

DRAFT

Minutes from the Albemarle County Natural Heritage (NHC) Committee Meeting

April 6, 2023, 5:30pm

Albemarle County Office Building (Room 250)

401 McIntire Rd., Charlottesville, VA 22902

Committee Members Present: Christine Putnam, *Chair*, Meghan Sobott, *Vice-Chair*, Mike Callahan, *Secretary*, Dan Mahon (6:25pm), Leah Jung, and Abigail Wilson

Members Absent: Lonnie Murray, Peggy Cornett

Other Guests & Attendees:

- Rob McGinnis, Senior Land Use Field Representative for Albemarle & Greene Counties, Piedmont Environmental Council (PEC)
- James Fulcher, Community Development, Albemarle County
- Ruth Douglas, former Natural Heritage Committee member
- Tom Olivier, former Natural Heritage Committee member

Staff: Scott Clark

1. Call to Order. Christine called the meeting to order at 5:30pm.
2. Establish a Quorum. There was a quorum present.
3. Welcome/Acknowledge Guests. Rob, Ruth, James, and Tom introduced themselves.
4. Approval of Agenda. Abigail motioned to approve the meeting Agenda and Leah seconded the motion. Committee members present voted unanimously to approve the Agenda.
5. Approval of Minutes. Meghan motioned to approve the final Minutes from the March 2, 2023 meeting, and Leah seconded the motion. Committee members voted unanimously to approve the Minutes.
6. Follow-Ups:
 - A. Important Sites updates and outreach
 - a. Site updates. Ruth Douglas reported from the Key West neighborhood that *Corydalis incisa* (common name Incised fumewort) has become very invasive in the neighborhood. Abigail reported on a prescribed burn (adjacent to or part of a private residence on Fendall Ave.) in a meadow adjacent to Key West. She mentioned the Center for Urban Habitats. There was a short conversation about declaring Key West an Important Site.
 - B. Comp Plan Update and Feedback on Goals and Objectives

- a. Scott reported on feedback; he has worked on the Committee's input to the Staff. There was discussion about the feedback from the March 6 Committee meeting. A final Summary doc was to be developed as a response to the Goals & Objectives for the Staff to review. Feedback focus on
- Natural Resources
 - Rural Area
 - Parks and Recreation, Greenways, Blueways, and Green Systems

Leah, Rob, and Tom continued a discussion about incorporating the BAP with the Comprehensive Plan and that the "Comp Plan" update would drive an update to the BAP. Some of the Committee's suggested "Objectives" from the March meeting to be added or modified for consideration by the Comprehensive Plan review team include:

- Dark sky protection
- Climate resilience through green infrastructure
- Stream buffers for flood protection, greenways, stream health and wildlife
- Improved air quality
- Highlight economic and health benefits of equitable access to natural spaces and greenways

C. Recommended plant list and landscaping for new developments

- a. The Plant List remains at the Staff-level; needs to move forward. Need to look at wholesale suppliers.
- b. Rob mentioned legislative bills in Richmond propose to have Commonwealth agencies use native plants instead of invasive plants.

D. Hexagon Solar Project

- a. Project was reported as approved. Rob's letter (12 pages) included conditions that will be incorporated with an ordinance.

7. Staff Update: Scott Clark had already updated several items.

8. Future budget proposals

A. Advocating for natural resource protections in the 2025 budget. There was mention of employee training in invasive plant removal.

Action Item: *Develop goals for 2025 budget that include County parks.*

9. BAP Review of Goals & Recommendations GOAL 13: Identify, restore, and protect prairie and savanna habitat.

A. Protecting prairie and savanna habitat includes big blocks of forests and small blocks of disturbances.

B. Discussion about promoting biodiversity on working agricultural land;

C. **Action:** *Virginia DCR's Natural Heritage Plan (2003) [Virginia's Precious Heritage](#)*

D. **Action:** Send Michelle Mrdeza's (Piedmont Master Gardeners) presentation "Conservation Landscaping" to committee members separately.

E. Committee members are encouraged to continue commenting on Goal 13.

10. Working Group & member Reports

A. Education and Outreach -none

B. Wildlife Corridors – Bobcat study and update

- a. Leah talked about her interview with Carol Diggs from C'ville Weekly, about Bobcats and the need for a biodiversity assessment.

11. Other Matters.

- **Action:** Christine shared that Mona El Kahafif, UVA Associate Professor of Architecture and Urban + Environmental Planning; Graduate Urban Design Program Director has been appointed to the committee.
- Christine mentioned the formation of the Piedmont Dark Skies group to advocate for stronger protections in the outdoor lighting ordinance update and to educate the public about the impact of light pollution on wildlife and how to address the problem..
- Dan mentioned the Virginia Land Conservation and Greenways Conference meeting April 25-27, in Harrisonburg.

12. Adjournment.

- Christine adjourned the meeting at 7:05pm.
- The next meeting of the Natural Heritage Committee will be held on May 4, 2023, at 5:30pm, in room 250, at the Albemarle County Office Building, 1600 5th St., Charlottesville, VA 22902.

The minutes were prepared by Michael Callahan, Secretary for the Natural Heritage Committee.