

**Minutes of Albemarle County Natural Heritage Committee (NHC) Meeting
February 21, 2019 – Room 235**

Committee Members: Nancy Weiss, Mary Tillman, Christine Putnam, Michael Rodemeyer, Peggy Cornett, Emily Luebke, Kennon Williams

Absent: Lonnie Murray

Other Attendees: Narissa Turner, Leah Jung, Mary Ames, David Hannah

Nancy called the meeting to order at 5:35. Minutes of the 1/17/19 meeting were approved.

Chair's Report. Nancy talked with Diantha McKeel (Board of Supervisors, BOS) recently and plans to meet with the Citizen Advisory Committee for Route 29/Hydraulic Road next week. The CAC is interested in improving the Charlotte Humphris County Park and has \$30,000 to spend. The park is small (25 acres) and has no parking area or amenities other than trails. As an NHC rep, Nancy wants to help them with design and improvement ideas.

Christine described the committee's support of two Va General Assembly bills last month, neither of which made it to the floor for consideration. She also described an effort for Virginia to join a nine state network working to cap carbon emissions from generating electricity. Everyone acknowledged the need for the NHC to stay close to its core mission if/when it supports activities.

Action Item:

- Christine will send an email to the BOS to let them know of the committee's actions last month.
- Christine will send an email about the carbon emissions cap to committee members in case individuals want to support the effort.

David updated the group on the 2/12/19 work session with the Planning Commission. The commission made some minor recommendations but approved the draft wording for amending the Comprehensive Plan with biodiversity strategies. The draft proposal to develop diverse urban forests will not be added to the Comp Plan at this time, but will in the future. David has a work session on 4/3/19 with the BOS, seeking approval of the Comp Plan changes.

Action Item:

- David will send the current Figure 4 from Natural Resources Chapter of Comp Plan to committee members, in hopes of finding a better graphic to use.

Biscuit Run. Emily and David described the site visit on 1/31 to inspect the eastern hemlocks. Three Va DOF staff were in the group, data was collected on 92 trees. The situation is not as dire as feared, and no immediate action is needed. David and Ches Goodall will meet with DOF staff next month to review treatment options and costs. DOF staff are likely to treat the hemlocks, saving the cost of hiring others to do it. The county will probably need to purchase the insecticide. Fall of 2019 is the likely time for treatment.

The County Executive submitted his proposed county budget for FY2020 last week. It does not include any funding for Biscuit Run. It is not known when the county will receive the \$4-5 million from the state

(which is to come from Atlantic Coast Pipeline mitigation funds). The proposed county budget includes some funding for Hedgerow Park and Darden Towe Park (improving the athletic fields).

David described what he recently learned about Desired Future Conditions data that DCR-State Parks staff developed in 2013, based on 2011 field work. A map (created by David Anhold) using the data is now in Google drive, and DCR documentation about DFCs is also in the drive.

Action Item:

- Kennon will share the list of recommendations from committee members compiled to date regarding Biscuit Run.

Important Sites. There have been no site visits or landowner contacts since the last committee meeting. Committee members should come to the March meeting prepared to discuss revising the list of Important Sites. There is no Important Site corresponding to the DCR Conservation Site for Biscuit Run. There may be other DCR Conservation Sites that do not have corresponding Important Sites. (There are some of these in Shenandoah National Park.) County Parks were discussed. There was general agreement that only sections of county parks that meet the criteria for Important Sites should be designated as Important Sites, not the parks in their entirety. Kennon said we should consider identifying important corridors as well as Important Sites.

Report from staff. Andrew Walker is leaving his GIS position with the county and moving to Colorado. That leaves two vacant GIS positions. The County Executive's budget includes \$32,000 for the Albemarle Conservation Assistance Program (ACAP). David is scheduling a joint work session of the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors in mid-2019, to review stream health proposals for Development Areas. Albemarle County recently passed the 100,000 acre mark for land under conservation easement.

Native plants. There was discussion about how best to promote the use of native plants by the county. There are multiple plant lists and multiple staff members involved. It will not simply be a matter of revising existing lists. Education and discussion will likely be needed. Kennon and Peggy expressed interest in being involved.

Action Item:

- David will talk with county staff and determine how best to proceed.

The committee's Annual Report for 2018 is scheduled to be submitted at the 4/3 BOS meeting.

Action Item:

- Nancy will work on the report and share it with the committee for review.

Kennon led the group in using the Google Maps app on smartphones. We were unable to use iNaturalist as planned.

The next meeting is scheduled for March 21. David will invite Narissa Turner to talk about the county's Climate Action Plan. The meeting was adjourned at 7:30.