

**Minutes of Albemarle County Natural Heritage Committee (NHC) Meeting
March 16, 2017 – Room 235**

Committee Members: Nancy Weiss (Chair), Ari Daniels (Vice Chair), Peggy Cornett, Lonnie Murray, Peter Hatch

Absent: Rochelle Garwood, Manuel Lerdau, Christine Putnam

Other Attendees: David Hannah, Tom Olivier, Ruth Douglas

Nancy called the meeting to order at 5:33, and welcomed everyone. The meeting agenda was reviewed and approved. Minutes of the February 16, 2017 meeting were approved.

Nancy gave a short Chair's Report. She would like to add more members to the committee. Bob Finley declined to apply because of other commitments he has. Ari will reach out to a friend about joining, and Nancy will talk to two other people. Travis Morris has updated the county's web page for the NHC and gave us an online link to the application form to join the NHC.

Ruth talked briefly about Ragged Mtn. She recently met with Sam Lindblom, president of CAMBC & a long time TNC employee, who she has known for many years. It was a wide ranging talk and included Ragged Mtn. He is hoping that we in the conservation community can work together, and thinks it is very unfortunate that there is a split among many groups and individuals. Some NHC members have said similar things. Sam would like to come talk to NHC. He believes a trail system can be developed that will move things forward. Ruth feels encouraged that good dialogue w/CAMBC can take place. Ruth suggested we invite Sam to come talk to NHC. Ruth needed to leave the meeting after her report.

Biodiversity Action Plan, BAP. Tom briefed everyone on the current status of BAP. Tom's introductory narrative to date covers from Section I of the outline to almost Section IV. Tom's goal is to draft all sections to IX by the next meeting. Lonnie & Tom would both like to work on Section IX.B., Fragmentation. Lonnie has already written on the issue. Section IX is the most important overall portion of the BAP. Some of Lonnie's narrative somewhat covers IX.E. Site Restoration.

Lonnie suggested that recommendations about specific habitat types should go in the habitat sections, where the habitat overviews and threats are described, rather than in a section devoted only to recommendations. Several people agreed we should consider this, while still keeping a section for broad recommendations near the end of Section IX. Regarding the educational components in BAP, only what is needed to carry out the plan needs to be discussed. Not a great deal of text should be needed.

We should think about who could (not necessarily would) assess our BAP recommendations. We should prioritize the recommendations. There will be limits on how much review county staff can provide. Dan Mahon should review on behalf of the Parks & Recreation Department. We should also solicit PEC and SELC to review some ideas we might propose.

Lonnie wanted a group review and some level of approval of his policy ideas before he spends significant time researching them. He listed most of the potential policy recommendations included in his draft text for the Habitat section of the report. A few notable points:

- The “preservation development” concept falls under Rural Preservation Developments, which the county allows. Perhaps a recommendation should be to encourage greater use of this.
- TDRs – Transfer of Development Rights – was discussed, in much detail on some points. The desire to get outside review on the issue was expressed.
- FBC – Form Based Code – is no longer one of Lonnie’s recommendations. The county will be using it when developing the Rio Road/Route 29 Small Area Plan.

Action Item:

- TDRs will be discussed more fully as an agenda item at the next NHC meeting.

Lonnie has updated the list of people with access to Google Drive. It includes committee members plus Ruth and Tom. Various people discussed their comfort level and familiarity with Google Drive and group editing of documents. Tom’s method of sending documents and receiving feedback from individuals with ‘track changes’ is fine too, authors of BAP sections do not have to use Google Drive if they would rather not.

Action Items:

- Ari will send a link to a CWP document on good development practices.
- Lonnie will give a tutorial on Google Drive at the next NHC meeting.

David has talked with Ruth, and has emailed Cinder Stanton to make sure he has the most current information about species occurrences at Important Sites. Updated data is needed to rank the Important Sites. David recently received much material from a DGIF biologist about coyotes, including a recent study about coyote impacts on deer population levels. He will send this information to anyone who is interested. The BOS is considering “fast tracking” the development of Hedgerow Park, in light of the Ragged Mtn trail issues. It will probably be an agenda item at the April 12 BOS meeting.

Nancy and David met in February with John Porter, who teaches a GIS class at UVA. They discussed ideas for potential student projects that would benefit NHC or the BAP. David has some limited amount of money to hire part-time GIS help until July 1, and has three people in mind. He is waiting to hear back from one of them. Some GIS help is possible from county staff, but time demands on them make any consistent help from them questionable. Several good GIS tasks were mentioned, including tracking land cover changes over time. David’s first priority is to develop specific data about Important Sites and then explore the connectivity data from Green Infrastructure Center.

Nancy reported it is time to submit an Annual Report (for calendar year 2016) from the committee to the BOS. Nancy will take the lead in drafting it but wants input from everyone.

Action Item:

- Nancy will contact Travis Morris about submitting the Annual Report at a BOS meeting.

Ragged Mountain issues and the need to revise the county ordinance governing land around public drinking water sources were discussed. Ari wants to draft some wording to consider for the revised ordinance, and thinks the committee should submit the wording to the BOS. It was decided the

committee will not invite Sam Lindblom to speak until they have confirmed that it would not be counter-productive or an issue with BOS members.

Action Item:

- Wording for an ordinance revision will be discussed at the next NHC meeting.
- Nancy will send a copy of the NHC comment letter on Ragged Mtn to reporter Chris Suarez.
- David will contact Ann Mallek about the NHC inviting Sam Lindblom to speak.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:25.