

**Minutes of Albemarle County Natural Heritage Committee (NHC) Meeting
January 18, 2018 – Room 235**

Committee Members: Nancy Weiss (Chair), Ari Daniels (Vice Chair), Christine Putnam, Emily Luebke, Michael Rodemeyer, Mary Tillman

Absent: Lonnie Murray, Peggy Cornett, Dorothy Tompkins

Other Attendees: David Hannah, Ruth Douglas, Michelle George

Nancy called the meeting to order at 5:35. We went around the table introducing ourselves, as there were several “new faces” at the meeting. Four new members were just appointed to the committee – Emily Luebke, Dorothy Tompkins, Mike Rodemeyer, and Mary Tillman. Michelle George was visiting, having just learned about the committee recently and wanting to learn more.

Nancy began a discussion about electing officers for 2018. No committee members had approached her about becoming an officer, and the committee members that Nancy approached about it were not interested in serving. Nancy offered that she would be willing to serve another year as Chair, and Ari is also willing to serve another year as Vice Chair. Several members expressed their thanks to Nancy for her willingness to continue.

Action Item:

A motion was made, seconded, and approved to have Nancy serve as Chair and Ari serve as Vice Chair of the committee for 2018.

The December 2017 minutes were approved.

Biodiversity Action Plan. David reported on the status of the plan and the landscape/GIS analysis section that Andrew Walker and he have been working on. Four draft GIS maps for the landscape analysis section of BAP were shown. David hopes to have the next draft of BAP ready for review in early February. A presentation to the Board of Supervisors was rescheduled from Feb. 14 to April 4.

Action Item:

David will send a document with links to the 2004 report by the Biodiversity Work Group and other information about or relevant to the NHC.

Notes from staff. The stream buffer review process for Development Areas should begin soon. David’s time on BAP has pushed the start of buffer review back a little.

Recent big news was the lease of state-owned land to Albemarle County in order to create Biscuit Run Park. It will almost certainly be on the “fast track” for development. There is much public sentiment for active recreation, including athletic fields. The MOA between the state and county requires a minimum amount of forest cover to be retained (80%), 100’ buffers along Biscuit Run (trails allowed in the buffer), and protection of certain natural heritage resources. The committee agreed it should be active in providing input to county Parks & Recreation staff about developing the park, particularly protecting important areas. One of our newest Important Sites, Avon Wetlands, falls partially within the park land.

Action Item:

David will send some documents he has about Biscuit Run.

Creating Biscuit Run Park will probably take some pressure off the desire to quickly open Hedgerow Park. Devin Floyd has continued to survey the Hedgerow property for county Parks & Recreation. NHC members have long wanted to visit the property.

Action Item:

Christine will stay in touch with Dan Mahon (Parks & Recreation) about the public planning process for Biscuit Run, and the possibility of site visits to Hedgerow and Biscuit Run.

Action Item:

David will send a document from Devin Floyd, summarizing his survey work to date at Hedgerow.

Ari and David described the proposed construction of a data center in Loudoun County. If approved, it would destroy a Piedmont mafic barren. Many groups and individuals are involved in trying to prevent the project. Loudoun County Board of Supervisors is meeting tonight to make a decision about the project.

Manuel Lerdaun emailed recently about a possible small grant through NASA that would allow one of his students to conduct GIS work using remotely sensed data. It is possible the work could be of interest to the committee (e.g., identifying isolated, significant natural plant communities). It is unclear if Manuel will submit a proposal or what role the NHC might play. David will stay in touch with Manuel.

The committee needs to develop and submit an Annual Report to the Board of Supervisors, for 2017, one to two pages in length.

Action Item:

Nancy will review the annual report for 2016 and develop a draft report for 2017.

Nancy discussed the desire to thank former members of NHC for their volunteer work. Five members have resigned in the past two years or so. Tom Olivier may have stepped away before that time, but definitely needs to be recognized. There was discussion of recognizing Tom Dierauf in some fashion as well. Lonnie introduced the idea via email a few weeks ago, and was probably thinking along the lines of formal recognition of some type by the Board of Supervisors.

Action Item:

Nancy will draft a thank you letter to send to the former NHC members.

Nancy suggested an orientation meeting with the new committee members. Everyone agreed this would be very useful.

Action Item:

Nancy and David will schedule a meeting with the four new members.

The next committee meeting is February 15. Rex Linville of Piedmont Environmental Council will talk about PEC and conservation easements. The meeting was adjourned at 7:15.