Council on November 28, 1994, “emphasizing the importance of greenways (corridors of open space connecting separate recreational, cultural and natural areas).”

Roanoke’s City Manager recommended on February 13, 1995, that Council appoint members to a regional greenways committee. Council concurred in the recommendation and passed a motion appointing Lucy Ellett, the chief of the City’s planning and development department, and a member of the City Planning Commission to the regional committee, to prepare a regional open space/greenway plan. The Roanoke Valley greenways program was off and running!

On August 14, 1995, Council adopted an ordinance appropriating \$14,400 to fund the City’s share of costs for consultant services for development of a regional greenways plan. On December 11, 1995, Lucy Ellett, in her new capacity as Chairperson of the Roanoke Valley Greenways Open Space Steering Committee, reported to Council that her committee had held three public workshops in which over 300 persons participated and that over 50 possible greenway corridors had been identified. And on January 16, 1996, Council adopted Resolution No. 32820-011696 requesting the Commonwealth Transportation Board establish a project for the first phase of the Roanoke Valley Comprehensive Greenway System.

### **Beginning of the Roanoke River Greenway**

On April 1, 1996, Ms. Ellett again appeared before Council to advise that the Roanoke Valley Greenway Conceptual Plan had been completed and to recommend (speaking for the regional steering committee) that the City’s interceptor sewer project along the Roanoke River and Tinker Creek “be planned and engineered in such a way so as to enable future construction of a greenway along the river and the creek,” first official mention in City records of what is today the very popular Roanoke River Greenway.

At this time she also requested funds for the salary of a greenway coordinator. William H. Tanger, President of Friends of the Roanoke River, was on hand to support the steering committee’s recommendations. On September 3, 1996, Council voted to provide an appropriation of \$28,800 to pay its pro-rata share of the salary of the greenway coordinator.

On January 21, 1997, Roanoke City Council adopted Resolution No. 33249-012197 asking the Commonwealth Transportation Board to establish a project for the Prospect [Mill Mountain] Greenway, the first phase of the Roanoke Valley Comprehensive Greenway System and agreeing to pay 20 percent for the total cost of planning and design, right-of-way acquisition, and construction of this project. On February 3 Council was advised that \$240,000 had been received from the Virginia Department of Transportation for the Mill Mountain Greenway.

### **City's Comprehensive Plan Amended to Include Greenways Plan**

On March 17, 1997, Roanoke City Council adopted Ordinance No. 33308-031797 "authorizing an Intergovernmental Agreement establishing the Roanoke Valley Greenway Commission." On April 21, Council appointed Lucy Ellett and Delvis O. "Mac" McCadden to be the City's representatives on the Roanoke Valley Greenway Commission and also adopted Resolution No. 33357-042197 "endorsing the Roanoke Valley Conceptual Greenways Plan and amending the City's Official Comprehensive Plan for Roanoke to include such plan."

Present at that important meeting were Elizabeth Belcher, newly appointed Roanoke Valley Greenways Coordinator, who "expressed appreciation to the City of Roanoke for moving forward to establish the greenway network," and Robert T. Fetzer, representing the Board of Directors of Valley Beautiful, who encouraged adoption of the greenway plan. The friends of greenways continued their advocacy before Council.

### **Lick Run Greenway Approved Including Interstate Overpass**

On June 16, 1997, M. Rupert Cutler, Executive Director of the Western Virginia Land Trust, appeared before Council to describe how the new local land trust could be a partner in the development of the Lick Run Greenway and in the protection of Mill Mountain and Carvins Cove by means of conservation easements. He advised that on June 4, 1997, the Board of Trustees of the land trust had adopted a resolution calling on the City to (1) include a pedestrian/bicycle lane in the construction of the I-581 overpass, (2) adopt plans to build a Lick Run Greenway trail connecting that overpass [at Valley View Mall] with the Hotel Roanoke, and (3) include the Lick Run greenway in its park system.

On October 22, 1997, City Manager Darlene Burcham recommended, and Council approved, Ordinance No. 33619-102297 approving a bid for construction of the I-581 Interchange at the extension of the Valley View Boulevard Project that included the bicycle/pedestrian facility.

On January 20, 1998, Roanoke City Council adopted Resolution No.33709-012098 asking the Commonwealth Transportation Board to establish a project for the Lick Run Greenway. (A personal note: I now use this greenway

weekly and have seen 80 species of birds in its varied habitats in heavily urbanized northwest Roanoke.)

### **Mill Mountain Greenway Design Authorized**

On December 7, 1998, Roanoke City Council adopted Resolution 34103-120798 authorizing the City Manager to execute a contract in the amount of \$89,436 for the engineering design of the Mill Mountain Greenway to link the Roanoke City Market with the top of Mill Mountain.

On January 4, 1999, City Engineer Philip C. Schirmer, in a briefing of Council on the City's flood reduction program and its greenway system, "called attention to a number of greenway projects that are ongoing in the City"—Lick Run Greenway, Tinker Creek Greenway, "the Greater Raleigh Court [Civic League's Murray Run] Greenway which is in the early conceptual planning stages that proposes to link the Patrick Henry High School area with the James Madison Middle School area," and the Mill Mountain Star Trail "which is a primitive trail that was constructed by volunteers in conjunction with the Parks and Recreation Department."

At that same Council meeting, Greenways Coordinator Liz Belcher presented an update on the status of greenway projects throughout the Roanoke Valley, noting that "each locality [in the four-locality greenway region] is responsible for the development of greenways in its jurisdiction and that the commission coordinates between the localities and a non-profit group, Pathfinders for Greenways, to coordinate volunteer participation and funds for some of the projects." She asked Council to finalize the location of the section of the Roanoke River Greenway through Roanoke City because plans for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineer-designed and administered Roanoke River flood reduction project included construction of a greenway "and it would be advantageous to acquire greenway easements at the same time that drainage easement are acquired." She reported that Valley-wide for 1995-1998, \$3.25 million in Federal, State, and local funds were committed to greenway projects.

### **City Council Adopts a Comprehensive Greenway Policy**

On December 6, 1999, Roanoke City Council passed Ordinance No. 34579-120699 "approving and adopting a Greenway Policy to guide the planning, development, ownership or maintenance of greenways, as well as a policy allowing or defining the acquisition of properties or property rights for a greenway project." Adoption of this policy followed submission to Council of a report by the Acting City Manager noting that the City had no formal greenway policy and that one was needed "because citizens continue to request greenway development and because several greenway projects are in the planning stages."

On March 6, 2000, Greenways Coordinator Liz Belcher made a progress report to Roanoke City Council, noting that in May, 1999, the first Governor's Conference of Greenway Trails, attended by over 400 persons, was held in Roanoke, that the Wolf Creek Greenway was opened in the Town of Vinton, and that the Hanging Rock Battlefield Trail, "the first ISTEA project in the Roanoke Valley," was opened in Roanoke County. Ms. Belcher's report "advised that the Lick Run Greenway across the Valley View Interchange required boldness and vision on the part of the City; and the trail will be a great amenity to the City when it connects Valley View [Mall] to the Hotel Roanoke and to downtown Roanoke."

Also on March 6, 2000, Council passed Ordinance No. 34714-030600 providing for the acquisition of certain interests in property needed by the city for the Mill Mountain Greenway Project and providing for the acquisition of such property rights by condemnation under certain circumstances.

Council passed a similar ordinance (No. 35087-100200) on October 2, 2000, to provide for the acquisition of interests in property needed by the City for the Tinker Creek Greenway Project. On December 4, 2000, Council approved a budget ordinance that included a half million dollars for greenway projects.

On December 18, 2000, Council voted to accept the donation by the Greater Raleigh Court Civic League of labor and materials for the construction of Phase 1 of the proposed greenway trail and amenities on City- and Shenandoah Life Insurance Company-owned land in the Raleigh Court area (Murray Run Greenway), noting that the Roanoke City Public Schools supported the proposed greenway trail as an asset supporting its educational missions by providing convenient opportunities for access to natural areas within the City.

### **Resolution Requesting Roanoke River Greenway Project**

Roanoke City Council passed Resolution No. 35733-012201 on January 22, 2002, to request that the Commonwealth Transportation Board establish an enhancement project for the Roanoke River Greenway, noting that Council "supports the construction of 18 miles of the Roanoke River Greenway, a bicycle/pedestrian path along the Roanoke River, with 7 miles in Salem and Roanoke County and 11 miles in the City of Roanoke" and agreeing to pay 20 percent of the cost of the project within the City.

The unique content of the City Manager's report to Council on the state of City greenways on August 5, 2002, was its reference to the fact that several private entities had contributed substantially to the Mill Mountain/Prospect Greenway project including the Horace Fralin Charitable Trust, Lanford Brothers Co., Inc., J. M. Turner & Co., and Branch Highways, Inc. A budget ordinance passed on May 19, 2003 included one million dollars for construction of the Mill Mountain Greenway.

## **Greenway System an Essential Amenity for Economic Development**

On June 7, 2004, City Council adopted Resolution No. 36707-060704 “finding it in the best interest of the City to reauthorize previous and subsequent contributions for the Roanoke River Greenway project to general greenway development,” noting that beginning in fiscal year 2002 the City committed to contributing \$200,000 per year for 10 years for a total of \$2.0 million to the Roanoke River Greenways project and [that] greenways have become a necessary commodity for communities across the United States since they are viewed as an essential amenity that encourages economic development.”

On October 18, 2004, Council resolved to ask the Commonwealth Transportation Board to establish a project for the completion of the construction of a bridge across the Roanoke River for the Roanoke River Greenway from the Waste Water Treatment Plant connecting to the Tinker Creek Greenway.

On May 16, 2005, in an action I initiated as a Member of Council, Roanoke City Council passed Ordinance No. 37066-051605 amending Article IV, Parks, Chapter 24, Code of the City of Roanoke (1979) by adding a new Section 24-103, Definition; purpose, that provided a new definition of the term “park” and a statement of purpose for City parks (including greenways) and added thousands of acres of City-owned land, at Carvins Cove and adjoining the Roanoke River, Mill Mountain, Fishburn Parkway and the Blue Ridge Parkway, to the City’s park system. As I prepared to leave Council at the end of June 2006, I told my Council colleagues (on June 19, 2006) that I “hoped that seed [I] tried to plant in the form of the idea of a Salem to Vinton city park along the Roanoke River will germinate and become a reality.”

On September 18, 2008, I asked Roanoke City Manager Darlene Burcham how much the City of Roanoke currently has budgeted for greenways. The answer: Approximately \$4 million, which includes the commitment that Council made to provide \$2 million in cash funding over 10 years. That is quite a change from the negative response of City staff to Lucy Ellett’s plea for greenways in 1993.

The foregoing incomplete account of Roanoke City Council activity vis-à-vis greenways should provide a sense of the roles of private advocates and their advocacy groups and local elected officials in the creation and administration of community greenway trail systems.

When I ran for Roanoke City Council in 2002, I used the theme “Green is Good” to emphasize my personal belief in the importance to Roanoke of sound natural resources management and the provision of high-quality recreation areas and protected watersheds and wildlife habitats. The fact that I was elected and devoted much of my four-year term of office to pushing conservation and recreation initiatives, and received good public support for doing so, shows that

the public is with those of us who advocate quality of life-protection and enhancement programs.

Just as “conservation easement” recently has become a “household word” in Roanoke, “greenway trail” has, too. As trail system miles grow, so does the number of trail users, and the potential political constituency for trails expands.

Keep track of your trail users. Alert them to public hearings on budgets, development plans, and other Council actions that affect trails. Create a citizen advisory committee for each greenway that includes immediate neighbors who live along the trail to create a sense of neighborhood ownership. Support fundraisers for and litter pickup events by trail advocacy groups and service clubs. Plan to connect trail systems into region-wide and statewide systems. Make their importance clear to your convention and visitors bureaus, the local travel and tourism industry, and your chambers of commerce.

Greenway trail programs are a critically important part of the essential “greening” of our Virginia communities. Communities at an early stage of trail system development can call on other Virginia communities with relatively mature systems such as Roanoke for support and help, and it will be freely given.

Thank you for your attention.