



# County of Albemarle

Community Development Department - Planning Division

## Meeting of Albemarle County Natural Heritage Committee

January 5, 2023

Albemarle County Office Building

401 McIntire Rd. (Room 235), Charlottesville, VA

### **Committee Members Present (7):**

- Christine Putnam, Chair (appointed xx, retired educator, Extension Master Gardener)
- Peggy Cornett (appointed xx, Extension Master Gardener and Plant Curator at Monticello)
- Lonnie Murray (appointed xx, former NHC Committee Chair 2010, appointed member of Albemarle County Planning Commission; Director on Water Conservation District board, background in botany)
- Dan Mahon (appointed xx, retired County employee, Planning and Parks & Recreation, former Greenway Coordinator, environmental art interest)
- Bruce Gatling-Austin (appointed 2020, retired educator; former Coordinator at Ivy Creek)
- Leah Jung (appointed 2018?, leads Wildlife Corridor Working Group, Master Naturalist)
- Michael Callahan, Secretary (appointed August 2021; Extension Master Gardener, Urban & Environmental Planner; veteran and retired military officer)
- Meghan Sobott (appointed December 2022; formerly with VCE, now Environmental Coordinator for the Thomas Jefferson Soil and Water Conservation District; has plant science, horticultural, and organic farming background)

### **Absent (3):**

- Emma Andrews, Vice-Chair (status pending)
- Kate Mallek (has submitted resignation)
- Abigail Wilson

**Other Attendees:** Jamie Powers - newly hired Albemarle County Climate Protection Project Manager (starts February 2, 2023)

**Staff:** Scott Clark

1. Call to Order. Chair called the meeting to order at 5:33pm
2. Establish a Quorum. A quorum of 7 Committee members were present.
3. Welcome/Acknowledge guests, participation options. Jaimee Powers was acknowledged.
4. Review agenda and approve.

***Motion - Leah Jung moved and Peggy seconded a motion to approve the Agenda.*** Committee members voted unanimously in favor of the Motion.

5. Review and approve November 2022 minutes.

**Motion - Peggy moved and Leah seconded the Motion to approve the minutes.** The Committee voted unanimously in favor of the Motion.

## 6. Officer Elections. (Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary)

Because no other Committee members offered to be considered, Christine Putnam offered to remain Committee Chair (until?). The Vice-chair position is tentatively unfilled due to the pending relocation of Emma Andrews(?). Mike Callahan volunteered to remain Secretary for the Committee (term?) (replaced staff member Kim Biasioli in October 2022). Questions remain:

- Where are Bylaws?
- What are the terms of officers?

Scott suggested the election of officers be postponed.

**Motion - Mike Moved and Peggy seconded a Motion to postpone Officer elections until the Committee meeting in February 2023.** The Committee voted unanimously in favor of the Motion.

Christine reminded members of the importance of attending and participating in meetings and asked Committee members to consider their commitments. Lonnie elaborated on Scott's suggestion of appointing advisors to the Committee for those who are unable to serve as members of the Committee.

**Action: Christine to talk to Kate about her membership status. (Complete)**

**Action: Christine asked members to commit to spending 3-hours a month reviewing Committee issues in order to be better prepared for meetings.**

Christine asked members to introduce themselves to the Committee's newest member, Meghan Sabbott. Members around the table introduced themselves.

Peggy let Committee members know that she will be speaking and making a presentation during the upcoming *Piedmont Landscaping Conference*, on February 2, 2023, at The Paramount Theater.

## 7. Follow-Ups:

### A. Important Sites Updates and Outreach

Lonnie spoke historic occurrences of rare plants CERNAC online search in Virginia; look for rare plants, tracking climbing fern, found in Alberene, found extensive wetlands, magnolia wetland,

Lonnie requested a letter from County (via Scott) to LLC, to look for rare species, Fan Mountain District (BAP) in a large biodiversity area. A draft letter template is in the NHC folder on the Google drive.

Christine mentioned that the Blenheim grasslands needs a burn.

Peggy, went out to look at Eagle's nest, Tufton Farms, toward the Rivanna River.

Lonnie, eagles nest at the reservoir, part of Moormans River. Surviving large hemlocks on a bluff. Letter to Rivanna Water and Sewer Authority.

### B. Outreach to ACPR Concerning Invasive Management in Parks

Christine said she had received a letter from Tim Paladino (Albemarle County Parks & Recreation), about hemlocks on a portion of the Preddy Creek Park. The letter is in the NHC folder on the Google drive. Tim

stated that the Parks needs greater funding for invasive plant management and arborists services.

There are opportunities to help with invasive plant “pulls” through several organizations including the Nature Conservancy, Blueridge PRISM, the Organic Conservation Alliance. Dan Mahon offered to help move the initiative forward for the Committee..

#### 8. Staff update.

Scott stated that his job transition is ongoing. He is making efforts to complete existing Planning tasks in order to transition to his new position as the County’s Natural Resource Manager, replacing Kim Biasiulli who departed in September 2022.

#### 9. Preparation for Comprehensive Plan Update Input.

Scott - staff team in research phase; working on background updates to policies; public involvement will be in Phase II.

Lonnie stated the Planning Commission heard input from contractors about what was heard from the public during the first phase of the review. He suggested impediments could be reduced in rural areas as ; proponents seek to expand growth areas. The Comprehensive Plan review remains in a “what-if” stage.

Leah - important to engage now before policies are developed. How to make input for Committee funding?

Scott stated that funding by Supervisors was unlikely. Mike suggested the Committee seek a Champion from the community. Lonnie mentioned the Sierra Club as a potential Champion. Christine suggested possibly Tom Olivier and organizations such as the Rivanna Climate Alliance and the Nature Conservancy.

Dan - Interested in streambank restoration; “Friends of the Parks”; support a Parks Foundation

Lonnie - brought up hemlocks; supports climate change; suggested reaching out to Trout Unlimited; will draft letter.

**Lonnie made a motion** to send a letter from the NHC to the Rivanna Water and Sewer Authority (RWSA) and the City of Charlottesville to chemically treat hemlocks (*wooly adelgid*) next to the Sugar Hollow Reservoir in order to help preserve the remaining trees. Peggy seconded the motion. The Committee voted in favor unanimously.

#### 10. BAP Review of Goals & Recommendations (Goal 9).

Discussion - *BAP Goal 9: Develop strategies for biodiversity conservation during climate change*

- Christine noted suggestions Mike made in Goal 9
- Christine recommended Committee members review the AC Climate Risk Assessment; make changes through the lens of “Climate Change”.
- Lonnie discussed needed changes to modify the definition of agricultural land use; identify habitats and species impacted by climate change (hemlocks)

#### 11. Update on the Climate Adaptation and Resilience Planning.

Leah - asked if Scott knew the latest about the County's ACE program. (Look it up on the County's website.); source of funding (or what happened to funding) for ACE program (Scott - matching grants for easements).

Scott - in process of finding someone to evaluate/analyze the program.

**Bruce - asked for a description of ACE to be included in today's meeting minutes.**

Christine - asked Jaimee if adaptation and resilience planning started.

Lonnie - added to #9.

## 12. Working Group & Member Reports.

A. Education and Outreach Working Group - Christine reported about the "turn off lights" initiative to occur in February; she asked about the status of the lighting ordinance. Christine proposed the Committee would make an input to the ordinance through staff Coordinator Scott Clark. She mentioned the "Earth-Hour Lights-Out" initiative.

B. Wildlife Corridors Working Group - Leah reported that a Virginia Tech graduate student had been hired for the bobcat study; the student is working on housing arrangements but plans to start setting traps this Spring; landowner(s) have been identified.

C. Policy Working Group - Lonnie reported, shared link:

<https://www.albemarle.org/home/showdocument?id=15996&t=638059378221846421>

Lonnie further shared in his 1/6/2023 email:

"I know this document is lengthy but it's worth reading in its entirety, particularly as [it] pertains to natural resources. There are scattered bits like this below that are somewhat concerning:

- The regulations for the floodplain need to be clearer, especially the allowed uses, to **help ease administrative burden.** (emphasis mine).
- The current guidelines for floodplain management are stricter than the FEMA guidelines.

It is my opinion that we should not necessarily be making it easier to build in flood plains and the fact that our regulations are stricter than FEMA is a *good* thing. While this is all at the concept stage now, it wouldn't hurt to have the NHC weigh in on some of these because it is an indication of where the consultants are planning to go with some of this, and some bad ideas should probably be headed off at the pass (so to speak)."

## 11. Other Matters not listed on the Agenda.

With the resignation of Kate Mallek (a/o 1/6/2023), there are two open positions of the 12 positions authorized for the Committee.

## 12. Adjournment.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:10pm. The next meeting is scheduled for February 2, 2023, from 5:30-7:00 pm. The meeting will be held in-person at the Albemarle County Office Building.