

# Crozet Community Advisory Committee

## Meeting Minutes from September 13, 2023

### Members Present:

Joe Fore - Chair  
 Michael Monaco - Secretary  
 Bruce Butala  
 Ken Thacker  
 Kostas Alibertis  
 Valerie Long  
 Jim Duncan  
 Lonnie Murray, Planning Commission  
 Ann Mallek, Board of Supervisors

### Staff Present:

Allison Wrabel, Community Connector

Chair Joe Fore called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm

### Call to Order, Agenda Review, Introductions

Minutes were not circulated prior to the meeting. Agenda reviewed.

### Community Concerns

No concerns presented at this time.

### Scheduled Presentation - Matthew Slaats, Crozet Community Orchard Project

Matthew Slaats: Provides his background, including community organizing work & participatory budgeting. Tonight, presenting on his proposed project for a community orchard. Overarching goal of creating “social infrastructure” to match Crozet’s growing physical infrastructure. Recognizes existing community efforts to do the same. Inspired by the Bloomington Community Orchard, as presented in Ross Gay’s book *Inciting Joy*. A Crozet Community Orchard would provide opportunities to reflect on Crozet’s history and strengthen community bonds. Immediate questions:

- 1) Location? None determined, couple ideas - open lot of land on Jarman’s Gap (corner of Orchard Rd), berm near Jarman’s Gap, over at the old elementary school, for instance.
- 2) Permits, land rental? Continuing to work on that.
- 3) Building community partners? Local orchards, local growers, mapping existing trees, schools.
- 4) Eventual fundraising? We will need funds eventually; we are a community of plenty in Crozet.

As a first initiative, meeting on September 30th at 12:00 noon at the library.

Valerie Long: I believe the Old Trail master plan for Western Park had an area set aside as an orchard.

Joe Fore: The plaza I believe was supposed to have some element of this.

Valerie: The lot of land on Jarman’s Gap - was that supposed to be a park once?

Michael: Emerson Commons does have a small orchard producing some fruit, and could share expertise.

Lonnie: There’s a huge number of native fruit trees - especially pawpaws. Also multiple species of native plums, two native apple species - a whole long list of indigenous trees producing fruit. In Old Trail, they just cut down the juneberry trees - my kids and I used to eat those berries, which attracted questions from passersby. Juneberries, mulberries - lots of local trees.

Joe Fore: Agree very much with the idea of social infrastructure. Also - the space around the Green Olive Tree, the car wash, the laundromat - ideal spaces to fill in with orchards.

Valerie: We do have to keep in mind that we have to plan around the land use map, which denotes that space as commercial/light industrial.

Lonnie: A distributed, mapped-out network of small orchards around Crozet would be a great way to avoid having a large project.

Terri M.: The County owns land around Lickinghole creek - there's 7ish acres right off Nicollette Ct in Westhall that aren't being used for anything. I don't know how the floodplain factors into that, but the County does have pieces in various places.

Lonnie: Most of our native fruit trees are riparian anyway, so there's lots of good places for persimmons and pawpaws.

Terri: I have a perfect spot in mind for a loop with a butterfly garden - we could really use trees there, too.

Kostas: The VFD and Rescue Squad used to make apple butter together down at Crozet park one weekend in October; when we talk about community engagement events, that sort of use for the orchard fruit would be a great opportunity.

Joe Fore: There is a role for the CCAC here, with the mandate from the Crozet Master Plan to engage in placemaking projects. I believe the CCAC could be a good bridge for advocating for the policy side of this project.

Lonnie: Placemaking is important. Density done right is not just a matter of more people in one spot - we've heard clearly through the comp plan process that people want green space and things to do. I think there's lots of energy to make Crozet vibrant.

Matthew Slaats: Shares an organization called The Civic Standard in Hardwick, Connecticut, that focuses on "cultural organizing" - puts on community meals, community theaters, etc., as a model for possible Crozet community organizing.

### **Board of Supervisors/Planning Commission Liaison Updates**

#### **AC44 Process**

Ann: Extensive update at the last meeting on the AC44 process. Looked at the four topics.

- Activity centers: for us, there's no dramatic changes, because we have the most recent master plan. Not as dramatic for us compared to say 5th and Avon. Our "activity centers" in the 2005 plan were a scare-point for the community, and were reduced in 2010.
- Factors for future development area expansion. Any time you announce a place where you intend to expand the growth area, you see a land rush in that area. Planning ahead is good, establishing factors is good, given that you've provided the amenities for that growth area already. This was not wildly supported by any means.
- Rural crossroads communities. Concern about bringing more commercial activities into the rural areas - Batesville, White Hall, Free Union. Little to no interest in new construction - franchises, etc - because those are meant to go in the growth areas.
- Interchanges. Lots of musical chairs - comments were often in the form of "not over here, put it over here." If there was any interest, it was tentatively at the northeast side of the Shadwell corner. There were those who said the existing commercial interests on the south side of 250 in Crozet should mean we build more there; Ann disagrees.

Lonnie: Greatly enjoyed the comments in that meeting. Appreciated Supervisor Andrews saying the Comp Plan is ordered in order of importance, and right now the first chapters are the conservation of the natural areas. We lack a natural areas toolkit, a rural areas toolkit. That was brought up at the last PC meeting. I caught some playful flak for red-carding each of the four issues, but felt justified listening to the BoS comments.

Ann: We did try to focus on the fact that we neglected climate change in the 2014 update, and preservation of natural resources is a priority.

Lonnie: The one item I red-carded about the activity centers was that there was no mention of engagement with the CACs. It was good to be able to provide the written opinion of the planning commission to the BoS as well, as an alternative to the staff recommendations.

Lonnie: One other item: Montclair is scheduled for public hearing on September 26th at the PC. I am already receiving emails and comments. The documents are not up yet as far as I know.

Allison: You haven't gotten the staff report yet, correct?

Lonnie: No, I only know this date because I asked Kevin and he let me know.

Ann: So there won't be another community meeting with a new plan? That's too bad.

Lonnie: The Eastern Avenue bridge, which apparently can't be built, has maybe necessitated a change in the Crozet Master Plan, if we really will be missing this major internal artery.

Ann: Background on that - the price of the Eastern Ave Connector has just gone up to \$39.5 million. It's an unbelievable increase. The state has a new statewide estimating plan, to do away with the fact that there is a range of estimates across the state, including inequitable estimates across localities. VDOT decided they need a more clinical, consistent process. Prices have shot up. When I heard about this on June 8, I went to county staff and said this has been on the list since 1992; what other alternatives can we find to get this done (including private-public partnership)? That's underway, but that \$22m gap needs to be made up entirely by the county. The most the state will provide is \$10m. It could be changed to a SMART Scale project; that's one of the exploratory options.

Community member: VDOT informed me that it would be 6 years from funding to complete the construction.

Kostas: It did take us 25 years to get Jarman's Gap built.

Joe Fore: What are these other alternatives for Eastern Avenue? Including extending Dunvegan?

Ann: They are exploring other locations for the bridge, to shorten it from 6 piers to 3 piers. Also looking at private-public partnerships to lower the costs, including design costs.

Joe Fore: If this project is truly delayed, deferred, or even written off entirely, how does that change our approach to the Crozet Master Plan? It's the number one catalyst project!

Lonnie: If there's major infrastructure that may never be built, then that influences our decision at the PC about what we approve. It's important to adhere to the plan, I believe in that plan, but if there's major infrastructure that won't be there...what do we do?

Joe Fore: The plan is holistic - each part depends on the completion of the other. From this committee's perspective, how do we evaluate these things when these changes happen? And how, at the county level, do we update the master plan to, say, hypothetically eliminate something like the Eastern Ave bridge from the Master Plan?

Ann: And how do we accelerate other parts of the plan with the dollars allocated to Eastern Avenue?

Joe Fore: Absolutely - it changes the priorities. Reprioritizing the Dunvegan entrance, the sidewalks by the park.

Bruce Butala: That makes sense - reallocate that money to the things we can get done. That bridge is never getting done. Best to take that money and put it to problems we have today.

Joe Fore: I agree. My guess is what staff would do is reallocate that money around the county, but we need to reallocate the money to Crozet. Even the northern entrance of Eastern Avenue would be good to get.

### **Other Committee Business**

#### **Development Tracking Project**

Joe Fore: [Link here](#). Originally created by Michael Monaco, worked on by myself and Allison Wrabel. Funny note - there actually aren't that many projects that are community meetings. (Only including development projects, so not necessarily all special permits like the Daylily Daycare).

Ann: Part of the delay between approval date and being built is legislature-related.

Joe: Old Dominion Village is a good example - 3 years from initial CCAC meeting, one year since approval.

Valerie: A lot of that is site plan approval - that takes at least 1-2 years.

Joe: We do just want to keep an eye on these projects as they progress. Oak Bluff and Montclair stand out as ones with extensive community engagement.

Jim: Almost tangentially - what remains to develop here? Besides Acme site?

Michael: The land behind Green Olive Tree is for sale, but that's Light Industrial in the Master Plan, so likely not as many residential units.

Tim Tolson: We wanted to explore the Acme site with the architecture students, but we were forbidden from examining the premises. The owner isn't saying if they'll develop or sell.

Ann: While we're looking, interested in checking Pleasant Green/West Glen Strem Crossing, because that set to happen a while ago.

Upon examination, discovers that the stream crossing has a five-year expiration in July 2025.

Valerie: Suggests adding a column for the site plan approval process - what round of comments are they in?

#### **Budgeting/CIP Cycle**

Joe Fore shares the FY 25 budget calendar. Emphasizes how much work happens on the budget in November/December, well before the work sessions which are often later in the process. What meetings can we send people to well before the February 21st deadline for the County Executive's Recommended Budget is due?

Ann: During the end of summer is when depts are scouring their budgets to present to senior staff. Budget season never ends. Been trying to get the Park & Tabor sidewalks back onto the priority list - it will take people coming to public meetings demanding this sidewalk project. This is how the library happened - different faces showed up for a year with posters etc. It's very powerful to have lots of voices in the room.

Lonnie: It might be neat to have a spreadsheet of desired infrastructure improvements, similar to the development one.

Joe: Good especially to track when the master plan projects are underway/completed - because some are!

Michael: As a spreadsheet hobbyist, I have one already; I can send that out.

Allison: Quick announcement - the roundabout design package meetings, including the 240/250 one. The Crozet roundabout has been fully funded now.

Ann: Yes - after it was almost ditched, they did put it in the Smart Scale and it's happening now.

Joe Fore: To the budget/CIP process - we do need faces in the room in October and November. Passing a resolution as a CAC may be less impactful than just showing up early.

#### **2023-24 Meeting Topics**

Allison: October 17th is a Tuesday; it's the all-CAC meeting about transportation talking about the planning and implementation of transportation projects in the county. 6:00-8:30 in person at Lane Auditorium. It will be recorded, but it won't be hybrid. More details forthcoming. In March, we're planning for a virtual all-CAC

meeting about the budget, which will function similarly to the AC44 all-CAC meeting a few months ago. The other topic we were asked to hold at CACs in Nov/Dec is another round of AC44 feedback about activity centers and updated land use designations. Not much change in Crozet, but they do want to hit all the CACs. Likely November, since CCAC often skips December. Other big topics: Rivanna Water & Sewer will come in the spring, transportation will also come annually, parks as well.

Michael: Suggests a Catalyst Project update for the Crozet Master Plan - a public update on the status of each Catalyst project.

Kostas: Would like to revisit the Beaver Creek dam, depending on the timing for that.

Allison: That is supposed to start in 2024-2028, so we'll see.

Valerie: I would suggest transportation, but that'll probably be a part of the catalyst project update.

Joe: We can aim for January for that topic.

Ann: Would like to see an update on the Three Notch'd Trail, because documents are already being signed.

Allison: Crozet Square/Barnes Lumber does want to come out in February or April as well.

Ann: I believe they are about ready to hit the right-of-way phase. Just waiting for a box to be checked.

There's still engineering to be done - a property owner meeting is coming up on the Square later this month. Likely county staff updating the owners there.

Valerie: Are you aware of any community meetings coming up?

Allison: Nope, none on the horizon.

Lonnie: Matthew Slaat's presentation got me thinking - maybe when we talk to parks, there should be a conversation about livability in Crozet. What kind of amenities do people want? Where do we want to take our kids to play? That might be an interesting discussion to host and have. Building that social infrastructure.

Joe Fore: Placemaking is part of our role here - how can we partner with Crozet Arts to get murals back up.

Tim Tolson: Would be good to re-survey on community desires for amenities. The Square was a good process - it began with a survey, and became the plaza.

Ann: Would love to bring more murals to Crozet.

Tim: Reminder that the CCA meeting is tomorrow at 7:30 at the Crozet Park community building. Someone wants to present an idea for hanging baskets on the lightpoles and how to accomplish that. 10th Anniversary Library Party September 29th 3-5:30 pm.

### **Closing**

Next meeting scheduled for October 17, at 6:00 pm, at the Lane Auditorium. Details will be posted on the County calendar on the website. <https://www.albemarle.org/community/county-calendar>

Michael motioned to adjourn; Jim seconded. Joe Fore adjourned the meeting at 8:32 pm.