

**Minutes of Albemarle County Natural Heritage Committee (NHC) Meeting
October 30, 2018 – Room 235**

Committee Members: Nancy Weiss (Chair), Christine Putnam (Vice Chair), Michael Rodemeyer, Peggy Cornett, Mary Tillman, Emily Luebke, Kennon Williams, Lonnie Murray

Absent: none

Other Attendees: Devin Floyd, Ruth Douglas, Leah Jung, Narissa Turner, David Hannah

Nancy called the meeting to order at 5:35. Guests were welcomed.

Devin gave an informal presentation that touched on several topics. He began by discussing natural plant communities, what they are and why they are important. Other topics included the importance and historical context of grassland communities in the Piedmont, quantifying diversity at specific sites, new county records for five species, the need to organize data, and how NHC and CUH can work together.

Minutes of the August meeting were approved. There was not a committee meeting in September. Nancy gave a brief Chair's report. She talked about the PEC Annual Meeting on 10/20 that she and Kennon attended. Several important issues were addressed, including how localities can guide solar power installations and the Strong Towns concept. PEC recently held a meeting of various localities/conservation groups that Kennon attended. Nancy mentioned the Va Safe Wildlife Corridors Collaborative group, and the need to see if there is a need for a wildlife passage on Route 29 South.

Action Item:

- Kennon will send a short report to the committee about the PEC sponsored meeting.
- Lonnie will create a map identifying the area of Route 29 South to investigate.

David handed out newly printed hard copies of the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP). He updated the group on the status of amending the county's Comprehensive Plan with strategies and information from BAP. He meets with the Planning Commission on 11/20 to discuss the Comp Plan amendment.

Action Item:

- David will send a revised draft of the relevant Comp Plan section to the committee for review. He will send it before the weekend and needs quick turnaround for comments.

A handout of the priority Important Sites was distributed. There was lengthy discussion about the need to contact landowners of these and a few other sites, and setting up site visits. Mary, Emily, Lonnie and others shared their experiences with contacting landowners. Some committee members volunteered to contact landowners of specific Important Sites, after Election Day on 11/6. Nancy noted the need to consider adding some sites (e.g. part of Biscuit Run) to the Important Sites list. Additions and edits to the list should be done in "batch mode" once or twice a year. David should be able to work on this in February or March of 2019.

Action Item:

- Committee members will contact Nancy with the Important Sites they would like to work on.

There was brief discussion about a recent site visit to the southern section of Biscuit Run. Peggy, Lonnie, and David were part of the small group. The hardwood forest is impressive and of good quality, not largely affected by human disturbance, though invasive plants are a major threat. The eastern hemlock trees are under great stress from hemlock woolly adelgids, and are not likely to survive more than a few years longer, if that long, without intervention. A motion was approved to recommend that the county take steps to formally assess the condition of the hemlock stand and the possibility of treatment.

Action Items:

- On behalf of committee, Nancy will write to the Steering Committee for Biscuit Run requesting immediate action to evaluate the condition of the hemlock trees and the prospects for successfully treating some of them.
- David will gather basic information about the methods and costs of treating hemlocks.

The next committee meeting will be on November 29. The need for public input regarding the Comp Plan amendment was discussed. The committee agreed to let the first part of the 11/29 meeting serve as a public meeting related to the Comp Plan amendment, if the Planning Commission approves the idea at their 11/20 meeting. Other avenues for public input were discussed, including using the City Space venue on the downtown mall or hosting a First Friday event.

David informed the group of a budget request by the Community Development Department for \$32,000 in Fiscal Year 2020 to create the Albemarle Conservation Assistance Program, or ACAP. A motion was approved to send a letter to the Board of Supervisors in support of the budget request and creating ACAP. Lonnie abstained from voting on the motion.

Action Items:

- On behalf of committee, Christine will write to the Board of Supervisors in support of the budget request for ACAP.
- David and Lonnie will send informational bullets to Christine to use in writing the letter.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:40.