**NATURAL AREAS ADVISORY COUNCIL**

**35 Years of Service to Improving Delaware’s Quality Of Life**

**“Preserving Delaware’s Natural Areas Today For All Delawareans Tomorrow”**

**NATURAL AREAS ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING**

June 9, 2016

Rose Cottage

102 South State Street

Dover, DE 19901

9:30 a.m.

ATTENDANCE

**Council Members:**

Debbie Heaton, Chair

Ted Palmer

John Williams, Esq.

Jim White

**Guest:**

Nathan Smith, Intern with The Williams Law Firm

**Staff:**

Eileen Butler, Parks & Recreation, DNREC

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**I. Call to Order/Welcome/Introductions/Announcements**

Ms. Heaton called the Natural Areas Advisory Council meeting to order at 9:35 a.m. welcoming Council members and staff and asked for announcements.

**II. Approval of Meeting Minutes**

Ms. Heaton asked for a motion to approve the March 10, 2016 minutes. Motion was made by Mr. White to approve minutes, Mr. Williams seconded. Motion carried.

**III. Old Business**

* *Felician Sisters Property* – Area legislators are interested in permanent preservation of the area and have requested the state appraise the property. The appraisal is underway. They have also contacted the Delaware Nature Society requesting what it would take to manage appropriately.
* *Monitoring Forest Stewardship Plans* – Ms. Butler will be participating in monitoring of the forest stewardship plans associated with Frenchtown Woods area this summer.
* *Articles of Dedication* – the menu of options for landowners to consider when permanently preserving land was reviewed. The only comment was the inclusion of fishing in with hunting and trapping to be a permitted activity. They were unanimously approved by Council.
* *Application to delist a portion of the Christina River Natural Area* – Council reviewed a draft letter to Sec. Small regarding Council’s position on a delisting application. Mr. Williams made a motion to approve the draft letter subject to comments to prepare a final draft. Mr. White approved.

**IV. Natural Areas Registry**

* *Update on County review for Natural Area Registry* – Brandywine Creek State Park lands were surveyed and the current natural area boundary was found to be correct. Staff is not looking to add any additional lands to the Registry at this time. It was determined that expanding the natural area around the Frenchtown Woods Natural Area and Bank of America within the Christina River Natural Area was premature at this time due to related activities within the Delaware Legislature. Once session has ended, Council will take up this review again, and Ms. Heaton will reach out to the Bank of America to request a site visit.
* *Russ Peterson Urban Wildlife Refuge* – Mr. Williams suggested this area be considered as part of the Christina River Natural Area. Both Mr. Williams and Mr. White will submit a nomination for this area in the future.

**V. Nature Preserve Dedications**

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1. **Nature Preserve Management Issues**
* *Blackbird Delmarva Bays* – Mr. White reminded the Council that they need to

reengage staff from the Forest Stewardship Program to discuss expanding the boundaries of the VanDyke Tract of the Blackbird Delmarva Bays Nature Preserve to parcel-wide, and also to add the Naudain Tract to the Nature Preserve. Mr. White, Mr. Heckscher, and Mr. Palmer will be connecting with Forestry staff soon.

1. **New Business**
2. **Public Comment and Synopsis Reports From Other Councils, Stakeholders, and Partners**

 Parks and Recreation Council Meeting, as reported by Mr. Jim White

 5 May 2016 Auburn Heights

* Rob Line is retiring this year.
* The council discussed naming rights for areas, trails and buildings in DE parks. All agreed that the naming of park property should be kept to a minimal. However exceptions can be made and each case should be judged individually.
* There will be no grant cycle for Land and Water Conservation Trust Fund as the fund has suffered a bit from recent downturn in stock market.
* I explained to the council that the Natural Areas Advisory Council is very interested in working with Park staff to identify and dedicate Nature Preserves with state parks. I discussed that the process should be a collaboration between the Natural Areas Council and the state park managers and administrators and the final product should benefit the Natural Areas Program and the State Park system.
* After the meeting I was able to take a ride on the Rail Bikes – fun was had by all.
1. **2016 Council Meeting Dates/Time**

 September 8, and December 8

1. **Adjournment**

Ms. Heaton asked for a motion to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 10:54 am.