

Working Draft Minutes
Albemarle County Natural Heritage Committee (NHC) Meeting (Zoom)
12/7/2023

Present: Christine Putnam, Chair, Mike Callahan, Secretary, Leah Jung, Dan Mahon, Lonnie Murray (5:55pm), Abigail Wilson, Mona El Khafif, Ph.D., Kaleb Notari (guest)

Absent: Meghan Sobott, Vice-Chair

Staff: Scott Clark

1. Call to Order
2. Establish a Quorum - At least 5 members were present to open the meeting.
3. Welcome/Acknowledge Guests
 - Rob McGinnis, Piedmont Environmental Council (PEC)
4. Review and Approve December 2023 Agenda
 - Dan Mahon motioned approval; Leah Jung seconded approval; all members present voted unanimously to approve the meeting agenda.
5. Review and Approve November 2023 Minutes
 - Mona El Kafif motioned approval; Leah Jung seconded approval; all members present voted unanimously to approve the minutes.
6. Other Matters Not Listed on the Agenda from the Public
7. Staff Update: The staff is working on closing five conservation easements that encompass several 100 acres. There will be more information in January 2024 regarding the riparian buffer ordinance. Christine asked about the status of the [utility scale solar project](#) on the Secretary Sand Rd. site. Scott said there was no status yet. (Link provided for background.)
8. NHC membership and election of new officers
 - Elections for new committee officers will take place in January. Meghan will move up from Vice Chair to Chair as Christine steps aside. Mike volunteered to remain as Secretary so the committee still needs a Vice-Chair. Members of the committee should consider candidates and take the opportunity to recruit new committee members. Mona offered to pulse her UVA colleagues. Scott will confirm the residency requirement. Karen Firehock was mentioned as a potential committee member.
 - UVA Urban and Environmental Planning Professor Tim Beatley will participate in the February 2024 committee meeting, tentatively to be held at the UVA School of Architecture. Mona (faculty member) offered to make the committee meeting room

reservation. She confirmed that committee members and attendees would have access to wifi in the meeting room.

9. [AC44 Strategy/Action Steps - Recommendations for An Environmental Stewardship Chapter](#)

- Christine mentioned actions steps to be drafted. Christine asked committee members to comment and provide feedback on protections for biodiversity.

- Scott said the action steps have not yet been drafted. Tori (County staff member) took the committee's feedback and information. Scott said the staff continues to gather public feedback on the Goals and Objectives until January 2024. The Public will have an opportunity to review the updated version in early 2024.

10. Follow-Ups:

a. Important Site updates and Outreach - none

b. County Native-plant Demonstration Beds - A discussion ensued regarding native plantings on the County's campus, primarily in the parking lots and around the County building.

- Christine proposed to ask for regular funding to properly maintain landscape beds and for educational signage. Christine has written a proposed letter and will ask for other groups (Virginia Native Plant Society, PEC, Wild Virginia, PVCC, etc) to help create a coalition in line with conservation stewardship. Christine cited the "[Plant Virginia Natives](#)" program and the letter as one step to generate a funding "ask".

Lonnie - Moved to approve the letter Christine drafted and distribution.

- Dan described some aspects of the "native" demonstration planting in the Administration Building parking lot. He suggested the County create a best practice landscape plan for developers. Dan suggested the Natural Heritage Committee could recognize the "best" plan.

- Leah asked about how the beds are/would be maintained (which department and criteria to be used).

- Scott said the letter should be sent to the County Facilities and Parks Departments. Christine wants to include potential partners.

Mike/Abigail seconded Lonnie's motion; the motion was unanimously approved by a roll call vote.

- Rob offered weblinks to native plant resources:
www.plantvirginiannatives.org/native-plants-for-northern-piedmont;

www.lewisginter.org/invasive-plants-the-dirty-dozen/;
www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural-heritage/invspdflist

- c. Biscuit Run Park Visit - Christine and Mona toured the park on December 1. They noted biking areas, bikers making their own trails, and the parking lot. Their host introduced local native plant and tree species in the park. The park is scheduled to open in the Fall/Winter of 2024. Hampering the opening is the Parks Department's having received only one bid for the parking lot, \$800K above budget.
 - i. Christine asked Dan to write the letter about scalability concerning the paving of the parking lot, before the upcoming committee meeting in January 2024.
 - ii. Christine asked about reaching out to the Parks Director.
 - iii. Mona asked about a Master Plan for Biscuit Run; Scott offered to research whether a plan exists.
 - iv. A letter to department heads for a Natural Resource Management Plan for County Parks was thought might be useful.
 - v. Budgeting for plans was thought to be a good idea.
 - vi. Jessie Wingo was mentioned for protecting natural resources.
 - vii. It was suggested that an AC44 action step include outreach on native plants and a more coordinated native plant program be included.
- d. Speakers for future meetings -
 - i. Tim Padalino, the Director of Albemarle County Park Planning and
 - ii. [Tim Beatley, Principal for Biophilic Cities and Professor of Urban and Environmental Planning in UVA's School of Architecture.](#)

11. BAP Review of Goals & Recommendations: *"Goal 18: Clean up and reuse potentially contaminated sites with bioremediation and natural habitat restoration."*

- Christine briefly mentioned including a comment about the utility-scale solar project and sending committee members a link. Lonnie asked about proposed changes to the Goal. Christine and Abigail commented.

12. Dark Sky Week Proclamation - April 2-8, 2024

- Christine provided a proposed proclamation for County Supervisors to consider and a proclamation template for other versions of a proposed proclamation.
- Lonnie offered to develop a proposed proclamation, modifying the proclamation Christine had proposed.
- Abigail asked about private and public properties.
- Christine said she will work on a letter to accompany the proposed proclamation.

13. The meeting adjourned at 7:05pm.

Note: The next NHC meeting will be in-person on January 4, 2023 starting at 5:45pm.