



2020 Hampton Street • Room 3063A
P.O. Box 192 • Columbia, SC 29202
(803) 576-2083

Minutes May 21, 2012

Attendance:

Members present: Carol Kososki, John Grego, Virginia Sanders, Glenice Pearson, Ann Furr, Jim Lawracy

Absent: Margaret DuBard, Mildred Myers, Sam Holland, Becky Bailey, Gary Atkinson

Others present:

James B. Atkins (Buddy), Environmental Planning Division

Nancy Stone-Collum, Environmental Planning Division

Charlie Fisher, Environmental Planning Division

Ken Driggers, Legal

Coal Powered Filmworks: Wade Sellers, Mary Cruz Figueroa, Paige Faucette, Jeff Wilkinson

Mike Dawson, River Alliance

Chair Carol Kososki called the meeting to order at 4:04 pm without a quorum and requested those present look over the minutes and agenda while waiting for more members to arrive.

Saluda Canal Documentary

In FY12, Richland County Conservation Commission (RCCC) awarded an \$8,000 grant to Coal Powered Filmworks for the purpose of creating a Saluda Canal Documentary. The eleven-minute film documents the use of the canal for transporting goods to markets in the 1820s. Coal Powered Filmworks hopes to generate interest in preserving the canal as part of a Saluda Greenway linking strategic resources and highlighting the beauty of the river. Carol appointed Jim Lawracy, Chair of the Historic Committee, to meet with his committee and discuss with Coal Powered Filmworks concerns Commissioners may have regarding the documentary.

With the arrival of Jim Lawracy, a quorum was obtained.

Minutes: Jim Lawracy moved to accept the minutes with the two corrections Nancy Stone-Collum made. John Grego seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Report of the Chair

Carol Kososki informed the Commission second reading of the County's budget will be Wednesday, May 23; a special call meeting is scheduled on May 31 for third reading. RCCC and Richland Soil and Water Conservation District (RSWCD) are still awaiting the outcome of the requested reorganization which will create a Conservation Department and terminate the Environmental Planning Division.

Ken Driggers explained RCCC was unaware until just recently the sale of Cook's Mountain by Republic Services had not occurred. Cook's Mountain is being marketed by a real estate firm in Chattanooga, Tennessee for less than its purchase price. RCCC has begun the process of gaining support from County Council and the SC Conservation Bank to purchase the property. Ken and Carol spoke with Marvin Davant, Executive Director of the Conservation Bank, and are optimistic about the bank's interest in funding the purchase of Cook's Mountain. The Bank has only funded one project in Richland County; however there is a large backlog of applications due to lack of Bank funding for the last three years. RSWCD, a subdivision of State government, would have to take title of the property if Conservation Bank funding is used.

Carol reminded the group of the Development Roundtable public information session scheduled tonight (May 21) from 6-8pm. The revised ordinances proposed by the Development Roundtable are the result of three year's work to balance environmental and development interests in the County.

Environmental Division Manager's Report

Mitigation Banking

Buddy Atkins reported Alan Kahn, one of the two major landowners of the Jackson Creek and Decker property, has been fairly receptive to negotiations but Mr. Hugh Palmer has not been as amenable to discussion. A five page certified letter has been mailed to Mr. Palmer regarding the property. The project will not proceed unless there is favorable response in the near future from Mr. Palmer.

The other mitigation property is located off Lower Richland Blvd. and Highway 378 in Lower Richland and is owned by Ted Hopkins. On May 10, Mr. Hopkins emailed Kelvin Washington, County Council Chair, proposing to sell the 503 acres to the County for \$7,500 per acre, which is non-negotiable, and results in a purchase price of approximately \$3.7 million. This project is on hold until Council considers Mr. Hopkins' offer.

Buddy reported Sparty Hammett, Assistant County Administrator, has indicated the county's Stormwater Division will be in charge of mitigation banking beginning July 1. Quinton Epps, the County's Flood Plain Coordinator, has been offered the position of Stormwater Manger within the Public Works Department, replacing Srinivas Valavala. A budget amendment is expected to allocate \$1.5 million in the stormwater budget for mitigation banking. If the County does not move forward with the Jackson Creek or Hopkins mitigation banks, funds could be used for preservation mitigation credits at Cook's Mountain.

Green Code

At this time, Planning Director Tracy Hegler and other members of her staff concur the Green Code is ambiguous and unworkable. Buddy provided comments to Ms. Hegler to address some of the more problematic areas. June 8 is the scheduled date to present the Green Code draft to the Development Roundtable.

Saluda Woods is a proposed Green Code subdivision that has been reviewed by the Planning and Developmental Services Department. The plan will be resubmitted for further review to ensure compliance with the Green Code. The View subdivision on Lorick Road, west of Wilson Blvd. is also being developed under the Green Code. Already two years old and partially built, the developer is requesting RCCC accept a conservation easement on 30 acres of woods and wetlands. The code states conservation areas in the subdivision must be protected by a conservation easement *before* building permits are issued.

Councilman Norman Jackson contacted Buddy to schedule a meeting for May 24 at the Caughman Pond property. Mr. Jackson has made a motion to allocate \$750,000 of hospitality funds or other available funds for infrastructure improvement, dredging, weed removal, trails, and restoration of buildings on the property.

RCCC received a Sustainable Path Award for Local Government Initiatives from Sustainable Midlands at a reception at 701 Whaley on May 7.

Time Extension

Jim Lawracy moved to extend the meeting an additional 10 minutes. The motion was seconded by Virginia Sanders.

Conservation Coordinator's Report

Grants

Nancy Stone-Collum referred everyone to a status report on Conservation and Historic Grants. The completed grants and the rollover grants are highlighted on the spreadsheet. The funds for the cancelled Green Development Grant (Wall Development Group) will be repurposed. Nancy presented information and answered questions on the recommended FY 13 grants at a recent Council budget work session. Council members had only a few minor questions regarding the grants.

Easements

Nancy and Buddy met again with Mr. Ted Hopkins regarding his plan for a potential conservation easement at Oldfield off Lower Richland Blvd. and Highway 378 in Lower Richland. Due to staff concerns about reserved rights, Mr. Hopkins proposed an easement on 60 acres of cropland rather than the 100 acres initially proposed. However, he is asking for substantially more than the \$50,000 the Commission approved for the full acreage. The consensus of the Commission was to stay with the amount approved in April. Spring Valley Homeowners Association plans to vote on the conservation easement at the entrance to the subdivision at its November meeting.

Events

- A ribbon cutting ceremony for the Round Top Elementary School Carolina Fence Garden (grant project) was attended by Carol, Nancy, Chanda Cooper, and Councilwoman Joyce Dickerson on April 25.
- John, Chanda, and Nancy visited the Bioswale project at USC on May 1. RCCC funded an educational grant in FY12 for the printing of a booklet and signage for the site.
- A book signing for the COWASEE Basin book (grant project) will be held May 24, 4:30 – 6:00pm at the Hay Hill Garden Market on Bluff Road.
- A Memorial Day ceremony at Government Cemetery, followed by a celebration at the Harriet Barber House is scheduled for May 28.
- The USC African American Documentary History Initiative is planning to hold a community meeting on June 20 that will include past African American grantees.
- The grand opening of the Neal Ecological and Heritage Preserve will be held June 23 from 10 – 12 noon. This includes a workshop to discuss and explore the research uncovered by John Middleton and Chicora Foundation concerning the Reese family buried on site.

Carol asked for a volunteer to chair the June RCCC meeting during her absence. John Grego agreed to chair the meeting. Due to lack of time, the committee reports were omitted.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 5:45pm.

Next meeting date is June 25.

Submitted by
Charlie Fisher
Administrative