

**Minutes of Albemarle County Natural Heritage Committee (NHC) Meeting  
April 13, 2017 – Room 246**

Committee Members: Nancy Weiss (Chair), Ari Daniels (Vice Chair), Peggy Cornett, Lonnie Murray, Christine Putnam, Rochelle Garwood

Absent: Manuel Lerdau, Peter Hatch

Other Attendees: David Hannah, Tom Olivier, Ruth Douglas, Dan Bieker

Nancy called the meeting to order at 5:35, and welcomed everyone. The meeting agenda was reviewed and approved. Minutes of the March 16, 2017 meeting were approved.

Nancy gave a short Chair's Report. She has communicated with Travis Morris (county staff), and Lonnie's committee membership has been renewed and extends until 2020. Nancy has been in contact with four individuals about possibly joining the committee. Each has been invited to the May 18 meeting. The four are Michael Brown, Mary Tillman, Wanda SanJule, and Tom Wild. There was discussion about reaching out to UVA faculty. Manuel approached Howard Epstein several months ago, and David broached the topic with John Porter. Neither was able and/or interested. Tom will email Tim Beatley. We should also consider contacting Howard Epstein again.

There was group review and discussion of the draft 2016 Annual Report to BOS. Some minor edits were suggested. During discussion, Christine said that she recently got the Master Naturalists to approve working on the online native plant database as a project.

**Action Item:**

- Nancy will make the revisions and send report to Travis Morris, for inclusion in an upcoming BOS meeting.

There was brief discussion about Important Sites. The group acknowledged there were few site visits in 2016, and that review of the sites is needed, including the names assigned to some sites. The committee decided to continue using the term "Important Sites". Cinder Stanton recently sent final clarifications about some plant data at a few Important Sites.

**Action Item:**

- David will update the summary sheet on Important Sites (Word document) and share with everyone. He and Nancy will discuss possible updates to the Important Sites spreadsheet.

David gave a GIS update. He described an email he sent recently, reviewing the maps and data that Green Infrastructure Center (GIC) has produced. He asked for input from the committee about this. There will be a Planning Commission work session on May 2 at 6:00, during which the GIC project and data will be discussed. David encouraged everyone to attend if they can. Anne Dunckel has been developing data using the Important Sites and Core Habitat Areas. Anne will be leaving the county in early May, and David will set up a meeting where she can brief people on her work. Again, David encouraged those who are interested and able to attend.

**Action Items:**

- David will forward a recent email about the GIC maps and data to the committee for their feedback.
- David will set up a work session with Anne Dunckel to review her GIS work, and invite committee members to attend.

Ari reported on potential wording suggestions for updating the county ordinance about public drinking water reservoirs. He has not been able to spend much time on this. David relayed a perspective that county attorneys have. They believe it may not be possible to address biodiversity or natural resources in county regulations, as the state has not given localities the authority to regulate those resources. Localities have been given authority to regulate water quality and other things related to drinking water. David suggested talking with the attorneys before spending a lot of time on this. There is no timeframe yet for revising the ordinance, and it is not likely to happen in the near term.

Ragged Mountain. There was no new information to share, beyond the county's recent decision to decline the city's invitation to arbitration. There was discussion about the "scale of use" at Ragged Mountain, rather than the number and types of trails, being a core issue. David learned the cost of fabricating and installing the existing floating bridge was roughly \$150,000.

David attended the BOS work session on 4/12. The board approved moving forward with a study to begin developing Hedgerow Park. If all goes well, the park could be open by November 2018. The board also approved a recommendation by County Parks & Rec Dept. to remove Chris Greene Lake from the list of public drinking reservoirs, and allow it to be managed as a traditional park. The board set May 10 as a public hearing on the matter.

Biodiversity Action Plan. Tom gave a general overview of the BAP status. He will be generally unavailable after September, and is hopeful a draft report can be completed this summer. As few committee meetings are scheduled before summer, subcommittee meetings or smaller, 2-3 person meetings can be held to continue the work. The need for maps to include in the BAP was discussed.

**Action Items:**

- Tom and Lonnie will meet to work on the Habitat section Lonnie drafted, potentially moving portions of it to other sections of the BAP (sometime after the next 3 weeks, due to commitments both have right now).
- Education subcommittee will draft the section on education, though it may be June before they can complete it.

Lonnie discussed his TDR proposal. There was general approval of the informational document he created, and how to incorporate it in the BAP.

Important Sites visits. Very little has been done this year.

**Action Item:**

- Lonnie and Ari plan to meet next weekend at Meriwether Lewis Elementary School and bike to some sites in the area.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:15, as some members left the meeting. For those who stayed, Lonnie gave a short overview of the Google drive where numerous NHC files are stored. Nancy described her recent work to organize the site.