

**Minutes of Albemarle County Natural Heritage Committee Meeting  
September 27, 2016 – Totier Room 235**

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

Absent: Jeremy Glode, Manuel Lerdau, Christine Putnam

Other Attendees: John Blair, Andrew Walker, David Hannah, Tom Olivier, Leah Jung, Terri Keffert

The meeting was called to order at 5:15 by Devin.

John Blair, Deputy County Attorney, spoke to the committee about basic information concerning the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and conducting public meetings. Some points he covered:

- FOIA requests are very common, so we should not be too concerned about it occurring. The County Attorney's office will assist us if one is ever made regarding our committee.
- Verbal requests for information can qualify as FOIA requests, so we should be responsive.
- Meetings and records are the two primary components of FOIA requirements.
- Our committee is a public body, so advance public notice of meetings is required, and notes or minutes of meetings must be taken.
- A gathering of three or more committee members is a public meeting that requires public notice and meeting notes. Non-committee gatherings (e.g., holiday party, social event, etc.) that three or more committee members attend are not considered public meetings so long as no committee business is discussed.
- Emails related to committee business are public record, even if some or all of the parties are not members of the committee. Any communication related to committee business is subject to FOIA. Emails should be kept for three years.
- The subcommittees we have formed to date are not public bodies. Notes/minutes of the meetings are not required but if taken, they are FOIA-able. John advises that we give public notice of the subcommittee meetings. It is not required but makes our work more transparent. John also believes it is a good idea to appoint chairs of the subcommittees.

Minutes of the 8/23/16 meeting were approved.

Andrew Walker of Green Infrastructure Center updated the committee on the status of the grant project. Prior to the meeting, Andrew provided the project's GIS data to David, who will give it to any committee members who want to use it. The project is nearing completion and next steps include meeting with County staff to inform them of the data and tools, briefing the Planning Commission on the project, and creating a final report.

Important Sites were discussed. David shared summary information on the number and size of Important Sites, and will send a revised summary document to committee members. A ranking of the sites is needed for the Biodiversity Action Plan, even if a very simple prioritization at this point. In the longer term, a more rigorous review and ranking is needed. David has been in contact with John Porter (UVA Environmental Sciences Dept.) and two of his students about potential GIS class projects. He hopes one project will involve developing resilience factors (relative to climate change) for the Important Sites, and will try to nurture this along. Devin and Peter described a recent visit to the Rivanna Bluffs below Bucks Creek site, which included the landowner.

Nancy shared her thoughts on the work of the advisory work group that helped develop ideas for natural resource management in the County. A total of seven meetings were held, and several group members hope to meet again in 9-12 months to see what progress has been made. David will send a summary of the process to committee members.

Members of the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) subcommittee briefly updated the committee. They have held two meetings to date. The topic of including policy recommendations in the plan was discussed, as Lonnie shared a list of policy/land use recommendations for consideration at the latest BAP meeting. PEC staff have been invited to attend the next BAP meeting to review and discuss the list. The group will schedule the next meeting soon.

Ari shared a handout of ideas developed by the Education subcommittee. The handout generated some discussion, particularly about how best to share current information with the public about topics related to biodiversity. Non-native invasive species generated much interest.

The committee is schedule to make a short presentation to the Board of Supervisors on the afternoon of December 7. David feels it will be a great opportunity to inform the newer supervisors about who we are and what we do, and to set the stage for the Biodiversity Action Plan. The committee will discuss the presentation at future meetings.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:40.

Next Meeting: October 25, 2016 at 5:30pm, Totier Room 235.