

**Minutes of Albemarle County Natural Heritage Committee (NHC) Meeting
November 22, 2016 – Totier Room 235**

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

Absent: Devin Floyd, Jeremy Glode, Nancy Weiss, Peter Hatch

Other Attendees: David Hannah, Tom Olivier, Ruth Douglas

The meeting began at approximately 5:30, as the group began discussing the draft ordinance language the City of Charlottesville (City) is considering for Ragged Mountain Natural Area (RMNA). Discussion of the draft ordinance is scheduled to be on the agenda for the December 5 City Council meeting. A committee quorum was reached when Manuel arrived at about 5:45.

The senior assistant county attorney, Andy Herrick, had forwarded the draft ordinance to David the day before this meeting. He is seeking feedback on the ordinance language and other thoughts the committee might have. The committee feels strongly that the Board of Supervisors should be aware of the City's belief that the County Code does not apply to RMNA and how the City chooses to manage it. The idea was expressed that NHC should be a strong advocate for protecting biodiversity and the resources of RMNA. In the City's process of considering management options for RMNA, no advisory group similar to NHC was involved to inform and advise on biodiversity and other resource issues. The ecosystem study conducted by Center for Urban Habitat was not designed to (and did not) include many management recommendations. The public discussion centered on recreational uses of the land, and consideration of the site's biological/ecological value was lacking.

Motion Approved: Manuel will draft a letter to send to Andy Herrick, summarizing the committee's thoughts and suggestions. Manuel will circulate the letter by email for committee review, with target date of sending the letter on Nov. 28.

Minutes of the 10/25/16 meeting were approved.

A presentation by NHC to the Board of Supervisors is still scheduled for December 7, but has been moved to the evening session. David will contact Devin to confirm he available to develop and give the presentation. Ari agreed to serve as backup if Devin is not available. David and Tom plan to attend the meeting, and can contribute if needed.

The committee feels a December meeting is needed. The next meeting date is scheduled for Dec. 27, but this will not work for several members. David will send a doodle poll to choose between Dec 13 and 20 as the next meeting date.

The committee quorum dissolved when Christine left the meeting at 6:40.

Tom summarized the meeting of the Invasives/climate change subcommittee on 11/18. Peri Bowser, the UVA student working on using Green Infrastructure Center and other data to develop a resilience factor for Important Sites, was at the meeting. She may be available to provide GIS help next semester. Lonnie offered that TJSWCD sometimes has scholarship money available for people doing conservation work. Tom and David met earlier in the day to discuss the outline they are developing for the biodiversity action plan (BAP).

A brief discussion of adding expertise to the BAP efforts was discussed, either through new committee members or simply people willing to help the subcommittees. Tom recently sent an email to Bob Davis at UVA, but has not heard back from him. He is Manuel's office mate at UVA. Manuel recommended we contact Howie Epstein, as he works on climate change in the Arctic region and might be open to helping us. Manuel will contact him. Manuel will be out of country for 2 months beginning near end of March.

David and Devin were part of a small group site visit to the Hedgerow property on 11/11. Dan Mahon led the visit, and Julia Monteith (UVA) and Mark Graham (Director of Community Development Department for Albemarle County) participated. Lonnie wants to be sure NHC is involved in comments on designing Hedgerow Park. Some hemlock trees on site are still intact, but probably need to be treated before hemlock wooly adelgids infest them. Does the Parks & Rec Department have policy on land donations? Would VA DGIF accept donated land for a Wildlife Management Area? Ari will look into that.

Manuel is talking to the state for funding to identify and map invasive species, developing a one year pilot project. A decision is expected in December on funding. Research probably would begin in 2018, Albemarle County would be the first location. Manuel will keep us informed. Rod Walker and Howie Epstein are also involved.

Money still available for use by the committee, an amount of \$1,084. Education subcommittee has some potential uses for it. Earth Week coming up, Earth Day is April 22, we should participate if there is an event. There was brief discussion of ways to publicly recognize good land stewards and conservation volunteers, similar to the commemoration for Mo Stevens.

No visits have been made recently to Important Sites, and none are scheduled. Devin has a site to recommend but has not submitted a site report or description yet. Generally, additions to the Important Sites list should be done in batches, perhaps once or twice a year.

The Hayes property on Dudley Mountain Road, which adjoins Arrowhead along the ridgeline of Dudley Mountain, has been removed from consideration for an ACE easement. The family withdrew the property from the process.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:30.