

Draft Minutes
Albemarle County Natural Heritage Committee (NHC) Meeting
10/5/2023

Reminder: See Agenda

Present: Christine Putnam, Chair; Meghan Sobbott, Vice-Chair, Mike Callahan, Secretary, Peggy Cornett, Leah Jung, Dan Mahon, Lonnie Murray (arr. 6:20pm)

Absent: Abigail Wilson, Mona El Khafif, Ph.D., Lily Engle

Staff: Scott Clark

3. Guests: Tori Kanellopoulos, Albemarle County Principal Planner; Rob McGinnis, PEC, Sr. Land Use Representative for Albemarle and Greene counties; Peggy Gilges, Albemarle County Solid Waste Alternatives Advisory Committee (SWAAC); Carol Carter, Piedmont Environmental Council; Kaleb Notari, undergraduate Environmental Science major, University of Virginia; James Fulcher, Albemarle County Natural Resources Planner (and Conservation Planner)
4. Review and Approve October 2023 Agenda
 - Leah Jung motioned approval; Peggy Cornett seconded approval; all members present voted unanimously to approve the meeting agenda.
5. Review and Approve September 2023 Minutes
 - Peggy Cornett motioned approval; Dan Mahon seconded approval; all members present voted unanimously to approve the minutes from September.
6. Other Matters: none.
7. Q&A/update session w/Tori Kanellopoulos
 - Tori presented an update on the status of the Comprehensive Plan Review (AC44)

Tori reviewed the questionnaire process; noted Environmental Stewardship, Parks & Recreation, Historic Resources sections; reminded Planning Commission Work Session scheduled for Wednesday, 10/11/2023; inputs may continue to be submitted to AC44@albemarle.org; suggested members should see “Updated Topic Report” link; outlined Supervisors Approval/Adoption late 2024; Planning staff working on a Rural chapter, and Land-use and Transportation chapters; Scott reminded that the Rural Land-use chapter was evolving from 2015 Rural Area Plan; Tori highlighted Phase 1: Plan for Growth (Winter/Spring 2023); Phase 2: Goals, Objectives, and Planning Toolkits (Summer 2023); Phase 3: Prioritize Action Steps (Fall/Winter 2023); Phase 4: Finalize and Adopt Plan (2024).

Dan pointed out the regionalism and importance of broadly planning; reminded the Committee that rural Albemarle County abuts Greene County's Development Area, and Augusta County and Waynesboro abuts Albemarle County. The Rivanna River, several watersheds, and the James River cross several counties.

Tori added that Phase III will include identifying projects and infrastructure improvements. Phase IV will include a draft Comprehensive Plan document and public hearings. There will be additional Supervisor Work Sessions (dates tbd), collection of inputs from the Community Advisory Committees. Action steps will be included in Phase III.

Christine was pleased to see the focus on Biodiversity and climate action. She voiced concern about light pollution, impervious surfaces (ongoing trend of owners adding asphalt driveways); need for more conservation easements to protect biodiversity; restoring soils, hardwood forests, and differentiating timber as habitat versus commercial use.

Peggy mentioned the need for a plan to cover generational turnover of rural land.

Scott said the staff would seek to reactivate the ACE program.

Dan noted management and funding problems with landowners donating land for parks. Preddy Creek was an example.

Lonnie suggested land-use and transportation issues be cross-references with a note included to "see Chapter xyz". He also suggested the inclusion of water resources to take advantage of Commonwealth resources.

Rob asked if the Committee could share comments w/PEC; Christine indicated she would.

Action: Christine will create a Google Doc so that the NHC members could comment and those comments will then be sent on to Tori and shared with "Friends of the NHC".

8. Follow-Ups:

- a. Invasive Plant Management
 - a. Scott sent the NHC letter requesting funds of invasive plant management to ACPR leadership
- b. Important Sites Updates and Outreach
 - i. Dan mentioned sighting mushroom fungus in the area of the Blue Ridge Parkway
 - ii. Lonnie mentioned the absence of a rare plant near James River which can no longer be found and a stand of *Calycanthus floridus* negatively impacted by work done by VDOT during road work.
- b. Wildlife Corridors
 - i. **Action:** Suggested to talk with Karen Firehock.

c. Stream Health Initiative

i. **Action: Christine will draft a letter asking for funding for an FTE to implement the Buffer Overlay District.** Scott offered to review the letter once written so it is ready for review by the NHC in November

- Dan reminded Committee members that funding is needed for stream bank restoration; stream daylighting was discussed.
- Christine let Committee members know that Lisa Wittenborn, Executive Director of the Rivanna Conservation Alliance will make a presentation at the November Committee meeting.

11. NHC Work Plan 2023-24 (did not discuss)

12. Adjourned at 7:00pm