

## **Meeting Minutes**

Wicomico County Natural Resource Conservation Advisory Committee

June 14, 2022

3-4:30 pm

Room 300 GOB

Committee: Judith Stribling   John Grout   Aaron Cooper   Alyssa Hastings

Will Dyer   Jared Parks   Douglas Stephens

Attendance: Alma Hackett   Cassie D. Dyson

### **NRCAC Members & Nomination:**

Mrs. Alma Hackett received nomination from the committee after recommendation by Mr. Grout to join the NRCAC. Mrs. Hackett discussed her previous work as a science teacher starting in 1964, and she now tutors. Mr. Grout and Mrs. Hackett discuss various projects they've worked on historically.

NRCAC members discussed their individual role in the committee and they are as follows:

- Judith Stribling: Chair, Wetlands Ecology
- John Grout: Co-Chair, Environmental Organization Representative
- Alyssa Hastings: Sustainably Specialist, City of Salisbury
- Aaron Cooper: Agricultural Representative, Local Farmer
- Doug Stephens: Lower Shore Land Trust Representative
- Jared Parks: Wildlife Specialist
- Will Dyer: Forestry

### **Vote on Meeting Minutes**

Mr. Parks made the motion to approve the meeting minutes from April 12, 2022. Ms. Hastings seconded the motion. NRCAC had a unanimous yes and the motion passed to approve the minutes

### **Tree City USA:**

Wicomico County was not able to meet the 2021 Tree City USA deadline due collection of paperwork including financial data and proclamation requirements. NRCAC discussed requirements for 2022 application with Mrs. Dyson to ensure the deadline is met. Pursuant discussion regarding the spending requirements and whether the city population and spending could be included. After discussion it was concluded that the population would be based on unincorporated areas of the county.

### **Invasive Species**

The previous Invasive Species Coordinator, Victoria Spice, has been appointed to the MD Dept. of Agriculture position of Noxious Weeds Coordinator. Ms. Spice will continue to coordinate the

Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISM). One of the biggest initiatives for the committee has been to manage invasive species. NRCAC has worked towards this initiative with a \$72,000 grant, partnering with the Lower Shore Land Trust to administer the grant. Mr. Parks discussed the informal Friends of Pemberton Group who went out to Pemberton Park with Ms. Spice to eradicate wisteria. Wicomico Environmental Trust (WET) has requested office space at Pemberton Park and Ms. Spice suggested she would like to have an office hour there once a week to utilize the space as a living classroom aimed at educating people about invasive species on the Eastern Shore. This could serve as an opportunity for PRISM and Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA). Mr. Parks assisted with the first grant for the invasive species and was encouraged to submit again for the CBT grant. The remainder of the grant was used to prepay two treatments of invasive species at Pemberton Park and Leonard's Mill Parks. Harbor Point Development is adjacent to the site that is being treated for invasive species.

### **American Chestnut Trees and Pemberton Park:**

Mr. Groutt discussed The American Chestnut Association, and their goal to breed a new American Chestnut with all of the good qualities of the American Chestnut and the resistant qualities of the Chinese Chestnut. Mr. Groutt has planted 2 American Chestnut trees at Pemberton Park. The American Chestnut Association is interested in planting a nursery at Pemberton Park due to its history and potential for educational outreach. Mr. Parks discussed various sources of funding to plant trees back at Pemberton Park. Ms. Stribling inquired about the possibility to restore the trees in a way that would no longer require maintenance. Mr. Dyer stated it is a possibility but it would require a large piece of equipment to come through and mulch the area initially.

### **Funding:**

Ms. Stribling discussed previous conversation with the County Executive regarding additional funding for the committee. Ms. Stribling stated he was not in favor of allocating additional funds in this FY budget; however, if emergency situations occurred there may be funds available. Committee discussed potential plans and conversations with county executive for next fiscal year.

### **Pemberton Park Long Term Goals:**

Mr. Groutt suggested it would be ideal if Pemberton Park and The American Chestnut Association worked together to achieve the committee's goal of education. Ms. Stribling stated her ideal goal is to see Pemberton Park manageable. Ms. Hastings suggested potential for maintenance plan, Mr. Parks stated the importance to recognize how Pemberton Park became so overridden to ensure other areas don't become like that. Committee discussed the various county departments roles in maintain the park, specifically the role of Recreation and Parks in mowing and maintaining the park. Committee does not believe any subcontractors mow Pemberton or other parks. Mr. Parks discussed having a discussion with Mr. Chuck Poole, Ms. Spice, and Ms. Stribling to create a full plan to manage invasive species at Pemberton Park. Mr. Groutt mentioned the county is understaffed in these roles, Mr. Cooper and Mr. Dyer discuss mulching

the area would be incredibly helpful to manage the area. Mr. Dyer discussed potential for county roads equipment be used to mulch the area or have someone subcontracted out. Mr. Dyer specifically mentioned a “Merri crusher” which is attached to a large tractor and pulled behind to mulch a large area.

### **New Projects**

Ms. Stribling discussed potential to locate areas that also need invasive species removed and reaching out to the County Executive now before the problems evolve into bigger more costly problems. Ms. Stribling stated Mr. Dyer has been mapping out locations of invasive species. Mr. Parks discussed Cedar Hill Park being an ideal location to remove invasive species due to previous conversations with Chuck Poole and Steve Miller from County Recreation and Parks. Mr. Parks had previously met onsite with Mr. Poole and they noted need to remove species. Ms. Stribling and Mr. Parks decided to contact Mr. Poole first then talk to County Executive for request for funding to be put towards invasive species management. Ms. Stribling asked Mr. Dyer about the cost of mulching at Cedar Hill Park, Mr. Dyer suggested first to go in with GPS to determine the actual size of the lot and treat with basal bark treatment during the dormant season. Mr. Dyer mentions the entire lot is within the Critical Area and they would need to be cognizant of that. Ms. Stribling mentioned setting up meeting with Mr. Poole, Mr. Dyer, and Mr. Parks in July to discuss possibilities at Cedar Hill Park.

Mr. Parks discussed various sources of funding for these projects. This included how Ms. Spice implements the business model. Mr. Parks stated if the work was done internally, they’d be essentially paying themselves to do the work keeping the funds internal. Mr. Parks also stated grants would be helpful since there is a built-in match for the work done. Mr. Parks further discusses the various opportunities for funding for this project and those similar.

### **Pull the Ivy Campaign**

Ms. Hastings discusses the City of Salisbury is doing a “Pull the Ivy” Campaign to get information out to the public regarding hazards of Ivy. Mr. Stephens emphasized his excitement for this campaign. Ms. Stribling states there are specific locations on Salisbury University that should be addressed. Mr. Dyer noted the North Carolina Forest Service or Department of Agriculture is running a campaign where they will give you a replacement tree if you remove and kill your Bradford Pear tree. Mr. Dyer and Mr. Parks agreed there are many problems with Bradford Pear trees as they grow and that North Carolina was not the only place they know running a similar campaign and it might be a good example for future initiatives.

### **Gypsy Moth**

Mr. Dyer stated the MDA mapped 35,000+ acres of infested land in 2021 identified as having high enough caterpillars to be treated for Gypsy Moths. The MDA had a budget to treat 10% of the location meaning they sprayed 3,500 acres in prioritized areas. Mr. Dyer stated he attended a presentation approximately 3 weeks ago where a survey found there is closer to 90,000 acres of exfoliation that starts in Sussex County and travels down. Mr. Grout suggested writing to the county executive to provide funds to spray for Gypsy Moths. Mr. Dyer stated the MDA runs the program that sprays for Gypsy Moths so it is unclear on if requesting funds from the county

would work. Mr. Dyer also stated there was a fungus that killed approximately 90% of Gypsy Moths, last year there was no fungus, this year the spring has been wet which may encourage the fungus growth. Mr. Grout speculated there's been wet years he did not see as large of a population as Gypsy Moths. Mr. Dyer discussed how Gypsy Moths are an introduced species which most birds won't eat. The Gypsy Moths eat and kill many Sweet Gum Trees and Red Maples.

### **Vision Statement:**

Ms. Hastings moved to officially approve the vision statement. Mr. Parks seconded the motion. The committee voted unanimously in favor of the vision statement.

### **Green Infrastructure:**

Ms. Stribling distributed a letter to be issued to Ms. Lori Carter addressing implementing Green Infrastructure into the Zoning Code. Ms. Stribling stated she believed the best process for this would be to formally request the Planning Department drafts the language for this and the committee will act in an advisory role through the process and have the language be consistent with the LPPRP with respect to Green Infrastructure. Ms. Hastings inquired about the timeline the Planning department had to address the request once the letter is drafted, further questions amongst the committee regarding when the comprehensive plan will be updated. Mr. Stephens makes the motion to send the letter to Ms. Carter. Mr. Parks seconds the motion. The committee voted unanimously in favor of sending the Green Infrastructure letter.

Ms. Stribling discussed potential mapping sources for green infrastructure. Committee discussed that the maps are generated through the State and not at a local level. Mr. Parks discussed the Chesapeake Conservancy has mentioned releasing their lidar maps online for the public later this year. Mr. Parks discussed land use and land cover maps have also been released by various sources that can be utilized. Mr. Grout discussed how this information fits into the tree canopy study done by the city, however, Ms. Stribling stated the study occurred only within the city and not across the county.

### **Committee Meeting:**

Ms. Stribling discussed with committee potential to move meetings to bi-monthly. Committee decided to continue to meet monthly, and if a quorum cannot be made cancelling the meeting until the next month. Ms. Hastings proposed to meet at Schumacher Park over the Summer. The committee discussed options for meetings over the Summer.

### **City Updates:**

Ms. Hastings stated the sustainability survey had over 250 responses and 98% of the people that took the survey finished it, the results are still being analyzed. Ms. Hastings also noted the city is starting the process to consider banning plastic bags. Ms. Hastings discussed the controversy surrounding banning the bags. Ms. Stribling inquired about charging for bags, Ms. Hastings stated as a municipality they are not allowed to levy a tax at the point of sale. Ms. Hastings stated the state will likely ban plastic bags in due time. Mr. Parks and Ms. Hastings state Chestertown is the only other municipality on the Eastern Shore to have banned plastic bags. Committee

discussed the sale of invasive species, Ms. Stribling stated the recent bills Delaware passed would be ideal to repeat in Maryland.