

# Crozet Community Advisory Committee

## Meeting Minutes from June 14, 2023

### Members Present:

Joe Fore - Chair  
Michael Monaco - Secretary  
Bruce Butala  
Ken Thacker  
Kostas Alibertis  
Jim Duncan  
Valerie Long  
Lonnie Murray, Planning Commission  
Ann Mallek, Board of Supervisors

### County Staff:

Allison Wrabel, Community Connector  
Mike Culp, Director of Broadband Connectivity Office

Chair Joe Fore called the meeting to order at 7:01 pm

### **Call to Order, Agenda Review, Introductions**

Joe made two modifications to the April minutes - one at the request of a member of the public, to clarify a description of her, and the other to clarify a question of units versus units/acre. April minutes are approved. Jim moves to approve the May minutes, Kostas seconds, unanimously approved.

### **Meeting Norms and Agenda Structure**

Allison: Over the past months had discussion with county staff and CAC chairs, which resulted in the implementation of the standard meeting norms for CAC meetings.<sup>1</sup>

This also included a standard reformat of the agenda - meeting reminders up front, then topic discussion, then BOS/PC updates, then other committee business. This was driven by facilitation needs and time needs.

Michael: Is the parking lot a formal duty of the secretary?

Allison: Not a formal duty, but an expected practice of all the CAC members, something that the Chair and the County Liaison should keep track of.

Ken Thacker: Requests that we take five minutes at the end of this meeting for CAC members to share thoughts on Oak Bluff.

Joe: Sounds good - five minutes bookmarked during community concerns.

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### <sup>1</sup> **Meeting Norms:**

- Staff liaisons will be prepared, working with chairs to set agendas and provide necessary information.
- Committee members will come prepared having read provided materials.
- We will respect everyone's time by starting and ending on time. We will work to set and follow agenda topic time allotments.
- Everyone is responsible for helping to stay on topic. Speak up if you feel like we're getting off track and need to move an issue to a "parking lot" for possible future discussion.
- Everyone is encouraged to participate. You may be asked to share what you think, or we may ask for comments from those who haven't spoken. It is always OK to "pass" when you are asked to share a comment.
- Listen respectfully, without interrupting. Listen actively and with an ear to understanding others' views.
- One person speaks at a time. If you think you will forget an idea or question that comes to mind, write it down.
- Challenge ideas, not individuals.

### **Broadband Focus Group (Mike Culp)**

Mike: Broadband is important. A lot of people still can't access the internet fully. Jason Inofuentes has been working on the Regional Digital Equity Plan to increase equitable internet access. This set of focus group questions was developed initially by a group of students at UVA who carried out similar focus groups across the county and Charlottesville.

Mike & Allison facilitate the focus group. An audio recording is taken for posterity.

Community members raise concerns including gaps in coverage from power outages, dead zones in Ivy, along the railway, as well as expressing a continued general desire to be able to virtually participate in CAC meetings. (Mike recommends the FCC's MapNow and the Virginia Commonwealth Connection map for viewing broadband connectivity maps).

Lonnie Murray provides a brief update on cell towers in the County. There are standards in Albemarle County that hide and limit cell towers. A consultant asked about what standards we could change to allow for more towers. Options include more arrays and wider towers, but also our standards for height cut the towers just above the treetops. There's general opposition to towers in protected mountain areas; less opposition to towers in forest/ag land, and then an open question of how specific historical districts might still have room for towers. Biodiversity was not a criteria when these rules were put together. Also cited statements from rural residents who do not have an expectation of ever having cell coverage.

### **Crozet Trails Crew (Terri Miyamoto)**

Terri: CTC is an all-volunteer crew; we work with AC Parks and Rec and are guided by the master plan when working on trails. Anyone is welcome to join the crew and should subscribe to our newsletter.

- Workday scheduled for June 24 in Western Ridge
- Added Crozet Connector Trail eBike Tour
- Foothill Crossing trail had to be closed. Access to the connector trail passed through a backyard; the new homeowner doesn't want a public trail in their backyard. The current easement is down at the bottom of a steep hill. The current best plan for the trail will pass through HOA land; lawyers have to talk to lawyers.

Lonnie: In some localities, the riparian buffer of 100 feet is a required donation to the county as an easement. We should consider implementing that.

Matt Helt (community member): This is why we need a county-provided map of trails, to avoid trails passing through private property.

- Want to put a bridge over Lickinghole creek between Cory Farm and Westhall. Very close to the Cory Farm easement. Next step will be funding. We have approached builders and developers for funding - got some, still working on them. Ballpark is about \$100,000 needed. Fundraising efforts forthcoming. It takes a lot - engineering, etc. It will be built by the County and owned by the county.

Ken Thacker: any updates on the Three Notch'd Trail?

Terri: At the start of next FY (July 1) the study will begin.

Matt: State Trails Advisory Committtee exists - it would be great to have Albemarle represented on that body.

Valerie: These trails are an asset for the community and I use them all the time - thank you!

Terri: We are doing our best, but the county employees have been tremendously helpful.

### **Board of Supervisors/Planning Commission Liaison Updates**

Ann Mallek: The Oak Bluff development is in deferral for up to a year planning time, wherein they will take the information heard at both community meetings and use that to make the plan more amenable to

community concerns. Following up this Wednesday with the head of the planning dept to take other and broader concerns from the community meetings to staff.

Lonnie Murray: The AC44 draft criteria for development areas expansion did not come before the planning commission before being posted publicly; the Planning Commission felt that they should have had input prior to the publishing of this plan. There are other draft toolkits including Rural Interstate Interchanges which could have an effect on Crozet; please comment on these and ask for the justification for not including the planning commission in the drafting process. There is concern at the planning commission that staff ask for informal input from the planning commission and then just throw it to the board for approval.

Lonnie: We're spending \$14m not on buying conversations permanently. If you look around you see acres and acres of empty parking lots. I don't think we should expand the growth areas until we are using all the space we have.

Ann: Re: growth area boundaries - we have not provided amenities for the growth area we have, so that has to be our first priority. The development areas were created to house the expensive amenities - water and sewer - in areas of dense housing. We cannot be lured by the call to expand the growth area and fall into this trap. Everyone needs to get involved - it is incredibly important work and we need everyone involved.

Eric Schmitz (community member): [The planning commission] are there for a reason - they understand a dense manual and how it interdigitates with the planning process. To jump over them on AC44 matters is a problem. Do you have a charter, and can you change it if it's insufficient?

Ann: That is the state mandate - the PC has to be involved in the plan.

Lonnie: I believe we delivered that message in the last planning commission meeting - and adding public weight to our words will help bolster that message.

Eric Schmitz: Agreed. I would like to know: what are the teeth and what are the repercussions here?

Joe Fore: Yes - it's also struck me as odd that the CACs, which are beholden to the master plan, are not integrally involved in the comprehensive plan drafting process. Also of note: the mobile home park is going to the PC on the 27th of June. In my reading of the documents in the plan, I still do not see pedestrian improvements in that proposal, despite us asking for that at the CAC meeting.

### **Community Concerns**

Matt Helt: Community member.

- Planning a four-story storage building at 240/250 light - this is bad!
- DEQ needs to clean up the Dairy Queen site and enforce it
- Schools are supposed to limit to 50 commercial entries/day, and this goes unenforced at Crozet elementary

Tom Loach: The AC44 plan worries me. It feels as though the comprehensive plan has bypassed the people. Why not do a survey like they did in 2020? In 2020, almost half the county said they thought life would get worse in the future. Need to take the CAC back.

Minsu Kim: We've applied to join CCAC - what's the status?

Ann: Those go through the Board, so we will see them soon.

Ken Thacker: Provides correction on the 240/250 storage facility - it's now two stories with a buried story.

Ken Thacker: For about three months now, there has been a lot of public comment about Oak Bluff; I want to make sure that CAC weighs in and makes our voice known. Personally, I believe the proposed plan is

compatible with the master plan. I do believe the county needs to commit to finishing Eastern Avenue through the north end as well as the south, as well as other commitments to improve infrastructure connecting the neighborhoods and alleviating traffic. However, I believe this is compatible with the master plan, and it's important to develop in here to avoid expanding the growth area.

Joe Fore: I agree that Oak Bluff is within the master plan. If I were asked to vote yes/no today, my answer would be "I have no idea," because the maps are just very rough proposals. Very rough sketches, with no information about water hookups etc.

Sameer H (community member): If Eastern Avenue were complete today, I would be absolutely in your corner.

Jim Duncan: The county has been negligent in not building adequate infrastructure. We have community members here voicing support for the project *if* the Eastern Avenue connector existed. Eastern Avenue has been on the books for a long time and it hasn't been completed.

Joe Fore: It's great to see so many people at these meetings with a packed house. That's success for a CAC. One thing that's frustrating is to see all this energy against projects - don't build that. Where were the mass of people demanding the connector funds and sidewalk funds at County Budget meetings? Where do we harness that public energy to create public infrastructure.

Tom Loach (community member): You see a lot of people bemoaning what has happened to Crozet over the last 20 years. Population estimates provided in 2004 and 2010 have increased in stairsteps. Why should we continue to get houses if we don't get the infrastructure?

Matt Helt (community member): We're missing improvements in other parts of Crozet - I want my taxes to be refunded if other community projects like Eastern Avenue go through first.

Bruce Butala: If you build the development today, that's a lot of cars well before Eastern Avenue will be done in at best 2030.

### **Other Committee Business**

Straw poll suggests we have a quorum for July 12 meeting. Potentially virtual, but members are split. Possible topics include: AC44.

Next meeting tentatively scheduled for July 12 at 7:00 pm, at the Crozet Library. Details will be posted on the County calendar on the website. <https://www.albemarle.org/community/county-calendar>

Jim motioned to adjourn; Michael seconded. Joe Fore adjourned the meeting at 8:35 pm.