

**Minutes of Albemarle County Natural Heritage Committee (NHC) Meeting
May 6, 2021 – Virtual Meeting on Zoom**

Committee Members: Christine Putnam, Peggy Cornett, Emily Luebke, Bruce Gatling-Austin, Leah Jung, Lonnie Murray, Emma Andrews

Absent: Kennon Williams, Nancy Weiss, Kate Mallek

Other Attendees: Rod Walker, Nicole Jones

Staff: Kim Biasioli, Carolyn Schaffer

There was a quorum of seven members present, and Christine called the meeting to order at 5:34.

Welcome to guests.

Peggy moved approval of the agenda, Bruce seconded. Approved by a roll call vote.

Peggy moved approval of the minutes, Bruce seconded. Approved by a roll call vote.

Introductions for new NHC member, Emma Andrews.

Follow-Ups:

- Important Sites and other areas of interest
 - Blenheim Grasslands – prescribed burn occurred first week in April.
 - Biscuit Run South – Invasives control would be beneficial on the edges of the high quality habitat. Pink lady slippers near the trails – ACPR is aware of their location. There are lots of new trails throughout. **ACTION ITEM:** Invite CAMBIC to next NHC meeting.
 - Jefferson Mill Important Site is near Emma’s property. Unique wetland on her property that might be of interest for a future survey.
- Rural Area Planning
 - Kim and Scott met with assessor’s office and County attorneys.
 - The County does not have the discretion to change the qualifying standards for land use for any category without changing the state code. Property has to meet both the minimum qualifying standards and be consistent with the uniform standards.
 - Assessors are aware of soil and water conservation programs language in the code. They will not remove a property from land use if it’s enrolled if it still meets the minimum standards for ag. If there is no active agreement and the property does not meet the minimum standards for ag, there is no legal mechanism for it to qualify.
 - To qualify in the open space category, a property has to meet the minimum qualifying standards (AFD, CE, or OSUA) and be consistent with the code. Open Space Use Agreements (OSUA) are limited in that they are only used for properties with remaining development rights and have very restrictive vegetation management language. **ACTION ITEM:** Kim will send a link to the OSUA language to Lonnie for the policy subcommittee to review.
 - There might be a need to clarify language on County website to be consistent with the state code.
- Comprehensive Plan Update – Need for the NHC to stay involved and be ready to provide feedback. Tom Olivie has a study group. **ACTION ITEM:** Let Christine know if you want to join the study group.

- Subcommittee Meetings
 - Only the education subcommittee is currently meeting.
 - **ACTION ITEM:** Christine will follow up with Kate about the subcommittee meeting protocol.
 - Leah proposed to disband the wildlife corridors subcommittee. Christine moved, Leah seconded. Approved by a roll call vote.
- Focus Area Reports
 - Wildlife Corridors
 - Leah working on 240/250 intersection; working with VDOT on plantings.
 - Leah studying BAP corridors and basis of connectivity analysis using forest blocks. Effort to get tracking study on bobcat in Albemarle County. Potential to work with Brett Jesmer, Assistant Professor from Virginia Tech and Smithsonian.
 - Brett Jesmer has joined the wildlife corridors work group focused on the Southern Albemarle Mountains. Kim is working on customization of roadkill app with VDOT and Center for Large Landscape Conservation. Camera traps are starting to pick up bobcat at the South Fork; possibility for improvements at some crossing sites.
 - Education Subcommittee
 - Working on the Landowner Welcome packet.
 - Looking at land sale data – mostly small lots; large sales are in the southwest.
 - **ACTION ITEM:** Kim to help apply different filters to the land sale data (acreage and LLCs).
 - Group is also updating the landowner resources page.
 - PEC is collaborating and offering support.
 - Darden Towe reduced mowing project in progress. Emma is working on signs and laminated info sheet.
 - Litter clean up event at Old Mills Trail on National Trails Day (June 5). Christine will lead an NHC tour of no-mow zones.
- Other Matters
 - Lonnie and Repp are working on the native plant database and are looking for photos.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30. Next meeting date is June 4th, 2021.