

Working Draft
Minutes from the Albemarle County
Natural Heritage Committee (NHC) Zoom Meeting, 5:45pm
August 1, 2024

Present: Rob McGinnis, Chair, Christine Putnam, Vice-Chair, Mike Callahan, Secretary, Lonnie Murray, and Leah Jung

Absent: Kaleb Notari and Mona El Khafif, Ph.D.

Notes:

- The Committee has five open seats needed to fill its 12 authorized positions.

Staff: Scott Clark

1. Call to Order. The meeting was conducted on Zoom and declared in-session at 5:48 pm.
2. Establishment of a Quorum. Four committee members were present to open the meeting.
3. Welcome/Acknowledge Guests. Christine introduced Megan Sebasky, who has submitted an application to Staff to be considered by the Board of Supervisors (BoS) for a position on the Committee.
4. Review and Approve Meeting Agenda
 - A Motion to approve tonight’s Meeting Agenda was made by Christine. Lonnie requested to add a “Biodiversity Update” to the agenda. It was added as item “c” under paragraph 10, *Follow Ups*.
 - The Motion was seconded by Lonnie and approved unanimously by members present.
5. Review and Approve July 8, 2024 Meeting Minutes
 - Motion to approve the July 8 Meeting Minutes was made by Lonnie.
 - Christine seconded the Motion and it was approved unanimously by members present.
6. Matters from the Public not listed on the Agenda. None.
7. Staff Update (by Scott Clark)
 - a. The Long-Range Planning Team is working on scheduling Public input to the Updated Comprehensive Plan 44 (CP44) and a BoS meeting in September. The Committee will have the opportunity to comment on Action Steps proposed by Staff. Rob mentioned that the Staff should provide a “Crosswalk” with the previous goals and objectives along with adjacent new proposed goals and objectives to reflect how the goals and objectives were changed and how they will be tied to Actions. The Committee will need to submit input before the Planning Committee and BoS Work Sessions.

8. Solar Ordinance - *Comment Letter*

- A recommendation to require native plants was previously included when the NHC comments were submitted as well as that a Developer will need to submit rationale to seek approval to install non-native plants.
- For Albemarle County, identifying pros and cons of “Agrivoltaics” that includes raising cattle, sheep, and goats amongst and around solar installations should be considered. (Agrivoltaics, the practice of co-locating agricultural production and photovoltaic (solar) energy production on the same land.)
- *Follow-up/Next steps:*
 - a. The Committee will continue to submit recommendations to Staff, highlighting concerns about language in the draft solar ordinance.
 - b. Committee members were reminded of the potential for land owners leasing their land to solar energy producers, to seek tax advantages and benefits under current ordinances (taking agricultural land out of agricultural commodities production in favor of energy production).
 - c. Rob reminded Committee members to see [Virginia’s HB 206](#). Lonnie asked if buffers between properties and streams had been included in the legislation.

9. Draft FY 24/25 Work Plan

- a) Review Work Plan - Actions & prioritization
 - i) Christine suggested the Committee use “Focus Areas” similar to what the Albemarle County Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC) had used.
 - ii) There was discussion about being present and speaking before the BoS during regularly scheduled BoS meetings, on issues related to BoS interests, that intersect with the Committee’s Work Plan.
 - iii) It was agreed to add “Engagement” to “Biodiversity Education & Information”.
 - iv) It was agreed to combine “Biodiversity Assessment” with “Biodiversity Indicators”.
 - v) It was agreed to add the “Solar Ordinance” as a Work Item.
- b) Discussion of member roles.
 - i) Lonnie made a **Motion** to approve the proposed Work Plan with modifications discussed ((9. a) iii, iv, and v above). The **Motion** was seconded by Christine and was unanimously approved by Committee members present for the meeting.
 - ii) Scott will revise the Work Plan and incorporate the approved modifications.
- c) New members. No discussion.

10. Follow Ups:

- A. Budget Proposals
 - Scott confirmed that a Compliance Officer position is already being planned.
 - Christine reminded Committee members of previous letters to the BoS recommending the County’s native plant beds be tended regularly and appropriate signage installed to inform the public about the native plants

present. Christine has developed a draft recommendation letter and will email to Rob, who will sign the proposed letter, with recommendations, and forward the signed letter to Scott to present to the appropriate office. Christine introduced a **Motion** to accept the addition of the [noxious list of plants](#) to the draft letter and submit as described. Lonnie seconded the **Motion**; it was approved unanimously by members present.

- Lonnie discussed the need to find current land cover maps that reflect land use changes over time and referenced his recent email to Committee members (7/23/2024).

B. Wildlife Corridors. Leah shared that Nicole Gorman, Virginia Tech Ph.D. Candidate, will be presenting her team's findings from the **Bobcat Study** on August 8, 2024, at 7:00pm at Ivy Creek.

C. Biodiversity Update (added). Lonnie talked about meeting with agency reps about a *Rhus aromatica* ([Fragrant sumac](#)) sighting.

11. Old Business. None.

12. New Business.

- Christine reminded Committee members that she had prepared a draft NHC Annual Report (due in September) and asked for any additional input. Scott clarified that the report has been prepared by the Staff in the past and would continue to be. Scott mentioned a second report that was more common among committees and that he would provide additional guidance.
- It was suggested that the Committee use indicators and achievements from the Work Plan to supplement the Annual Report.

13. Adjournment. Leah motioned to adjourn the meeting; Mike seconded the Motion, and Rob adjourned the meeting at 7:28pm.

Note: Next NHC meeting will be held on September 5, at 5:45pm. The committee meeting will be in-person.